NOTABENE

This paper was written, reviewed, accepted and sent to print before Cappello's discovery of the existence of the 1560 edition of the *De artificio dicendi*, which was unknown prior to 2014. Discovered by Sergio Cappello in the Biblioteca Civica di Udine (signature 7.B.8.25), this is the only surviving evidence of this first printed edition, and remains to this day uncatalogued in inventories both in Italy and internationally. In this article (p. 367), I raised the question of whether there existed, at least in the author's mind, an alternative compilation of the *De artificio dicendi* to the one that was actually printed in 1567. I went on to suggest that the book published in 1567 might have been compiled posthumously, given its disjointedness, a characteristic attributable to a printer rather than to the author – a theory now supported by Cappello himself. My dating for the *Discorso* places it at the same time as, or later than, certain parts of the *De artificio dicendi*, which at that time I believed to have been first printed in 1567. I also asserted that the manuscripts held in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli were notes associated with the *De artificio dicendi*. The latter remains a valid hypothesis, as does the dating of the *Discorso* at the same time as or later than certain parts of the *De artificio dicendi*, but no longer may it be ascribed to the latest period, as a greater lapse of time is needed. Also valid is the content analysis of the work. Cf. S. Cappello, "L'editio princeps ritrovata del De artificio dicendi (1560) di Francesco Robortello," in *Dal Friuli alle Americhe. Studi di amici e allievi udinesi per Silvana Serafin*, edited by A. Ferraro (Udine: Editrice Universitaria, 2015), 133–148.

FRANCESCO ROBORTELLO ON TOPICS

Marco Sgarbi[*]

Abstract: This article focuses on a neglected aspect of Francesco Robortello's work, that is his conception of Topics. The scope of the reconstruction is not only erudite: The reason for investigating Robortello's idea of Topics is that for him, as for many other Renaissance philosophers, there was a strict relationship between Topics and the other sermocinal arts, that is grammar, rhetoric, poetry, and sometimes, in the period in question, also historiography, and it is the claim of this article that it is impossible to understand the latter if not in relation to the former, because the Topics lay at the foundation of every possible way of reasoning and argument. In particular, the paper shall examine the vernacular manuscript entitled the *Discorso dell'origine, numero, ordine et methodo delli luoghi topici*, the transcription of which is included in the appendix.

Keywords: vernacular Aristotelianism, Francesco Robortello, logic, Topics, deduction, invention, Orazio Toscanella, Antonio Riccoboni.

FRANCESCO ROBORTELLO WITHIN RENAISSANCE LOGIC

Known as "canis grammaticus," Francesco Robortello (1516–1567) was an eminent philologist and historian of the Italian Renaissance[1] whose contribution to philosophy has been entirely overlooked by modern scholars. The aim of this paper is therefore to examine Robortello's conception of Topics in the light of a little known and unedited manuscript written by him in the vernacular. This manuscript is of particular interest because it presents an original account of Aristotle's Topics based on a novel association with the inner workings of the human mind, while establishing new grounds for a connection between the two core areas of Renaissance logic, invention and judgment.

Topics was normally employed in the Renaissance as a method for uncovering the logical grounds for probable reasons about any argument whatsoever. In general terms, we might say that it was identified with invention in opposition to judgment, so that whereas judgment establishes the manner in which the question needing to be solved may be related to the argument, and recognizes the truth and falsity of the argument and the conclusion, invention characterizes the ways in which the argument is found.

To date, there exists no substantial research on Robortello's conception of Topics: we find no trace of his thought in Cesare Vasoli's seminal investigation on humanistic dialectic and rhetoric, nor in Wilhelm Risse's exhaustive history of Renaissance logic.[2] The primary reason for investigating Robortello is that he saw a direct correla-

[1] Cf. Bernard Weinberg, "Robortello on the Poetics," *Critics and Criticism. Ancient and Modern*, ed. R. S. Crane et al. (Chicago 1952) 319–348; Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago 1961) 1.66f and 388–404; Antonio Carlini, "L'attività filologica di Francesco Robortello," *Atti dell'Accademia di scienze lettere e arti di Udine* 7 (1966–1969) 5–36.

[2] Cf. Wilhelm Risse, *Logik der Neuzeit, Bd. 1 1500–1640* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1964); Cesare Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo. Invenzione e Metodo nella cultura del XV e XVI secolo* (Milan 1968).

tion between Topics, the other sermocinal arts (logic, grammar, rhetoric, poetry), and sometimes historiography, a field in which he excelled. It is the claim of this paper that it is impossible to understand the sermocinal arts without reference to Topics, because Topics was fundamental to every possible mode of reasoning and argument.

Robortello is striking not least because, unlike many other logical writers, he writes in the vernacular. Vernacular started to gain currency as a language of culture in Italy in the 1540s, when it became the vehicle for disseminating knowledge to as wide a section as possible of the population outside the universities and religious orders. Its purpose was thus to reach a new kind of audience while leaving behind the constraints of Latin culture,[3] and in so doing it soon established itself as a fully functional means for expressing even the most complex of philosophical ideas, as in the case of logic. Consequently, a new conception of knowledge emerged in which knowledge was above all else power—a power that had to be available to all.[4] With this new conception of knowledge, logic, vernacular logic in particular, took on an entirely new role within the encyclopedia of the sciences, becoming a fully-rounded methodology for reasoning and inquiring into nature, as is clear from the vernacular treatises by Antonio Tridapale, Nicolò Massa, and Alessandro Piccolomini.[5] Logic and methodology became instrumental and propaedeutic disciplines in the acquisition of all new knowledge, a point that was corroborated some decades later with the works of the famous Paduan logician, Jacopo Zabarella. It is within this framework, therefore, that Topics came to play a pivotal role as an instrument of argumentation, which explains the importance of Robortello's contribution to this field of research.

<div align="center">A FORGOTTEN MANUSCRIPT</div>

In this article, I shall examine one of Robortello's very few remaining works in the vernacular, the *Discorso dell'origine, numero, ordine et methodo delli luoghi topici*, of which I provide a transcription in an appendix. The *Discorso* is preserved in four manuscript copies, BAV, Patetta 971 (*De' luoghi topici*, ff. 3r-4r), BAV, Vat. Lat. 6528 (*Discorso del Robortello in material delli luoghi topici*, fols. 193r–195r); BNF, Lat. 8764 (*Discorso qual sia l'arte, overo methodo della Topica, et del numero dei luochi et orgine di ms. Franc° Robortello*, fols. 71r–78v); Correr, Donà dalle Rose 447, folder 22 (*Discorso dell'origine, numero, ordine et methodo delli luoghi topici*, fols. 1r–4v), each of which I have examined autoptically. The Venetian manuscript appears to be the oldest, being datable to somewhere between the end of 1566 and the beginning of 1567.[6] The Vat. Lat. 6528 manuscript, which is seriously damaged and

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[3] Cf. Luca Bianchi, "Volgarizzare Aristotele: per chi?," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 59 (2012) 480–495.

[4] Cf. Marco Sgarbi, *The Italian Mind. Vernacular Logic in Renaissance Italy (1540–1551)* (Leiden 2014) 213–228.

[5] Cf. Eugenio Refini, "Logic, Rhetoric and Poetics as Rational Faculties in Alessandro Piccolomini's Map of Knowledge," *Philosophical Readings* 2 (2012) 24–35; Sgarbi, *The Italian Mind* (n. 4 above) 27–212.

[6] The folder Donà delle Rose 447 contains miscellaneous unedited works of Robortello. Cf. Federico Seneca, *Il doge Leonardo Donà. La sua vita e la sua preparazione politica prima del Dogado* (Padua 1959) 33.

no longer available for reading,[7] is clearly a fair copy of an original, perhaps the Venetian manuscript given their close terminological correspondence with minor orthographical discrepancies, e.g., "per fino/persino" or "delli/de gli," and their identical content and presentation. The Patetta manuscript is unfortunately incomplete, but it differs from the Venetian manuscript, as well as from the other Vatican manuscript, only in the spelling of certain words ("infino" instead of "per fino" or "persino," "hora" instead of "hoggi"). The handwriting of the Parisian manuscript, on the other hand, is datable to the end of the sixteenth century or the beginning of the seventeenth century, putting beyond all doubt that it is the most recent copy. This manuscript differs consistently from the Venetian and Vatican manuscripts on two points. Whereas in the latter the term "dottori" is used when Robortello is criticizing the men of letters of his time, in the Parisian manuscript they are referred to as "rhetori," namely rhetoricians. Further, the Parisian manuscript provides vernacular translations of all the examples of problems, such as "se si dee far Guerra col Turco" or "se il philosopho sia beato o no," while the other manuscripts keep the Latin. The Parisian text does use Latin and Greek words to characterize what Robortello calls the four circumstances, however, hence the Parisian manuscript may be said to go one step further in the vernacularization of the original text compared to the other three copies.

The *Discorso* yields a precious clue for dating the text. Robortello states that he has already addressed the problem of Topics at length in his other "discourses and commentaries to the topics of Cicero himself."[8] Clearly the reference is not to his printed works, *De rhetorica facultate* (1548) and *De artificio dicendi* (1567), where there is no direct treatment of these matters. In fact, in *De artificio dicendi*, which deals with the enthymeme, Robortello points out that he will discuss the origin and number of the topical places elsewhere, and appears to make a reference to the *Discorso* when he states that "we will explain, showing in another place, the exact number of the places themselves."[9] "Explicabimus" (we will explain) here cannot be referred to the *De artificio dicendi* as we know it, since Robortello does not broach the subject of the number of the topical places in this work. I suggest reading these passages differently, however. It is my opinion that *De artificio dicendi* was not ready to be printed at the time of Robortello's death, and the remaining treatises and writings were collected and put together by the publisher. My thesis is backed by the collection of Robortello's autograph manuscripts in the Biblioteca Nazionale of Naples, folder V D 45. Folio 69 contains an incomplete writing entitled *Diversa ratio Ciceronis ab Aristotele in Topicis in ponendo loco a contrario*, which is of the same kind as the treatise included in the *De artificio dicendi* and deals with the issues discussed in the *Discorso*.[10] The

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[7] The manuscript is now under restoration.

[8] Cf. *infra*, appendix 1v.

[9] Cf. Francesco Robortello, *De artificio dicendi* (Bologna 1567) part 1, 14v: "quanto vero artificio id sit a summo viro factum, alio loco nos certum numerum ipsorum locorum demonstrantes explicabimus."

[10] Cf. BNN, V D 45, 69r: "Etsi Cicero Topicam suam ab Aristotelis opera eodem eruerit, tamen in quibusdam diversam rationem sequutus est est, nec vel tamen sine consilio, ut exemplo indicabo. Aristoteles nec posuit locum a contrario primum idcirco quia universalior est, nam per hunc locum omnia facile probari possunt. Marcus vero Cicero extremo loco posuit hunc idem a contrario, quod magis extra rem est hic inter omnes alias."

"explicabimus" thus most likely refers to this short treatise, which was not included in the *De artificio dicendi* because it was not yet complete at the time of Robortello's death. This leads to two conclusions: either that Robortello wanted to include the treatise in *De artificio dicendi*, but was unable to due to his death, or that he did not include it because it was not yet finished, which might also explain why the publisher did not include it in the publication. The first hypothesis is more plausible because in another treatise of the *De artificio dicendi*, which explains how to make philosophical argumentations less abstruse and more accessible, Robortello writes that he will speak briefly on the manner of deducing philosophical words for oratory.[11] Here, too, Robortello uses the future form "dicam" (I will say) to state that he is going to write something on the topic. Folio 70 of the same collection of manuscript treatises in Naples contains a preparatory work to the chapter "Quomodo sermo philosophicus ad popularem et oratorium redigi possit" of the *De artificio dicendi*, entitled *Regula deducendi sermonem philosophicum ad oratorium*, which deals precisely with what he promised to discuss. One might reasonably conclude that both of these treatises were to be included in the *De artificio dicendi*. Be that as it may, the *Diversa ratio* deals only with the difference between Cicero and Aristotle, and very cursorily at that, thus the reference to the explanation of the origin and number of the topical places must be related to the *Discorso*.

The *Discorso* must therefore be later than the *De artificio dicendi*. Things get complicated because, as mentioned above, *De artificio dicendi* was published in 1567, the year of Robortello's death. It is impossible to know the exact month of publication of the *De artificio*, and one can suppose that Robortello wrote some of the treatises contained within it well before 1567. It is more likely that the *Discorso* is one of Robortello's very last writings, because it refers to the *Diversa ratio*, an unfinished work that had to be included in the *De artificio dicendi*.

As noted, the *Discorso* presupposed other "discourses and commentaries" that are not included in the *De artificio dicendi*, one of them being the *Diversa ratio*. The other could be the *Explicationes in Topica*, which is now held as an unicum in folder Vat. Lat. 6528, 156r–193v, and is no longer available for consultation. The *Explicationes* are notes taken by an anonymous student during a course held in Bologna in 1557. It deals mainly with Cicero's conception of Topics and with the various definitions of the topical places, but Robortello often integrates the Ciceronian exposition with Aristotle's logic, thereby elaborating an eclectic Aristotelian-Ciceronian position on Topics which, as we shall see, will come to constitute the mainstay of his later thought. Robortello clearly recognizes the distinction between Aristotle's dialectic and Cicero's Topics, but conceives the latter as a continuation and particular interpretation of the former, arguing that it is impossible to understand the latter without the former.[12] Hence it is not possible, as many humanist logicians and rhetoricians did, to deal purely with Cicero's perspective without first going through Aristotle's. In the *Explicationes*, however, we also find frequent references to Hermogenes, Quintilian,

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[11] Ibid. 36r: "… Est quaedam ars deducendi sermonem philosophorum ad oratorioum usum, de qua breviter dicam…"

[12] Cf. Vat. Lat. 6528, 156r.

Boethius, and Agricola. What is striking about these lecture notes, given Robortello's customary exuberance, is the lack of personal and original reflections on the Topics,[13] which makes the *Discorso* even more valuable for the purpose of knowing his opinions.

Similarly to the *Discorso*, the subject-matter of these writings shows Robortello's familiarity with this field of investigation, and provides evidence that he thought deeply about it throughout his life. Indeed, we know that already from the time of his stay in Pisa between 1547 and 1549, Robortello was particularly involved in interpreting Cicero's rhetoric, the *De inventione* and *De oratore* in particular, an activity that will occupy him throughout his sojourns in Venice (1549–1552), Bologna (1557–1561), and Padua (1552–1557, 1561–1567).[14] It is unlikely, however, that Robortello mentioned his treatment of the Topics of the Bolognese lectures in the *Discorso*, since the lectures and the *Discorso* were not aimed at the same target-audience. The hypothesis that Robortello is in fact referring to the *Diversa ratio* is more plausible, whereas the possibility that he is referring to the *Dell'oratore* contained in the folder Donà delle Rose 447, folder 28 may be ruled out, since it deals with the role of the orator and rhetorical arguments.[15]

The origin of Robortello's *Discorso* on Topics is uncertain. The language indicates that the work was destined for an audience other than that of the university, where professors still taught in Latin. Given its dating close to the time of his death, Robortello might have read this work just before passing away in the academy that he established and hosted in his own home between 1565 and 1567.[16] Robortello probably taught privately in Italian what he was writing in Latin for the *De artificio dicendi*, a common practice in late sixteenth-century Italian academies, since the latter work contains similar topics to those of the *Dell'oratore*, which is from the same period as the *Discorso* and is contained in the same folder. The *Discorso* in the Donà delle Rose folder is thus probably the oldest testimony we have of this work, hence I have included a transcription of it as an appendix.

Upon closer examination of the content of the *Discorso*, one is forced to acknowledge from the outset that any attempt to trace Robortello's logical ideas back to a specific philosophical tradition, or to specific authors such as Aristotle, Cicero, Boethius, or Agricola, is destined to fail. No doubt analogies between Robortello and these philosophers do exist, but his position is highly original and eclectic, as befits a thinker of this period. Eclecticism in both content and form, be it in Latin or vernacu-

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[13] There are some original thoughts on rhetoric and dialectic, which for the most part merged in *De artificio dicendi*.

[14] Cf. Gian Giuseppe Liruti, *Notizie delle vite ed opere scritte da' letterati del Friuli* (Venice 1762) 2.421.

[15] Cf. Marco Sgarbi, "Francesco Robortello's Rhetoric. On the Orator and his Arguments," *Rhetorica*, forthcoming.

[16] Nothing is known about Robortello's academy and no substantial traces are left. The meetings in his home, however, are documented in a letter from Giulio Tiranni to Antonio Carafa dated May 15, 1565, and in a letter from Robortello to Antonio Carafa dated May 17, 1565, BAV, Barb. Lat. 5728, 123r–v, 186v. On Robortello and Carafa, cf. Romeo De Maio, *Riforme e miti nella Chiesa del Cinquecento* (Naples 1992) 121–136.

lar, is indeed one of the more striking developments in sixteenth-century Renaissance philosophy.[17]

<div align="center">LOGICAL PROLEGOMENA</div>

Before tackling the *Discorso*, it is worth highlighting certain specific terms that Robortello employs in his treatment. He follows his own rule of speaking in concrete terms about philosophical concepts in order to render them more comprehensible[18] without giving abstract definitions that are nevertheless necessary for us to understand his conception of Topics.

In order to understand Robortello's attempt to revive Aristotle's Topics and reformulate Cicero's perspective, it is necessary to review some of their theoretical assumptions. The τόποι (topical places) in Aristotle belong to both dialectic and rhetoric, and consist primarily of strategies to enable an arguer to connect premises with conclusions for the purpose of establishing an effective proof. But the nature of argumentation in these two "sermocinal" arts differs significantly: the dialectical argument is predicative, in that it shows that a predicate does or does not pertain to a subject, whereas in the rhetorical argument the connections among subject and a possible predicate are mainly relative to the audience, and arise from "social knowledge existing within a community."[19] In essence, this means that topical places for Aristotle are concerned with both material and formal aspects. Whereas for the material element dialectic and rhetoric are similar, in terms of the formal reasoning they differ markedly. Many ancient commentators, from Cicero and Boethius onwards, have fastened upon the matter rather than the form, thereby departing from the Aristotelian conception of τόποι as a strategy for arguing[20]—a conception which Robortello aims to revive, as we shall see. As Michael C. Leef has argued, Cicero clearly distinguishes between his topical places and the other component of Aristotle's "inventional theory," the theory of argumentation: while the latter deals with the form and the making of the argument as that which creates belief about a doubtful issue, the topical places provide only the matter on which they actually operate.[21] Thus Cicero, by focusing only on the matter, seems to omit the very grounds for the Aristotelian conception of τόποι, as testified by his identification of Topics with the process of invention in opposition to Aristotle's theory of argumentation, which comprised what the Renaissance logicians, following Cicero, called invention and judgment.[22] Such

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[17] Cf. Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA 1983) 10–33; Luca Bianchi, "Per una storia dell'aristotelismo volgare nel Rinascimento: problemi e prospettive di ricerca," *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 15 (2009) 367–385.

[18] Cf. Robortello, *De artificio dicendi* (n. 9 above) part 2, 35v–36r. In the chapter "Quomodo sermo philosophicus ad popularem, & oratorium redigi possit," included in *De artificio dicendi*, Robortello writes quite critically that philosophical discourses are usually vague and not well known and comprehensible to the major part of the people. In fact, popular discourses always refer to concrete and singular things because the populace understands only what it sees with its eyes and this is the reason why, as shall be clarified below, it is of some help to use schemes and diagrams to explain abstruse philosophical matters.

[19] Michael C. Leef, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention in Latin Rhetorical Theory from Cicero to Boethius," *Rhetorica* 1 (1983) 25.

[20] Ibid. 26.

[21] Ibid. 27.

[22] On the differences between Aristotle and Cicero's perspective, cf. Donovan J. Ochs, "Cicero's *Topica*. A Process View of Invention," *Explorations in Rhetorics*, ed. R. E. McKerrow (Glenview 1983) 107–118.

identification, however, led also to a conflation between rhetoric and dialectic that was to inspire, as we have seen, generations of Renaissance humanists.

As for Cicero, Boethius, and Agricola, the topical locution or place was central to Robortello's conception of Topics. Unlike his predecessors, though, Robortello maintained that topical places are deduced from circumstances. Circumstances are ways of considering and finding that are "in the thing itself" which is under examination and investigation. The topical place uncovers in a subject all possible ways of affirming or denying concerning that subject: it is, in other words, the seat of the argument. Unlike other philosophers such as Cicero and Agricola, all topical places are *of* the subject, or better *in* the subject, being internal.[23] There are no external topical places, and even those considered by Agricola are for Robortello traceable back to the essential topical places of the thing: the topical places constitute a universal structure of the sorts of particular statements that may be made about each particular thing. Places, in other words, are "pulled out" from the subject.[24] This is of the utmost importance for Robortello in identifying the peculiar characteristic of the topical places, which draw their arguments from the intrinsic qualities of the things themselves, while the places of the various specific disciplines, called "proper" (for example the rhetorical disciplines), draw their arguments from the qualities attributed to things externally. As Robortello points out, the Topics usually only account for and reveal how general places, not proper places, are employed in problems and questions.[25]

Given these preliminary concepts, Robortello in the *Discorso* states that no one before him had identified the method of discovery and the number of topical places by following Aristotle's thought and procedure. In the *Topics*, Aristotle aims to find a line of inquiry in virtue of which "about any subject presented to us, we shall be able to reason from opinions that are generally accepted."[26] He is particularly concerned with finding a method for proceeding from the problem, or the subject, to the reasoning that has to provide a solution. The original task of the *Topics* was to find the topical places from which to draw the various ways of forming a reasoning. This "art" of finding, or invention, must be considered of the utmost importance and utility for three reasons: the first is that "the possession of a method will enable us more easily to argue about the proposed subject;" the second is that once one is familiar with such an art, one can test the opinions held by most people and respond to them "on the grounds not of other people's convictions, but of one's own;" the third is that this method concerns the "ability to reflect on both sides of a subject," and "will allow us to detect more easily the truth and error about the several points that arise." Aristotle adds that this method has a further use in relation to the general and first principles used in the several sciences, because "it is impossible to discuss them at all from the principles

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[23] Robortello, *De artificio dicendi* (n. 9 above) part 1, 12v. Cicero's list of topical places came from the subject of the argument: some places were inherent in the subject, some were only related to it, while others were completely extrinsic. Cf. Leef, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention in Latin Rhetorical Theory from Cicero to Boethius," (n. 19 above) 43–44.

[24] Cf. appendix 3r.

[25] Robortello, *De artificio dicendi* (n. 9 above) part 1, 12v.

[26] Aristotle, *Topics*, I.1 100 a 18–20. Unless noted otherwise, all quotations from Aristotle follow *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton 1984).

proper to the particular science in hand, seeing that the principles are primitive in rela-
tion to everything else."[27] It is only through shared, reputable or widely held opinions
that these general principles may be read, a task which belongs properly and appropri-
ately to this process of invention wherein lies the path to the principles of all inquiries
and investigations. Meanwhile, in *Prior Analytics*, Aristotle is more concerned with
the construction of a formal system that is abstracted from any content of knowledge
whatsoever, and supplies the structure of any reasoning. Philosophers in the Middle
Ages focused primarily, but not exclusively, on this formal and systematic part of
logic known in the Renaissance period as the judicial part, or judgment, while the hu-
manists shifted their attention to the method of invention of topical places. As we shall
see, from Robortello's standpoint these two stages are essential in the construction of
the Topics itself, which Renaissance logicians viewed as being concerned only with
invention, thereby misconceiving Aristotle's original intention.

An example is Rudolph Agricola, who, according to Robortello, did not under-
stand Aristotle at all.[28] In Robortello's estimation, Agricola thought that Aristotle had
discovered the various topical places accidentally and rhapsodically and made them
comply to his four problems. The four problems mentioned by Robortello are (1)
whether something exists (*an sit*); (2) what it is (*quid sit*); (3) whether it has this or
that property (*quale sit*); and (4) why it is so (*propter quid*). Aristotle thematizes these
four problems not in the *Topics*, as might be expected, but also in *Posterior Analytics*
II.2 89b 36–90a 34. From Agricola onwards, however, the discussion was of central
importance in assessing the question of the dialectical dispute, especially in opposition
to Cicero's perspective. Agricola discusses the four problems in the eighth chapter of
the second book of his *De inventione dialecticae*. The problem, or question, is, for
Agricola, a proposition formulated as an interrogative. Problems are not all similar,
but they can be grouped according to certain general characteristics. According to
Cicero, followed on this point by Quintilian and Hermogenes, the problems are only
three, namely (1) whether something is; (2) what it is; (3) what kind it is. But Aristotle
added a fourth, correctly in Agricola's view, namely (4) why it is.[29] Agricola further-
more viewed Aristotle's problems not so much as questions, but as ways or modes of
questioning; indeed, real questions are in fact not questions at all, but answers to these
questions when an argument presented in the question is open to discussion, in other
words when it is questioned.[30] Agricola maintained that because of this confusion be-
tween "real" questions and modes of questioning, Aristotle was not able to discover all
the possible topical places that must be included in the Topics. Aristotle's doctrine of
four problems was widely debated in the sixteenth century by Philipp Melanchthon
and Johann Caesarius, and was famously attacked by Petrus Ramus.[31] For Robortello,

[27] Aristotle, *Topics*, I.1 101 a 25–b4.
[28] Cf. appendix 1r.
[29] Cf. Rudolph Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* (Köln 1539) 221–224.
[30] Cf. Ibid. 226–227: "Quatuor illa quae ab Aristotele numerantur, non esse quaestiones, sed modos
quosdam quaerendi, & prolectantia (ut ita dicam) quaestionem … Non igitur quaestiones sunt primae inter-
rogationes illae, quando nequit de eis vel in hanc in aliam partem dici; sed responsum adversarii, interroga-
tioni datum, cum in dubium vocatur, sit quaestio."
[31] Cf. Philipp Melanchthon, *Erotemata dialectices*, in *Corpus reformatorum, Philippi Melanchthonis
opera, quae supersunt omnia* (New York 1963) 13.574; Johann Caesarius, *Dialectica* (Paris 1533) 157–158;

however, the method for elaborating the four problems and submitting the topical places to them is quite simple, and basically has nothing to do with the invention of the places, as Agricola maintained. According to Robortello, a correct reading of Aristotle would have allowed Agricola to see that Aristotle's questions are concerned with demonstration and how to proceed by reasoning from the first necessary principles. By taking this stance, Robortello is clearly dismissing Agricola's position and those of the other Renaissance authors involved in the interpretation of this passage as foundational for "sermocinal" arts.

DEDUCTION AND INVENTION

A more difficult and interesting point for Robortello is what we call nowadays the "deduction" of these places, in particular their number and order. It is a pivotal idea in the history of philosophy which will occupy some of the greatest minds of Western thought up until the nineteenth century and beyond, and one that places Robortello alongside figures such as Gottfried W. Leibniz and Immanuel Kant, who tried to reveal the primitive structures of thought of which every reasoning consists, starting from natural logic, that is from of the very nature of human understanding and its inborn functions and operations. In jurisprudence, when dealing with rights and claims, it is possible to distinguish the question of right, the so-called *quid juris*, from the question of fact, or the *quid facti*, and both must be proved. Proof of the former kind, which has to state the right or legal claim of something, in this case of places, is deduction. Cicero, Boethius, and Agricola were more concerned with the *quid facti*, that is in collecting the largest possible number of places without considering their generation and systematization.[32] This becomes clear, Robortello says in *De artificio dicendi*, if we look at Agricola's treatment of this topic in the last two chapters of the first book of his *De inventione dialecticae*.[33] In chapter 28, Agricola tries to discover the "communis ratio locorum," that is the common ground of all places. But the title of the chapter is deceptive, because he does not in fact deal with the common ground of all places at all, rather with the reason why he adds some places and removes others from Cicero and Boethius's lists.[34] It is only at the end of the chapter that we find a clue as

Petrus Ramus, *Scholae in liberarles artes* (Basel 1569) 445–446. On this topic, cf. Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Chicago 1983) 238–240.

[32] Even recent scholarly research has shown the absence of deduction in Cicero and Boethius. Donovan J. Ochs, for instance, made it explicit that although Cicero was making a coherent and functional topical system that could be taught, there is no clue as to the source of the procedure, which he simply traces back to Cicero's eclecticism; cf. Ochs, "Cicero and Philosophic Invention" (n. 22 above) 221–222. Leef agrees, stating that there is no apparent attempt to systematize the items in Cicero's inventory of topical places into a coherent structure, and that Cicero himself does not explain the rationale of his approach to topical places. Cf. Leef, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention in Latin Rhetorical Theory from Cicero to Boethius" (n. 19 above) 27.

[33] Cf. Robortello, *De artificio dicendi* (n. 9 above) part 1, 14v: "quanto vero artificio id sit a summo viro factum, alio loco nos certum numerum ipsorum locorum demonstrantes explicabimus; quod a nullo adhuc video perspectum; nam unus è recentioribus Agricola Rodolphus cum rationem, & ordinem locorum in Aristotelis Topicis non cognosceret."

[34] On the differences among Agricola, Cicero, Themistius and Boethius's list of places cf. Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument. Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden 1993) 147.

to the reason behind his choice of places: he handles the places that are strictly con-joined with the thing first, and then those that are far from the substance in which they originate.[35] Thus, for instance, repugnant places come last because they are not related in any way to the substance they are in contrast with. Agricola is not elaborating any real deduction from this argument: he is simply arranging or ordering the topical places. His failure to recognize the need for deduction is a serious omission for Ro-bortello. It is not enough to simply list the topical places in order to find them: an ex-planation of the process of their generation is mandatory, and Agricola's failure to supply one represents a severe limitation in his conception of the Topics, as well as in that of the humanists in general, albeit their elaborations clearly contained the premi-ses for subsequent developments.

No one showed any interest in the *quid juris*, that is in finding the deduction, be-cause in Robortello's view no one read Aristotle's logic with sufficient care. Philoso-phers have the bad habit of reading his texts in haste in order to acquire knowledge quickly, which nevertheless proves useless in the end.[36] Hasty reading gives rise to "every ruin of the beautiful sciences and arts written by the Ancients." For Robortello, therefore, a direct and close reading of the Aristotelian texts is required, as opposed to simply trying to understand the content and rehashing it for personal purposes. Ro-bortello here is not advocating a philological study of the Aristotelian writings, but rather a complete and exhaustive knowledge of Aristotle's work, a knowledge that ap-pears to be lacking among modern logicians – by which he signified not the *logica modernorum*, but the humanistic logic of thinkers such as Agricola. More specifically, Robortello asserts that "in our times the books of the *Prior Analytics* are not read by our celebrated doctors only up to the end of the third figure [of syllogism], which is only the third part of the first book, and no farther does one proceed, as if the rest was useless and superfluous."[37] Such a strategy is quite harmful in Robortello's view, and in fact the logicians do not realize that in the *Prior Analytics*, especially in those parts they disregard, Aristotle deals with principles common also to other disciplines, such as rhetoric, poetry, sophistic, dialectic and demonstration. Furthermore, Robortello adds that Aristotle frequently omits repetition in his rhetorical, poetical or logical dis-cussions of the common principles he has already considered as universal in the *Prior Analytics*, and ignorance of these principles by modern logicians is therefore twofold: not only do they not employ them, they do not even know that this kind of principle had already been discovered by him, and therefore charge him with negligence for no reason at all.[38]

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[35] Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* (n. 29 above) 172: "Utque paucis rationem ordinis mei reddam, ita iudicavi primum quenque locorum ponendum, ut esset arctissime quisque cum re coniunctus; & proinde ut longius defluxit à substantia rei, posteriorem posui."

[36] Cf. Robortello, *De artificio dicendi* (n. 9 above) part 1, 14v. Robortello states that neither Aristotle himself elaborated such deduction: "ipsum Aristotelem, quod perturbate locos disposuerit; nec certum nu-merum demonstrarit, reprehendere ausus est; cum ipse sit maxime reprehendendus, qui id non viderit ab Aristotele diligenter factum."

[37] Cf. appendix 1r.

[38] The idea that Aristotle was lacking a special treatment of Topics was quite popular. For instance, in his *Instrumento della filosofia* (1551) Alessandro Piccolomini writes that dealing with the Topics is "in truth a very difficult thing, despite there having been great men, as Rudolph Agricola was, who have shown

It is clear therefore that the study of the deduction of topical places is fundamental not only for logic, but for all the "sermocinal" arts, and its knowledge is essential for arguing correctly and making convincing discourses. Deduction thus becomes the key for every good form of reasoning in general, be it rhetorical, oratorical, poetical or merely logical. It is from this conception that Robortello's idea of a Topics as a general system of invention of reasoning valid for both dialectic and rhetoric—in true humanistic spirit—derives.

Unlike Cicero, and perhaps more in the mold of Boethius, invention is no longer the discovery of a persuasive, concrete argument that convinces on the basis of dubious arguments or questions: it is in fact the discovery of an argument that can be guaranteed by some place and can be used with certainty in a syllogism. The error of logicians thus consists in not having a full grasp of the universal principles of "sermocinal" arts, and reducing topical places to dialectical or rhetorical places, that is reducing general places to proper places.

Robortello supports the idea of an unrhetorical conception of topical invention, which was the standard medieval interpretation "among authors who deal with invention generally, that is as a faculty or discipline within both rhetoric and dialectic."[39] Robortello therefore collapses the Ciceronian and Boethian distinction of different systems of invention corresponding to different disciplines of knowing, such as dialectic and rhetoric, elaborating one single topical system for all disciplines. In addition, contrary to many rhetoricians, Robortello does not extend the domain of the instruments and methods of rhetoric to inquiries in all branches of knowledge as a general system of invention, but aims to find a universal tool based on the forms of reasoning, before any rhetoric can be established. This means that the basis of the Topics must not be founded on rhetoric, but on something prior to it that concerns the natural workings of the mind.

According to Robortello, therefore, dialectic must not be confused with the Topics, which is the real inventive process. Dialectic is rather defined in opposition to demonstration, in the sense that the former deals with probable arguments while the latter deals with necessary ones; this constitutes a difference in method, because, as Robortello states, demonstration proceeds by following a unique, continuous, and solid reasoning, whereas dialectic proceeds according to questions and answers.[40] This is a particular conception of dialectic that is very close to the disputative and dialogic process described by Aristotle in the eighth book of the *Topics*. It is undoubtedly different from dialectic as the art of speaking or arguing on probable matters, or as an instrument for distinguishing truth from falsehood, as the majority of humanists such as Valla or Agricola contended. Ever the good Aristotelian, Robortello does not follow Agricola's shift in the conception of dialectic from being a logic of disputation to be-

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Aristotle's lacking on this issue." Cf. Alessandro Piccolomini, *L'instrumento della filosofia* (Rome 1551) 228–229.

[39] Marc Cogan, "Rodolphus Agricola and the Semantic Revolutions of the History of Invention," *Rhetorica. A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 2 (1984) 180.

[40] Cf. Robortello, *De artificio dicendi* (n. 9 above) part 1, 9v.

ing a logic of inquiry: dialectic remains a logic of disputation and the more general logic of inquiry and invention becomes, properly speaking, the Topics.

The error of modern logicians is mainly methodological, and is traceable back to Cicero and Boethius, who in Robortello's view followed the opposite order to that of Aristotle.[41] Robortello is particularly critical of this way of proceeding, namely following the same order in the argumentation (or judgment) and in the invention. Judgment and argumentation must proceed from the first, universal and necessary principles, while invention must start its inquiry from what is easier to know for the human mind, which is usually what comes from the senses, or what we already know, even if only partially. It is an important position that Robortello defends here, since he is establishing the distinction between the method (of finding) and the order (of exposition), or, to be more precise, between analysis and synthesis, between the process from what is more knowable by human beings to what is more knowable by nature, and the process from what is more knowable in itself and by nature to what is more knowable by us. It is a classic theme in the logic of the second half of the sixteenth century which with Robortello acquires a highly original formulation.[42]

Why is the approach of Cicero and Boethius wrong? And more importantly, which is this way? According to Robortello, Cicero starts from the definition of the thing and moves away from it, following extrinsic or accidental determinations in a concentric order, from inner to outer, as may be seen in scheme 1 (as also Agricola suggested in his *De inventione dialectica*, as we have seen). Aristotle, however, does not proceed in the same manner.

AN ATTEMPT AT AN ARISTOTELIAN TOPICS

"What no one has recognized before me," Robortello claims, "nor declared to the best of my knowledge, is that the topical places are determined by the invention of the 'medium.'"[43] Although this view is held also by Agricola, in Robortello the medium "is nothing other than the proposition from which the argument is drawn." It is "a common form, that is to say a maxim."[44] The medium itself would be a topical place that generates other topical places within the argumentation. Robortello seems to offer a very personal interpretation of Boethius's Topics, from whom he implicitly draws some ideas. Boethius's Topics tries to combine eclectically the topical doctrines of Aristotle and Cicero, supporting the view that invention is a process of finding a medium to connect two extremes, and that the topical places serve as instruments for

[41] In Robortello, *De artificio dicendi* (n. 9 above) part 1, 13v, he states, "Iureconsultum, si docet, eadem prorsus habere problemata quae Aristoteles Dialectico subiicit in Topicis, & locos adhibere ad probandum, non quidem eo ordine quo Cic. ipsos disposti, sed quo Aristoteles ipse."

[42] On the problem of method in the late sixteenth century, cf. John H. Randall, "The Development of Scientific Method in the School of Padua," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (1940) 177–206; Neal W. Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York and London 1960); Eugenio Garin, "Gli umanisti e la scienza," *Rivista di filosofia* 52 (1961) 259–278; Neal W. Gilbert, "Galileo and the School of Padua," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1–2 (1963) 223–231; Angelo Crescini, *Le origini del metodo analitico. Il Cinquecento* (Trieste 1965).

[43] Appendix 2r.

[44] Appendix 2v.

achieving this.[45] According to Boethius, the topical place can be understood as (1) a maxim, or topical maxim, which is a proposition that can be used as a premise in a proof or in a syllogism; or (2) a topical difference, which is the topic itself. Agricola rejected Boethius's conception because many topical maxims were not inventive at all, but judgmental, some were too restricted to logical necessity, thus preventing the use of probable arguments, and some were limited by logical necessity in the possible places to only a few particular uses.[46] Against Agricola, Robortello adopts Boethius's twofold meaning of the topical place as a maxim and middle term in his treatment of the medium.

The medium as maxim determines the middle term, which is properly speaking the topical place. Furthermore, the topical place can be either a place common to all "sermocinal" arts encompassing more specific places, also called media, or a proper place, that is peculiar to certain specific sciences. More specifically, according to Robortello, proper places differ from common places only in their matter, which is peculiar to each "sermocinal" art. Since Robortello is interested in what no one else before him has done, that is identifying in an Aristotelian manner all common principles and places for all "sermocinal" arts, he focuses on the "deduction" of these common places and neglects the study of the proper places. Robortello clearly pays attention to the form of the inference rather than to the matter, and this allows him to conceive a Topics which is prior to any distinction between rhetoric and dialectic.

In order to establish such a Topics, Robortello must first of all keep the question needing to be solved in sharp focus and reduce it to two simple terms, the subject and the predicate. Indeed, any matter under investigation can be reduced to a question in which one asks whether a given predicate inheres to its subject. For instance, if we question "whether the philosopher is blessed," "philosopher" is the subject and "blessed" is the predicate. Following Aristotle, unlike Cicero and Boethius, Robortello identifies what he calls four "circumstances," or four ways through which it is possible to examine a term of the question. In general, these four circumstances are forms of argumentation that Cicero included in the places, while Agricola rejected them just because they were forms of reasoning, attributing them rather "to judgment, rather than invention."[47] Robortello considers these circumstances essential to the role the place plays within reasoning and syllogism as a medium. In fact, the procedure of comparing subject and predicate involves the determination of their points of agreement or disagreement by means of a third element, the medium, which is the argument that makes possible the comparison between the two extremes, the subject and the predicate, like in the syllogism.

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[45] Cf. Leef, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention in Latin Rhetorical Theory from Cicero to Boethius" (n. 19 above) 38.

[46] Cogan, "Rodolphus Agricola and the Semantic Revolutions of the History of Invention" (n. 39 above) 185.

[47] Cf. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* (n. 29 above) 108–109: "non loci sunt, sed formae argumentandi: cum non rerum invendiendarum ratione, sed certa colligendae argumentationis lege constent … Et ad iudicandum potius quam inveniendum pertinebunt." On Cicero, cf. Mack, *Renaissance Argument* (n. 34 above) 147, while on Agricola cf. Mack, *Renaissance Argument* (n. 34 above) 148.

It is particularly interesting to note Robortello's choice to proceed from the forms of reasoning to the individuation of topical places. Robortello is maintaining, albeit implicitly, the idea of the priority of the judicial part of logic, that is of judgment, in other words of the forms of argumentation and the ways of reasoning, over invention. Robortello here is in direct opposition to Agricola's well-known position, according to which invention comes first. This allows Robortello to limit drastically the number of topical places: once having identified the structures of argumentation, it is indeed not possible to find places other than those that can be applied to these forms. This is the only way to guarantee a possible deduction, otherwise every research of topical places could not be other than casual, that is a set of headings collected together according to extrinsic principles with only an alleged completeness. The problem is nonetheless to understand why there are only four forms of reasoning, neither more nor less. The answer is not easy to find, but in general historians of Aristotelian logic agree that if every reasoning is based on the comparison between a subject and a predicate by means of a medium, there are only four combinations of terms, that is four circumstances, in which it is possible to find their agreement or disagreement. Thus in a logic with the Aristotelian structure "S is P": 1) S is in total agreement with P and therefore the two terms are convertible; or 2) P derives from or is contained in S, and therefore the former follows the latter in determining the relation of consequence of the predicate from the subject; or 3) P defines and is cause of S, determining the relation of antecedence; or 4) S is in total disagreement with P and therefore the two terms are repugnant.

The first circumstance is to consider the term as replaceable by other terms called convertibles. In the example mentioned above, "philosopher" can be substituted by "knower of causes," "knower of celestial and human things," etc. The second circumstance is to consider the term in relation to the terms that follow, which are called consequents. From the term "philosopher" follows, for instance, "to not fear death," "to not be ambitious," etc. The third circumstance is to determine the term in relation to the terms that precede it, which are called precedents. For instance, in the case of a "philosopher," "to be concerned with a difficult question," "to study as a job," "escape pleasure," etc. The fourth way is to consider terms that are contrary with the term, which are called repugnants. For instance, "to be ignorant of the cause of things," "fear death," "seeking pleasure" are contrary to being a "philosopher."

These are the four main circumstances, however, each of them presenting various modalities of expression. For instance, convertible terms can be derived from definition, or from the enumeration of the parts, or from the etymology. On the contrary, consequents, precedents, and repugnants can be either essential or accidental. Essential consequents can be determined by the species, the parts or the effect. Accidental consequents can be true, according to opinion, or according to the name. Essential precedents are the kind, the whole, or the cause. Accidental precedents can be either true or according to opinion. Essential repugnants are in some relations with the subject, or are mutually contrary, contradictory, or privative. Accidental repugnants are true, according to opinion, or according to the name. In Robortello's view, these and only these are the things that can be said of a term, and they are properly speaking the topical places. Such a structure for the deduction of the topical places reflects the possible

connections between the subject and the predicate in the general judgment "S is P." In this way, the general scheme of the places would offer the totality of the ways of discussing any possible subject which philosophers such as Leibniz with his alphabet of human thoughts and Kant with his table of categories aspired to.

There is a profound difference between Cicero and Boethius's proposal and that of Robortello, a difference which becomes clear in the comparison between scheme 1 and scheme 2. This is no minor point: schemes for Robortello are essential to understanding his theory. What is at stake here is the problem of the method of finding places. In the former case attributed to Cicero and Boethius it is not possible to argue for any deduction, and it is not possible to find the connection between the various places: we understand only the order of the places from inner to outer, not how they are in relation to the subject. With Robortello's diagram, on the other hand, at any given moment any person (1) can understand the specific articulations of a given argument; (2) can see the network of connections; (3) can find the specific derivation or deduction of each place.[48] The procedure by which the scheme is constructed reflects the deduction itself and is typical of Robortello's teachings on rhetoric.[49] Robortello's use of diagrams and trees as a powerful instrument of knowledge is a genuine innovation in the Renaissance, in printed works especially. Lina Bolzoni has pointed out that, as well as fostering a new generation of intellectuals such as Giason Denores, Bernardino Partenio, Agostino Valier, Ludovico Castelvetro, and Orazio Toscanella, especially in the Venetian sphere, Robortello was one of the very first scholars to employ these advanced techniques for making even difficult knowledge more accessible to a wider audience.[50]

Upon examination, and once having made all possible combinations, the diagram of topical places yields no more than eighteen places, according to Robortello. But in order to solve the opening question, that is "whether the philosopher is blessed," it is necessary to repeat the procedure also on the second term, in this case "blessed." This does not mean that the places are multiplied, however: the common places are always 18, but the aspects to be considered to solve the question are, in Robortello's words, of "admirable abundance." Adding to every reasoning not only these places, but also historical examples and philosophical sayings, that is maxims understood as places – what we have called topical maxims—the complexity of the argumentation increases. The number of topical places, however, remains unvaried: it is 18, no more, no less.

The last part of the *Discorso* focuses on the defense of the number of the places, and in particular on the fact that, for Aristotle, Cicero's place "ab adiunctis" is not a topical place at all. The so-called topical places known as "adjuncts" are in Robortello's view comparison relations such as "minor," "major," "equal," "similar," etc.

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[48] Cf. Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory. Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press* (Toronto 2001) 25.

[49] On a tree for a course on rhetoric given in Venice in 1549, Robortello writes that anyone can consult this diagram "and thus can know the origin of every question and the heading to which one must refer. In this way, every time a controversy arises in interpretation, all that can be disputed about it will be readily identifiable in its place." Cf. BMCVe, Donà dalle Rose 447, folder 29. On Robortello's use of schemes cf. Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory* (n. 48 above) 24–30.

[50] Cf. Marco Sgarbi, "Francesco Robortello on Popularising Knowledge," forthcoming.

Such topical places are not for Robortello autonomous places, but are reducible to the consequents, because from every single thing follows another thing which can be minor, equal, or major. Robortello, however, supports the idea of adding the "adjuncts" as a fifth circumstance besides convertibles, consequents and precedents, even if these "adjuncts" should not be counted in the list of the places because they are reducible to the consequents. Robortello points out that this fifth circumstance containing three places was already elaborated by Cicero in his *De inventione*, but was withdrawn in the *Topica*, where the circumstance became only one place called "ab adiunctis," a reduction which could not be correct. The addition of this fifth circumstance is simply a proposal that Robortello launches at the end of his *Discorso* and leaves to the judgment of the most distinguished logicians.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

Due to the impromptu nature of the *Discorso* as an academic lecture probably delivered in his own home, Robortello's proposal did not circulate widely among late sixteenth-century logicians. Moreover, in the second half of the century a conception of method as an inference from one content to another, and therefore of syllogistic reasoning in its formal aspect rather than invention, came to prevail. Even so, Orazio Toscanella makes explicit reference to Robortello's *Discorso* in his *Applicamento dei precetti della inventione, dispositione et elocutione*, a compilation of tables and schemes on topics and rhetoric. Toscanella collects and presents in the form of diagrams the teachings of the most important rhetoricians and logicians of his time, including Rudolph Agricola, Giulio Camillo Delminio, and Francesco Robortello. Lina Bolzoni's detailed investigation has shown that in his printed works Toscanella owed much to Robortello's project to schematize knowledge;[51] in this specific case, however, he seems also to be following the content of the *Discorso*, suggesting either a manuscript circulation of the text or that Toscanella attended Robortello's lectures, which seems quite plausible given his interest in classical antiquity and philosophy. Toscanella not only employs Robortello's four circumstances and emphasizes the importance of common places over proper places, but he also uses the same example of the war against the Turks, and, like Robortello, shows how to find all the places and how to construct convincing arguments.[52] Toscanella, however, does not follow Robortello in deducing topical places, but refers explicitly to his favorite author, Rudolph Agricola, of whose *De inventione dialecticae* he provided the first Italian translation in 1567, the year in which the *Discorso* was published.
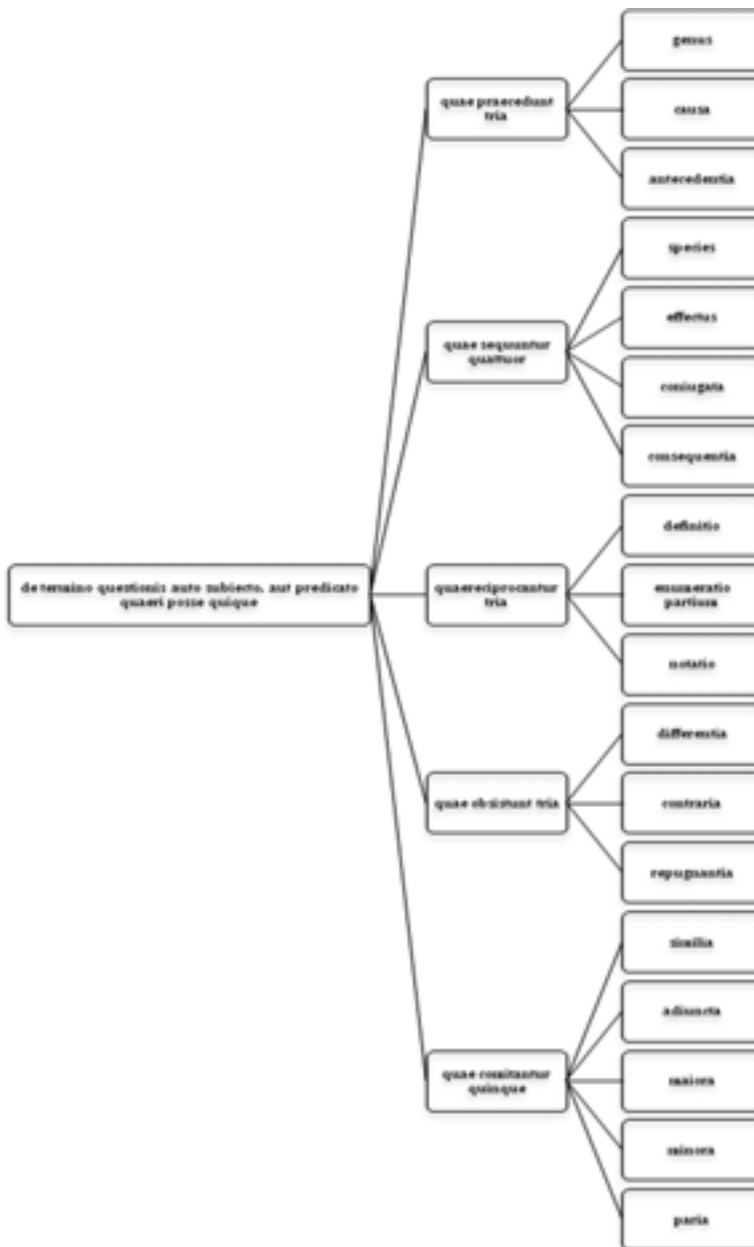
Perhaps the most striking example of Robortello's impact, however, is to be found in Antonio Riccoboni's *Ars rhetorica*, published for the first time in Venice by Meietti in 1579, and running to more than twenty editions in the following century, thus becoming one of the standard textbooks for rhetoric not only in Italy, but also in Germany and France. Riccoboni explicitly states that his conception of Topics and topical

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[51] Cf. Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory* (n. 48 above) 23–82.
[52] Cf. Orazio Toscanella, *Applicamento dei precetti della inventione, dispositione et elocutione che propriamente serve allo scrittore di epistole latine et volgari, ritratto in tavole* (Venice 1575) 28–29. Robortello is explicitly mentioned at pp. 46–49, in which Toscanella deals with humble, mediocre, and vehement styles.

places comes "from the manuscript notes of the most learned and eloquent Robortello."[53] Like Robortello, Riccoboni follows Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* in deducing places from the five types of subject-predicate relation. Whereas Robortello in actuality acknowledged only four circumstances rather than five, Riccoboni incorporated his additional "fifth circumstance" into his topical structure. His scheme of the circumstances is in fact almost identical to Robortello's:

[53] Antonio Riccoboni, *Aristotelis rhetoricae libri tres. Antonio Riccobono latine conversi. Eiusdem rhetoricae paraphrasis* (Hanau 1588) 263: "Quod sensisse ante nos Franciscum Robortellum virum doctissimum, & disertissimum vidimus in quibusdam eius manuscriptis annotationibus." Cf. Lawrence D. Green, "Renaissance Views of Aristotelian Topoi," *Papers on Rhetoric*, ed. Lucia Calboli Montefusco (Rome 2010) 133–135.

determino quaestionis auto subiecto, aut predicato quaeri posse quisque

- quae praecedunt tria
  - genus
  - causa
  - antecedentia
- quae sequuntur quattuor
  - species
  - effectus
  - coniugata
  - consequentia
- quae reciprocantur tria
  - definitio
  - enumeratio partium
  - notatio
- quae obsistunt tria
  - differentia
  - contraria
  - repugnantia
- quae comitantur quinque
  - similia
  - adiuncta
  - maiora
  - minora
  - paria

Riccoboni's use of Robortello's manuscript testifies not only to the reputation the intellectual from Udine enjoyed as a rhetorician, but also to the wide circulation of and interest in his vernacular writings, which made him a key point of reference for at least one generation of intellectuals.

Given the fundamental role in determining the completeness of the Topics played by the deduction of topical places, or where the places come from and how it is possible to derive them in a comprehensive manner, the lack of interest in it among Robor-

tello's contemporaries, with the exceptions of Toscanella and Riccoboni, is striking. This is most certainly a concern linked to Robortello's encyclopedic conception of knowledge and the unity of all the "sermocinal" arts, which, for instance, was not felt at the end of the fifteenth century. Another striking element is the strict relationship between judgment and invention, a relationship which during the Renaissance was far from settled. From the reception of Agricola's Topics among sixteenth-century Italian Aristotelians contemporary to Robortello, like Orazio Toscanella, one can see that his *De inventione dialectica* was conceived primarily as a theory of invention. In point of fact, after translating it into Italian, Toscanella then went on to translate George of Trebizond in order to supply the part on judgment which in his opinion was lacking in Agricola's logic.[54] Robortello's combination of judgment and invention, as it is presented, is quite original. Most manuals have both invention and judgment, but not many argue for the intimate connection between them, and the impossibility of conceiving one without the other. Textbooks such as those of Petrus Ramus claim that it is not possible to carry out invention if not by means of judgment, and conversely that it is not possible to arrange the places if they are not previously found.[55] For Ramus and his Renaissance followers, however, interest in invention and the Topics was a reaction to the formality of the Scholastic syllogistic that favored the content of knowledge. Invention, in other words, was considered a methodology for discovering the topical places with which it was possible to fill the empty terms of the formal structure of judgment. For Robortello, on the other hand, invention rests upon the idea of a fixed, one would say inborn or natural structure of reasoning of the mind which determines the various forms of judgment according to which it is possible to discover all the places. In other words, Robortello grounds his Topics in the natural logic of the workings of the mind following the system of Aristotelian logic, rather than collecting an aggregate of topical places derived from grammatical or rhetorical analysis.

It is difficult to make an assessment of Robortello's conception of Topics. His perspective is undoubtedly eclectic and original: following his interpretation, Topics as an inventive process is not simply a part of the dialectic, rather it is an interdisciplinary instrument for various "sermocinal" arts, a tool based on the natural operations of the mind that aims to find, by means of the topical places, all the possible arguments with which to form argumentations in any discipline whatsoever. In this sense, his conception is pivotal, and provides a basis for the Renaissance encyclopedia of knowledge, thus shedding light on the general reassessment of the system of disciplines in the second half of the sixteenth century, as well as on the development of a universal Topics in the philosophy of the Baroque era.[56]

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[54] Cf. *Dialettica di Giorgio Trapezontio con le interpretationi del Neomago et del Latomo* (Venice 1567) dedicatory letter to Ettore Podocatro, 1r: "I had hardly finished translating … that highly learned and beautiful and useful work, the *Invention Dialettica* by Rudolph Agricola, which has already been published; … I translated also the *Dialettica* by Trebizond, so that scholars could have in one corpus both invention and judgment, since the one needs the other; as the body needs the soul."

[55] Cf. Petrus Ramus, *Dialectique* (Geneve 1964) 63.

[56] Cf. Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Topica universalis: Eine Modellgeschichte humanistischer und barocker Wissenschaft* (Hamburg 1983).

<div align="center">APPENDIX</div>

[1r] Discorso dell'origine, numero, ordine et methodo delli luoghi topici*

Nessuno persino al giorno d'hoggi ha veduto qual ordine ovvero methodo serbi Arist^e in dare li luoghi topici, et che numero di essi luoghi secondo lui si possa assegnare, et la ragione di esso. Rodolpho Agricola pensando che Arist^e habbi scritto a caso lo riprende come quello che dovea dichiarare le predette cose avanti che accomodasse li luoghi topici alli suoi problemmi. Il methodo di fare li quattro problemi et sottomettere a ciascuno li luoghi è facile, et ogn'uno l'intende, ma io parlo del numero delli detti luoghi, et dell'ordine loro qual debbe essere, et a che riguardo Arist^e quando li trovò et ordinò.

Noi dunque adesso vogliamo mostrare tal cosa, la quale invero non d'altro luogo habbiamo osservato che dal proprio Arist^e ma hoggidi per qual si voglia causa non si leggono interamente li libri suoi anzi leggermente ogn'uno trapassa per avvicinare presto al guadagno. Di qui nasce ogni ruina delle belle scienze et arti scritte da gli antichi, et per stare nelli termini della cosa proposta, a nostri tempi li libri della Priore chiamati non si leggono dalli nostri celebrati dottori si non insino alla terza figura che apena è la terza parte del libro primo, piu oltre non si procede come se il restante fusse inutile, et superfluo, et miseri non s'avveggono che lasciano il meglio, perche Arist^e toccò in quelli libri i principi communi a tutti li arti chi sono circa il parlare come sono Rhetorica, Poetica, Sophistica, Dialettica, Demonstratoria. Questo è un difetto delli dottori di nostri tempi. L'altro è che non mostrano l'uso perfetto di quelle scienze sermocinali, et a loro basta dire, homo est animal, ne considerano piu altri, ma il dottissimo Arist^e havea l'occhio a descrivere certi [1v] communi principi di tutti le arti simili, et ben spesso nelli altri libri tace qualche principio commune perche sa haverlo detto in quel libro della priore come universale a tutti. Questa è la causa che non si vede replicato l'ordine delli luoghi topici, et la ragione del methodo loro nella topica, perche l'have insegnata avanti nel libro della priore, ma perche anzi nessuno si aveduto che di la si possi trarre. Cicerone non lo vidde ma altro ordine seguitò, et che non lo vedesse da molte cose si comprende, tutto questo io lo dicchiaro copiosamente in altri miei discorsi et commenti sopra la topica di esso Cicerone. Boetio nelli libri delle differentie topice insegna l'ordine et ragione del methodo delli luoghi topici ordinati un doppo l'altro come Cicerone li dichiara, ma non si vede gia che Arist^e in argomentare al problema proposto di qual si vogli sorte vada per tal ordine, anzi ben spesso comincia dall'ultimo secondo l'ordine di Cicerone. Pero s'ingannano quelli, li quali pensano doversi serbare quell'ordine istesso in argomentare ad una qualche questione proposta, et ogn'uno che lo proverà conoscerà ch'io dico il vero. L'ordine et ragione del methodo di Cicerone è nell'intima parte della cosa a poco a poco s'allontani da essa, et venghi all'esteriore di essa, et piu anchora allontanandosi vada al contrario, al simile, et maggiore li quali sono cosi fuori di essa cosa che inserte, come se uno dal centro si dipartisse e a poco poco di ritirasse alla nona ovvero decima sphera, et accio meglio s'intendi io lo metterò in figura qui sotto. [2r]

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*The transcript of BMCVe, Donà delle Rose 447, folder 22, fols. 1r–4v is an exact copy of the text. The present edition—strictly diplomatic—preserves original spelling as well as capitalization, italicization, line-ation, and punctuation, even when erroneous, reproducing all the orthographic information provided by the manuscript.

Et cosi di mano in mano sino al numero di 18 luoghi segondo l'ordine dato da Cicerone nella topica.

Ma segondo Arist[e] l'ordine et ragione del methodo delli predetti luoghi, quello che nessuno ha veduto avanti di me, ne dichiarato ch'io sappia, si debbe pigliare dal libro della priore dove Arist[e] parla di abundantia medii. Medio non è altro che la propositione, dalla quale si cava l'argomento, et la proposizione ovvero medio è forza che caschi in un luogho [2v] topico, il quale non è altro che una forma comune, ovvero per dir chiaramente una proposizione massima, sotto la quale si contiene ogni luogo proprio anchora esso detto proposizione ma non massima pero et medio. Questo tanto ha voluto dire per dicchiarare brevemente la differenza del luogho detto proprio et del luogho detto commune da Arist[e] ma noi cerchiamo il methodo delli communi perche li proprii sono differenti solamente di materia et entrano nelli communi.

Ecco dunque l'ordine il numero, et methodo delli topici luoghi communi sicondo Arist[e].

Primariamente bisogna mettersi avanti il problema, ovvero questione di che habbiamo a ragionare argomentando ridutto a simplici termini duoi subietto, et predicato cosi, Utrum bellum sit gerendum cum Thurcis, Bellum è il subietto, cum turcis è il predicato, ovvero cosi, Utrum philosophus sit beatus, philosophus sarà il subietto termine, beatus sarà il predicato termine. Io piglio il subietto et considero intorno a esso quattro cose cioè ἀντιστρέφοντα id.

Convertibilia per dire hora cosi, consequentia, precedentia, repugnantia.

Philosophus havera per convertibili, cognitor causarum naturalium, cognitor omnium artium et disciplinarum, cognitor coelestium et humanarum rerum et simili.

Haverà per conseguenti tutto quello che si puo immaginare che conseguiti a un philosopho come serio contemnere mortem, non esse ambitiosum, non esse obnoxium cupiditatibus.

Haverà anchora li suoi precedenti come saria Laborare in discendo, occupatum esse studio rerum, gravium voluptatis fugere, animi excolendi curam suscipere etc.

Haverà anchora li suoi repugnanti, et questi di m^e sorte, cioè repugnanti alla convertibili, alli conseguenti, alli precedenti, et repugnanti [3r] sarà tutto quello che in contrario delli predetti essempi si puo mettere. Onde nasce una copia infinita di ragionare, et una abondantia mirabile d'argomenti per approvare o rifiutare una questione, et tanto piu se uno hosa interporre essempi historici, detti philosophici, et fatti d'homini rari accomodandoli alle predette proposizioni cavate dal termine subietto.

Quando in tal modo haveremo cavato dal subietto ogni cosa, noi si rivolgeremo al predicato termine del problema, il quale è beatus, et cercaremo li convertibili suoi che molti potranno essere.

Cui nihil desit

         Vacare curis
         Vacare metu et simili

Poi vedremmo li conseguenti suoi,

non temere mortem

           frui quiete
           letum esse et simili

Poi poneremmo li precedenti et li repugnanti sottilmente distinguendoli uno dall'altro, come di già ho mostrato, et cosi formando l'animo in su uno o duoi o piu di essi saremo prontissimi a ogni grave ragionamento interponendo come gli oratori sogliono essempi historici per arrichire il ragionamento detto.

Ma bisogna adesso mostrare come dalle quattro predette circostanze cosi dal subietto come dal predicato nascono tutti li luoghi topici, et il numero loro si scorgerà dover essere di 18 et non piu o, 17 salvus il vero perche questa che mette Cicerone per luogho ab adiunctis non è loco topico, ne è posto da Arist^e. [3v]

[4r] Hora habbiamo in questa divisione dato luogho a tutti li luoghi topici, ma cosi a questi quattro, o cinque che siino, ab adiunctis a maiori, a minori, a pari, a simili si potriano riddure questi quattro a maiori, a minori a pari, a simili sotto li conseguenti perche sempre che una cosa è ne seguita che ella sii o minore, o maggiore, o pari, o simili. Ma la mia opinione saria aggiungere a quelli quattro rami principali un quinto che fusse adiuncta, come ho fatto, et sotto questo metterei questi luoghi a maiori, a minori, a pari.

Cicerone nella topica mette un loco ab adiunctis et da l'essempio. [4v] Io non ho mai potuto vedere che sii altro che a pari, o a simili. Però io lo levarei dal numero delli luoghi. Esso Cicerone nel primo de Inventione nel capo de confirmatione dividendo adiuncta negotio gli da per membri a maiori, a minori, a pari et questo mi piace. Ne so la causa perche mutasse poi questa buona opinione in cattiva come è nella topica a mio giudizio.

Et benche nel methodo di Arist^e si puo assignare luogho nella divisione a questi tre luoghi a maiori, a minori, a pari sotto li conseguenti una di quelle quattro generali circostanze del termine subietto ovvero predicato, come di sopra anchora ho detto, niente di manco io volentieri metterei adiuncta per quinta circostanza generale, et sotto essa segnarei ne luoghi topici a maiori, a minori, a pari, perche invero s'aggiungono di fuori via, et si paragonano con il quesito proposto pero accio la mia opinione apparisci qual sii io ho di sopra nella delineata divisione segnato il tutto. Lascio pero libero il giudicio a tutti, sempre rimettendomi al piu verace del mio.