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CONTINGENCY, THEOLOGY, AND POETRY AT THE COLLÈGE DE NAVARRE IN THE AGE OF GERSON

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pransus non avide, quantum interpellet inani
ventre diem durare, domesticus otior. Haec est
vita solutorum misera ambitione gravique;
his me consolor victurum suavius ac si
quaestor avus pater atque meus patruusque fuisset.

— Horace, *Satires* 1.6.127–131

For my father

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This dissertation treats three authors at the prominent Collège de Navarre at the cusp of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: Jean Gerson, Pierre d'Ailly, and Nicolas de Clamanges. It describes their attempts to constellate terminist philosophy of language, emergent vernacular literary theories, and Christian devotional discourse around a reforming vision of academic theology. It explicates the Navarrists' bold claim that poetry should be the privileged avenue for theological production, given that it faithfully embodies the contingencies and affective contours of human life. By considering the literary and academic-philosophical qualities of the Navarrists' poetic theology, the dissertation highlights the underacknowledged influences of vernacular literature and nascent humanism on the academic theology of the era, challenging preconceived notions about the systematicity, precision, and insularity of late-medieval scholastic thought.

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PREFACE

I Can't Give Everything Away

Parolle me fault.
—Jean Gerson

The prospectus for the dissertation was approved and I entered candidacy the same week in early 2016 that David Bowie released his twenty-fifth studio album, *Blackstar*. A haunting, concise work, the album iteratively ponders the struggle to express and interpret meaning in a corruptible world nevertheless weighted with expectations. The closing track, "I Can't Give Everything Away," rehearsing a harmonica motif from 1977's *Low*—itself composed and recorded while Bowie was trying something new (getting clean) in a new town (Berlin)—, asserts that by not giving everything away, by not disclosing any unitive interpretation of Bowie's career heretofore, the album has actually been more meaningful and truer to the unapologetic messiness of human frailty. Less may be more when it comes to verbal signification (even though the music still keeps on playing). Just two days after its release, Bowie died.

The triple specter of the limits of language, of emotion, and of human life has thusly haunted the dissertation from its beginning.

Consider this scene: a mourner comforts the deceased's family, offering a heartfelt embrace before a tentative statement, "Words fail me." There is a push and pull between the physical intimacy of the embrace and the distancing, almost in self-absolution, of an appeal to words' failure. And yet, to declaim that there are no words for the occasion is often taken as an especially authentic claim, laying bare one's own vulnerability and sense of loss in a way that

further verbal expression could not be adequate to. When language fails it thus throws into sharp relief the admixture of disclosure and obscuring that runs through verbal meaning-making. At the same time, being at a loss for words is endemically associated with feeling, particularly moments of being emotionally overwhelmed or of intensely affected. It seems then, at least anecdotally, that the failure of human language, profound loss, and particularly true feeling frequently cooccur.

Such scenes of language struggling at moments of acute grief, familiar to so many of us both from tropes across media and (more poignantly, perhaps) our own experiences of loss and (attempted) consolation, distill an animating question of this dissertation: how can loss be navigated amid and alongside language failure? The strands forming this knot suggest adjunct questions. How do our affective experiences inflect our language, and vice versa? In what ways does temporality, particularly that of decay and passing away, enable and/or foreclose meaning? To what extent is language failure a feature of human being in the world outside of limit cases of extreme loss or ecstatic bliss? Consequently, from one vantage point, this dissertation provides a sustained meditation on the mantra: "Words fail me."

However, it is not just I who carry out this meditation. Rather, I describe how three late-medieval authors and thinkers themselves grappled with language and with affect in the face of societal upheaval and of personal loss. Nevertheless, by recapitulating their theories, I trust that they will inform our own answers to—or refusals to answer—these questions that still dog us today. From this other vantage point, the dissertation arranges motifs from the long fourteenth century into a new song that retrospects to the past while struggling with disarmingly analogous questions in the present. For my own part, I can't give everything away, and I trust the Navarrists in this study would deem the project stronger for it.

INTRODUCTION

Contingency Plans

In the antepenultimate strophe of his "Opus metricum super Magnificat," a defense of poetry in light of Mary's exemplary hymn recorded in Luke 2, Jean Gerson suggests that the certainty of God's foreknowledge and divine plan does not fundamentally alter the human experience of uncertainty in this life, subject as it is to the whims of Fortune:

> Quidquid contigerit nobis nec praescia mens est
> Praevidisse Deum non dubitare potest.
> Hinc fortuna liquet quod in omni re dominatur
> Nemo scit sibi quid vespera sera vehat.
> Praeterea causas alias si colligis omnes
> Ipsas fortunam saepius invenies[1]
>
> [Our mind is not prescient of what may happen to us, but one cannot doubt that God foresees [what will happen]. Hence, it is obvious that Fortune domineers all affairs. No one knows what the midnight hour will bring to them. Further, even if you weigh all the other causes at work, you will often find them to be Fortune.]

In these three verses, Gerson artfully distills something of a phenomenology of life *in statu viae*. We are uncertain about what will happen. Even in hindsight, we are uncertain about the causal forces that accrue and collude to effect things beyond any individual's intent.[2] Divine

[1] Jean Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 4, l'œuvre poétique*, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962), 126, ln 449–54. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted. In line 453, I read "Praeterea" for Glorieux's "Praetera."

[2] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 126, ln 455–59. "Cur? Quia concausant ubi nemo intenderet actum/ Talem vel tali fine modo fieri/ Junge intellectus ubi major inest, minus illic/ Est de fortuna. Cur? Quia plura videt."

omniscience, while not at all in question, nevertheless is summarily foreclosed to us on this side of death.[3] We may say that, for Gerson, the human condition is one of radical contingency.

0.1 *Materia* of the Argument

The term *contingency*, bandied about with regularity by both medievals and scholars thereof, warrants further clarification. The term itself tends to accumulate senses, outstripping its technical definition in scholastic discourse to encompass more general valences of uncertainty. Indeed, we have seen Gerson do so just now, opening the strophe with the verb *contingo* that both refers to things (in this instance, states of affairs) that could be otherwise and evokes the phenomenological reality of dwelling amid contingent states of affairs. For Gerson, contingency is a way of life.

We can enumerate at least three different meanings, all implied by Gerson's usage here. First, contingency describes that which could be (or could have been) otherwise; in this way it is opposed to necessity.[4] Second, in late-medieval usage, the term may expand to include a sense of contextual imbrication. Such a usage can be seen in the distinction between necessary, logical demonstration and the limited-scope, probabilistic statements characteristic of rhetoric. (This second sense of contingency may thus be seen as more or less synonymous with Aristotle's usage of "particular.") Third, transferred from the second sense, contingency can evoke uncertainty, not as an active, prosecuting doubt, but more as a Skepticist assertion of not being

[3] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 126, ln 460–61. "Angelici porro cives animaeque beatae/ Nil vel raro aliquid fortuitum reputant."

[4] As philosophically inclined readers may note, this definition of contingency (and necessity)—although the common usage in late-medieval universities—does not neatly distinguish the potentially overlapping distinction of possibility and impossibility. For a very concise discussion of such distinctions in the ancient and medieval traditions, see: Simo Knuutila, "Modal Logic," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism 1100–1600*, ed. Norman Kretzmann et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 342–43.

able to know for sure (with all the scruples and anxiety that may entail).[5] Here, contingency signifies what it is like for people to grapple with the earlier senses of contingency.

To be sure, the contextual sutures that constitute any state of affairs in human life, coupled with the inherent finitude of created existence and the fallen human mind, render it impossible to know many things in *certain* detail and precision. To conjure a plausibly fourteenth-century example, Joachyns could intend to retile his roof next week. This plan is contingent in all senses: he could end up not doing it of his own volition, problems could arise in the process that mean it does not happen as intended, and at all points he may not be sure of the course of action (will the weather cooperate in the future, whether his roofing technique suffices in the moment, or if a tile may be loose and liable to fall and kill someone after the fact). In all regards, Joachyns' project and his experience of it are contingent.

This example gets at a crucial element of contingency for someone like Gerson: it overflows. The first sense of contingency refers to a state of affairs. The second layers on the messiness of flux: states of affairs are changing and difficult to pin down within temporality. The third sense, finally, complicates all of this by expanding it to the experience of human life; our subjective engagement with states of affairs is contingent. As a result, contingency is not just a discrete logical concept, but a difficult-to-pin-down feature inherent to human life *in statu viae*. Contingency becomes a critical lens that helps Gerson—and us, over his shoulder—to scry unexpected points of contact between ontology, language, and humans' navigation of both. This

[5] Rudolf Schuessler has weighed the function of Skepticist thought in Gerson's moral theology. Gerson's emphasis on the criterion problem for discerning the truth of propositions, particularly in the realm of theology, owes much to both scholasticism's own skeptical strands in the wake of the condemnations of 1270 and 1277 and to a renewed consideration of academic Skepticism, which (remarkably) Gerson commends every time he mentions. See: "Jean Gerson, Moral Certainty and the Renaissance of Ancient Scepticism," *Renaissance Studies* 23, no. 4 (2009).

sprawling, shifting aspect of contingency is a major locus of the present study, pertaining both to Gerson's abiding concern with language and to his fascination with affect.

Nevertheless, such a capacious definition is less than desirable for analytic clarity and cuts against the typical scholarly meaning of the term. Accordingly, in this dissertation I will restrict my use of the word "contingent" to refer to: states of affairs that could be or could have been otherwise and propositions that are not necessarily true (i.e. virtually any statement besides fideist axiomata or demonstrative syllogisms). However, the reader should keep in mind throughout the fundamental association between contingent things and the human experiences of uncertainty and change that result—an association that Gerson insists on. That broader human navigation of contingency I describe variably, sometimes as "uncertainty" and sometimes under the heading of "affect."

In approaching this topic, the present study does not restrict itself to Gerson's works. I follow Gerson's own lead in this regard. At the conclusion of a letter to his younger brother, Jean the Celestine, Gerson presents us with another brief poem, cast as an exchange between Volucer (a self-insert used by Gerson in many texts) and Monicus. Here, Gerson suggests that even amid the absence of knowledge and in the face of death camaraderie still remains:

> At cum sodales mors mihi sustulit
> Cum Pallas arcem vix habitet suam
> Quaero sonabunt cui mea cantica,
> Nervi loquentes quos lyra temperat
>
> [(Volucer:) But when death has carried off my companions, I aim to sound forth my songs—those stringed utterances that the harp composes—to Pallas, even though she scarcely still haunts her citadel.]
>
> Omitto Musas, angelus audiet
> Sanctique tecum; nonne satis tibi
> Nec prorsus omnes mors tulit effera.
> Petrus superstes quem sapientia
> Totum replevit, cardo dedit sibi

Nomen statumque; sufficit unicus
Carmen melodum cui resonet tuum
Vivit Gerardus, quis rogo par sibi.
Qui Veritatis exsul amore fit
Nostri Clamengis dulce sapit stylus.
Aetas novella progeniem dabit
Pro patribus quos perdidit Atropos.[6]

[(Monicus:) I'm setting aside the Muses. An angel, with saints accompanying, will be your audience. Is that not enough? See it through; to be blunt, death hasn't snatched everyone. Pierre, whom wisdom has wholly filled, a survivor, a pivotal figure, has earned title and office. He alone is enough: let your melodious lyric sound forth to him. Gerard yet lives. Who—I ask—is equal to him who is made an exile due to his love of truth? Our own de Clamanges' pen savors of sweetness. This age will yield a new offspring in the stead of our fathers wasted by Atropos.]

Bookended by invocations of death and Atropos (the fate associated with dying and portents of death), Gerson gives himself a sort of poetic pep talk, recalling to himself his friends and colleagues who are also enduring the violence gripping Paris and much of the rest of France at that time. This solidarity is held out as a ray of hope. Intriguingly too, it the literary act of canting poetry that effects the connection between these geographically separated confrères. Gerson essentially tells himself that, even and especially at death's door, he needs to write poems for his friends.

The cast of characters named by the fictive Monicus, in fact, are all thinkers who were personal friends of Gerson, each associated with the Collège de Navarre. Thus, while Gerson is the principal thread running through this project, woven around him is a close-knit network of intellectual siblings whom I collectively term Navarrists. Alongside Jean Gerson (1363–1429), we find Pierre d'Ailly (1351–1420), Nicolas de Clamanges (c.1360–after 1434), and Gérard Machet (c. 1380–1448). All trained in the Collège de Navarre, these figures are exceptionally

[6] Jean Gerson, "Carmen de causa canendi," in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: l'œuvre poétique,* ed. Palémon Glorieux (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962), 19, ln 19–34.

suited for gauging the contours of French intellectual culture, broadly construed, in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. D'Ailly, a prolific philosopher and theologian whose *Sentences* commentary enjoyed wide use as a standard textbook, served as chancellor of the University of Paris and then cardinal of Cambrai. Gerson, the most-published theologian of the fifteenth century, was trained by d'Ailly at Paris and succeeded him as chancellor and head of Europe's most prestigious faculty of theology. De Clamanges, one of the foremost first-wave French humanists, worked as a secretary to Benedict XIII and later as an instructor in rhetoric and theology in the Collège. Machet, hailed as the greatest preacher of his day, maintained a high profile as confessor to the Dauphin and eventual King Charles VII and acted as Gerson's cancellarian successor. The dissertation reads Gerson within and alongside this singled-out circle of Navarrist colleagues (with the unfortunate exception of Machet, little of whose writing remains extant).[7]

[7] The relative lack of writing by Machet available today is likely due to the simple fact that he seems to have written less in genres typically preserved than did the other Navarrists discussed here. Although trained in the Collège de Navarre and attached to the University of Paris for most of his career, Machet is recalled by his contemporaries primarily for his role as confessor to Charles VII and as a popular preacher—we can presume this is not a wholly inaccurate indication of where he focused his time and energy. The Bibliothèque nationale de France does house one manuscript containing an extensive amount of Machet's epistolary; this text lacks any published edition, nor are the individual 388 extant letters catalogued. As Pierre Santoni notes (and my own consultation of the manuscript confirms), however, the epistolary is primarily drawn from the 1440s when Machet served as cardinal to the antipope Felix V (and well after Gerson's demise). We know from external evidentiary sources that this epistolary compilation is far from exhaustive. For example, we have the text of many letters written by de Clamanges to Machet spanning 1410–1417, letters which refer to Machet's intervening dispatches, but we do not have the text of any letter from Machet to de Clamanges. On de Clamanges' and Machet's correspondence, along with discussion more generally of Machet's preserved epistolary, see: Pierre Santoni, "Les lettres de Nicolas de Clamanges à Gérard Machet. Un humaniste devant la crise du royaume et de l'Église (1410–1417)," *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 99, no. 2 (1987). Santoni's article builds on, and pushes back on, the earlier work of Dario Cecchetti. Machet's extant epistolary may be consulted in: Gerardi Macheti, Episcopi Castrensis et Confessoris Regis Caroli VII. epistolae 388, Latin 8577, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Beyond the interpersonal bonds uniting Gerson, d'Ailly, and de Clamanges, the distinctive context of the Collège de Navarre inflected the thought and writing examined in this dissertation. Within the larger confederated structure of the University of Paris, the Collège was distinguished for receiving generous financial support directly from the crown, uniquely housing members of both the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Theology, engaging in the vernacular-literary orbit of the French court, and serving as a center for the circulation of humanist texts from Italy.[8] This dynamic hotbed exposed the Navarrists to a wide range of intellectual and cultural movements, in addition to the vibrant cosmopolitanism afforded by the University of Paris writ large.

As a result, this dissertation operates with a scope delicately poised between common genres of intellectual and cultural history, along two separate axes. First, the problem to be considered—how language and affect both are implicated in and offer refuge from the ubiquitous human experience of responding to contingency—covers more ground than a neatly delineated doctrinal question but also will not magically unfold to reveal a totalizing system of thought (not even an incoherent one). Second, by taking the trio of Gerson, d'Ailly, and de Clamanges' work as the source material, the study is decidedly not an individual intellectual biography (not even one of Gerson) on the one hand, and it does not proffer any tidy synthesizing accounts of an "age" or "culture" on the other. In adopting this tack, I am not opting for a middle way—Aristotelian or otherwise. Rather, I intend (perhaps unadvisedly) to reanimate the corpse of the unfashionably passé notion of "school of thought" as an analytic, not merely heuristic, category

[8] For a meticulous history of the Collège during the long fourteenth century, see: Nathalie Gorochov, *Le Collège de Navarre, de sa fondation (1305) au début du XVe siècle (1418): histoire de l'institution, de sa vie intellectuelle et de son recrutement*, Études d'histoire médiévale, (Paris: H. Champion, 1997).

for intellectual history. It is hoped that the merits of such an approach become progressively clearer to the reader over the course of the dissertation, even if my gambit runs the risk of the experiment getting loose.

0.2 *Dispositio* of the Argument

The argument is arranged in two parts of three and two chapters respectively.

Part I, "Language," both unpacks and articulates the Navarrists' views on a trio of nettlesome questions regarding language: technical arguments over the relationship of logic and rhetoric in academic method, disputes over the proper hermeneutical approach to interpreting scripture, and debates over the ethical stakes of significatively ambivalent poetry. Surveying conversations that at first may seem discrete, the whole of Part I implicitly argues that the Navarrists in fact share a reasonably coherent and previously unacknowledged theory of language that draws on terminist logic, vernacular poetics, and humanist rhetoric. As a result, though the chapters can stand individually as a sequence of independently circumscribed investigations, their conclusions largely overlap; each may be read as a recapitulation of the other two.

Chapter One, "The Scholastic as Humanist," opens by reading polemics on theological method by de Clamanges and Gerson.[9] Earlier scholarship has tended to characterize the

[9] Nicolas de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, in *Nicolas de Clamanges: Opuscules*, ed. François Bérier, (Paris: PhD Dissertation, École Pratique de Hautes Études, 1974). Jean Gerson, *Contra curiositatem studentium*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol 3., l'œuvre magistrale*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962). Not all of de Clamanges' works have been edited. (And most of the critical editions that exist are unpublished and difficult to access.) Much of de Clamanges' prose has been edited by François Bérier in his unpublished dissertation: "Nicolas de Clamanges: Opuscules" (PhD Dissertation, École Pratique de Hautes Études, 1974). De Clamanges' letters are edited in another thesis: Dario Cecchetti, "L'epistolario di Nicolas de Clamanges" (PhD Dissertation, Università degli Studi di Torino, 1960). When possible, I rely upon these critical editions, though of some of de Clamanges' work (sc. poetic works) is not included in them. In such situations, I will use: Nicolas de Clamanges, *Nicolai de Clemangiis*

Navarrists on this front as disaffected scholastic theologians who marshal a number of humanist tropes to lampoon the technicality of academic theology. In contrast, I call attention to the Navarrists' repeated recourse in these polemics to precise, contested issues in scholastic philosophy of language. Looking then to treatises on language and logical method by d'Ailly and Gerson,[10] the chapter argues that the Navarrists, drawing on the fourteenth century's numerous developments in philosophy of language, advocate for a *hermeneutics of contingency*: an interpretive framework that recognizes the variable, embedded, and tentative scope of virtually all language statements. They arrive at so-called humanist conclusions by very traditional, dialectical methods.

Chapter Two, "The Exegete as Semionaut," considers Navarrist recommendations for how scripture is to be interpreted. Examining a number of Gerson's doctrinal polemics and a treatise on theological method by d'Ailly,[11] it documents how the Navarrists endorse a

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catalaunensis Archidiaconi baiocensis opera omnia, ed. Johannes Lydius (Lugduni Batauorum: Apud Ludouicum Elzeuirium & Henr. Laurentium, 1613; repr., Farnborough, Hants: Gregg, 1967). Jean Gerson's collected works have been edited in the ten-volume-in-eleven-codices edition of Palémon Glorieux. While not strictly a critical edition (an ongoing desideratum for the field) and subject to more than its fair share of typographical errors, it remains the standard edition: Palémon Glorieux, *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes*, 10 vols. (Tournai, Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1960–1973). When available for a given Gerson text, I will cite from a more properly critical edition, as shall be indicated.

[10] Ludger Kaczmarek and Pierre d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: B.R. Grüner, 1994); Jean Gerson, *De duplici logica*, in *Jean Gerson. Œvures complètes: vol. 3, l'œuvre magistrale*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962); Jean Gerson, *De modis significandi*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 9, l'œuvre doctrinale*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1973).

[11] Pierre d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, in *Joannis Gersonii, doctoris theologi & cancellarii Parisiensis: Opera omnia, vol. 1*, ed. Ellies du Pin, (Antwerp: Sumptibus Societatis, 1706); Jean Gerson, *De sensu litterali sacrae scripturae*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 3, l'œuvre magistrale*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1963); Jean Gerson, *Réponse à la consultation des maîtres*, in *Jean Gerson. Œvures complètes: vol. 10, l'œuvre polémique*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1973). Unfortunately, there is not a critical edition of d'Ailly's *Recommendatio*.

provisional, iterative, and non-linear approach to discerning scriptural meaning, owing in large part to the semiotic complexity at work in such a large collection of texts as the Christian Bible. Going further, and drawing on the late-medieval reception of Aristotle in Latin Europe, I argue that the Navarrists believe scripture to be non-apophantic, i.e. not propositionally true or false. Accordingly, they propose reading practices, often associated with devotional and vernacular modes of literature, that construe meaning as the result of semiotic displacement within and across a dynamic assemblage of texts. Such practices form a natural counterpart to the hermeneutics of contingency explored in the first chapter.

In Chapter Three, "The Moralist as Littérateur," I present a revisionist account of d'Ailly and Gerson's participation in the explosive *querelle* of the *Rose*: a years-long para-academic controversy over the ethical status and literary value of the massive composite poem *Le Roman de la Rose*, penned successively by Guillaume Lorris and Jean de Meun. The chapter explores the Navarrists' insistence on an ethical and affective orientation toward divine love as requisite for anchoring the interpretation of ambiguous texts, by attending to a pair of prose poems,[12] composed in Middle French and circulated among the literary elite embroiled in the *querelle*. In a strong break from prior scholarship, I argue that the Navarrists do not simply dismiss the *Rose*, but rather claim that they are in fact the true heirs of its poetic lineage. Directing composition and interpretation toward God allows for the discerning rehabilitation of previously suspect, even illicit, literary activity—such as the *Rose*.

Despite its greater length, within the larger project, Part I functions as an extended prolegomenon to the investigation of Part II, "Affect." I define *affect*, for the purposes of this

[12] D'Ailly's *Le jardin amoureux* and Gerson's *Traite contre le Rose* may both be found in: *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, ed. and trans. Christine McWebb, Routledge Medieval Texts, (New York: Routledge, 2007).

project, along two axes. The vertical axis contains what we commonly describe as "emotion," a terrain roughly mapped out by the noun *affectus*. This incorporates the full range of internal emotional responses—to be distinguished from ratiocinative and intellective acts of cognition—that one may experience, such as feeling down or having one's spirits lifted. The second axis, the horizontal, is perhaps less intuitive to us today, but it refers to how subjects are inevitably and regularly "affected" by external actors, forces, and circumstances; it can be associated with the adjective *affectus*. As will become apparent in Part II, this definition of affect comports with the Navarrists' accounts of emotion and human interdependence and their assertion that the two are inextricably linked. Further, the human experience of affect, for the Navarrists, bears marked similarities with the vicissitudes of language traced in Part I.

By looking to affect, Part II outlines what may be understood as the Navarrists' constructive intellectual program worked out in recognition of language's promises and shortcomings and with profound pastoral concern for the contingency that leaves its marks on virtually all aspects of human life *in statu viae*. Turning away from the polemical sources that predominate in Part I, the second part looks principally to theological treatises, biblical commentaries, and/or poetry. Here, I present a vision of a *poetic* theology, understood by the Navarrists as an antidote to the blunders of earlier scholastic theology and a more inclusive model of (re)form than the conciliarism and moralism with which scholarship on the Navarrists continues to be preoccupied. In many ways, the two component chapters are not easily separable. One could understand Chapter Four as concerned with vertical affect and Chapter Five as focused on horizontal affect. One could also see Chapter Four as focused on positive affects (love, delight, joy) and Chapter Five on negative (trauma, isolation, death). Regardless, they

should be considered companion pieces in conversation with one another, whether as the interlocutors in an academic dialogue or as the prose and verse in a prosimetrum.

Chapter Four, "The Theologian as Poet," explicates the Navarrists' privileging of poetry as the premier avenue for theological activity, through a consideration of the first tractate of Gerson's sprawling commentary on the Magnificat and a pair of Navarrist commentaries on the *Song of Songs*.[13] The Navarrists contend that poetry formally grapples with the limits of language and thereby can meaningfully address the affective experience—itself marked by desire for what one lacks and feelings of finitude—of the postlapsarian condition. Indeed, Navarrist poetic theory insists upon the power of hermeneutics as a practice that can structure and internally form affect, even though they maintain that phenomenologically some primary emotions typically elude direct volitional intervention. This poetic theology, worked out initially in reference to traditional Christian genres such as hymnody and liturgy, expands to include original poetic compositions, scholastic dialectic, and devotional reading practices under its aegis.

The final Chapter Five, "The Wayfarer as Lost," looks to poetic lamentations by Gerson and de Clamanges and, as a capstone to the dissertation, Gerson's *De consolatione theologiae*.[14]

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[13] Pierre d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, in *Tractatus et sermones*, (Strasbourg: Jordanus de Quedlinburg, 1490; reprint, Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1971); Jean Gerson, *Collectorium super Magnificat*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 8, l'œuvre spirituelle et pastorale*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1971); Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat."; Jean Gerson, *Super Cantica Canticorum*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 8, l'œuvre spirituelle et pastorale*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1971).

[14] Nicolas de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," in *Recherches sur quelques écrivains du XIVe et du XVe siècle*, ed. Alfred Coville (Paris: Libraire Droz, 1935); Jean Gerson, "Deploratio studii parisiensis," in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 4, l'œuvre poétique*, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962); Gilbert Ouy and Jean Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 71 (2004); Jean Gerson, *De consolatione theologiae*, in

I analyze how for the Navarrists poetry—*pace* many earlier medieval accounts of poetry and consolation—does not resolve suffering or end grief, but rather relativizes it through collective affective experiences. Poetry's foregrounding of the contingency and variability of language similarly emphasizes the fraught affective situations in which one finds oneself as a pilgrim in this life. The mourning reader or writer is then directed to the language and feeling of others through the medium of poetry. Poetry thereby creates new communities precisely by underscoring affective and ratiocinative finitude. Gerson's *De consolatione* suggests that these new affected and affective collectives, drawn together by congruent grief, provide a mitigated form of consolation. In an age that the Navarrists deemed unusually traumatic, this limited model of consolation is understood as more true than deductive arguments for confidence in the future (ubiquitous in the output of contemporary scholastic theologians), calls for spiritual reform that demand personal perfectionism (common in many popular and monastic reform movements), or mystical theologies that promise moments of affective fullness (typical of Low Countries' mysticisms of the late-medieval era).

In tracing the Navarrists' theological understandings of language and affect, the dissertation models new ways of thinking about the long fourteenth century and late-medieval thought. I trust readers will weigh this project with an eye toward its currency even beyond the walls of the Collège de Navarre. Accordingly, Gerson's words from his 1402 treatise on the discernment of spirits provide a fitting set of guidelines for the careful evaluation my project and its interpretation ask for:

> We are to be like spiritual brokers or moneychangers, expertly and precisely examining the precious and strange coin of divine revelation, lest at some point demons—who, tweeking out, contaminate and counterfeit any divine and good coinage—traffic

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Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 9, l'œuvre doctrinale, ed. Glorieux Palémon, (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1973).

> deceptive and spurious currency in place of the true and legitimate. This would be to the considerable detriment of the Church's public and private accounts or the imperial treasury of God. And coinage that is actually worth what it claims is relatively rare, just like actual heroic feats or supernatural visitations. Therefore, our caution in handling coins to discern their worth should be more meticulous when their circulation would be more damaging. Because this metaphor is quite apt for concretely showing what we aim to, let's stick with it.[15]

Let us now turn our attention to the coin in hand.

[15] Jean Gerson, *De distinctione verarum revelationum a falsis*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: l'œuvre magistrale*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962), 38. "Erimus sicut nummularii seu campsores spirituales, ad solerter et acute examinandum numisma pretiosum et extraneum divinae revelationis ne forte daemones qui monetam quamlibet et divinam et bonam corrumpere falsareque satagunt, subintroducant pro vera moneta et legitima falsatam et reprobam; esset hoc in detrimentum non mediocre ecclesiastici fisci vel aerarii, seu thesauri imperialis Dei. Et tanto amplius quanto moneta pretiosior est et rarior, quemadmodum sunt actus virtutum heroïcarum, atque supernaturalium visitationum. Tanto igitur vigilantior adhibenda est ad discernendum cautela, quanto esset jactura damnosior. Et quoniam haec similitudo satis idonea est ad id palpabilius ostendendum quod intendimus, prosequamur eam."

Part I: Language

CHAPTER ONE

The Scholastic as Humanist

> So what I told you was true, from a certain point of view.
> —Obi-Wan Kenobi, *Star Wars: A New Hope*

At the close of the fourteenth century, Latin Europe saw a crescendo of vibrant debates within and without the university between those we now call humanists and scholastics. The scholastics, exemplified by the faculties of theology trained in Aristotelian dialectic, had been—challenges from medicine and law notwithstanding—the ensconced luminaries of the emerging European academic community. However, as novel angles in philosophical investigation burst forth in the Ockhamist revolution at Oxford and in the new literary movements south of the Alps heralded by Petrarch, the *studia humanitatis* of the faculties of arts increasingly asserted its own claims to academic primacy. This often-contentious interchange between humanism and scholasticism has been described along a number of axes: political feuding between different faculties, principled disputations over different accounts of the human person, or disagreements over the comparative eminence of Latin and the vernacular.

While conceding the applicability of these interpretations in certain contexts, in this chapter I propose that the intellectual history of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Christian west would be better studied by attending to the *methods* of knowing, writing, and argumentation employed by thinkers within and without the university, rather than by attempting to reconstruct and correlate the *content* of various posited systems of thought (e.g., assembled axiomata associated with "scholasticism" or "humanism"). I thus argue for a *via media* when describing how humanism and scholasticism interacted in the ambit of the Collège de Navarre: Humanist

and scholastic are more than just labels used to smear professional rivals, but they do not each represent a coherent system of thought with certain characteristic doctrines. Rather, humanism and scholasticism, I contend, are best understood in this time and place as overlapping and competing discourses that, at each of their respective nexuses, offer a particular pastiche of epistemic sensibilities, sought-for educational outcomes, and methods of inquiry. This chapter is especially interested in how they differ in answering the following question: how do dialectic and rhetoric relate to each other in investigation, particularly theological?

Ultimately, in this chapter, I argue that the Navarrists, although trained and institutionally active primarily as scholastic theologians, draw on the toolkit of humanism to apply a corrective to their received scholastic method; they call for a dismantling of the epistemic and semantic confidence typical of earlier scholastic theology through the formulation and application of what I term a "hermeneutics of contingency."[1] In so doing, they undertake to resolve what they

[1] My approach here should be seen as an outgrowth of (and, admittedly, a circumspect departure from) the brief consideration of "contingency" in Heiko Oberman's essay on the shape of late-medieval thought: "Contingency is perhaps the best one-word summary of the nominalist program. This contingency is understood in two directions, embracing both the vertical relation God-world-man and the horizontal relation world-man-future. We cannot now pursue this second form of contingency, which concerns the so-called question '*De futuris contingentibus*.' When applied not only to the future but also to the past, it provides a truly scholarly basis of historical studies by its tendency to eliminate supernatural factors in the interpretation of the course of events./ Contingency should not be understood to mean unreliable, threatened by the alternatives *de potentia absoluta*. The contingency of creation and salvation means simply that they are not ontologically necessary. The point is that in the vertical dimension our reality is not the lowest emanation and level in a hierarchy of being which ascends in ever more real steps to the highest reality, God," Heiko A. Oberman, "The Shape of Late Medieval Thought: The Birthpangs of the Modern Era," in *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 18–19.

I conceive of this hermeneutics of contingency as a parallel mode of horizontal contingency exploring the relation of world-language-human. (Cf. "…words are the connecting link between the mind and reality," Steven Ozment, "Mysticism, Nominalism, and Dissent," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion: Papers from the University of Michigan Conference*, ed. Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 80.) It reflects the late medievals' reflexive

perceive to be scholastic dilemmas with humanist solutions. Thus understood, I argue that the Navarrists must be interpreted as performing a set of critical interventions in philosophies of language and psychology to reconstrue the inheritance of high-medieval scholastic theology.[2] While such an interpretation provides explanatory purchase for their beguiling, not immediately intuitive mix of "conservative" and "innovative" positions, it also establishes the fundamental starting points operative in the Navarrists' ambitious theological project to be outlined in Part II of this dissertation.

The chapter's argument proceeds in three phases. First, I outline the broader terrain of the humanist-scholastic debates in late-medieval Europe to contextualize the exceptionality of the Collège de Navarre therein. Second, I unpack texts targeted toward scholastic audiences (whether a posited "scholasticism" or specific opponents) to argue for a strong attenuation of received scholastic norms of certainty and argument based on humanist *topoi*: de Clamanges' *De studio theologico* and Gerson's *Contra curiositatem studentium*.[3] Third and finally, I interpret more technical treatises—the *Destructiones modorum significandi* traditionally attributed to d'Ailly and Gerson's relatively early *De duplici logica* and mature *De modis significandi*—[4] as incorporating humanist critiques into otherwise scholastic treatises to articulate a (de)constructive theoretical framework, sc. a hermeneutics of contingency, that radically reconceives theological investigation as a question of practicalities, probabilities, and marked by an almost-skeptical epistemic humility.

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concern with contingency in their present moment, alongside the temporally external orientation of historical and future investigations noted by Oberman.

[2] I use psychology to refer to discussions of philosophy of the soul, mind, and mental faculties that medievals invariably broached with reference to Aristotle's *De anima*.

[3] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*. Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*.

[4] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*. Gerson, *De duplici logica*. Gerson, *De modis significandi*.

1.1 Locating Humanism and Scholasticism

To be sure, the outbreak of humanist-scholastic debates in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries constitutes one cluster of episodes across a long, sometimes sporadic, history of dispute between dialectic and rhetoric stretching back to antiquity. The fraught repartée between these at-times-competing discourses stretches to sources as far back as Platonic dialogues that, at least as they present it, pit principled philosophy against free-wheeling Sophism.[5] This pair of dialectic and rhetoric—which I take to be aporetic, not antinomic—I would suggest is an apt lens for thinking about humanism and scholasticism in the long fourteenth century in particular. Such a proposal must be situated vis-à-vis a number of historiographic definitional questions: what are twelfth-century humanism, scholasticism, and early-modern humanism? Let us look at each in turn.

The cultural flourishing of twelfth-century Latin Europe was decisively argued for in Charles Homer Haskins' germinal *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, setting it as of a piece with Jacob Burckhardt's vision of the Italian Renaissance.[6] However, the specific use of humanism as a summative description of the intellectual culture of the twelfth-century was established by Richard Southern who defined it as an intellectual outlook comprising three planks: the nobility of the human, the dignity of nature, and an orderly cosmos that could be rationally investigated.[7] Willemien Otten, agreeing generally that twelfth-century humanism may

[5] Plato's *Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, and *Sophist* all rely upon this oppositional frame between philosophical investigation and sophist rhetoric. To be sure, the practicing Sophists of the ancient Hellenic world would object to their Platonic characterization.

[6] Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927); Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy: An Essay* (New York: Modern Library, 1995).

[7] Richard W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 29–60.

be understood as "an all-embracing discourse in which the human and divine are found to be on equal footing," nevertheless nuances Southern's approach by calling for a consideration of the formal dynamics of humanism—including a preference for sustained conversation, an intimacy of tone, and an aesthetic valuation of the iterative—rather than parsing the content of twelfth-century texts about humanity and God.[8] She describes her method:

> To be able to reduce speculative and metaphysical problems to the rhetoric of conversation and to turn concentrated conversation into a true meeting of the human and the divine is what I see as the particular humanist quality of the literary texts that are studied in this book. To value the theologizing ambience needed for that, quite apart from any appreciation for the individual positions involved, is what it wants to be all about.[9]

As a result, Otten sees greater room within humanism, as a function of the dialectical tension within its form, to both include currents of ambiguity and melancholy as well as to eventually shift and transform.[10]

In a rather different vein of looking at the twelfth-century, criticism against a generalized account of "humanism" therein has been mounted by C. Stephen Jaeger on a number of points. First, as Jaeger argues at greatest length in *The Envy of Angels*, it is the cathedral schools, not the monasteries often emphasized in the older scholarship, that stand as the most notable institutional space for the cultural maintenance of a Christian-humanist discourse.[11] Second, and relatedly, he notes that since these cathedral schools are not a sudden invention of the twelfth-century, they

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[8] Willemien Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm: A Study of Twelfth-Century Humanism*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1–6. See also: Willemien Otten, "Medieval Latin Humanism," in *Encyclopedia of Mediterranean Humanism,* ed. Houari Touati (2016). https://www.encyclopedie-humanisme.com/?Medieval-Latin-Humanism.

[9] Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm*, 7. As shall become apparent, the Navarrists would be deeply sympathetic to Otten's project.

[10] Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm*, 274–82.

[11] C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994). For a more condensed form of some of the argument, see: C. Stephen Jaeger, "Philosophy, ca. 950–ca. 1050," *Viator* 40 (2009).

evidence a sustained humanist tradition in Latin Christianity preserved in institutional relationships between cathedral schools and administrations, both ecclesial and political, in the prior centuries.[12] Third, the breakdown of the specific institutional configuration that privileged a cathedral-school education (which he dates to c. 1150) effectively, *pace* Southern, marks the end of medieval humanism, already at the time of the Victorines a "dying movement."[13] While we may see works, among later medieval scholastics for instance, that we associate with humanistic ideas, they constitute only "a small collection of the *disjecta membra* of a humanism once tightly cohering with the social, political and intellectual world in which they arose… as isolated individuals, not as participants of a larger movement."[14] Taken as a whole, Jaeger's discontent with much use of the term humanism is rooted in a methodological preference for an institutionally grounded definition, even if he sees it as having far-reaching outgrowths in the culture as a whole.

Southern, Jaeger, and Otten each point to the scholastic tradition, beginning perhaps with Abelard, becoming established in Lombard's *Sentences*, and continuing through Thomas Aquinas' achievements in the late-thirteenth century, as distinct from the general tenor of the twelfth century. However, they diverge from each other in the specifics. Southern, for his part, seeks to minimize the difference. While scholasticism focuses on dialectic as a method rather

[12] C. Stephen Jaeger, "Victorine Humanism," in *A Companion to the Abbey of Saintt Victor in Paris*, ed. Hugh Feiss and Juliet Mousseau (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 83. "Three institutional elements in particular give coherence to humanism 950–1150 as a movement. The first is a liberal arts curriculum based largely on classical models that spreads through cathedral schools in Germany, France, and England. The second is the important joining of intellectual elements of the curriculum with ethical training. The curriculum is often designated by the phrase 'letters and manners.'… The third is the connection between cathedral school education and a career in the administration of either the church or the state, or both."

[13] Jaeger, "Victorine Humanism," 84–85. Not dissimilarly, Otten identifies Alain de Lille as emblematic of the end of twelfth-century humanism: *From Paradise to Paradigm*, 39–44.

[14] Jaeger, "Victorine Humanism," 80–81.

than its trivial siblings of grammar or rhetoric—the premier methods of twelfth-century literary humanism—it is resolutely still a species of humanism. Scholasticism, or even "scholastic humanism," still fundamentally seeks to rationally understand the world through the growth of knowledge and subsequent enrichment of human life.[15] Otten endorses much of Southern's approach here, and she pushes it further in one regard and pushes back on it in another. As to the former, Otten commends that a formal definition of scholasticism (like Southern's)[16] possesses greater explanatory purchase, for instance, for early-modern, including Protestant, varieties of scholasticism and even varieties beyond Europe and/or Christianity.[17] She departs from Southern, however, in not sharing the same rose-colored lens in assessing scholasticism—lodging particular criticism at the structure of its tendency to ground "a knowledge without a past," as *ratio* came to increasingly outstrip *auctoritas*.[18] Jaeger shares a somewhat cool view toward the "desiccating rationalism" of scholasticism, but he markedly departs from both

[15] R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe. Volume I: Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe. Volume II: The Heroic Age* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). In an admiring, but often critical, review, R. M. Thomson draws out that for Southern this specific account of human dignity grounds the definition humanism. Thus, some scientific figures, like Adelard of Bath and Robert Grosseteste, are described as "non- or even antischolastic," despite their overt reliance upon dialectic. "Richard Southern and the Twelfth-Century Intellectual World: Essay Review of R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Vol. I: Foundations, Vol. II: The Heroic Age*," *The Journal of Religious History* 26, no. 3 (2002): 272.

[16] Picking up on a nuance missed by some interpretations of Southern, Otten (rightly, to my mind) notes that his is *not* an essentialist definition of scholasticism. The formalism of Southern's definition comprises distinct intellectual commitments structured into a coherent program: "Medieval Scholasticism: Past, Present, and Future," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis/ Dutch Review of Church History* 81, no. 3 (2001): 285.

[17] Otten, "Medieval Scholasticism: Past, Present, and Future," 284–86.

[18] Otten, "Medieval Scholasticism: Past, Present, and Future," 288.

Southern and Otten in maintaining institutional and curricular criteria for defining scholasticism (just as with humanism).[19]

Implicit, if not explicit, in all these accounts of twelfth-century humanism and subsequent scholasticism is the notion that the terrain shifts markedly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a period when overt appeals to the *studia humanitatis* over and against scholasticism emerge with new vigor.

Scholars however are not in agreement as to why this back-and-forth flared up with such intensity. One current interpretation, inaugurated by Paul Oskar Kristeller, has maintained that the root cause of these debates is professional rivalry. According to this interpretation, humanists and scholastics alike played up their differences and criticized each other primarily to improve their standing in their respective universities or faculties.[20] The other, advanced recently by scholars like Erika Rummel and Charles Nauert, perceives divergences that are "fundamental rather than incidental;" incommensurable differences in method and the heightened religious

[19] Jaeger, "Victorine Humanism," 80–83. "The stark difference between the humanism of the 10th to the 12th century and the elements of humanist thought that Southern cites in proposing a 'scholastic humanism,' is that the former had an institutional basis and a program of education that sustained humanist thought and ethics. In the period of high scholasticism, that basis was eroded, the educational system transformed, its curriculum very much changed. Human dignity was an idea among others. It was not cultivated as a pedagogic goal."

[20] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 43. "…We are inclined to view this polemic in its proper perspective, that is, as an understandable expression of departmental rivalry, and as a phase in the everlasting battle of the arts of which many other examples may be cited from ancient, medieval, or modern times." Alan Perreiah explicitly presents himself as a guardian of Kristeller's thesis and argues that humanist-scholastic disputes elide a large set of shared concerns and are fundamentally reducible to "ideological" prerogatives (i.e. professional or religious turf wars) rather than philosophical differences: "Humanistic Critiques of Scholastic Dialectic," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 13 (1982): 161–62. This same thesis is operative throughout: James H. Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Germany, 1450-1520* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978).

stakes of the Reformation are the prime examples.[21] Beyond an occasional introductory mention, however, none of these studies has dwelled on how to address the polemic crescendo before the close of the fifteenth century.[22] As we saw with discussions of twelfth-century humanism and of scholasticism, these scholarly disputes largely rest on different methodological assumptions about how to define these terms (i.e., Kristeller prefers an institutional definition; Rummel and Nauert a formal definition).

Turning to how the Navarrists fit within these schemata, nestled between high scholasticism and the more intense feuding of early modernity, I have opted to begin by treating the distinction between humanism and scholasticism as one of method (reflected in institutional curricula) rather than one of formal features of thought. Indeed, the Navarrists themselves frame an opposition between rhetoric and dialectic. However, that is simply our starting point. Over the course of the dissertation, as further Navarrist reflection on rhetoric and dialectic is interpreted, we will see that this is far from an incidental distinction. Thus, by the close of the project we will approach a formal account of Navarrist thought.

What then was the status of rhetoric and dialectic in the later Middle Ages?

The landscape was decisively transmuted by Petrarch, who, dependent on his readings of Cicero, saw rhetoric—incorporating eloquence, wisdom, and ethics—as the privileged point of access to philosophy. Although scholastic dialectic had its place, it was not the ideal way to

[21] Charles G. Nauert, "Humanism as Method: Roots of Conflict with the Scholastics," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 2 (1998): 432. Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[22] Daniel Hobbins has called attention to how Rummel brings up Gerson but is unable to place him neatly within a humanist-scholastic framework: Daniel Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 103–04; Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation*, 30–40.

advance in true (sc. moral) philosophy.[23] Many humanists subsequent to Petrarch likewise identified Cicero and his fellow rhetor Quintilian as *the* models of language, style, and eloquence.[24] This circulation of classical and late-medieval texts that treated rhetoric and moral philosophy laid out a set of commonplaces that endured for fourteenth- and fifteenth-century humanists; [25] European thinkers found new resources from which to advocate for a pursuit of wisdom grounded principally in eloquence that had been comparatively underrepresented in medieval university curricula.

On the other side, the high Middle Ages saw new translations of and commentaries on Aristotle from the Arabic world that provided access to what was called the "new logic."[26] This more extensive Aristotelian *organon* undergirded the scholastics' dialectical method, largely supplanting the Boethian translations of and commentaries on Aristotle that had earlier circulated throughout the medieval west. The *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, and *Prior Analytics* in particular together comprised a corpus of logic treated by both arts and theology faculties, formalized in 1255 as curriculum by the University of Paris and likely by Oxford around the

[23] Jerrold E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism from Petrarch to Valla: Studies in the Development of Quattrocento Thought and its Classical Antecedents* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978), 40.

[24] Alan R. Perreiah, *Renaissance Truths: Humanism, Scholasticism and the Search for the Perfect Language* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 29–32.

[25] While this humanist so-called rebirth, attentively treating classics not traditionally part of the medieval curriculum, was particularly vibrant in Italy, indeed Avignon and Paris formed another line of textual and intellectual reception. See: Cecchetti, *Il primo umanesimo francese*, 20.

[26] Julie Brumberg-Chaumont helpfully clarifies that the thirteenth-century's labeling of the earlier set of Aristotelian texts as the "old logic" should not project any teleological expectation onto the earlier medieval *organon* used in the curriculum that was markedly Boethian in character, "a corpus with a coherence of its own, in line with an alternative conception of logic, not epistemologically oriented." "The Legacy of Ancient Logic in the Middle Ages," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Logic*, ed. Catarina Dutilh Novaes and Stephen Read (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 40.

same time.[27] For the scholastics of the medieval university writ large, this Aristotle (termed simply "the Philosopher") provided *the* model for proper dialectical investigation. Despite the chilling effect of the Parisian condemnations of 1270 and 1277 on the most strident Aristotelians, viz. the so-called "Latin Averroists,"[28] the new curriculum had become ensconced by its centrality in masters of the *via(e) antiqua(e)* such as Albert, Aquinas, and Scotus. Its enduring popularity among *moderni* furthered its ubiquity in the milieu of late-medieval European universities. Thus, Aristotle came to be emblematic of the entire scholastic program; his rigorous treatment of dialectic and logic were fundamental to any student in the arts or theology.

One of the touchstones of the burgeoning humanist movement, however, was Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which plotted a space for a moral reasoning (using enthymemes and examples) as

[27] Alex J. Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 106–07. For a more full narrative, see: Robert Pasnau, "The Latin Aristotle," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, ed. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[28] I opt to use the term "Averroism" in this context, respecting the Latin medievals' own usage of *averroistae* and characterization of the Commentator (sc. Ibn Rushd, ابن رشد— commonly Latinized as Averroës), while fully recognizing it hardly comprises a fair reading of Ibn Rushd. In this I agree with Jean-Baptiste Brenet's remark defending the utility of "Averroism" as a description of focused reception, regardless of how we would evaluate that reception's interpretation: "Le terme ['averroïstes'], on le sait, n'est pas sans difficultés: on y recourt ici par commodité pour désigner les «sectateurs» du Commentateur à la Faculté des Arts, c'est-à-dire ceux qui, sur le plan philosophique, démontrent principalement avec lui, à l'aide de son *corpus* (sans préjuger de leur fidélité *doctrinale*);" "Averroès et les 'averroïstes' dans le traité *Sur l'éternité des choses* de Nicolas d'Autrécourt," in *Nicolas d'Autrécourt et la Faculté des Arts de Paris (1317–1340)*, ed. Stefano Caroti and Christophe Grellard (Cesena: Stilgraft editrice, 2006). He gives a fuller account in: "Averroïsme latin," in *Dictionnaire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002). In a similar vein, John Marenbon has defended "Latin Averroism" as preferable to the proposed alternative "Radical Aristotelianism." See: "Latin Averroism," in *Islamic Crosspollinations: Interactions in the Medieval Middle East*, ed. Anna Akasoy, James E. Montgomery, and Peter E. Pormann (Cambridge: The E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007), 5 et passim. For an effective overview of Latin (and Hebrew) Averroisms' spread, see: Maurice-Ruben Hayoun and Alain de Libera, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, Que sais-je?, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991), 75–120.

somewhat distinct from dialectic (using demonstrative syllogism).[29] Ironically, this approach to Aristotle had the potential to intrude upon the ken of Aristotelian scholasticism. To some extent, sparring between scholastics and humanists in late-medieval Paris can be understood as a disagreement over how to harmonize the Aristotelian corpus: is rhetoric a sibling comparable in dignity to dialectic, or is it an offshoot of limited reliability? The grounds for these competing outlooks lie in the text of the *Rhetoric* itself. On the one hand, Aristotle fairly bluntly categorizes rhetoric under the larger umbrella of dialectic.[30] On the other, he privileges rhetoric as better able to speak to human—i.e., particular—affairs than demonstration.[31] The reception history of

[29] Aristotle distinguishes enthymemes from logical syllogisms in the *Rhetoric*. These arguments, a species of syllogism, are the tool of the rhetor, and they seek to establish generally applicability rather than demonstrate the strictly necessary. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, trans. J. H. Freese, Loeb Classical Library, (1926). "It is obvious, therefore… that rhetorical demonstration is an enthymeme, which, generally speaking, is the strongest of rhetorical proofs; and lastly, that the enthymeme is a kind of syllogism," "Επεὶ δὲ φανερόν ἐστν... ἔστι δ'ἀπόδειξις ῥητορικὴ ἐνθύμημα, καὶ ἔστι τοῦτο ὡς εἰπεῖν ἁπλῶς κυριώτατον τῶν πίστεων, τὸ δ'ἐνθύμημα συλλογισμός τις," (I.I.11, 8–9). "But since few of the propositions of the rhetorical syllogism [i.e. enthymeme] are necessary, for most of the things which we judge and examine can be other than they are, human actions, which are the subject of our deliberation and examination, being all of such a character and, generally speaking, none of them are necessary… it is evident that the materials from which enthymemes are derived will be sometimes necessary, but for the most part only generally true… For that which is probable is that which generally happens, not however unreservedly, as some define it, but that which is concerned with things that may be other than they are," "Επεὶ δ'ἐστὶν ὀλίγα μὲν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐξ ὧν οἱ ῥητορικοὶ σθλλογισμοί εἰσι (τὰ γὰρ πολλὰ περὶ ὧν αἱ κρίσεις καὶ αἱ σκέψεις, ἐνδέχεται καὶ ἄλλως ἔχειν· περὶ ὧν μὲν γὰρ πράττουςι, βοθλεύονται καὶ σκοποῦσι, τὰ δὲ πραττόμενα πάντα τοιούτου γένους ἐστί, καὶ οὐδὲν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης τούτων)… φανερὸν ὅτι ἐξ ὧν τὰ ἐνθυμήματα λέγεται, τὰ μὲν ἀναγκαῖα ἔσται, τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολύ... τὸ μὲν γὰρ εἰκός ἐστιν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ γινόμενον, οὐχ ἁπλῶς δέ, καθάπερ ὁρίζονται τινες, ἀλλὰ τὸ περὶ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα ἄλλως ἔχειν," (I.II.14, 24–27). Translation Freese's.

[30] Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, I.II.7, 18–19. "Thus it appears that Rhetoric is at were an offshoot of Dialectic," "ὥστε συμβαίνει τὴν ῥητορικὴν οἷον παραφυές τι τῆς διαλεκτικῆς εἶναι."

[31] Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 24–25."…for most of the things which we judge and examine can be other than they are, human actions, which are the subject of our deliberation and examination, being all of such a character and, generally speaking, none of them are necessary; …it is evident that the materials from which enthymemes are derived will be sometimes necessary, but for the most part only generally true," "(τὰ γὰρ πολλὰ περὶ ὧν αἱ κρίσεις καὶ αἱ σκέψεις, ἐνδέχεται καὶ ἄλλος ἔχειν• περὶ ὧν μὲν γὰρ πράττουσι, βουλεύονται καὶ σκοποῦςι, τὰ δὲ

manuscripts of the *Rhetoric* shows that, while occasionally paired with logical or dialectic texts, it typically was read alongside moral-philosophical works: the *Politics* and the *Ethics*. Nevertheless, the *Rhetoric* and derivative texts circulated extensively in high- and late-medieval Europe (with Paris serving as an especial center of textual production), especially in pastoral and professional orbits less beholden to the norms of scholastic demonstration. Insofar as Aristotle himself traced the suture between rhetoric and dialectic along the distinction between particularity and universality, he laid out a roadmap for the Navarrists to follow in developing their thought and writing in light of their fundamental awareness of contingency's conditioning of human life.

At the Collège de Navarre around 1400, the interplay between humanism and scholasticism gained immediacy from the Collège's dual identity servicing both the faculty of arts and that of theology.[32] The Navarrists thus studied and taught within a context that foregrounded the terms and stakes of debates between scholastics and humanists: the former's interests in dialectic method, logical parsimony, and semantic theory and the latter's in literary production, moral reasoning, and rhetorical theory. Compounded by their self-fashioning as public intellectuals,[33] it is not surprising that d'Ailly, Gerson, and de Clamanges wrote themselves into this (para-)academic debate. This activity is evident in two primary modes. First, there are polemic or disputational texts targeted at an explicitly labeled scholastic audience. Second, there are treatises on semantics and logic, often as they relate to theological method.

πραττόμενα πάντα τοιούτου γένους ἐστί,… φανερὸν ὅτι ἐξ ὧν τὰ ἐνθυμήματα λέγεται, τὰ μὲν ἀναγκαῖα ἔσται."

[32] For details on the structure and workings of the Collège, see: Gorochov, *Le Collège de Navarre, de sa fondation (1305) au début du XVe siècle (1418): histoire de l'institution, de sa vie intellectuelle et de son recrutement*.

[33] See: Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning*.

This chapter surveys these genres among the Navarrists to understand how they articulated their own positions within the larger contours of the humanist-scholastic debates in the orbit of academic theology.

The analysis of the Navarrists in this chapter intervenes in this scholarly conversation in three primary ways. First, it removes the implied *telos* of the Reformation from consideration. Setting aside the confessional disputes, so to speak, allows for a more focused treatment of the state of play for the late medievals themselves. Second, the Navarrists occupied a hybrid college that served both the arts and theology. In many ways, this context mitigates the explanatory power of the rivalry thesis—at least in Paris—and thus provides a control case of sorts for construing humanism and scholasticism's relationship otherwise. That is to say, the Navarrists' academic posts were not in jeopardy with respect to whether scholastic or humanist discourses were ascendant. Third, this chapter pursues a line of inquiry called for by Nauert by attending to humanists' discussions of probable rather than absolute truth.[34] Indeed, I will go further by demonstrating that this wariness of absolute truth is not isolable to humanism *per se* in the late medieval period.

The Collège de Navarre was a (if not *the*) privileged epicenter for the circulation of humanist thought and texts in France.[35] D'Ailly, in particular, saw to it that his students were

[34] Nauert, "Humanism as Method: Roots of Conflict with the Scholastics," 432. "The more difficult [necessary line of inquiry], but potentially the more rewarding, is to focus on those aspects of humanism that challenged the whole enterprise of rational philosophy, the scholastic aspiration toward attainment of absolute truth. This involves humanism in its aspect as rhetoric. It calls for further investigation of rhetorical thought, that art of persuasive argument which sought to establish probable truths and questioned whether the human mind is capable of attaining absolute certitude."

[35] In his biographical sketch of d'Ailly, Alan E. Bernstein provides a nice overview of the Collège de Navarre's prestige: *Pierre d'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 61–67. The standard studies for the Collège's enmeshment in the literary-humanist scene remain: Ezio Ornato, *Jean Muret et ses amis Nicolas de Clamanges et Jean de Montreuil: contribution à*

reading Petrarch and his circle from the beginning of their studies and secured a number of texts for the University.[36] Further, the Navarrists were entrenched in the vernacular literary scene of France, evidenced by their prominent involvement in the debate over *le Roman de la Rose*.[37] The humanist credentials of the Navarrists also extend to their perennial concern for moral philosophy and a practical theology. Gerson, for instance, was instrumental to a revival of Skeptic moral theories, motivated out of a pastoral concern to console scrupes.[38] Recent work on Gerson in particular underscores his desire to reach broad audiences and encourage their moral formation.[39]

In both humanist and scholastic circles, language was the topic *du jour*. Specifically, the innovative developments in philosophy of language and psychology associated with Ockham stand as a central part of (especially scholastic) university activity in the late Middle Ages. The period, embroiled in considerations over universals, signification, and semantics, was decisively inflected by the spread of so-called "nominalism;" questions of language and its relation to reality were foregrounded.[40] The foregrounding of language in both the humanist appeals to

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l'étude des rapports entre les humanistes de Paris et ceux d'Avignon (1394-1420), Hautes études médiévales et modernes, (Genève: Droz librairie, 1969); Gilbert Ouy, "Le Collège de Navarre, berceau de l'humanisme français," in *Actes du 95e Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes, Reims, 1979; Section de philologie et d'histoire jusqu'à 1610* (Paris: 1970).

[36] Brian Patrick McGuire, *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 32.

[37] See Chapter Three, "The Moralist as Littérateur," p. 118ff.

[38] Schuessler, "Jean Gerson, Moral Certainty and the Renaissance of Ancient Scepticism," 450–53.

[39] See the two recent monographs: Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning*; Nancy McLoughlin, *Jean Gerson and Gender: Rhetoric and Politics in Fifteenth-Century France*, Genders and Sexualities in History Series, (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[40] Ozment, "Mysticism, Nominalism, and Dissent." "Nominalists perceived an unsettling 'extra' dimension in the system [of divine covenant] itself; but they discovered that it was a verbal relation… Man must work come to grips with the world around him through 'signs

rhetorical eloquence and intra-scholastic deployment of Ockham's razor both contribute to the Navarrists' perduring attentiveness to language.

The new wave of the *moderni* within the universities, foregrounding questions of certainty, language, and reception, terraformed the ground which the humanists and scholastics had long occupied. The Navarrists were in the trenches of these debates, albeit to differing degrees.[41] In addition to engagement in the literary *querelles* of the day—be they on the *Rose* (d'Ailly and Gerson) or with the Petrarchan school (Gerson and Clamanges)—d'Ailly and Gerson were at the center of doctrinal *querelles* too, unsurprising given their successive chancellorships at Paris. Zenon Kaluza incisively lays out the heuristic that many at the University of Paris used to categorize different strands of thought of the age: the Augustinian-Platonist *formalizantes* (the Scotists are present here too), the moderate Albertist *peripatetici*, and the Buridanist *nominales* with their predilection for logic. [42] (It should be emphasized, as Kaluza is at pains to demonstrate throughout his monograph, that this taxonomy—while generated by late-medieval scholastics themselves—does not map onto identifiable factions within the faculties. It should be interpreted instead as a commonly recognized and deployed rhetorical framework used by thinkers at Paris to situate their particular polemics.)

If on the one hand the humanist polemical forays of the Navarrists evidence a centrifugal mode of academic activity vis-à-vis the university proper, seeking to influence broader audiences

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voluntarily instituted'… In the final analysis, all he [the human person] has is willed verbal relations."

[41] For a survey of the influence of Ockham and English thought more generally on Paris in the early fourteenth century, see: Katherine H. Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham: Optics, Epistemology, and the Foundations of Semantics, 1250-1345* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 315–83.

[42] Zénon Kaluza, *Les querelles doctrinales à Paris: nominalistes et realistes aux confins du XIVe et du XVe siècles* (Bergamo: Lubrina, 1988), 16–17.

and contribute to reform across society, on the other, their spirited engagement in the philosophico-theological disputes of the University proper is markedly centripetal. In the Latin west debates over universals date back at least to Abelard in the twelfth century,[43] though that question and the adjunct issues of philosophy of language and of psychology came increasingly to the fore over the subsequent centuries. These questions were usually treated within *Sentences* commentaries, which formed the cornerstone of the theology curriculum. Consequently, the debates on language and universals structure a set of *internal* questions facing the scholastic guild: what is/are the nature(s) of the linguistic and mental systems used as the basis for pursuing philosophical and theological questions?

The Navarrists are remarkable for making a concerted effort to keep up with the distinct conversations fomenting within humanist and scholastic circles. While their early careers were marked by the dynamism of late-medieval literary production, the theologians were also fully enmeshed in the scholastic world from the start. D'Ailly's career began with an aggressive *Sentences* commentary.[44] Gerson, for his part, demonstrates textbook precision complete with carefully enumerated lists in his licentiate disputation of 1392.[45] The rest of the chapter, in two dovetailed sections, considers this hybrid academic identity of humanist and scholastic and the way in which the discourses are not so easily distinguishable in the *opera* of the Navarrists. First, it looks to "hybrid polemics" wherein attacks against scholastics incorporate an unexpected

[43] The standard study is: Martin M. Tweedale, *Abailard on Universals* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1976).

[44] Alice Lamy, *La pensée de Pierre d'Ailly: un philosophe engagé du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 2013), 13.

[45] Jean Gerson, *De jurisdictione spirituali*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 3, l'œuvre magistrale*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962). *Horribile dictu*, we lack any text from Gerson's (externally attested) commentary on the *Sentences*. With this in mind, our textual record of Gerson's scholarly activity very likely underrepresents his degree of activity in the philosophical weeds of these disputes.

mixture of humanist talking points alongside a deep engagement with scholastic-philosophical semantics and theories of mind. Second, it considers "hybrid hermeneutics," my term for the apparently scholastic discussions of language and mind that likewise bear unexpected features, more associated with humanist rhetorical theory.

1.2 Hybrid Polemics

The Navarrists were active participants in the polemical back and forth of humanists and scholastics. This chapter does not seek to explore the precise views of d'Ailly, Gerson, or de Clamanges on isolated disputed points, but rather their synthesis of rhetorical *topoi* and scholastic disputes over philosophies of psychology and language to craft criticisms of the scholastic university's methods. Therefore, this section identifies shared characteristics across two Navarrist texts aimed against scholastic opponents. First, de Clamanges' treatise on academic theology (a letter circulated later as *De studio theologico*), previously interpreted as a straightforward call for a more practical and simple theology geared toward producing good works, will be shown to integrate humanistic talking points with nuanced criticisms of theological method vis-à-vis philosophy of language. Second, Gerson's *Contra curiositatem studientium* will be analyzed, revealing a sustained integration of scholastic argument amid a chorus of typical humanist lines of critique.[46] In sum, the Navarrists use humanist lines of attack, buttressed by scholastic-philosophical accounts of language, to create a hybrid discourse wherein

[46] These texts are not being treated in chronological order. Their ordering rather is aimed to make the proliferation of humanist modes of argumentation readily apparent, and it thus begins with the least scholastic of the sources. As a proviso, this argument is consequently not one that argues for a specific line of transmission or development internal to the Collège de Navarre. On the contrary, it aims to elucidate a commonly practiced hermeneutics that can be identified—*mutatis mutandis*—across the Navarrists' works.

humanist and scholastic lines of reasoning are mixed to offer consequently internal critiques to the scholastic project.

De Clamanges' treatise *De studio theologico* foregrounds his two best-known characteristics: his humanist literary aspirations and his insistence on personal moral reformation.[47] The treatise is addressed to a Jean de Piémont, a bachelor in theology at the University of Paris. De Clamanges had written him another letter, in which he enjoined Piémont to attend to rhetoric alongside logic and dialectic, which too many theologians had spurned and thus needlessly fractured their knowledge: "Moreover, people of our time—effetely educated and neither seeking out nor even putting up with any sort of effort—want to separate out these disciplines [*scientias*]."[48] This imagery of fracturing a simple unity will recur throughout *De studio theologico*. While broadly an appeal for Piémont to embrace a pastoral vocation as a theologian, de Clamanges develops standard humanist calls for personal virtue and a rejection of

[47] Christopher Bellitto, in the one English-language monograph on de Clamanges, argues at length that this concern for personal reformation is a distinctive hallmark of de Clamanges, which departs from the more institutional reformation *in capite et membris* advocated for by d'Ailly and Gerson. See: Christopher M. Bellitto, *Nicolas de Clamanges: Spirituality, Personal Reform, and Pastoral Renewal on the Eve of the Reformations* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001). While this reading perhaps insufficiently attends to the other Navarrists' extensive writings on personal and moral reform (as subsequent, unpublished conference papers by Bellitto underscore), it argues convincingly that this view of reform was of central import to de Clamanges throughout his life. This study, focused as it is on personal reform, does not consider the philosophico-theological aspects of de Clamanges' œuvre. In this reading of *De studio theologico*, I will demonstrate that de Clamanges operates with a theory of language that resonates with those of his fellow Navarrists; such a philosophy of language undergirds the hermeneutics of contingency espoused directly by d'Ailly and Gerson.

[48] *Ms. H 86 de Montpellier*, fol. 150v: "Nostri autem temporis homines, delicatius educati nec tanti laboris appetentes aut etiam patientes, eas volunt scientias sectari." Quoted in Ornato, *Jean Muret et ses amis Nicolas de Clamanges et Jean de Montreuil: contribution à l'étude des rapports entre les humanistes de Paris et ceux d'Avignon (1394-1420)*, 39, n. 165.

curiosity alongside a complex account of language clearly indebted to his Parisian training.[49] His self-proclaimed distance from the scholastics protests too much.

The text begins with an appeal to turn to the apostolic age as a model for theological activity in his own day. One needs to look to this exemplum, claims de Clamanges, for "who would dare call bad that which, according to apostolic testimony, the Lord established in his Church?"[50] These apostles had various callings, as "some were prophets, others evangelists, yet others pastors and doctors."[51] The final pairing is intentionally construed: no true pastor is not also a doctor, nor is any true doctor not a pastor. De Clamanges creatively invokes (presumably scholastic) grammarians to argue the latter point:

> Grammarians say (and say rightly!) that these terms [pastor and doctor] come forth from active verbs to signify the action of an established habit. And this, in my opinion at least, means nothing other than that those, who are called such things because of the regularity and intensity of their carrying out this habit, must be characterized by that action, which fittingly their name assumes. As a result, it is necessary that they readily, willingly, and eagerly are able to carry out that task when and wherever there is need for it, just like a worker in any given trade would be ready.[52]

[49] Cecchetti has underscored the importance of style and language, especially vis-à-vis Petrarchan humanism, to de Clamanges, but he does not address de Clamanges' philosophy of language. See: Dario Cecchetti, *Il primo umanesimo francese* (Torino, Italy: Albert Meynier, 1987), 51–54.

[50] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 105. "Quis audeat malum dicere quod Dominus in sua Ecclesia, apostolico testimonio, instituit?"

[51] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 105. "…apostolos, quosdam, prophetas, alios evangelistas, alios pastores et doctores."

[52] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 105. "Dicunt grammatici, et proprie dicunt, verbalia ista [pastores et doctores] actiuis a verbis exorta actum significare in habitum conuersum, quod mea quidem opinione nichil aliud est nisi quod illi qui tales dicuntur frequentia et assiduitate operandi habitum debent illius actionis que suo nomini congruit inuisse, vt apte, prompte, faciliter vbi et quotiens opus est illam exequi possint, quemadmodum in omni artificio facile operator."

Punning on the technical language of grammatical instruction (*congruo, conversus*), de Clamanges suggests that a truly pedantic doctor would need to actively edify other Christians in the knowledge of theology.

With little more than a rhetorical handwave, de Clamanges specifies that theologian is a synonym for preacher and defines the goal of that office to be an exemplary model of a godly life grounded "not just in doctrine but in works."[53] Preachers who do not offer good examples, "which inspire more than words, drain any force from their preaching."[54] Much of the rest of the treatise reiterates similar definitions of theology or preaching, alongside criticisms of its foil: scholastic theology.[55]

Accordingly, a criticism of curiosity develops alongside the positive model of theological study endorsed by de Clamanges. He warns, "The sower of words should not so watchfully attend to the cultivation of the form or elaborate artifice of speech, rather than [taking care] that there will be that healthy and incorruptible root [of love]."[56] Too many theologians do just that, preferring the sophistry of *quaestiones* to the apostolic theology of the scriptural texts.[57]

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[53] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 111–12. "At theologum sive predicatorem—hec enim pro eodem habeo—in primis pertinent bene secundum Deum vivere, in mandatorumque eius obseruatione morumque compositione formam ceteris ac speculum se prebere, vt ad Christi imitationem qui, vt legimus, cepit facere et docere non a doctrina sed ab opera incipiat, queque alios agere monet prior ipsa agat."

[54] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 112. "…nec, dum recta docet et perusersa facit, operum exempla, qua plus verbis excitant, vim sue predicationis euacuent."

[55] For (non-exhuastive) examples, consider: de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*. "Illa est vera Scientia que theologum decet, quamque omnis debet theologus expetere, que non modo intellectum instruat sed infundat simul atque imbuat affectum," 120; "subtilia non utilia," 123; "Quis non intelligat vtilius esse errores de cordibus expelli quam de codicibus?" 132.

[56] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 115. "Nec tanta debet vigilantia verbi seminator ad cultum aut formam sermonis curiosumve artificium attendere, quam vt sana et incorrupta sit radix [caritatis] illa."

[57] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 118. "Quocirca miror theologos nostri temporis paginas Divinorum Testamentorum ita negligenter legere et in nescio quarum satis sterilium

"Most scholastics" spurn the authority of church teachings,[58] and they would even prefer to teach other scholastics and practice disputation than to preach or be active in parish ministry.[59] Especial criticism is leveled at those who see non-Christian philosophers (presumably those in the classical and Islamic traditions) as providing better knowledge and methods than the Christian gospel.[60]

However, he moves beyond these fairly standard humanist tropes of moral living and practical knowledge to raise questions about the limits of words and the mind. A rhetorical question posed near the opening of the text provides the link: "What is more foreign to the nature of things than making a blind person a watchman, a mute or speechless person a doctor, or a wolf or thief a pastor?"[61] Clamanges takes the image of a shepherding wolf—building on the Matthean warning[62]—and links it to questions of language. The greedy wolf, shorthand for the

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subtilitatum indagine sua ingenia conterere, vtque verbis vtar apostolicis, languere circa questiones ac pugnas verborum, quod sophistarum est non theologorum."

[58] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 119–20. "Nunc autem plerosque videmus scolasticos Sacrarum inconcussa testimonia Litterarum tam tenuis estimare momenti vt ratiocinationem ab auctoritate ductam velut inertem et minime acutam sibilo ac subsannatione irrideant, quasi sint maioris ponderis que fantasia humani ymaginationis adinvenit quamque divinitas celitus aperuit."

[59] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 125. "…videamus quid prestabilius salubriusque existimandum sit, vtrumque zelo salutis animarum officium sedule predicationis apud populum exercere, an iugiter in loco studii post gradum magisterii adeptum legendo disputandoque et scolasticos instruendo residere."

[60] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 131. "Quis nisi insanus dixerit tantum fructum doctorem gentium in aliquot studio legendo facere potuisse quantum in tot orbis partibus evangelizando profuit, qui ab Iherusalem per circuitum vsque ad Illiricum Christi Euangelium repleuit? …Non dyaletici argumentatores in acutis sillogismis, non suauiloqui oratores in persuausibilibus humane sapientie verbis, non tumidi philosophi in sectarum atque opinionum varietatibus fidem Christi gentium pectoribus infuderunt."

[61] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 106. "Quid magis est a rerum natura alienum quam de ceco speculatorem facere, de muto et elingui doctorem, de lupo vel fure pastorem?"

[62] Matthew 7:15, Vulgate: "Attendite a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces." Cf. Jeremeiah 5:6, Ezekiel 22:27, Luke 10:3, John 10:12.

pastorally disinclined scholastic, is implied to fail both linguistically and perceptually. This is not just a criticism of academic jargon and a call for eloquence.

De Clamanges is boldly wading into scholastic arguments about philosophy of mind and language. In a central passage, he espouses a moral account of language that leaves little room for ratiocination:

> And at the end of the Psalm [it reads]: "Lo! He will give to his voice a voice of virtue." The Spirit gives to his voice a voice of virtue, because he breathes the voice and impresses virtue, which proceeds out of love and not from the dust of cupidity or the gut of vainglory. And he considers that spoken voice of his to be none other than what love sends forth, rather than whatever an opportunity for some earthly ambition elicits. Consider the word of Christ: "For it is not you speaking, but rather the Spirit of your Father who is speaking in you."[63]

Here, spoken language (the voice) emerges from an internal, non-material source; this comports with virtually all late-medieval accounts. However, the natural human mind is not the source, but rather the Spirit (at least in this exceptional case of true theological declaration). Adherence to indwelling love becomes a metric for truth more than logical parsimony. De Clamanges is taking the fight to the scholastics' own turf.

But he presses further, divorcing language from its frequent bedfellow: external reality. Much of the medieval tradition followed a generally Platonic theory of language, exemplified in the fourteenth century by the modists and Scotists. They argued that the internal structures of the mind, and concomitantly grammar, paralleled those of reality and nature—a view shared fundamentally by Aristotelians like Albert and Thomas, even if they differed on the priority of

[63] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 114–15. "Et in fine Psalmi: Ecce dabit voci sue vocem virtutis. Dat Spiritus voci sue vocem virtutis, quia illa voci aspirat et virtutem imprimit que ex caritate procedit non ex puluere cupiditatis vel vento inanis glorie, illamque suam non loquentis vocem deputat quam caritas emittit, non terrene alicuius ambitionis occasio elicit, iuxta verbum Christi: Non enim vos estis qui loquimini, sed Spiritus Patris vestri qui loquitur in vobis."

one over the other.[64] However, the terminist alternative, the standard of which was born by Gregory of Rimini and Jean Buridan in Paris, posited that language, both mental and spoken or written, is prior to meaning and thereby, due to its contingent nature, meaning is intensely variable.[65] De Clamanges' pinning of the mind's activity to charity or the lack thereof works parallel to such a terminist critique. The mind has internal phenomena that do not neatly track with the world "out there," and indeed divine intervention is called for to provide clarity to language.

Practicing what he preaches, de Clamanges points to the testimony of revelation: "To be sure, 'mouth' in the Holy Scriptures often is posited not for the external body part but rather for the heart, just like even 'word' frequently is understood not as spoken language but rather as a mental concept."[66] De Clamanges, in essence, is giving a crash course in what the scholastics called supposition: how words mean things in a variety of different ways, frequently linked to

[64] While some early Christian authorities, notably Augustine, held to a traditional Platonic theory of language wherein ideas in the mind of God cause human concepts which cause words—linking language to actually existent things necessarily—, critiques drawn from the Arabic reception of Aristotle gained traction in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Such critiques underscored how individual words or statements do not follow from what we know. Anyone can speak of apparently non-existent counterfactuals and theorists can use logic to draw conclusions formally that they do not yet grasp cognitively. As a result, those seeking to preserve some sort of language realism in the Latin west turned to modism, the doctrine that certain modes of thinking and organizing concepts are universal within humanity. The modists discerned these specific modes, typically, by grammatical analysis, e.g., the ubiquity of passive and active forms across languages. Thus, modists conceded that while specific words or phrases may not be linked to real things, the structure of human language and ratiocination as a whole certainly is.

[65] Thus, the terminists took the Arabic complication of intellection and language further by insisting that meaning is built up from terms, rather than flowing out of prior divine or human ideas. The effect was an insistent turn to context, of speaker and audience, of the parts of speech in an utterance, and of possible referents of various terms. Signification, and in consequence meaning, are adjudicated after the fact and are not contained in or dictated necessarily by a statement.

[66] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 116. "Os nempe in Scripturis Sacris sepe non pro organo exteriore sed pro corde ponitur, sicut etiam verbum frequenter non pro lingue sermone sed pro mentis accipitur conceptu."

concepts and not things out in the world; meaning does not reside in the word itself. He even implies that attending to externalities tokens a departure from the inner light of love:

> What else is that knowledge, which has outfitted every pious person with mere intelligence after casting aside feeling (*affectus*), other than kindling for vainglory and lamps without oil—the oil which the virgins foolishly delighted in and on account of which they were excluded from the King of Heaven's entry in exchange for human praise? That knowledge carried off Lucifer, once impressed with the light of heavenly understanding, to that insane pride, for which he was cast down from the heights of the heavens to the deepest of hells.[67]

The lapsarian imagery, creatively projected onto the usually interpreted-as-apocalyptic parable of the virgins, not only heightens the stakes of his moral theory of language but draws up the notions of fragmentation from a prior unity that de Clamanges continually works to pin on the scholastics. While he is largely dismissing scholastic thought whole cloth as insufficiently attendant to morality, ignorant of the need for divinely revealed love, and too concerned with the diversity of externalities, de Clamanges does so on very precise philosophical points that had been highlighted by terminist critics: the suspect nature of both the structures of human intellection and words *per se* as source of meaning. His take down has the marks of an inside job.

In sum, de Clamanges declares scholastic ratiocination bankrupt for theology, and he lauds the revealed words of the Spirit as the sole foundation for theological investigation. Nevertheless, he does so in a way attentive to the nuances of scholastic disputations on language. Similarly, on the one hand, Gerson likewise sees the sinful mind as unable to gain certainty through rational investigation—a typically humanist critique. On the other however, he harbors

[67] de Clamanges, *De studio theologico*, 121. "Quid aliud est illa Scientia, que omni pio exuta afectu solam intelligentiam instruit, nisi fomentum vane glorie et lampas sine oleo, qua Regni Celorum ingressu fatue virgines laudibus hominum delectate excluduntur? Illa Luciferum, luce cognitionis adeo sublimiter insignitum, in illam insanissimam extulit superbiam qua asummis celorum ad ima inferorum precipitatus est."

skepticism about the availability of systematic certainty even through revelation and accordingly traces a theory of mind and language that would be coherent to his scholastic audience.

This is on full display in Gerson's *Contra curiositatem studentium*, an incisive criticism of scholastic culture given as a pair of addresses to the theology faculty of the University in November 1402. Treating the text of Mark 1:15 ("Repent, and believe in the Gospel!"), Gerson avers that this phrase, a "model of great humility and unity," should be taken as the starting point for any theological undertaking. [68] Gerson, over the course of the first lecture, explicates this moral framework for theological study and proceeds to unleash a scathing attack on (especially Aristotelian) philosophical curiosity as "the whole and foremost root of errors."[69] In the second lecture he presents further theses concerning the effects of this curiosity on the study of theology, culminating in an argument that the present papal schism is the natural outgrowth of such a corrupt seed.

Gerson's strictures come to center on questions of language. His case proceeds by linking curiosity to vicious pride, taking a number of authorities (from Aristotle to Augustine) to task for succumbing to it. This pride is baseless, because the human mind wounded by sin lacks the capacity to perceive truth. This noetic weakness finds a parallel in the structure of human language. Language, contingent as it is upon finite ratiocination, cannot deliver the logical certainty that many scholastic philosophers and theologians expect of it. Gerson's ideal faculty of theology would be distinguished by a reticence to articulate new teachings, a wariness of semantic excess, and a critical appraisal of language's inherent contingency. To put it otherwise,

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[68] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 224. “cujus [Joannis] praedicatio a poenitentia similiter inchoavit, data in hoc magnae humilitatis et unitatis forma praedicatoribus.”

[69] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 232. “Haec est, fateor, tota et praecipua radix errorum in istis philosophantibus." Cf. 232: "Ex hoc errore praeterea omnis ad Deum religio et gratitudo tollitur.”

Gerson's well-documented doctrinal conservativism, on remarkable display in this text, depends on unexpectedly cutting-edge philosophy of language and psychology.

I turn now to a closer reading of the course of Gerson's argument. As his gloss on the Markan text indicates, Gerson takes the dichotomy of humility and pride as a structuring lens for his treatment of curiosity. He links curiosity, the root of error, to pride, the radical sin: "Continually, curiosity for knowing—to the extent it swells up in pride—is knowing easily; this was clearly the case for our first parents."[70] Coupled with the aforementioned linking of repentance to humility, Gerson sets a thesis for the whole work: academic overreach is coterminous with grasping pride. The stakes of abstract philosophical debate are thus resituated within the practicalities of virtuous Christian living (as they were in de Clamanges). Gerson's definition of curiosity reinforces this approach. It is "the vice that causes a person, setting aside more useful things, to turn their effort toward things that are of little use, unattainable, or harmful."[71] Clearly, the audience is to repent of this vice, as the consequences are grave. He laments, "Woe, woe to the world because of these monstrous and terrifying plagues!"[72] Rhetorically echoing a biblical vice list, he itemizes the "unfortunate offspring" of curiosity: "strife, disputation, impudence, obstinacy, defense of error, love of one's own view, clinging to the opinions of oneself or one's friends, and finally offense and contempt for the simple and

[70] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 229. "Subinde curiositas sciendi quantum abundet in superbia scire perfacile est quod in primis parentibus liquido constitit."

[71] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 230. "Curiositas est vitium quo dimissis utilioribus homo convertit studium suum ad minus utilia vel inattingibilia sibi vel noxia."

[72] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 229. "Vae, vae mundo ab his pestibus monstruosis et horrendis."

disdain for every humble doctrine."[73] The homiletic framing of the work signals Gerson sees the subsequent lines of criticism to be more than merely academic.

Gerson uses this as the logical starting point for two remarkable lines of counter- (and intra-)scholastic critique. First, proud curiosity becomes the warrant for a somewhat revisionist treatment of the received canon of both philosophical and theological authorities. Second, it grounds a deeper argument about noetic consequences of sin. Each of these will be considered in turn.

Academic curiosity, according to Gerson, has a long pedigree: "Curiosity so deceived the ancient philosophers that it must be dreaded, lest a similar curiosity ensnare the theologians of our time."[74] He notes too that this is a perennial complaint, stretching back to Seneca's letters and reiterated by none other than Hugh of St. Victor.[75] Gerson even suggests that Dionysian apophaticism was meant as a check on scholastic curiosity.[76] He doubles down on this genealogical image of curiosity, identifying it and novelty (*singularitas*) as the twin "scholastic"

[73] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 230. "progenies infausta multiplex est super numerum: ibi contentio, disceptatio, protervia, pertinacia, erroris defensio, amor proprii sensus, immansio in opinionibus vel suis vel suorum: denique scandalizatio et contemptus simplicium atque omnis doctrinae humilis abominatio."

[74] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 230. "Philosophos antiquos sicut curiositas fefellit, ita formidandum est ne theologos nostri temporis ipsa similis curiositas decipiat."

[75] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 230–31. "De errore philosophantium causato ex curiositate nimia loquitur Seneca in Epistola de liberalibus artibus, et Hugo melius in prooemio commenti sui super Angelicam hierarchiam."

[76] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 233. "Exposita parte prima nostrae considerationis, quod curiositas non contenta suis finibus fefellit philosophos, par similitudo deducere potest esse formidandum ne talis curiositas theologos decipiat. Constat enim quod doctrina fidei quamvis philosophiam superet habet terminos suos praedefinitos in sacris litteris nobis revalits, ultra quos nihil audendum esse definire vel tradere beatus Dionysius expressit primo de Divinis nominibus; Universaliter, inquit, non est audendum dicere neque etiam cogitare de supersubstantiali et occulta deitate, praeter ea quae diuinitus nobis ex sanctis eloquiis sunt expressa."

(!) children of pride.[77] He shows the same pairing of lapsarian and multiplicative imageries as de Clamanges in his tracing of scholastic vice.

Gerson provides an extensive litany of how curiosity and novelty's necessary fragmentation have infected the universities. Scholastics now ask ridiculous questions following in the footsteps of Aristotle's curiosity, like "Is the world eternal?," which should be neatly answered by church teaching.[78] He notes how the Franciscans ignore Bonaventure, chasing new theories instead of the truth they already had.[79] In a similar manner, he laments how scholars obsess with providing new answers to questions, however contradictory, and thus multiplying more falsehoods.[80] In a rhetorical move still used by critics of academic excess today, Gerson reproduces a disconcertingly jargon-laden and unnatural quotation from Heinrich of Oyta:

> Scotus, the second distinction, seventh and final question: this distinction can be called a virtual distinction, because that which holds such a distinction within itself does not hold one thing and another, but rather it is one thing holding them virtually or especially as if two realities; I call it a formal identity where that which is said to be the same in this way—this includes that by which it is the same in this way in its own formal reason and in itself primarily. Therefore, ought this distinction every be conceded? It is better that this negative be used: "this is not formally the same," rather than "this is distinct in this and that way." The third of three distinctions, first question: and if you object, "Mary

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[77] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 238. "Superbiae vero duas esse filias scholasticis adversas pridie docuimus: curiositatem scilicet et singularitatem, ab sacra Theologiae Facultate et a studentibus in ea removendas."

[78] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 232. "Hinc fortassis sobrie sentiens Aristoteles hanc propositionem inter problemata reposuit in Physicis: utrum mundus sit aeternus?"

[79] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 231. "…quemadmodum pulcherrimo et evidentissimo compendio divinus Bonaventura deducit in suo Itinerario mentis in Deum; qui libellus omni laude superior est: nec admirari sufficio qualiter Patres et Fratres Minores dimisso tanto doctore, qualem nescio si unquam Studium Parisiense habuerit." Gerson's distaste for Scotistic "formalizing" probably underlies this jab.

[80] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 239. "Si dixerit aliquis, exempli gratia, de Scoto vel de Ripa, vel alio doctore Fratrum Minorum: doctor iste minus bene sensit in hac et in hac materia; videbimus protinus secundum varietatem Ordinum varietates affectionum et gustuum, his indignantibus et contraniti paratis, aliis congratulantibus atque faventibus, ut vel dominum Hugolinum vel de Tarentasia mox intuebimur, mutata esse omnia versa vice mortalium. Haec nonne sunt indicia vanitatis quaedam, vestita singularitate intrinsecus, et palliate extrinsecus; umbra veritatis afficit, et non aut nuda aut sola veritas adamatur."

> from her first moment is understood to be truly just by nature," I say, "No! Rather she is not understood to be just *and* it is not just a lie of the abstractors!" See the second book of the *Physics*: 1) not everyone not understanding this will understand not this—like when one who does not understand a human to be an animal and understands it to not be an animal; 2) abstraction cannot exist without a lie, namely abstracting from one thing what essentially belongs to it.[81]

Gerson, lampooning the perceived ridiculousness of scholastic jargon, certainly plays the part of a late-medieval humanist well. One can almost hear Gerson affecting a voice for this passage while delivering the address to the University—he (and some of his audience) certainly knew Heinrich who taught at Paris in the late 1370s.

One antidote is a call for discipline, consonant with the humanist exhortation for practical virtue. Virtue is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for truth. Knowing the scholastics' deference to Aristotle, he invokes the Philosopher's own account of the passions: hope, fear, grief, hate, and the like all must be brought under control if one's mind and soul are to act effectively.[82] The imagery is of these passions trespassing on the proper order of the mind. In response, the Christian is to cultivate penitence, which arrays the four cardinal virtues in a

[81] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 241–42. "[Doctor magister Henricus de Hoyta… ad concordiam conatus est extrema reducere, quaestione septima primi, corollario ultimo:] 'Scotus distinctio secunda, quaestione septima et ultima: potest vocari haec distinctio distinctio virtualis, quia illud quod habet talem distinctionem in se, non habet rem et rem, sed est una res habens virtualiter sive praeemeninter quasi duas realitates; voco identitatem formalem ubi illud quod dicitur sic idem, includit illud cui sic est idem in ratione sua formali, et per se primo. Numquid ergo debet concede ista distinction? Melius est uti ista negative: hoc non est formaliter idem, quam hoc est sic et sic distinctum. Distinctio tertia tertii quaestione prima. Et si arguas: Maria in primo instanti naturae vere intelligitur justa, dico quod non; sed non intelligitur justa et abstrahentium non est mendacium; secundo Physicorum, quia non omnis non intelligens hoc intelliget non hoc, ut non intelligens hominem esse animal, intelligit ipsum non animal, quia tunc posset esse abstractio sine mendacio, auferendo ab aliquo quod sibi essentialiter inest." Note that Gerson even teasingly prefaces this quotation with an uncharacteriscally precise citation.

[82] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 236. "Tertius exercitus est passionum omnium, quae sunt spes, metus, moeror, odium et similes, de quibus tradit Aristoteles IIo Ethicorum, et IIo Rethoricae."

defensive formation against such passionate incursions.[83] However, attention to virtue is not just a first step in pursuing knowledge, it is also the end; Gerson approvingly invokes Augustine's definition of the theological as that which develops the theological virtues, especially love.[84] One must discard the grasping lies of curiosity and novelty and pursue the practicalities of living a loving and virtuous life. They are chains that keep us bound. But even if one is to cast them off, one is still trapped within the prison: that of the limits of human understanding.

Thus, Gerson proceeds to found a deeper argument about the noetic consequences of sin. "Thrust too into the dark prison of the stinking, corrupt flesh," the "rational person" no longer can perceive any "light of heaven" without penitence's mediation of the "light of faith."[85] At this juncture, Gerson certainly comports with the "anti-intellectual" label occasionally applied to him. However, he clarifies these remarks with characteristic academic subtlety. Without divine aid, "one is more blind to these [truths] than a blind person is to colors, and less learned than someone uneducated in the disciplines of metaphysics or mathematics."[86] At stake, then, are the perceptual shortcomings of the mind and its ability to construct linguistic systems. Gerson works these out explicitly as questions pertaining to language theory.

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[83] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 237. "Milites quartae aciei sunt virtutes cardinales ordinatae instar tetragoni: prudentia, temperantia, fortitudo, justitia. Sub quibus plurimae virtutes numerantur, quibus omnibus utitur ipsa poenitentia, nunc una, nunc alia."

[84] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 240. "Fides, spes et caritas, quemadmodum solae nominantur, et sunt virtutes theologicae, ita materia illa proprie dicenda est theologica quae fidem aedificat, spem erigit, caritatem inflammat."

[85] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 225. "Est itaque rationalis homo post peccatum velut servus nequam, reus criminis laesae majestatis projectus in exilium hujus vallis miseriae, detrusus quoque in carcerem tenebrosum carnis corruptae faetulentae; ubi in tenebris sedens lumen caeli non videt, nisi reconcilietur prius per poenitentiam, quam esse recte dicimus ostiariam liberantem nos a vinculis peccatorum, qua mediante potest lumen fidei ad animam clarius radiare."

[86] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 233. "nullus dubitaverit quin ad illas caecior sit quam caecus ad colores et non minus idiota quam idiota aliquis ad metaphysicam aut mathematicam disciplinam."

He advances a skeptico-empirical criticism that centers on alleging a disconnect between reality and our mental perception of it. He baldly says that the natural intellect avails little: "indeed, philosophical investigation, following the lead of natural ratiocination, is not able to get very far."[87] At issue is not so much the posited transcendence of such knowledge, but the noetic defects of the sinful mind. A human mind is grievously inclined to multiply deceptions as it lacks the perceptual capacity for discernment. Gerson pointedly states:

> If a blind person fusses about with an aggressive zeal for ratiocination and imagination and consequently concludes from some few small truths other truths not passed down to him, there is no one—I think—who would not deem that he would be deceived by facile and dense sophistry.[88]

Penitence is the gatekeeper of this noetic prison, alone able to open the door to the incarcerated soul and make external light available to it.[89] While one's mind can be active on its own, in such a state it would never perform any activity that gets outside of the tiny cell of the soul. The affects must be stirred to recognize the state of imprisonment and cry out in penitence.

Late in the treatise, Gerson connects this criticism of human understanding explicitly to criticisms of certain philosophical doctrines:

> Again, Plato wanted to abstract forms [*quidditates*] from motion and from matter, time, and place and other externalities, and he posited eternal ideas of things—like the distinct

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[87] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 231. "Philosophica siquidem perscrutatio ductum ratiocinatonis naturalis insequens nequit in immensum progredi."

[88] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 233. "Si caecus iste satagat cum studio vehementi ratiocinando et phantasiando elicere consequenter ex istis paucis veritatibus alias veritates sibi non traditas, nemo est (ut opinor) qui non arbitretur quod ipse facili et crebra paralogizatione falleretur."

[89] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 226. "Ipsa [poenitentia] est ostiaria erigens de profundo carceris animam damnatam; elevans caput suum, intellectum scilicet, ad videndum lumen coeli, ut tandem sedeat cum principibus et solium gloriae teneat. Ipsa catenas ferreas cupiditatum, ipsa funes peccatorum infelicem animam circumplectentes disrumpit; ipsa aegros rationis oculos tergit, sanat et illustrat; ipsa superiors fenestras animae aperit, depulsis quantum status carceris hujus miser patitur, nebulis volitantium phantasmatum, et a confusione horrida carnalium desideriorum ab eorumque tumultu separat animam, elevans eam in specula vel arce vel apice ipsius simplicis intelligentiae."

> idea of the human, which was the form of all humans, or the idea of the good and eternal, real universals outside of the soul and God… In the same way scholars [today] posit eternal forms of things, outside of the soul, which are not God, neither produced nor producible by God, or able to be destroyed by God.[90]

Spurning strong forms of realism, Gerson signals his commitment to theological voluntarism in his desire to preserve the prerogative of divine will. Further, he commits to a terminist line of thinking: there is not some underlying metaphysical order of the sort that we can count on to structure our thoughts. There is not necessarily any one-to-one correlation between our mental concepts and the external realities they purport to explain. Gerson indicates that he empathizes with the desire for certainty these endeavors grow out of but cautions that seeking something does not mean it is there.[91]

Language here is contingent, variable, and difficult to pin down with certainty. This reinforces a line of argument Gerson traces elsewhere in the treatise: language can obscure as much as clarify. He gives the example of how classical philosophers of peripatetic and Stoic varieties agree on the four basic passions, but their differing technical vocabularies make that a

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[90] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 246. "Rursus Plato volens abstrahere quidditates a motu et a materia et tempore et loco et ceteris extrinsecis, posuit ideas rerum aeternas sicut ideam hominis separatam quae erat quidditas omnium hominum, ideam boni et universalia realia extra animam et Deum aeterna, si virum sit quod ei imponitur. Quidam ex nostris volentes talibus abstractionibus uti, corruunt in hunc errorem non solum peripatheticae sed catholicae scholae contrarium. Ponunt itaque quidditates rerum aeternas, extra animam, quae nec sunt Deus, nec productae a Deo, nec producibiles, aut annihilabiles a Deo contra Articulum Parisiensem tempore Guillelmi Parisiensis et Bonaventurae, sicut recitat."

[91] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 246–47. "Alioquin fictus esset, inquiunt, noster conceptus speculativus et quidditativus, si non tale aliquid sibi in re corresponderet quale concipit. Sed non accepi tales positiones vel recitare vel refellere: de aliquibus solum admonuisse satis fuerit. Forte controversiam totam solveremus, distinctio facta de analogia hujus nominis, ens, quae tam late a sancto Thoma, supra quartum Metaphysicae in principio ponitur, ut ad possibilia et objectalia, immo ad negationes et privationes eam dicat extendi, sicut Gregorius complexe significabilia ad tertium entitatis modum resolvere conatus est. Ita forte contrarietates de relationibus an sint res distinctae vel non, concordaretur ex facili apud illos qui non tam contendere quam verum quaerere parati sunt." The repetition of "perhaps" and subjunctive verb forms highlight the tentative air of the whole endeavor for Gerson.

less than obvious consonance.[92] This multiplication of terminology is for Gerson a key diagnostic sign of novelty; there is no reason to coin a new term if an established one will do. He gives the example of Paris's suppressing of some of Raymond Llull's texts, which Gerson attributes to Llull's "having terms used by no other doctor."[93] This wariness of new words, resonant with a post-Ockham instinct to cut through accretions of constructs that presume to stand in for reality, is not just a symptom of Gerson's conservatism. Rather, Gerson shows himself to be decidedly *modernus* in his identification of language not as a clear step on the way to truth, but rather as the focal terrain over which academic debates about truth are carried out.

Language is a constituent part of the problem of human uncertainty, not the clear solution to it. In the final thesis of the work, Gerson invokes a telling biblical passage:

> Presumptuous curiosity and novelty in every science cause a division from accessibility and the consequent destruction of that science. The edifice of the tower of Babel proffers to us an example of this consideration. That was the tower which the division of languages confused and destroyed.[94]

Many medievals—particularly of the modist variety—looked to Babel as a challenge, an aspirational call to resolve the confusion of human communication through a systematic and coherent universal language. Gerson sees it as just the opposite. Babel marks the necessary

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[92] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 241. "Dicit Lactantius de quatuor passionibus loquens an in virum justum cadunt, quod Peripatetici sub compendio attingunt veritatem, quam longo circuitu verborum Stoici vix assequuntur." Gerson himself in fact subscribes to a modified Stoic theory of the passions. See, Chapter Four, "The Theologian as Poet," pp. 177–178.

[93] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 245. "Ex hac consideratione maxime moti sunt magistri nostri et ego ne doctrina illa Raymundi Lulli publiciter; habet enim terminos a nullo doctore usitatos."

[94] Gerson, *Contra curiositatem*, 248. "Praesumptuosa curiositas et singularitas in omni scientia causant de facili scissuram et ex consequenti destructionem in eadem. Figuram hujus considerationis praebet nobis aedificatio ill aturris Babel; quam linguarum scissura confudit et perdidit; sicut per contrarium unitas linguarum ecclesiasticum aedificium stabilivit."

futility of any human language that aspires to universality. Presumptuous language will get one nowhere.

In this regard, Gerson fits with the humanist tendency to cast doubt on the accessibility of absolute truth. Yet, as we shall see below, Gerson carries these conclusions even into his technical philosophy of language. Babel does not call for people to continue building it, but rather to tear down its arrogant edifice. Half-built Babel heralds the inauguration of its own deconstruction.

1.3 Hybrid Hermeneutics

More striking than the willingness of institutionally scholastic thinkers like de Clamanges and Gerson to sound humanist lines of criticism is the Navarrist incorporation of humanist ideas, such as a tentative posture toward obtaining absolute truth and a privileging of rhetoric, even into their technical philosophies of language. D'Ailly and Gerson both wrote extensively, in traditional scholastic genres, on questions of psychology, language, and metaphysics. Yet their humanist wariness of systematic language shines through. They carefully argue for a contingent account of language, presenting an internal critique to scholasticism. First, we shall look at the *Destructiones modorum significandi*, a synopsis of terminist philosophy of language traditionally attributed to d'Ailly. It evidences a circumspect attitude toward language and what one can conclude from it. Second, two Gersonian treatises shall be considered, which both labor to articulate a coherent account of non-systematic language. Collectively, the account of language presented here demands what I term a hermeneutics of contingency.

The first treatise, the *Destructiones modorum significandi*, takes its impetus from the ubiquity of treatises titled *De modis significandi*. These works laid out the groundwork for an epistemic and linguistic theory to ground subsequent philosophical investigation (not dissimilar

to commentaries on the Lombard's *Sentences* in the faculty of theology). The phrase "modes of signifying" was popularized by the modists (*modistae*), who sought to articulate a singular set of rules that undergirded all human language. Attending to these rules allowed one's use of language to be wholly consonant with external reality on the basis of conformity with real, universal forms and substances. The speculative-grammatical tradition that came of age in the late thirteenth century, which in its strongest form alleged that grammatical proofs would obtain necessarily in nature, exemplifies this modist outlook.[95] D'Ailly and Gerson associate the term especially with Duns Scotus and his followers.

Thus when someone like d'Ailly—decidedly not a modist—invokes the phrase "modes of signifying" in the title of a work, it catches one's attention. D'Ailly's philosophical writings on language are marked by his training in the terminist tradition of Jean Buridan († c. 1361), a

[95] L.G. Kelly provides an introduction to the speculative-grammatical tradition: *The Mirror of Grammar: Theology, Philosophy and the Modistae* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2002), 1–10. Herein, he explains that "speculative" here refers to an analysis of cause and effect to identify the modes of something's existence, following the method of Aristotelian metaphysics; this presupposes that grammar is a natural science that describes realities independently existing. Speculative grammar is "a grammar whose agenda [is] parallel to that of metaphysics" (8). This parallelism requires one to posit a univocity of concepts across the various practitioners of a given discipline and a universal grammar that underlies all languages. It further empowers the model of *modi significandi*, which "[is] based on the categories seen as both qualities in nature, qualities perceived or modeled in the mind, and signified in the word" (10). Nevertheless, and of import in the case of the Navarrists, speculative-grammatical doctrines do not sit nicely with terminist commitments. Irène Rosier-Catach itemizes the distinctive grammatical teaching of the speculative grammarians concisely: "Cette doctrine peut être caractérisée par deux points essentiels: la constitution de la grammaire en tant que science, la tentative réalisation d'une grammaire indépendante de la signification… Il lui fait pour cela des principes spécifiques à partir desquels la grammaire sera établie par démonstration: ce sont des modes de signifier," *La grammaire spéculative des modistes* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1983), 9. This emphasis on discerning the *mode* of a discursive statement (sc. a non-particular, transferable structure of meaning) as requisite for a logical assessment of its significatory truth both privileges grammar vis-à-vis logic and posits an ontological basis for that relative status. Terminists, eager to privilege the local variability of the specific *terms* of a discursive statement rather than make recourse to (or, even worse, multiply) universals, stand in clear opposition to the speculative-grammatical tradition.

philosopher and twice-rector at the University of Paris who systematized (while of course modifying) William of Ockham's philosophical thought.[96] Buridan's *Treatise on Consequences* and *Summulae de Dialectica* were standard logical textbooks in late-medieval curricula, particularly in France and Germany.[97] More specifically, Buridan's chair at Paris saw him educating virtually all the masters in the arts faculty during the mid-fourteenth century. D'Ailly's own adherence to terminism of this sort is attested by his prolific output on logic, including *Conceptus*; *Insolubilia*; *Tractatus exponibilium (de anima, de oratione)*; *De arte obligandi*; and (likely) *Destructiones modorum significandi.* It is this last work that we shall treat as a précis of his logical thought.

The admittedly fraught question of the authorship of the *Destructiones* is well surveyed by Ludger Kaczmarek in his critical edition.[98] The traditional attribution to d'Ailly has been challenged by Sönke Lorenz on the basis of a preponderance of manuscripts lacking attribution in the colophon, geographically clustered in Germany, as well as a terminological preference for

[96] Indeed, one of Buridan's marked departures from Ockham is toward an even less realist account of language. While Ockham acknowledged the messiness of written or spoken language and its signification, he maintains that mental language—prior to the written or spoken—maintains a structural coherence that can allow one to "translate" a messy statement to a clearer, more logical form on the basis of our mental concepts. Buridan never treats mental language as qualitatively different from its spoken or written requires. Jack Zupko elucidates this *proprium* of Buridan's thought at a number of points: "Universal Thinking as Process: The Metaphysics of Change and Identity in John Buridan's *Intellectio* Theory," in *Later Medieval Metaphysics: Ontology, Language, and Logic*, ed. Rondo Keele and Charles Bolyard, Medieval Philosophy: Texts and Studies (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); "On the Several Senses of 'Intentio' in Buridan," in *Intentionality, Cognition, and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Gyula Klima, Medieval Philosophy: Texts and Studies (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); "Intellect and Intellectual Activity in Buridan's Psychology," in *Critical Essays on the Psychology of John Buridan*, ed. Gyula Klima, Historical-Analytical Studies on Nature, Mind, and Action (Berlin: Springer, 2017).

[97] For an overview of our (scant) knowledge of Buridan's life, as well as his place in the medieval logical tradition, see: Gyula Klima, *John Buridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–26.

[98] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*.

modi significandi language comparatively rare in the magisterial *Conceptus*; he proposes Thomas Maulfelt as an alternative author.[99] Nonetheless, one c. 1490-95 incunabulum, from Lyons, places the *Destructiones* alongside d'Ailly's *Conceptus* and *Insolubilia*.[100] Also, Marguerite Chappuis, Kaczmarek, and Olaf Pluta put forward a cautious, but noteworthy, case that the preamble of the *Destructiones* bears a stylistic affinity to d'Ailly's other logical works. This reinforces the sole manuscript attribution's reliability.[101] Moreover, Paul Vincent Spade's meticulous study on the *Conceptus* and *Insolubilia*, shows considerable points of continuity, despite some departure in language, between those works and the *Destructiones*.[102] Although I acknowledge Kaczmarek remains ultimately agnostic on the question of authorship after Lorenz's attack and recognizing with him the need for a sustained comparative study of pertinent *comparanda* to lay the question to rest, I find the weight of evidence sufficient to take d'Ailly as the provisional author.[103] Even if by Maulfelt or an anonymous master, the *Destructiones*

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[99] Sönke Lorenz, *Studium Generale Erfordense: zum Erfurter Schulleben im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1989), 230–36.

[100] Lorenz, *Studium Generale Erfordense: zum Erfurter Schulleben im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, 231.

[101] M. Chappuis, Ludger Kaczmarek, and Olaf Pluta, "Die philosophischen Schriften des Peter von Ailly. Authentizität und Chronologie," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 33, 600–604 (1986): 608–12.

[102] Paul Vincent Spade identifies a concept apparently unique to d'Ailly, which is wholly absent from the *Destructiones* despite being pertinent: the direct subordination of both written and spoken language to mental, rather than the former only by means of the latter. Pierre d'Ailly and Paul Vincent Spade, *Peter of Ailly. Concepts and Insolubles: An Annotated Translation*, Synthese Historical Library, (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1980), 115. Cf. Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 50. Spade also documents points of resonance between the *Conceptus* and *Insolubilia* and the *Destructiones*. For instance, §35 of the former differentiates mental terms from modes of signifying in a manner comparable to *Destructiones*. D'Ailly and Spade, *Peter of Ailly. Concepts and Insolubles: An Annotated Translation*, 106–07. Cf. Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 7–9. It should be noted that Spade's study presumes d'Ailly's authorship of the *Destructiones*.

[103] Accordingly, when discussing the *Destructiones*, I will use "d'Ailly" as shorthand for "the author of the treatise who has traditionally been identified as d'Ailly."

certainly presents an outlook thoroughly steeped in the logico-philosophical corpus of d'Ailly and late-fourteenth-century Paris.

The *Destructiones* advocates for a terminist account of language, insofar as it calls for attention to specific configuration of terms rather than logically prior ontological modes of signifying. D'Ailly here does not articulate any bold new innovations—his indebtedness to Buridan is apparent—as he does in the *Conceptus* and *Insolubilia*, But more striking than the conclusions drawn is d'Ailly's form of unfolding the argument. With his modification of the title, he at the outset adds a polemical edge to a frequently rote genre. "Destructiones" connotes dismantling or deconstruction more than destruction *per se*.[104] The formal arrangement of the text illustrates the operation d'Ailly has in mind. He prefaces the work succinctly:

> Myself shackled by the chain of nature, I feel such pity for the buried sciences that I am doing for others what I would want done for me by all of them if I were weighed down by the heap of modes of signifying. I will extend a helping hand, and those loosed by it from this immovable burden may go forth freely and lightly into a land far away from such modes of knowledge. So that this is carried out clearly, I will hold to this order of treatment:
> First, I will briefly recount the presuppositions and arguments of those positing these clearly delineated modes of signifying.
> Second, I will argue the contrary hypothesis along with its own arguments and proofs.
> And third, I will choose the way that *seems to me truer* for resolving the arguments of the contrary hypothesis.[105]

[104] Cf. Spade's rendering as "refutations" in: d'Ailly and Spade, *Peter of Ailly. Concepts and Insolubles: An Annotated Translation*, 107. n. 171

[105] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 6. "Naturae vinculo astrictus, non modicum in scientiis obrutis compatiens, ut aliis faciam, quod mihi vellem fieri ab eisdem multis mole modorum significandi oppressus, manum porrigam sublevantem, qua importabili onere exonerati in regionem scientiae talibus longinquam libere levius proficiscantur. Quod ut planius fiat, ordinem talem tenebo tractandi:/ Primo recitabo breviter radicalia ponentium tales modos significandi distinctos et eorum rationes./ Secundo opinionem contrariam cum suis rationibus et probationibus declarabo./ Et tertio eligam viam apparentem mihi verioriem solvendo opinionis contrariae ratinones." Emphasis mine.

The mixed metaphor notwithstanding, d'Ailly clearly labels modist doctrines a profound hindrance to knowledge. They have smothered the academic disciplines under their weight, and this treatise is meant to mark out a sufficiently sound course to escape from them. To that end, d'Ailly sets out to trace and then refute the modist arguments.

Nevertheless, it is not a straightforward *sic et non* structure. Rather, the tripartite arrangement of the work is iterative. First, the modist arguments are rehearsed on their own terms, based largely on Thomas of Erfurt's influential *Grammatica speculativa* (which even modern scholarship takes as representative of modist thought).[106] Second, these arguments are aggressively (and at considerably greater length) problematized, with an accompanying set of necessary conclusions. Third and finally, d'Ailly argues for the position that "seems to [him] truer." The text thus works toward the articulation of a position on signification, but it does so both subtractively and asymptotically. I will consider these two characteristics in turn.

D'Ailly does not begin by laying out his own position, or even by setting it in a back and forth on the contested questions. He articulates his own view, despite his rhetorically harsh critique of modism in the preface, precisely as a modification of this received doctrine. He also reiterates in the third chapter his language from the preface of "choosing" a way that seems preferable to him, but he specifies that it involves a choice of "some conclusions and at the same time some responses to arguments" drawn from both of the earlier chapters.[107] Thus, his method involves a full laying out of the tradition of modes of signifying, and he carves down this block

[106] E.g., Elena Lombardi, *The Syntax of Desire: Language and Love in Augustine, the Modistae, Dante* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 83.

[107] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 49. "Primo igitur restat nunc tertia pars huius tractatus, in qua eligam mihi viam apparentem veriorem, simul cum hoc ponendo aliquas conclusiones et similiter solvendo cum hoc rationes in oppositum."

of marble to leave the elements he deems most promising for an account of signification. It is worth underscoring here that d'Ailly takes the tradition of high scholasticism—exemplified for him perhaps in Scotus, via Thomas of Erfurt—as his starting point, and he does not invoke new sets of axiomata or source texts that suggest departures from it. Quite literally, d'Ailly deploys the same bases as the modists and speculative grammarians whom he is combating: modist propositions and the authorities of Aristotle and Boethius' commentaries thereon. His text is content to show that this tradition contains the resources for its own deconstruction, so to speak.

This can be helpfully illustrated by surveying a few key moments raised in the course of each of the three chapters. The first chapter opens with a paraphrase of a modist cataloguing of the modes of signifying. The first way to deploy a mode of signifying is with verbs, which are to be subdivided into active and passive modes that participate differently in the thing signified.[108] Lombardi helpfully glosses the stakes of this distinction in Thomas of Erfurt's grammatical theory:

> The motor of the process of language is the interplay between an active and a passive state of the *modi*. While the mode of being is an absolute, the modes of understanding and signifying are divided into active and passive. The inert, passive state describes the same property of the things as it is in reality (*modus essendi*), as it is in the mind (*modus intelligendi passivus*), and as it is in language (*modus signficandi passivus*). In other words, in the passive state the material principle consists of the same properties of the thing, whereas the form is given by the three different *rationes* (*essendi*, *intelligendi*, and *significandi*). The active state–the phase where language formation actually unfolds–builds on the passive state by calling into play a different set of properties. The matter of the active state is that of the voice (*modus significandi activus*). The forms of the active state, [sic] are, once again, the three different *rationes*. Within each space, the passive and active states differ in terms of matter while agreeing in terms of form, since the same faculty (*ratio*) underlies both of them. The *ratio* itself is diversified into active and passive: through the active faculty the intellect understands the property of the thing and

[108] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 7. "Primo dividunt modum significandi in modum significandi activum et in modum significandi passivum. Modus autem significandi activus est proprietas vocis attributa sibi per intellectum, mediante qua proprietate vox rem significat et proprietatem rei consignificat. Modus autem passivus est proprietas, secundum quod per vocem consignificatur."

> language signifies it, while it is by the passive faculty that the thing is understood and signified.[109]

Thus, for the modists, there are certain structures of how a thing can be that in turn correspond to parallel ways that thing can be understood and can be signified. Strikingly, this is seen to be rooted in the same ontology that grounds the distinction between the active and passive forms of verbs.

After his brief summary of the posited modes of signifying, chapter one proceeds to lay out a number of arguments for these same theses (which d'Ailly suggests he is likewise parroting from modist sources).[110] The arguments provided do not map directly onto specific modes of signifying, i.e., they do not provide syllogistic proofs for how the division of active and passive verbs necessarily comport to that between existence and understanding/signifying. However, they incorporate Aristotle (sometimes via Boethius) to argue that *something* has to make a voice signify when it is used as a sign and as a part of speech. The voice itself has the same characteristics before and after its deployment, so there must be something else effecting this.[111] D'Ailly explains that, of course, this something else provides the basis for the enumeration of

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[109] Lombardi, *The Syntax of Desire: Language and Love in Augustine, the Modistae, Dante*, 7–8.

[110] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 10. "Verumtamen istos modos significandi sic distinctos nituntur probare multis persuasionibus."

[111] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 10. "Primo sic: Si voci nihil adderetur, quando vox fit signum vel pars orationis et quando ipsae voces imponuntur ad significandum, sequeretur, quod voces ante impositionem possent facere constructionem sicut post impositionem./ Consequens est falsum, ergo et antecedens. Consequentia probatur, quia idem inquantum idem est aptum natum semper facere idem, secundum Aristotelem secundo *De generatione*. Sed vox est eadem ante impositionem et post. Ergo si post impositionem nullo modo sibi adveniente potest facere constructionem, sequitur, quod ante impositionem potest facere constructionem./ Falsitas consequentis apparet, quia clarum est, quod vox non significativa, vel quae numquam fuit imposita ad significandum, non potest facere constructionem."

modes in the earlier section: "They call this something else 'a mode of signifying.'"[112] D'Ailly keeps any critical commentary in chapter one very well hidden. He presents a fair and accurate version of the modist argument.

Chapter two, then, pivots and provides a point-by-point refutation of much of what came before in the first chapter. Notably, this is not done through a new set of constructive arguments, but only criticisms. The only authority cited is Aristotle (though at points d'Ailly follows arguments proposed by others).[113] D'Ailly wastes no time and begins attacking the foundational distinction between active and passive voices, with recourse to the argument about the need for a "something else" invoked in chapter one. I quote at length:

> And I will argue first like this: nothing should be posited on account of construction or agreement without those things by which construction or agreement are able to be most proper and true. But without such modes of signifying—active and passive—a construction and agreement are able to be most proper and true. Therefore, these active and passive modes of signifying, on account of construction or agreement, are not modes of positing.
> The major premise is known, and the minor is asserted. And I will take this statement [as a counterexample]: "God is God." It is clear—according to all grammarians—that in this statement there is a most proper construction and a most true agreement. And in it there are no active or passive modes of signifying. Therefore, the minor premise is true.[114]

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[112] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 10. "Primo sic: Voci per hoc, quod ipsa est signum vel pars orationis, aliquid additur. Et illud additum vocant 'modus significandi'. Ergo modi significandi sunt ponendi."

[113] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 46, n. 1–2. E.g., d'Ailly depends upon language and theses from Ockham's *Summa logicae*.

[114] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 23–24. "Et arguo primo sic: Nulla, sine quibus propriissima constructio et verissima congruitas possunt esse propter congruitatem vel constructionem, sunt ponenda. Sed sine talibus modis significandi activis et passivis possunt proprissima constructio et verissima congruitas esse. Ergo tales modi significandi activi et passivi propter constructionem vel congruitatem non sunt ponendi./ Maior est nota, et minor declarator. Et capio hanc orationem 'Deus est Deus'. Clarum est secundum omnes grammaticos, quod in ista oratione est propriisima constructio and verissima congruitas. Et in ista non sunt modi significandi activi et passivi. Ergo minor praecepta est vera."

He proceeds to stave off a number of potential objections that either try to make the deity a special case beyond signification—an "incredibly childish response"[115]—or that go through gymnastics to make both active and passive modes be present in the copulative verb *esse*.

His criticism is illuminating in two regards. First, d'Ailly shows his terminist commitments in his attending to the actual exigencies of language. The particular example of a sentence, "God is God," is used as a sufficient basis to push back on a theorized mode of signifying, even if the latter claims to be logically prior. Second, d'Ailly takes particular aim against any ontologically tidy and necessary relationship between language and reality. His unwillingness to entertain an objection that delimits language about the deity (which objection he introduces, both explicitly and by choosing to use the example "God is God" rather than, e.g., "Socrates is Socrates") as an exceptional case lets him drive this point home in a digression. He explains that the statement "God is God" is, given the presumed Christian commitments of his audience, factually the case (*res naturalis*) and totally syntactically sound. (He also provocatively seems to be daring his audience to insist that a truth statement about the deity depends upon a language-structure to function as its truth-maker.) Thus, "if in this case there are not those 'modes of signifying,' I have at least proven this conclusion plainly: a most true construction and a most true agreement are able to exist without such modes of signifying."[116] That is to say, truth can be acknowledged based simply on the significatory arrangement of terms in a statement without positing ontological entities to mediate between language and reality.

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[115] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 25. "Et si dicatur ad istud, quod ponentes tales modos significandi intelligunt eos esse in rebus naturalibus et non in rebus supernaturalibus vel in Deo, istud est nimis pueriliter responsum."

[116] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 25. "Si igitur hic non sunt illi modi significandi, ad minus habeo istam conclusionem probatam manifeste, quod verissima constructio et verissima congruitas possent esse sine talibus modis significandi."

Nonetheless, while d'Ailly takes the angle that a non-modist outlook can offer a more direct route to truth, without interposing universals, his critique actually compels a new degree of epistemic humility given the actual messiness of statements. The third chapter, in which he traces the path that "seems" best through these questions, makes this apparent. It opens with a sweeping denial of the need to posit universal forms or the like to account for signification: "I say therefore at the outset that in no system or any statement is there anything or object (*aliud vel aliqua res*) except for a sign, a thing signified, and parts of the sign and the thing signified—if the sign and thing signified are able to be subdivided."[117] While affirming the medieval consensus that mental language is natural and prior to written and spoken language, d'Ailly nonetheless refracts a number of categories from terminist analysis of language back into this natural language of the mind. Contra the modists (and Ockham!), he follows Buridan to posit that mental language can be incongruent.[118] He asserts that mental statements are subject to evaluation on the grounds of construction, agreement, and order—all grammatical terms—because these three "are naturally present in mental propositions."[119] On the one hand, these serve as the sufficient conditions for mental propositions to be true, without positing modes of signifying. On the other, as the late-medieval obsession with paradoxes attests, this troika in no way is a necessarily sufficient condition for truth, which was the apparent goal of the modist project.

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[117] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 49. "Dico igitur in principio quod in nullo regimine vel aliqua oratio est aliud vel aliqua res praeter signum et rem significatam et partem signi et partem rei significatae, si signum et res significate possunt dividi."

[118] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 54. "Istis habitis ponendae sunt aliquae conclusiones. [Conclusio 1] Quarum prima est haec, quod in orationibus mentalibus est congruitas et incongruitas."

[119] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 54–56. "…haec tria, scilicet congruitas, regimen et constructio, sunt naturaliter in propositionibus mentalibus," 56.

Thus, exactly as he says he will in the preface, d'Ailly's text deftly gets out from under the modes of signifying. But instead of a fully systematized alternative, the third chapter presents an asymptotic account of signification. That is to say, d'Ailly shows how one can have a basis for true mental propositions apart from modes of signifying, but he does not provide an exhaustive psychology to elucidate how that truth or falsity can be meaningfully ascertained. He subverts the modist argument from within and points to missteps made in its traditional articulation, but the treatise's conclusion is telling: "And so these statements about deconstructing the modes of signifying should suffice for the moment."[120] While one could conclude that this critical angle suggests the *Destructiones* is a "merely academic" exercise about philosophy-of-language questions, there are three reasons to think that this method is meant to convey more than that to the reader. First, the outline presented in the highly literarily wrought introduction suggests a level of care in the composition of the text not totally reducible to a rote exercise. Second, this subtractive method—rather than multiplying new sources or lines of argument—textually mirrors the program of ontological reduction embraced by terminism. Third, the ubiquity of the subjunctive mood and the use of the language of "seeming" in the third chapter underscores d'Ailly's sensitivity to the contingent nature of language, mental or otherwise. The text performs the epistemic humility its arguments entail.

The *Destructiones* is a subtle text in how it foregrounds language's contingency and the epistemic consequences that follow therefrom. Gerson, for his part, is willing to be a bit blunter when he makes a similar argument, in this case concerning the contingency of logic. Near the end of 1401, comfortably ensconced as the chancellor of the University of Paris and amid a

[120] Kaczmarek and d'Ailly, *Destructiones modorum significandi und ihre Destruktionen*, 100. "Et sic de destructione modorum significandi ad praesens dicta sufficient./ Deo gratias./ Explicit tractatus de improbatione modorum significandi."

series of largely devotional addresses on the Markan gospel, he composed his *De duplici logica*.[121] This text, though presented as a comment on Mark 1:5-6, spirals out to be a sustained engagement with a dictum particularly charged amid the humanist-scholastic feuding of the late Middle Ages: "Logic is twofold."[122]

Gerson quickly invokes Peter of Spain's definition of logic, noting, "there is a certain [understanding of logic] subservient to the natural and purely speculative sciences, which owing to its customary label (almost antonomastically) is termed logic. And this [logic] is described, by Peter of Spain, as safeguarding all methods [of inquiry]. This logic is called by some grammatical [*sermocinalis*]."[123] This comports with the scholastic *modus operandi*, is well attested in Aristotle's own writings on logical demonstration, and even mirrors the language d'Ailly uses in the *Destructiones* to describe the science of grammar. But Gerson then lays out a second kind of logic, inspired by Aristotle's statement and his writings beyond the *Organon*: "Further, there is another logic which we properly call rhetoric. This primarily assists, serves, and excels as a support for the moral, political, and social [*civilibus*] sciences by looking to a practical understanding."[124] The division now asserted between grammatical logic and rhetorical logic, Gerson is free to unpack what this entails. In the subsequent discussion, Gerson uses the shorthand of "logic" and "rhetoric" respectively for these forms of logic.

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[121] Posthumus Meyjes has noted that this text "must be studied" alongside Gerson's *Contra curiositatem studentium*. See: *Jean Gerson, Apostle of Unity: His Church Politics and Ecclesiology*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 316.

[122] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 58. "…juxta etiam Philosophi sententiam quod duplex est logica."

[123] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 58. "…quaedam subserviens scientiis naturalibus ac pure speculativas, quae usitato nomine et quasi antonomastice logica nominator et quae ad omnium methodorum viam habere describitur ab Hispano."

[124] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 58. "Porro altera est logica quam appropriato vocabulo rhetoricam dicimus; quae principaliter ancillatur, servit et adminiculum praestat scientiis moralibus, politicis et civilibus, ad intellectum praticum spectans."

First, Gerson argues that logic *per se* is insufficient for true knowledge. The biblical text in question presents a case of rhetorical hyperbole (sc., "all of Jerusalem" and "the entire region"),[125] and Gerson baldly claims that "logic is struck aghast and those who deal in logic are either scandalized by or condemn the form of this statement."[126] As he goes on, he explains—obviously—that this is a figure of speech, but insists that strictly speaking "logic *does not suffice*" to recognize that.[127] There are some propositions whose truth or falsity cannot be adjudicated on the sole basis of logic; one needs some common sense about the practical usages of language in diverse contexts to make such a judgment. Gerson is clear that logic has domains which it can properly treat, but rhetoric has its own domain—which apparently comprises most verbal activity!—where it is necessary for judgment and knowledge.[128]

As a result, Gerson cleverly suggests that the use of logic becomes dependent on the nature of the matter at hand.[129] Nevertheless, knowing when to invoke logic is a matter of wisdom and art—traditional buzzwords of humanism: "But when, where, and how this happens is not for anything but wisdom and art to discern."[130] A failure to discern creates problems, such

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[125] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 57. "Et egrediebantur ad eum Jerosolymitae universi et omnis regio Judeae et baptizabantur ab illo in Jordanis flumine confitentes peccata sua."

[126] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 57. "Ad hoc verbum stupet logica et logicae tractatores vel scandalizantur vel inculpant locutionis hujus formam."

[127] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 58. "…logica praecedens non sufficit." Emphasis mine.

[128] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 59. "Dicamus ergo quod, dum quaeritur de veritate propositionis alicujus secundum vim vocis aut proprietatem sermonis, aliter judicandum est et requirendum in speculativis scientiis ad quas deservit logica prior, aliter in moralibus atque politicis ubi rhetoricam vigere docuimus. Et quisquis istas logicas duas vellet confundere ita ut rhetoricam in speculativis et logicam priorem in practicis scientiis exigeret, ille in absurdissimos ineptissimosque errores totus corrueret."

[129] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 59. "Sed fallit eos plane ignorantia praemissae distinctionis inter logicam atque rhetoricam et quia logicam primam introducere satagunt ubi ea non opus est.

[130] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 59. "(Neque tamen nego quin vicissim logica una alterius opem quandoque requirat et quin pari quodam sensu ad veritatis unius inquisitionem plerumque concurrant.) Sed quando, ubi et qualiter hoc fit, non cujuscumque sed sapientis et artificis est istud discernere."

as when someone ignorant of logic may seem unintelligent when they try to treat speculative philosophy. However, and here Gerson indulges in some sophistic judo of his own, he notes that "it is said that those relying on logic alone are Sophists, lightweights, and babblers—and they are found to be scarcely, if at all, tolerable in polite company."[131] Rhetorical indulgence aside, Gerson calls attention to the ultimate contingency and particularist applicability of logic. Logic does not possess some sort of external validity; on the contrary, it is called for only in specific circumstances and specific modes of inquiry. Further, its potential deployment is delimited by the factors dictated by the topic, conversation, and practicalities at hand. Insofar as these are squarely within the ken of rhetoric, the relative status of these two "logics" is clear for Gerson.

At this point, Gerson invokes the authority of Augustine and his *De doctrina christiana* (a text he will dilate on in his own later *De modis significandi*): there are certain rules for interpreting scripture and these include a recognition of rhetorical forms such as synecdoche, hyperbole, and the like.[132] Gerson summarizes this as the attending to "why the words are there rather than what they are doing [grammatically]."[133] This purpose, particularly for biblical texts, is the same one pursued by the preacher—and here Gerson's similarity to de Clamanges is striking—namely inculcating "moral judgment… by condemning vices and lauding virtues."[134]

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[131] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 59. "Hic fit ut aliqui carentes logica priori reperiuntur in tractatibus aut doctrinis parum resoluti sed rudes et indigesti, sicut e contra dictum est quod soli logicae innitentes sophistae sunt, leves et jarruli, et in civili communicatione parum aut vix tolerabiles inventi."

[132] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 60. "Hic est quod egregius doctor Augustinus tum in locis plurimis tum specialius in libro de Doctrina christiana regulas pro exposition Sacrae Scripturae dedit et ab aliis datas collaudavit inter quas una est per synecdochen ubi pars pro toto sumitur, alia per hyperbolen ubi veritas ad exaggerandum exceditur, alia ubi locatum pro loco accipitur."

[133] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 60. "Et in talibus juxta quorumdam explicationem attenditur sensus non quem verba faciunt sed pro quo fiunt."

[134] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 60. "Juxta praedicta sumitur consideratio moralis quod praedicatores in sermonibus publicis detestando vitia et collaudando virtutes auctoritatem habent

Such a hortatory aim requires figures of speech and the tools of rhetorical persuasion; in such a situation deploying some "rule of prior logic would be completely incorrect, even scandalous and injurious."[135] Fairly typical calls for moral betterment, persuasion, and attention to rhetorical *topoi* are given center stage in a text ostensibly about logic.

Lest the reader think his effort to render logic insufficient and contingent is a gentle correction, Gerson crescendos into an extended declamation against those using logic as the privileged method within the universities:

> Finally, why are those Sophistic and verbose—indeed even delusional!—people of our time called theologians, except because they have abandoned any utility or understanding for their audience and committed themselves to bare logic or metaphysics or even mathematics? Where and when does not matter: now about the increase of forms; now about the dividing of a continuity; now exposing the sophisms concealed by theological jargon; now referring in the middle of this to certain priorities, measures, durations, instances, signs of nature and the like among divine things—and whether they are true and solid, and likewise whether they are not—ultimately to the derision of most of their audience or to mocking the proper edification of faith which they are seeking.[136]

An address that at the outset promises a consideration of logic to solve a textual difficulty—an eminently scholastic undertaking—turns out to be a ruthless humanist polemic. The text concludes with a call for humility and an attentiveness to the proper contexts for appealing to either of the two logics.

1.4 Wayfarer Theology

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utendi locutionibus transsumptis secundum regulas quibus exponitur Scriptura, et juxta licentiam rhetoricae artis."

[135] Gerson, *De duplici logica*, 60. "Vel aliud tale pronuntiatur quod de virtute et regula logicae prioris esset falsissimum et scandalosum et injuriosum."

[136] Gerson, 62. "Denique cur ob aliud appellantur theologi nostri temporis sophistae et verbosi, immo et phantastici, nisi quia relictis utilibus et intelligibilibus pro auditorum qualitate transferunt se ad nudam logicam vel metaphysicam aut etiam mathematicam, ubi et quando non oportet, nunc de intensione formarum, nunc de divisione continui, nunc detegentes sophismata theologicis terminis obumbrata, nunc prioritates quasdam in divinis, mensuras, durationes, instantia, solida essent, sicut non sunt, ad subrisionem tamen magis audientium vel irrisionem quam rectam fidei aedificationem saepe proficiunt."

The accent falls less on the question of practicality in a later logical text by Gerson. In 1426, exiled in Lyons and freer to write spiritual and devotional texts outside of the administrative constraints of the University, he nonetheless composed a treatise in the common scholastic genre of enumerated theses, *De modis significandi*. Absent the dictates of instructing students, he still finds it worthwhile to give something of a last word on the topics first of signification and then that of "the harmony between metaphysical reality and verbal logic."[137] The questions implicit in his earlier *De duplici logica* and indeed d'Ailly's *Destructiones* now receive explicit treatment. The text itself, bearing a typical academic title, is meticulously organized into two sets of fifty scholastic theses treating the two stated topics in turn. These two movements loosely rehearse, though in a radically different genre, the lines of argumentation we identified in Gerson's *Contra curiositatem studientium*: The discussion of signification expands on the empirical criticism to found a psychology properly attuned to contingency and then on metaphysics and language to chart a model for academic work that takes this hermeneutic of contingency as a given. Gerson roots this hermeneutic in three ways: a relativizing account of language on account of its structural features, a humanist critique of philosophers and theologians who spurn rhetorical analyses, and an audacious reconfiguration of Augustine's *signum – res* distinction. We shall chart each in turn.

Gerson's first thesis provides a semiotic starting point. Signs depend fundamentally on a mentally construed relation, not on a hermetic link between the signifier and the signified: "[An intellectual nature] is able to use a sign by comparing one thing to or deducing one thing from

[137] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 625. "de concordia metaphysicae realis cum logica sermocinali." The phrase *logica sermocinali* was a standard umbrella term for the trivium: grammar, dialectic, rhetoric. See: Sten Ebbesen and Russell L. Friedman, *Medieval Analyses in Language and Cognition*, Historisk-filosofiske meddelelser, (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige danske videnskabernes selskab, 1999), 173.

another."[138] Although he explains that this sign, in a typically Aristotelian schema, serves to present an object to the intellect, Gerson has specified that the sign is manufactured and stands distinct as an object even from what it signifies. He clarifies in thesis five: "A sign—from which we get the word 'signification'—is not received absolutely but with reference to something and relatively when it is understood as a sign."[139] Language is not a parallel structure to reality, as the modists averred, but rather a construction on top of it and distinguishable from it. It follows then that signification is not a transparent reflection of being, even if at times there is a superficial resemblance.

Beyond the distinguishing of signs from their intended signifieds, Gerson (rightly) notes that language evidences a structural relativity at the level of syntax. Thesis twenty-six reads:

> A grammarian who defines the parts of speech with reference to the resultant utterance does not err in his search for a first principle, because one thing is defined relative to another in that way. An utterance is considered by a grammarian not only as an utterance composed out of syllables and not only as significative, but also as an utterance that is constructed—that is, able to be ordered in a grammatical construction with other utterances according to the demands of the rule, while preserving [grammatical] agreement.[140]

Signs, even when they intend a specific objective referent, only gain that valence from their syntactical relation to other signs. Treating a given sign or phrase in isolation from the larger referential structure of the entire utterance (or, presumably, the language system) misunderstands how language functions. Gerson is clear that signification arises subsequent to the arrangement

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[138] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 625. "…ad naturam intellectualem quae potest uti signo per comparationem seu deductionem unius rei ad alteram."

[139] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 626. "Signum a quo significatio dicitur non accipitur absolute sed ad aliquid et relative dum intelligitur ut signum."

[140] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 628. "Grammaticus definiens partes orationis per orationem quae posterior est, non peccat in petitione principii, quia sic definitur unum relativum per alterum. Consideratur dictio a grammatico non solum ut est dictio ex syllabis composita a nec solum ut est significativa, sed ut est dictio constructibilis id est ordinabilis in constructione orationis cum aliis secundum exigentiam regiminis congruitate servata."

of words; an *a priori* theory of signification, like that of the *formalizantes* or modists, improperly reifies meaning before meaning can actually be said to be composed. Here he is clearly marked by his terminist training.

In addition to this criticism of failing to attend to the macroscopic features of language, Gerson alleges that the modists' neglect of specific terms' semiotic fluidity impoverishes their theory of language. He accordingly offers a measured defense of terminism that runs throughout the *De modis significandi*, though he foreshadows his moves at the end of the text by his persistence in using the language of *modi significandi*—even as he does not subscribe to modism. Grammatical systems, Gerson notes, are after all a matter of convention that may be deployed differently by different people.[141] People's use of specific words is conditioned by the words that are available to them.[142] Thus, any analysis has to look to these comparatively fine-grained concerns: "seekers of truth… must first of all be adapted to the modes of signifying of the terms or utterances with which the question is being considered; for in the same way, logic has taught that what a term means in any question must be established at the outset."[143] He turns this directly to attack metaphysical realists who sneer at terminists as petty, "as if they [the opponents of terminism] were able to speak without terms."[144]

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[141] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 628. "Modus significandi grammaticalis semper fundatur in beneplacito impositoris unius aut plurimum."

[142] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 628. "Grammaticus in impositione nominum solet a nobis notioribus procedere."

[143] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 629. "Conquisitores veritatis ad invicem debent in primis convenire in modis significandi terminorum seu dictionum secundum quos et quas versatur inquisitio; nam sicut logica tradit, praesupponi debet quid nominis in omni quaestione."

[144] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 629. "…quia [conquisitores veritatis nostri temporis in theologia sub specie subtilitatis et titulo metaphysicae] voluerunt sibi facere nomen ex inventione novitatum dum repugnantes eis vocant rudes et terministas nec reales in metaphysica, quasi sine terminis loqui possint."

The philosophy of language Gerson outlines here is highly skeptical of metaphysically inflected theories of language and, concordantly, intensely steeped in contemporary scholastic currents (claims to harmonize the terminist project with that of the *formalizantes* notwithstanding).[145] However, it at the same time increasingly invokes humanist tropes to flesh out its broadly terminist outlook.

When discussing the place of logic proper, he rearticulates some of his views from *De duplici logica*: "Truth-seekers must, at the outset, suit their modes of signifying terms or speech to those used by the question at hand; for, just as logic teaches, what a name means in each question must be defined in advance."[146] Logic is contingent given the exigencies of language. He renders this critique of current practice "in theology" more pointed, pointing out the hypocrisy of constantly coining new terms and—Gerson here repeats an earlier jab—mocking terminism as foolish "as if [these theologians] are able to speak without terms!"[147] Gerson proceeds to build on his suggestion in *De duplici logica* that rhetoric is prior to logic as it dictates when and how to employ logic; in theses 41 and 42 he catalogues a diversity of grammatical and

[145] See, e.g.: Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 632. "Ens consideratum seu relictum prout est quid absolutum seu res quaedam in seipsa, plurimum differt ab esse quod habet objectaliter apud intellectum juxta diversitatem intellectum et rationum objectalium, etiam prout rationes objectales non accipiuntur pro seipsis materialiter sed pro rebus quasi formaliter, ut sicut significatio est quasi forma dictionis et modus significandi quasi forma significationis sic res ipsa diceretur quasi materia vel substractum vel subjectum rationis objectalis vel modi significandi. *Quae consideratio clavis est ad concordiam formalizantium cum terministis si perspicaciter nec proterve videatur*." Emphasis mine.

[146] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 629. "33. Conquisitores veritatis ad invicem debent in primis convenire in modis significandi terminorum seu dictionum secundum quos et quas versatur inquisition; nam sicut logica tradit, praesupponi debet quid nominis in omni quaestione."

[147] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 629. "35. Conquisitores veritatis nostri temporis in theologia sub specie subtilitatis et titulo metaphysicae… ipsi novos sibi terminos assumpserunt… dumn repugnantes eis vocant rudes et terministas nec reales in metaphysica, quasi sine terminis loqui possint."

logical topics, saying that these represent a variety of potential modes of signifying (which are ever-changing and based on human convention) that must be chosen based on the investigation at hand.[148] Thus far, this account of a hermeneutics of contingency maps nicely, if in some unique ways, with those presented in *De duplici logica* and *Destructiones modorum significandi*. Yet Gerson also develops a more theologically oriented explanation for this synthesis of terminist and humanist approaches.

Augustine, in his *De doctrina christiana,* established the semiotic groundwork for virtually all later Latin Christians. All of reality is comprised of signs and things; properly discerning these enables the Christian to effectively "read" her way back to God, the ultimate end of all signs. Over the course of the text, Augustine narrows the scope of "thing" to encompass only that which merits being loved or enjoyed for its own sake; everything else—though it may seem to be a thing—is actually a sign meant to orient the interpreter toward God. Thus, the *signum – res* distinction charts an ethically charged ontological line between the appropriate object of affection, sc. the deity, and the rest of reality. Other human persons' fraught status notwithstanding, it is not a particularly permeable boundary. Many subsequent medievals, e.g. the Lombard, maintained this distinction as a given.

[148] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 630. "41. Ex modis significandi secundae intentionis composita est grammatica et logica; unde consurgunt traditiones praedicabilium et praedicamentorum, suppositionem, obligationum cum suis annexis, in logica; declinationes, genera, conjugationes, et regimen in grammatica cum adjunctis multis; ex quibus est accipienda de modis significandi notitia./ 42. Ex modis significandi circa grammaticam et logicam variatis omnis scientia consequentur variatur, nec est facile quod salubriter et in melius commutetur. Sic enim de mutatione legum tradit philosophus etiam si novae videantur meliores, non esse passim expediens; consuetudo enim est altera natura quae legibus assuetis dat vigorem."

Gerson's semiotic account opens with a riff on an Augustinian dictum and a knowing nod to this long tradition: "all knowledge is about things or signs."[149] However, this distinction for him does not primarily discern between objects of true enjoyment and those of use. Fundamentally for Gerson a thing is a thing in external reality; concepts do not seem to qualify in his usage, for instance. The *signum – res* division becomes descriptive of diverging ways of considering given objects. The penultimate thesis gives way to a programmatic digression:

> Another distinction may be posited by dividing objective reason (*rationem objectalem*), because it either considers a thing as a thing or it considers it as some type of sign. There would be a similar distinction in the case of a mode of signifying, because one either signifies a thing as a thing or as some kind of sign.
> There would be another analogous distinction in the case of terms of first intention or of personal supposition, wherein they accordingly signify things as they are things. Or insofar as the terms are of second intention or supposition, they supposit for things not as they are things but as they are some kind of signs—whether they are outside or inside of the mind (*anima*).
> To conclude from these distinctions: there is that consideration of a thing that looks at it as a thing according to metaphysics, but there is also that consideration of a thing only as a sign—especially in the mind—that looks at it according to grammar or logic.[150]

The human is capable of considering any given thing either as a thing or as a sign. In the former case, one presumes personal supposition (terms refer to things in themselves), and this is how metaphysics proceeds. In the latter, the mind presumes secondary supposition (terms refer to

[149] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 625. "Cum omnis cognitio sit de rebus aut signis." Cf.: "Omnis doctrina vel rerum est vel signorum," Augustine of Hippo, *De doctrina christiana*. II.2.

[150] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 642. "Altera distinctio sumeretur distinguendo rationem objectalem, quia vel rescpicit rem ut res est vel respicit ut res est signum quoddam. Similis esset distinctio de modo significandi; quia vel significat rem ut res est vel ut signum quoddam./ Proportionabilis esset alia distinctio de terminis primae intentionis vel impositionis seu personaliter acceptis prout significant res ut res sunt aut prout termini sunt secundae intentionis vel impositionis, supponentes pro rebus non ut res sunt sed ut signa quaedam sive sint extra animam vel ad intra./ Sumatur ex his distinctionibus haec unica quod consideratio rei ut res est spectat ad metaphysicam; consideratio vero rei ut tantummodo signum est, praesertim in anima, spectat ad grammaticam vel logicam." Supposition is the common scholastic parlance for how a given term (or complex signifier) refers to, or *supposits*, an object. For instance, when I say "dog" it may supposit canines generally or supposit any number of specific animals.

things' signifying functions), and this is the domain of grammar and logic. Gerson is splitting the difference between the *formalizantes* and terminists by suggesting that each is correct, from a certain point of view.[151] Both think about things in different ways, and this explains their varying ways of construing language. However, Gerson cleverly subverts the modist project at the same time: though one can talk about metaphysics and presume a concord between language and reality, that talk is still a discursive phenomenon internal to the human mind—and thus bound to signs.[152] There is no realist connection (or form effecting the connection) between the sign and the thing out in the world.

The final proposition of the text renders this consequence more explicit, by contextualizing these conclusions within the discipline of theology. Gerson proposes that theology works in two modes: wayfarer (*viae*) and homeland (*patriae*). [153] What unites these two

[151] For example, Gerson seems to concede (rhetorically?) a potential validity to formal distinctions, contra Ockham, Buridan, and d'Ailly. Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 635. "Subtilitas metaphysicantium si vera sit, consistit in acuta resolutione entis secundum esse suum objectale personaliter seu formaliter."

[152] Gerson is well aware of Ockham's view—a version of which was held by virtually all terminists—that even simple supposition supposits for a concept, not a thing out there directly. See: Brower-Toland, "Causation and Mental Content: Against the Externalist Reading of Ockham," in *The Language of Thought in Late Medieval Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Claude Panaccio*, ed. Jenny Pelletier and Magali Roques (Berlin: Springer, 2018). While there is some scholarly dispute regarding the upshot of some of Buridan's interventions on this question, there is agreement that Buridan's rejection of material supposition further underscores how even the language of human thought supposits concepts. See: Claude Panaccio, "Ockham and Buridan on Simple Supposition," *Vivarium* 51 (2013); Julie Brumberg-Chaumont, "John Buridan et le problème des termes singuliers substantiels," *Documenti e Studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 27 (2016); Magali Roques and Jenny Pelletier, "An Introduction to Mental Language in Late Medieval Philosophy," in *The Language of Thought in Late Medieval Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Claude Panaccio*, ed. Jenny Pelletier and Magali Roques (Berlin: Springer, 2018), 7–9.

[153] Gerson, *De modis significandi*, 642. "Concordia metaphysicae cum theologia fiet si consideretur ens simplicter vel ens purum vel ens universaliter perfectum quod est Deus; aut si consideretur generalis ratio objectalis entis. Secundum spectat ad metaphysicam, primum proprie ad theologiam in qua Deus est subjectum. Est autem theologia duplex, scilicet viae et patriae: Theologia viae respicit ens primum ut creditum cum suis attributis non excludendo intelligentiam

endeavors is that they both study God, i.e., "simple, pure, and completely perfect being." Wayfarer theology, however, takes this being generally, along with all of its various attributes and the diverse ways they are understood. It is concerned with believing, and it explicitly does not preclude the common understandings of that. The emphasis on common meanings and diverse attributes signal that this task is rhetorical and within the discursive domain of logic and grammar. The contextual-particularism and approximate nature of wayfarer theology—due to its reliance upon contingent language—becomes clearer with the explication of homeland theology, which "considers being primarily as something seen clearly and objectively in itself, *not in a mirror or mystery*." With the eschatologically charged reference to the first epistle to the Corinthians, Gerson clearly establishes a dichotomy between knowing in full or in part.[154] Further, this distinction is temporally marked by the eschaton, when faith and hope (presumably the operative virtues of wayfarer theology that looks to belief) passes away and only love remains. The modists and metaphysicians can have their mental language account for reality *per se*, Gerson implies, but certainly not yet. He concedes a potential harmony between language and metaphysics, but defers the epistemic access to it before the beatific vision.

Thus for the Navarrists, as we have seen, humanist *topoi* about scholastic logic-chopping or philosophical overconfidence are in fact part of an intellectually rigorous criticism of scholastic methods of demonstration and dialectic, not just bluster. The humanist defense of rhetoric is not reducible in late-medieval Paris to a defense of professional turf—the Navarrists had that secured in either case (at least until the Hundred Years' War reached Paris)—nor was

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de multis. Theologia autem patriae respicit ens primum ut faciliter visum et objectaliter in seipso, *non in speculo vel aenigmate*." Emphasis mine.

[154] 1 Corinthians 13:12-13, Vulgate: "Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem. Nunc cognosco ex parte: tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum."

humanism seen to be a complete overthrow of regnant scholastic thought. The Navarrists, especially Gerson, deployed humanist methods to intervene, critically and rigorously, in long-standing scholastic debates about epistemology, philosophy of language, psychology, and the doing of theology itself.

Crucially, all the texts considered in this chapter were composed in Latin. Some of them too were composed in traditional scholastic genres reliant on questions or enumerated theses. It is these forms that advance the Navarrists' critical assessment of theology-as-usual within the University of Paris. As the Navarrists demonstrate by these choices in their writing, in the case of pointing to rhetoric and practicality to criticize Aristotelian dialectic, the call is coming from inside the house.

This chapter, like the Navarrists included therein, has treated a variety of sources to develop a synthetic understanding. I have argued that, at least in the case of late-medieval Paris, humanism and scholasticism cannot be neatly divided into separate systems of thought with internally coherent doctrines, nor can they be explained away as back-and-forth arguments reducible to professional conflicts between diverging guilds in the changing context of the university. Instead, the Navarrists evidence an openness to humanist criticisms of scholasticism on the basis of their own, scholastically based, commitment to terminism's tenets of reduction. In contrast to R. W. Southern, who famously suggests that scholasticism is a particular method internal to the larger project of humanism, Gerson shows us a critical humanist approach that is internal to the intellectual project of scholasticism. Further, the language-philosophical consequences of this hybrid outlook, which I have labeled a hermeneutics of contingency, is remarkable in its preference for critical methods that deconstruct, not jettison, the scholastic

tradition rather than the articulation of a systematic philosophy or theology (or even theory of language) as an alternative.

Thus, this hermeneutics of contingency can be summarized as a skepticism of dialectical demonstration and the systematic doctrines it grounds rooted in an awareness of the contingency of language (informed both by humanists' attentiveness to the context of speaker and audience and terminists' attentiveness to the contexts of verbal particulars) that precludes straightforward appeals to deductive logic or necessary proof. This in turn exemplifies the intellectual spirit of the late-medieval University of Paris. Together, de Clamanges, Gerson, and d'Ailly incorporate a variety of methods and genres to advance a critical outlook that consistently registers a wariness about the attainability of systematic, absolute knowledge even as they remain deeply invested in the scholastic heritage of the University. Historiographic tendencies to give pride of place to posited systems of thought, such as Italian humanism or English "nominalism," have elided the creative methods and daring claims of the Collège de Navarre in this era. Only by seeing the back and forth between humanism and scholasticism may we bring the Navarrists' contributions into sharper relief.

The far-reaching consequences of the Navarrists' hermeneutics of contingency, not at all isolated to discussions of philosophy of language or scholastic method *per se,* will prove to be operative across the Navarrists' œuvres. Also, Gerson's "wayfarer theology," with its marked interpretation of death as a decisive threshold between uncertainty and certainty, the moment of potential relief from the psychic weight of contingency, shall prove similarly ubiquitous in his thought.

CHAPTER TWO

The Exegete as Semionaut

I am one-hundred percent sure that we're not completely sure.
—Jerry Horne, *Twin Peaks*

In the previous chapter, we considered the Navarrists' articulation of the hermeneutics of contingency: a fundamental resistance to demonstrative proofs, a skepticism toward an absolute interpretation of language, and a deconstructive temperament illustrated in a variety of texts under the umbrella of disputes between humanism and scholasticism. In this chapter we will attend to Navarrist works that lay out theoretical approaches to the interpretation of Christian scriptural texts. Acknowledging the Navarrists' sensitivity to questions of language, I contend, allows us to perceive elements of their scriptural hermeneutics that have been insufficiently, if at all, addressed by prior scholarship. In particular, this chapter argues that Gerson's polemics on the interpretation of scripture—a well-studied pocket of Gersoniana—cannot, on the one hand, be reduced to the question of the relative authority of (the plain sense of) scripture and the church. While this is incontrovertibly a major concern of Gerson's, the tendency to subordinate his thinking to external questions of sixteenth-century historiography has caused it to be emphasized to the exclusion of Gerson's actual strategies for interpreting scriptural texts. On the other hand, a tendency in medieval historiography to plot exegetical approaches on a spectrum from "literal" to "allegorical" likewise distorts the theoretical maneuvers deployed by the Navarrists. Independent of these concerns, the Navarrists proffer an interpretive mode not concerned with just *what* the signs of the biblical text are, but rather with *how* these signs operate

at the level of words.[1] We will term this exegesis that emphasizes the iterative process of meaning-making a semiotics of displacement. As a whole, the current chapter unpacks the stakes of this semiotics within the writings of d'Ailly and Gerson.

To that end, after surveying the scholarly literature on the scriptural hermeneutics of the Navarrists and before turning to the polemics of Gerson on biblical interpretation, we first will consider d'Ailly's *Recommendatio Sacrae Scripturae*, his inaugural lecture as a doctor in theology (that follows the Parisian tradition of treating holy scripture as its theme). While previous scholarship has characterized the *Recommendatio* as heavy on rhetorical flourish and light on any coherent theory of holy scripture, I will argue that its highly wrought rhetorical form gives us crucial insights into how d'Ailly thinks one should approach the interpretation of scripture. Second, the chapter turns to Gerson's writings against Jan Hus and Jean Petit respectively. Gerson has been understood as trying to offer a *via media* between Hussite literalism and Petitian allegorism, which is seen as comporting with conciliarism as a middle way of navigating the question of authority. In contrast, I demonstrate that, while Gerson does indeed try (with dubious success) to split the difference between scripture and the church with regard to final interpretive authority, his specific exegetical breaks with Hus and Petit both rely upon a *tertium quid*: a semiotic account of scriptural meaning that foregrounds ambiguity and demands interpretive strategies of displacement and recursion given the way language itself allows for the construal of meaning. In so doing, I will argue that d'Ailly and Gerson can be understood as semionauts, those who do creative work by uncovering (or assembling) and then

[1] As we saw in the previous chapter, Gerson and his Navarrist confrères broadly adhere to terminism, such that they identify the specific words of a text as the operative signs—not a second-order intention, meaning, or the like. See, Chapter One, "The Scholastic as Humanist," pp. 53–54.

moving along meaningful trajectories between signs.[2] Put otherwise, the Navarrists do not see meaning-making as reducible to a study of terms themselves or to a deductive linguistic operation, but as a constructive process performed within a sign system (sc. semionautics). Finally, the chapter considers the consequences of these Navarrist modes of exegesis for both our understanding of their hermeneutics of contingency outlined in the first chapter and for our framing of late-medieval Christian exegetical tradition as a whole.

2.1 Unremarkable Exegetes?

While scholars have paid attention to Navarrist understandings of scriptural exegesis, none of these thinkers have found central places in the larger narratives of late-medieval biblical hermeneutics. In brief, d'Ailly's short—albeit historically popular—writings on the topic have been seen as rhetorical exercises rather than serious reflections on biblical interpretation. Gerson's treatments of scriptural exegesis have garnered scholarly attention but are consistently described with reference to other thinkers. As a result, Navarrist exegesis has been portrayed with a curious absence of interpretive theory; they are said to be either not actually addressing biblical hermeneutics (d'Ailly) or simply continuing traditional medieval interpretive practices in a non-remarkable way (Gerson).

Palémon Glorieux's brief introductions to d'Ailly's *Principium in cursum Bibliae* and *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae* constitute the only scholarly consideration of d'Ailly's views

[2] I take the term from art critic Nicolas Bourriaud, who defines it as such: "L'artiste contemporain est un *sémionaute*, il invente des trajectoires entre des signes," *Esthétique relationnelle* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2001), 121. He expands this definition in a later catalogue entry: "Sémionaute : inventeur d'itinéraires à l'intérieur d'un paysage de signes. Se dit d'un artiste dont les œuvres produisent ou matérialisent des parcours singuliers dans le champ culturel," "Playlist," ed. Palais de Tokyo (Paris, 12 Février–25 Avril 2004 2004).

on scripture directly.[3] The former, the introductory lecture to d'Ailly's course on the gospel of Mark in 1375, is an early piece of his œuvre. Glorieux sees this as responsible for the *Principium's* underwhelming content: "Mais Pierre d'Ailly n'est encore qu'un jeune bibliste; son *principium* se veut œuvre d'art plus que de doctrine."[4] (And to be sure, the *Principium* proceeds more as a taxonomy of academic inquiry than a specific consideration of what reading the Bible entails.) Glorieux's assessment of the *Recommendatio* is similar. As d'Ailly's inaugural address as a licensed master, an air of rhetorical virtuosity is just as if not more important than any actual argument presented.[5] In short, for Glorieux, there is little substance to be found in d'Ailly's writings on scriptural interpretation.

The state of the question of Gersonian exegesis, such as it is, emerged in light of a pair of binary heuristics: between literalism and allegorism on the one hand, and between ecclesialism and biblicism on the other. Each of these derives from the historiography of sixteenth-century biblical interpretation. The foundational treatment is Fritz Hahn's "Zur Hermeneutik Gersons," which sees Gerson's account of biblical interpretation as "kirchliche Positivismus" and a direct precursor to the Tridentine position that the Church constitutes the authority of the Bible.[6] Heiko Oberman, calquing the phrase "ecclesial positivism" (glossed, with characteristic rhetorical flair, as "Tradition II"),[7] doubles down on this reading in his magisterial *Harvest of Medieval*

[3] Palémon Glorieux, "Deux éloges de la Sainte Écriture par P. d'Ailly," *Mélanges de Science Religieuse* 3, no. XXIX (1972).

[4] Glorieux, "Deux éloges de la Sainte Écriture par P. d'Ailly," 115.

[5] Glorieux, "Deux éloges de la Sainte Écriture par P. d'Ailly," 122. "Il est bien évident qu'en pareille circonstance, la forme du discours se doit d'être particulièrement soignée, autant, sinon même plus, que le fond à faire valoir."

[6] "Zur Hermeneutik Gersons," *Zeitschrift Für Theologie Und Kirche* 51, no. 1 (1954): 36, 49–50.

[7] Oberman, in an influential heuristic he derived for described sixteenth-century polemic over biblical interpretation in the context of the Reformations, distinguishes two models of authority, calling "the single exegetical tradition of interpreted scripture 'Tradition I' and the

Theology.[8] On this view, Gerson privileges the Spirit-led Church as the arbiter of interpreting revelation, which can be found both in scriptural texts and written and oral apostolic traditions. Both of these scholars thus place Gerson decidedly on the ecclesialist end of the spectrum, denying that Scripture has authority independent of the Church's authorization. Further, Gerson's exegetical approach is presumed to tend toward the allegorical as a consequence. Sixteenth-century Christian polemics had conditioned a scholarly presumption that the allegorical must pair with the ecclesialist and the literal with the biblicist.

One upshot of reading Gerson as a strong ecclesialist is that scripture, uniquely authorized by the Church, may be taken as utterly heterogenous to any other texts. The Bible has a *sui generis* logic, coherence, and kerygma. Hahn makes this case for Gerson, linking it to a fideism he associates with "nominalism."[9] Gerson's dilation upon the idea of a "literal sense," for this group of scholars, evidences the uniqueness of scripture and the demand for ecclesial determination thereof.

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two-sources theory which allows for an extra-biblical oral tradition 'Tradition II.'" "*Quo vadis, Petre?* Tradition from Irenaeus to *Humani generis*," in *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 280.

[8] *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 361–75.

[9] Fritz Hahn, "Zur Hermeneutik Gersons," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 51, no. 1 (1952): 35 ff. "Um die *Bedetung* und Stellung, die die *Schrift* in Gersons Theologie einnimmt, recht zu umschreiben, ist es unumgänglich, Gersons Erkenntnis- und Wissenschaftslehre zum Ausgangspunkt zu nehmen. Diese hat [Walter] Dress ausführlich entfaltet. Dabei tritt deutlich die in der Sache wie in der Methode zum Ausdruck gelangende genuin nominalistische Scheidung von Theologie und Philosophie hervor. 'Theologia suam habet logicam et modum loquendi proprium.' Allein von dieser Diastase zwischen Theologie und Philosophie her wird die besondere Stellung der Schrift verständlich./ 1. Man kann, einen Begriff Joachim Wachs aufnehmend, sagen: für Gerson besteht zwischen der Bibel und anderen Büchern eine völlige *Heterogenität*. Sie zeigt sich darin, daß auch die Schrift ihre eigene Logik hat…/ Es wird weiter unten deutlich werden, daß diese heterogene Betrachtung der Schrift für die Auslegung und Definition des sensus litteralis von entscheidender Bedeutung ist."

Much subsequent work has challenged this interpretation, instead considering Gerson as a literalist. This reading was pioneered by Karlfried Froehlich, deeming Gerson a "sophisticated fundamentalist" who consistently appeals to a *sensus litteralis* over and against spiritualizing meanings.[10] Froehlich, like earlier scholars, still reading Gerson with an eye on the sixteenth century, marks off this era of biblical interpretation as a progression from Aquinas' inclusion of the parabolic sense within the literal toward Luther's unified literal sense, signaling a biblicist lens for Gerson even if the question of authority is not broached per se.[11] The literalist aspect of this reading at least has held sway for most recent interpretations. For instance, in his own study of late-medieval biblical poetics, Christopher Ocker opts to situate Gerson "toward the literalist side of the spectrum."[12] Yet what literalism could look like without a straightforward appeal to biblicism—precluded by Gerson's ubiquitous assertions of ecclesial authority in interpretation—, especially in the context of late-medieval exegetical polemics that complicate notions of biblical clarity, is not easily intuited.

Two scholars have tried to thread this needle. First, Mark S. Burrows has offered a sustained account that explicates what he terms the "traditioned sense" of scripture within Gerson.[13] For Burrows, Gerson is indeed a literalist who hews closely to the text, but he turns to the Church's interpretive tradition, especially that of the fathers, to provide an authoritative guide

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[10] Karlfried Froehlich, "'Always to Keep the Literal Sense in Holy Scripture Means to Kill One's Soul': The State of Biblical Hermeneutics at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century," in *Literary Uses of Typology, from the Late Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 44.

[11] Froehlich, "'Always to Keep,'" 27.

[12] Christopher Ocker, *Biblical Poetics before Humanism and Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 168.

[13] Mark S. Burrows, "Jean Gerson on the 'Traditioned Sense' of Scripture as an Argument for an Ecclesial Hermeneutic," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991).

for contested passages. Moreover, Gerson demands that the moral context of the interpreter must also contribute to interpretation beyond the grammatical sense.[14] Thus Gerson's literalism is constellated with an attenuated ecclesialism. Notably, Burrows sees this balancing act as a commendable alternative to "postmodern" (his quotes) readings that question the existence of certain meaning; insofar as Gerson fails to conform with the typical coupling of literalism and biblicism, the specter of uncertainty is all the more present and must be vigilantly avoided.[15] For Burrows, Gerson's exegetical project is an attempt to preserve a mode of literal certainty without ceding ecclesial authority.

D. Zach Flanagin's reading of Gersonian exegesis takes a similar framework: Gerson posits an authoritative *sensus litteralis* whose interpretation is normatively, but not constitutively, authorized by the Spirit-led Church. Yet he calls attention to two aspects of Gerson's approach that had been underacknowledged: the need for variegated approaches to exegesis and the importance of affect in the interpretive process. Flanagin calls attention to Gerson's use of diverse rules for exegesis, within which Gerson—without any clear hierarchy of precedence among the rules—variously points to textual keys, appeals to broader hermeneutical context, and suggests a deference to traditional interpretations. As a result, and "[not] surprisingly, such an expansion of hermeneutical criteria leads to considerable subjectivity in the

[14] Burrows, "Jean Gerson on the 'Traditioned Sense' of Scripture," 170.

[15] Burrows, "Jean Gerson on the 'Traditioned Sense' of Scripture," 155–56, 72. "Medieval exegetes, unlike recent deconstructionist critics, were not yet brash enough to question [the possibility of grasping the authentic *sensus* of the text;" "this ecclesial hermeneutic [of Gerson] offers an at least viable alternative to the hermeneutical impasse of deconstructionism into which our 'postmodern' age has fallen." Notably, he follows Froehlich in this line of thinking: "When the theological virtues had become part of a system of ambiguous words and could be given meanings based on differing goals, then the door was open (to put it positively) for a new kind of creative playing with different meanings of equal claim to truth. Of course, it was a dangerous game," Froehlich, "'Always to Keep,'" 46.

realm of interpretation."[16] Affect, Flanagin argues, becomes used by Gerson to distinguish between primary and secondary literal significations, which distinction had previously been structured between literal and allegorical. Affective orientation toward God becomes a touchstone for navigating a difficult exegetical hurdle. Nevertheless, somewhat similarly to Burrows, Flanagin also sees Gerson's balancing act between biblicism and ecclesialism (and with the subjective demand for affect) as ultimately unable to "be coherently maintained in the crisis years of the fifteenth century, even by… Gerson."[17]

This is a rich historiography, in particular Burrows' foregrounding of the tenuous place of certainty in Gersonian exegesis and Flanagin's attentivity to the variability of Gerson's actual exegetical advice. However, I maintain that the full force of Gerson's criticisms of both Hus and Petit have been somewhat sidelined amid the effort to place him within frameworks of literal versus allegorical and/or biblical versus ecclesial. I will argue that Gerson is not meaningfully situated between the poles of the biblicist Hus and the allegorist Petit on actual questions of interpretive method insofar as he levels *precisely the same charges* against both. Gerson's exegetical quarrel with both Hus and Petit lies external to the axis of literal-allegorical readings; Gerson's hermeneutic concerns present a *tertium quid* rather than the *via media.* Indeed, I argue that Gerson criticizes both Hus and Petit for overstating the apophanticity of scripture, and he seeks to provide a set of interpretive tactics more attuned to scripture's own non-apophantic, rhetorical mode. That is to say, scripture, being non-apophantic, is not propositionally true or false.[18] Scripture's qualitative difference from the text of a syllogism is stark.

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[16] D. Zach Flanagin, "Making Sense of It All: Gerson's Biblical Theology," in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006), 146–47.

[17] Flanagin, "Making Sense of It All: Gerson's Biblical Theology," 177.

[18] The term "apophanticity" emerges, perhaps unsurprisingly, from Aristotle's use of ἀποφαντικός, which denotes that a proposition is truth-bearing, rather than subjective, in its

In the secondary literature on his account of biblical interpretation, the primary foci within Gerson's œuvre are his theses drafted as part of the proceedings of the Council of Constance against the Prague preacher Jan Hus in the 1414 *De sensu litterali sacrae scripturae* (which helped to burn Hus alive in 1415) and his 1415 *Réponse à la Consultation des Maîtres*, a critical response to Jean Petit, a theologian in the orbit of the Burgundian court who had advanced theological and biblical arguments in defense of the Burgundians' murder of Louis, Duke of Orléans. *De sensu litterali* argues that Hus's theory of scriptural interpretation does not in fact grasp the true, literal sense of scripture. For its part, the *Réponse* argues that Petit errs in advancing allegorizing readings to defend positions that explicitly dispense with the literal sense of scripture. Consequently, Gerson has been identified as a mediating figure between these exegetical poles. As noted above, scholars have generally concluded that Gerson does not succeed in this balancing act.

Thus, the scholarly literature has continued to take a desire for propositional certainty to be operative *a priori* in Gerson. I do not. I argue, breaking with the historiography's tacit assumption of certainty's value to all interlocutors, that Gerson seeks a biblical hermeneutic that

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semantic construction. L. M. de Rijk provides a nice summary of its classical usage, in opposition to onomastic utterances: *Aristotle: Semantics and Ontology* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 100–01. Such a distinction was explicitly maintained and commonplace in Aristotle's Arabic reception, particularly in al-Farabi, ibn-Sina, and ibn-Rushd. On al-Farabi, see: Deborah L. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 53–57.On ibn-Sina—who links apophanticity to the combination of intention and concept, a realism the Navarrists would not concede—see: Alain de Libera, *La querelle des universaux: de Platon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996). Ibn-Rushd treats the distinction in his commentary on *De Interpretatione*—see: Suzanne Husson, *Interpréter le De interpretatione* (Paris: Vrin, 2009), 24–34.— and in his legal theory—see: Ziad Bou Akl, *Averroès: le philosophe et la Loi. Édition, traduction et commentaire de "L'Abrégé du Mustafa"* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 418. While the Navarrists, to my knowledge, do not use the term (or rather, its Latin form *apophanticus*) explicitly, they were invariably familiar with the distinction based on their training in Aristotle and ibn-Rushd's commentaries thereon. I do not use the term with respect to Heidegger's usage of it in *Sein und Zeit*.

disambiguates certainty from reliability, due to a commitment to language's own tendency to defer that precludes exegetical certainty *in statu viae*. Accordingly, I differentiate between the terms "reliable" and "certain." Reliable, as I use it here, means simply that something merits confidence. Certain, however, adds a connotation of specificity, precision, and clarity about how that confidence will be satisfied. This divide maps roughly onto that between non-apophantic language (e.g., rhetoric) and apophantic language (e.g., logic). Different types of language, Gerson holds, make differing degrees of interpretive precision possible.

To be sure, in these texts Gerson does indeed sweat the question of authority and wring his hands over how best to articulate an interpretive method that meaningfully cleaves to the literal sense. The centrality of these issues in many other thinkers has thus, understandably, conditioned scholars to focus on this within Gerson's own writings on the Bible. However, Gerson's primary exegetical-theoretical works are series of polemic theses—a genre that almost invariably involves advancing a series of not-necessarily-integrated arguments against the target.[19] His attacks on Hus and Petit, I would suggest, stand as a pre-modern instance of throwing the book at the accused with every remotely relevant charge. Once alert to the likely presence of distinct lines of argumentation on exegetical method in these texts, the reader can discern that Gerson advances a series of divergent lines of interpretive criticism, some of which do not map onto a spectrum of literal and allegorical. Indeed, I argue that Gerson criticizes both Hus and Petit for overstating the apophanticity of scripture and the certainty they can derive from

[19] Gerson's own writing against Jerome of Prague exemplify this: he lambasts Jerome on topics as diverse as utraquism, the postulation of eternal forms apart from the deity, and the definition of angelic personhood (!). For more on this case, see: Zénon Kaluza, "Le chancelier Gerson et Jérôme de Prague," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 51 (1984). (Reprinted in: *Études doctrinales sur le XIVe siècle*, Études de philosophie médiévale, (Paris: J. Vrin, 2013), 207–52.)

it, and he seeks to provide a set of interpretive tactics more attuned to scripture's rhetorical mode.[20]

Two methodological clarifications about my argument in this chapter are in order before attending to d'Ailly and Gerson in turn. First, I maintain that the hermeneutics of contingency, defined and discussed in the previous chapter, continue to be operative in d'Ailly and Gerson's analysis of holy scripture. However, I am not here aiming to recapitulate the same argument merely from different sources. Instead, I will demonstrate how these texts discussing the on-the-ground work of exegesis advocate for a set of reading practices hitherto underrecognized by scholarship on the Navarrists. These reading practices, summarized as a semiotics of deferral, themselves stand as a practical outworking of the theoretical commitments to a hermeneutics of contingency. Thus, these chapters make independent arguments that nevertheless reinforce each other in turn.

Second, the d'Ailly and Gerson texts, although both explicitly treating the Bible, are in radically different genres: a rhetorical *encomium* and polemical theses, respectively. I am not arguing that they advance an identical agenda or that these texts can be flattened into a single outlook. Nonetheless, I contend that both authors reveal a set of shared assumptions about the interpretive strategies that should be brought to bear on biblical texts. Points of resonance across

[20] In this way, I make a homologous argument to Kaluza when he notes that the doctrinal charges Gerson leveled against Hus and Jerome of Prague (distinct from their biblical-interpretive differences) are ultimately reducible to Gerson's objection to their realism that lets them ground certainty in demonstrative logic and dialectic. As Kaluza summarizes: "Hus et Jérôme de Prague n'avaient aucune chance de quitter le concile du Constance: leurs propositions indéfinies, vraies pour les logiciens et pour les grammairiens, étaient indéfendables, parce que universelles, pour un théologien comme Gerson." *Études doctrinales sur le XIVe siècle*, 240. See also his note on page 214, where he links Gerson's heresiological effectiveness at Constance to this narrow definition of true theology, which Jerome and Hus had *a priori* transgressed based on their logical method.

authors and genres, this chapter suggests, indicate the importance of thinking critically about language, how it signifies, and how to interpret that signification for the Navarrists. Even when faced with a set of weighty questions about interpretive authority, and equipped with a robust set of categories for biblical interpretation, both d'Ailly and Gerson find it necessary to regularly articulate new frameworks, approaches, and cautionary notes. We turn first to the former.

2.2 D'Ailly and the Semiotics of Displacement

Pierre d'Ailly's *Recommendatio Sacrae Scripturae,* his inaugural lecture to the College of Navarre upon receipt of his doctorate from Paris's Faculty of Theology in April of 1381, follows the University's tradition of speaking on the topic of holy scripture for one's first address as a member of the faculty. [21] The text presents a sustained reading of the Matthean sentence: "Upon this rock I shall build my church." Unsurprisingly, much of the opening of the text grapples with the question of who or what is the rock in question—an issue particularly charged amid the conciliar movements in which the Navarrists were central. D'Ailly takes Augustine as a prime interlocutor, underscoring the variety of answers he presents to this issue. But in surveying them, d'Ailly takes a sudden turn with his own reply:

[21] It is somewhat remarkable for an inaugural address such as this to survive, but d'Ailly's circulated extensively alongside his enormously influential commentary on the Lombard's *Sentences*. The common title of the work is drawn from its traditional label in its late-medieval manuscript circulation. An overview of the manuscript tradition and attendant scholarship can be found in Palémon Glorieux, "Deux éloges de la Sainte Écriture par Pierre d'Ailly," *Mélanges de Science Religieuse* 29 (1972): 113-130. Moreover, the literary genre of the university lecture raises some particularly thorny questions for the scholar. While, to be sure, there was an oral presentation of it, its preservation in manuscripts reflects an intentional textualization. It is well established that most written records of academic milestones, e.g. magisterial disputations, involved after-the-fact editing on the part of the speaker. Thus, I am comfortable referring to the *Recommendatio* as a text, even if its first presentation was as a spoken address. As a corollary, I think thoughtful readings of the text—even if it would require an exceptional audience to identify those elements in a single listening—should not to be dismissed out of hand. Unintuitively, the only edited version of the Latin text is available in the 1706 *opera omnia* of Gerson: d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*.

> But the doctrine of Christ the Savior is entirely sound, whether we may understand the stone as Peter or the stone as Christ according to the literal sense [*litteralis sensus*]; nevertheless we are able to understand according to a spiritual meaning [*spiritualis intellectus*] that this stone signifies divine scripture and the holy doctrine of Christ, which is manifestly so firmly solid and so solidly firm that Christ has founded—not without merit—his church upon it.[22]

Subsequently, the text becomes something of an encomium of sacred scripture. Importantly, d'Ailly in this transition signals three elements that will be consistently examined in the rest of the work: the potential variety of licit signification, the reliability of biblical meaning, and a less-than-captive attitude toward the history of interpretation.

D'Ailly pivots from this cavalier break of opinion from (any version of) Augustine and a celebration of the verbal eloquence of scripture to suddenly claim fidelity to the exegetical tradition and take a jab at poetry: "And in order to declare these words, as we dismiss the rhymes of divisions, so that we may cleave to the pen of the fathers, let us show how Christ has built his church on holy scripture—so firm a stone!"[23] This apparent flexibility, or even argumentative inconsistency, to suddenly redefine the stone of the Church on d'Ailly's part (along with his ubiquitous enthusiasm for oratorical flourishes) is possible evidence that this text is a rhetorical exercise praising scripture rather than a serious presentation of views on interpretation. But, as argued in Chapter One, the Navarrists consistently reject any dichotomy between rhetoric and true argument.[24] Reading the *Recommendatio* as both a rhetorical exercise and as a cogent theory

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[22] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 604. "Sed salva omnino christi salvatoris sententia sive in petra petrum, sive in petra christum, secundum litteralem sensum intelligere valeamus, tamen secundum spiritualem intellectum per hanc petram divinam scripturam et sacram christi doctrinam signare possumus, quae tam firme soliditatis et solide firmitatis existit ut non immerito super eam christi ecclesia fundata sit."

[23] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 605. "Ad quorum declarationem verborum, omissis divisionum rithmis, stilum Patrum ut possumus insequentes, ostendamus qualiter super scripturam sacram tamquam super firmam petram christus suam aedificavit ecclesiam."

[24] See Chapter One, "The Scholastic as Humanist," pp. 52 ff.

of biblical hermeneutics, I will argue that here d'Ailly in fact describes a deferral of meaning within sacred scripture: the words of the text supposit various things such that any interpretation is but provisional. Further, this radical account of how meaning operates in the biblical text, for d'Ailly, does not mitigate the reliability of holy writ, even as it sidelines its apophanticity.

D'Ailly proceeds to unfold a sustained metaphor of the stone, more of a mountain in this case, on which the church has been built. I outline the image, briefly. The base of the mountain is full of classical, pre-Christian thinkers struggling zealously to climb it, although their lack of assent to biblical revelation thwarts progress.[25] Further up the slope are the patriarchs and prophets, making a slow ascent amid the shadows obscuring the path.[26] (Jacob and Elijah benefit from a ladder and flaming chariot, respectively, in this scenario.) Upon seeing the summit, the viewer witnesses Christ transfigured, adored by the inner circle of the apostles, who are in turn ringed by the evangelists, martyrs, priests, and in fact the whole throng of the saints bursting forth in song.[27]

This however is merely the foundation on which the edifice of the church stands. As with any building described by a trained scholastic, it can be analyzed in terms of its conveniently

[25] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 606. "Currunt ergo velociter, currunt pariter, et tum quia nec sacrae scripturae nec veritatis catholicae viam tenent in montem ascendere non valent."

[26] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 606. "Siquidem et licet non in via plana tamen sub umbra tenebrosa ascendentes in montem."

[27] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 606. "Ibi ipsement salvator, fons omnium salutarium exemplorum, in montem oraturus ascendit, temptantem adversarium vicit, turbas instruit, beatitudines distinguit, et in montis excelso transfiguratur ubi super eum aeterni patris vox auditur ibi. Petrus, Jacobus, et Johannes hanc transfigurationem vident at pavent, vocem audiunt, et mirantur. Et ut innumera sanctorum turba brevi sermone perstringatur, ibi evangelisant apostoli, annunciant discipuli, triumphant martyres, exultant confessorers, doctores praedicant, sacerdotes orant, psallunt claustrales, canunt virgines, ac universi sanctorum chori illud psalmigraphi personant: 'Exaltate dominum deum nostrum, et adorate in monte sancto eius.'"

enumerated parts. First, there are the stones that are the individual Christians (a reference to the first Petrine epistle). Second, the cement that binds the stones together is the unity of faith. Third the church's walls, rising up, are the moving beyond earthly to spiritual things. Fourth, the parapets are the virtue of hope, warding off threats. Fifth, the windows are the doctors and preachers who let light into the building. Sixth, the sacrament is the proclamation of divine eloquence. Seventh, the priests and rectors active in parish ministry are the supportive columns. Eighth, the spiritual love of God and neighbor covers all as the roof. (D'Ailly assures us that this list does not include the abundant mysteries and spiritual lessons that populate the interior of the building.)[28]

[28] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 606–07. "Sed ulterius videamus ecclesiastici aedificii incrementum: 'Aedificabo,' inquit. Christus namque dei virtus et dei sapientia ecclesiae suae domum quam aeterna mente concepit super sacrae scripturae fundamentum temporali aedificatione complevit. Implevitque illud quod dictum erat per sapientem, 'Sapientia aedificavit sibi domum, excidit columnas septem.' Habet siquidem domus ista catholica sancta ecclesia non solum septem columnas sed et singulas partes suas super sacrae scripturae veritatem fundatas: habet lapides, habet cementum, habet parietes, habet murum, habet fenestras, habet hostium, postremo habet columnas, et desuper habet tectum. Haec autem omnia plena sunt misteriis et abundant spiritualibus documentis. Habet namque ecclesia suos lapides, singulos sanctos christianos et fideles, per fidei stabilitatem quadros, per patientiae virtutem firmos, per exercitationem politos, per immobilitatem stabilitos. Habet cementum per fidei unitatem, per quam, dum fideles concordi glutino connectuntur, lapides in dei aedificio copulantur. Habet parietes veros, religiosos et spirituales, a terrenis elevatos, a celestibus non remotos, a transitoriis ad aeterna erectos, a corporalibus ad spiritualia sublimatos. Habet murum inexpugnabilem spei virtutem, per quam, dum aeterna praemia proponuntur, temproalia quaeque et adversantia mala facile repelluntur. Habet fenestras: viros speculativos praedicatores et doctores per quos veri solis radio illustramur et a caecitate ignorantiae liberamur. Habet hostium, divini eloquii veritatem, quem, dum in sensus varios vertit, caelestis secreti cognitio et occulti consilii nobis illustratio aperitur. Postremo habet columnas, viros activos pastores et rectores, per quos in christi aedificio sustentamur et firmitate constantiae solidamur. Qui ideo septem columnae dicuntur quia per septem virtutes tanquam septem bases fundantur, per septem beatitudines elevantur, per septem spiritus sancti dona firmantur et per septem christi sacramenta stabiliter roborantur. Denique habet ecclesia super has septem columnas tectum suum ipsam spiritum dei et proximi charitatem, quae dum veram dilectionem operatur totam legem complectitur. Quoniam ipso legislatore teste, in hoc 'universa lex pendet et prophetae.'"

While superficially straightforward, this ekphrasis of the church upon the mount of sacred scripture raises a number of questions immediately. First, there is the fact that the main object of analysis ends up being the intricacies of the Church, not scripture; this only underscores that the nature of the stone set out for consideration receives minimal discussion. Second, the entrance is described as "the truth of divine eloquence, which, when treated in its various senses, is opened to us as an understanding of heavenly secrets and an illumination of hidden wisdom."[29] This element seems to associate the building with the biblical text, rather than the mountain previously said to be scripture. A third confounding factor emerges as d'Ailly unpacks the consequences of this image. After making some straightforward points (e.g., the stones of the church are diverse with regard to class, age, and gender; Christ himself must be understood to have built the church), he—again invoking Augustinian commonplaces—avers that the church is still a mixed body, assailed by heretics, schismatics, and idolaters of all sorts. While it will eventually prevail against these diabolic interlopers, d'Ailly underscores the uncertainty of when that will occur and who will be cast out.[30] Until that time, the faithful should contend against wickedness in the church but only using the weapons of the "lessons of divine speech and sacred scripture."[31]

[29] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 607. "Habet hostium, divini eloquii veritatem, quem, dum in sensus varios vertit, caelestis secreti cognitio et occulti consilii nobis illustratio aperitur."

[30] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 609. "…quod quando erit nescio deus scit, numquid immo pax est ecclesiae dei, numquid ideo cessant persecutiones dyaboli;" "Nemo ergo, cum iam senectus ecclesiae expugnatur, aut miretur aut timeat. Sed cum de iuventute ecclesiae haec audiat, sese consoletur, et ex praeteritis exemplis discat quia etiam si expugnari posset ecclesia, nequit tamen penitus superari."

[31] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 610. "Per haec itaque arma, hoc est per divini sermonis et sacrae scripturae documenta, ecclesia pugnando vincit, vincendo crescit, crescendo perficit, perficiendo complementum accipit."

To summarize, the metaphor of the church on the rock features three aspects that are identified with the biblical text: the mountain itself, the preaching within the building of the church, and the entrance to the building. The latter two, further, are in a space described as potentially compromised by the presence of the unfaithful. Even if one were to see the *Recommendatio* as a rhetorical performance to the exclusion of any meaningful theoretical claims, one would have to conclude that d'Ailly failed to live up to the rhetorical standards and procedures of clarity, argumentation, and persuasion in which he was trained.

I contend that the highly wrought character of this text indicates that d'Ailly has taken care to construct a series of displacements and recursions. This structure in turn illustrates the understanding of sacred scripture—and in particular the semiotic operation of terms—that d'Ailly is advancing. Let us revisit the course of the text's narrative.

The opening of the *Recommendatio* gives us a scriptural clause: "Upon this rock I shall build my church." D'Ailly immediately points to the uncertainty at play here: what is the "rock" in question? He then provides, by invocation of Augustine, the two traditional answers to the question. At the point where one expects him to opt for an answer, he supplies a new option, namely that the rock is sacred scripture.[32] This moving between possible referents proceeds to further subdivide and displace scripture within the ekphrasis of the rock. He explains that the ancient non-Christians stand at the base of this rock, wishing they could ascend it. But when he turns to the patriarchs and prophets upon the slopes of the rock, he notes that their path is

[32] The stone of the mountain is variously described as: "divinam scripturam et sacram christi doctrinam," 604; "Quotquot ergo sunt christi eloquia, quot christianae doctrinae testimonia," 604; "Sacra igitur scriptura christi," 604; "petra… sacra potest intelligi scriptura sive verbi christi veritas," 605; "ipsam sacrae scripturae veritatem," 605. d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*.

obscure and they are still *en route* to an as yet deferred destination.[33] At the summit of what is up to this point the rock of sacred scripture, we learn that the edifice of the church houses the host, now said to be the symbol of divine eloquence, containing various senses, and opening up knowledge of heavenly secrets and hidden counsel.[34] But again, as the description continues, d'Ailly describes the various mysteries (sacraments) and lessons (preaching) contained in the church;[35] these in fact are later said to be the divine word and sacred scripture.[36] In addition to this iterative displacement (and/or multiplication) of the object(s) of reference, d'Ailly renders explicit a temporal deferral that had been implied before. Just as the prophets and patriarchs are working toward the truth, so too is the church yet awaiting its deliverance from Babylon.[37] This wait is marked by uncertainty, as no one knows the day or hour of the parousia.[38] To summarize, while divine truth—synonymous for d'Ailly with sacred scripture and the word of Christ throughout this text—is consistently described as reliable and the final end of the faithful, the specific sites of that truth and its revelation are regularly displaced both spatially and temporally

[33] *Nota bene* the present participle: d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 605. "Siquidem et licet non in via plana tamen sub umbra tenebrosa ascendentes in montem."

[34] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 607. "[Ecclesia h]abet hostium, divini eloquii veritatem, quem, dum in sensus varios vertit, caelestis secreti cognitio et occulti consilii nobis illustratio aperitur."

[35] It is important that these are associated with "mysteries" and described as "spiritual," echoing the language of the host: d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 607. "Haec autem omnia plena sunt misteriis et abundant spiritualibus documentis."

[36] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 610. "Per haec itaque arma, hoc est per divini sermonis et sacrae scripturae documenta, ecclesia pugnando vincit, vincendo crescit, crescendo perficit, perficiendo complementum accipit."

[37] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 608. "Sed audiamus qualiter huic civitati Jerusalem insidiatur civitas Babylon, et civitati dei semper civitas dyaboli pertinaciter adversatur. Harum ergo duarum civitatum videnda sunt certamina, numeranda bella, considerandi triumphi, pensandae victoriae. Igitur ut ab orbe condita est a fundatione civitatis dei et ab initio nascentis ecclesiae sumamus exordium."

[38] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 609. "Sed esto victi sint et ad veritatis viam reducti haeretici aut ad obedientiam scismatici, quod quando erit nescio deus scit, numquid immo pax et ecclesiae dei, numquid ideo cessant persecutiones dyaboli."

in the ekphrasis. Alongside and throughout this deferral, d'Ailly constantly points to the confidence one should place in scripture because of the Spirit's guidance, Christ's promises to the Church, and the hope of the eschaton. Yet at the same time, that confidence is not situated in specific discrete propositions. D'Ailly's *Recommendatio* is, in fact, a rhetorical exercise, but one that seeks to show the different mode of truth-telling which rhetoric permits.

In tandem with this programmatic displacement, d'Ailly also incorporates a pattern of recursion, which reinforces reliability while questioning certainty. This happens through the use of repeated language and through a blurring of the concepts of foundation and end. For instance, as new elements in the *Recommendatio* become defined as scripture, d'Ailly recapitulates the language first introduced discussing the rock as a foundation for the church to describe these new features. That is to say, even as d'Ailly constantly displaces the apparent signifier of holy scripture with new additions, we have seen that he here reuses language from earlier in the *Recommendatio*. Likewise, Augustine becomes a point of constant reference, with his account of two cities emerging repeatedly over the course of the oration, rehearsing a ubiquitously well-known doctrine multiple times in the course of a single address. The audience thereby finds themselves in a semiotic push-and-pull, moving forward and back in the text. This is most apparent in d'Ailly's collapsing of divine truth as both the stone and foundation of the church and also as the eschatological revealing of Christ's church. The surety of the Lord's protection of his church is of a piece with his providing it with a firm foundation; this guarantees the endurance of the church against the assaults of falsehood.[39] The throughline of this argument, for d'Ailly, is that the word of God is living and efficacious:

[39] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 609. "Non possunt igitur ecclesiam vincere eius adversarii, quod qui fundavit eam altissimus, qui aedificavit eam christus, ipse est qui custodit civitatem dei, ipse est qui defendit eam adversus civitatem dyaboli."

> Therefore, with these weapons, namely the writings of the divine word and of sacred scripture, the church will conquer by fighting, and grow by conquering, be perfected by growing, and receive its prize by being perfected. This is enough grace for now—and it will be a glorious future. And it is promised to us that our Lord Jesus, blessed through all ages, has built his church upon the rock. Amen.[40]

The listener becomes attuned by the structure of the text itself to see the process of interpretation as constantly retracing its own steps, even as it defers a full disclosure of meaning toward the future.

In an address that itself claims to speak to the role of holy scripture, d'Ailly performs a complicated maneuver: the *Recommendatio* suggests that meaning is enmeshed in a practice of displacement and reiteration. For d'Ailly this in no way prompts doubt in the veracity or potency of scripture. On the one hand the church's long tradition of reiteration provides a source of reliability, and on the other hand a commitment to an eschatological unveiling of divine truth guarantees this reliability. As d'Ailly says, scripture is reliable "enough for now" even if his text precludes a careful dialectic unpacking of how the Bible reveals divine truth. In sum, d'Ailly's address dynamically instantiates the non-apophantic nature of scriptural truth through its own literary form of displacement and recursion. D'Ailly is looking not to the content of revelation *per se*, but rather to how the text of scripture actually produces meaning. It is through a constant semiotic displacement: sometimes forward, sometimes back, sometimes repeated. This generative semiosis, notably, is not perceptibly teleological. Instead, even as the reliability of an eschatological affirmation is declared, these signs range back and forth in the meantime. D'Ailly's performance of noting connections and moving along these various filaments of the

[40] d'Ailly, *Recommendatio sacrae scripturae*, 610. "Per haec itaque arma, hoc est per divini sermonis et sacrae scripturae documenta, ecclesia pugnando vincit, vincendo crescit, crescendo perficit, perficiendo complementum accipit. Hic satis per gratiam et in futuro per gloriam. Quam nobis concedat quod supra petram suam aedificavit ecclesia dominus noster Iesus, per omnia saecula benedictus, Amen."

web of scriptural signification, I contend, instantiates for him how one is to read a text like the Bible. For d'Ailly, the proper exegete is a semionaut; the exegete does not deductively perform an operation according to laws of signification to extract meaning from a text. The exegete, rather, explores the interstices of signs and signifieds as a process of generating meaning that does not follow a linear model of meaning-making from the grammar of a given utterance.

Even at this comparatively early date in his career, we can thus see d'Ailly articulating a theory of reading scripture that comports with the hermeneutics of contingency that would, with increasing clarity, be explicated by the Navarrists.[41] Indeed, the hermeneutics of contingency can be seen as of a piece with the reading strategies explored in this chapter. Accordingly, d'Ailly's *Recommendatio* points to the central argument of this chapter: the Navarrists, when treating scriptural texts, are attentive to the actual semiotics of how words function as contingent terms. That is, how words point and refer back to other signs indefinitely. They endorse reading practices that are informed by texts' own patterns of displacement and recursion. Insofar as scholarship has focused on questions of biblical vs. ecclesial authority or literal vs. allegorical interpretation, it has effaced this other axis of Navarrist biblical exegesis: a semiotics of displacement. Many of the Navarrists' interlocutors indeed are concerned with meta-questions about the mechanisms of authority or the content of biblical truth. While not dismissing those concerns—far from it!—the Navarrists nevertheless contribute an abiding concern with the actual mechanics, limits, and habits of language itself.

2.3 Gerson Against the Literalists

The remainder of this chapter analyzes Gerson's extensive engagement in the high-stakes realm of scriptural interpretation, suggesting that his actual practice of scriptural interpretation

[41] See Chapter One, "The Scholastic as Humanist."

comports with that of d'Ailly by foregrounding semiosis characterized by displacement. In so doing, the chapter provides a strong corrective to historiography on, in particular, the understanding of Jean Gerson and the polemics over scripture at the Council of Constance and, more broadly, the contours of larger late-medieval biblical-interpretive traditions. An obsequious posture toward the early-modern framings of these debates has fundamentally obscured the importance and innovative nature of theoretical interventions like that of the Navarrists. Breaking with the scholarly literature, I aver that Reformation-informed categories of tradition versus scripture, Tradition I versus Tradition II, or literal versus allegorical senses leave major lacunae in understanding d'Ailly, Gerson, and their colleagues' approach to the Bible.

To reiterate from earlier in the chapter: invariably, the primary foci within Gerson's œuvre on biblical exegeses are his theses, drafted as part of the proceedings of the Council of Constance, against the Prague preacher Jan Hus in the 1414 *De sensu litterali sacrae scripturae* (which served as part of the proceedings to burn him alive in 1415) and his 1415 *Réponse à la Consultation des Maîtres*, a critical response to Jean Petit, a theologian in the orbit of the Burgundian court who had advanced theological and biblical arguments in defense of the Burgundians' murder of Louis I, Duke of Orléans. *De sensu litterali* argues that Hus's theory of scriptural interpretation (perceived to include a rejection of tradition and magisterial authority) does not in fact grasp the true, literal sense of scripture. Somewhat inversely, the *Réponse* argues that Petit errs in advancing allegorizing readings to defend positions that explicitly dispense with the literal sense of scripture. Given that we moderns are perhaps too sympathetic to anything framed as an Aristotelian middle way, Gerson has been identified as a figure who struggles to combine a biblical hermeneutic that allows for tradition, magisterial authority, and certain allegorical readings while also being attentive to the literal sense in a thoughtful, quasi-(proto-)

Protestant manner. Reading Gerson as a mediating hermeneut is rather difficult, as the quite divergent interpretations charted above attest. In the most recent (and most nuanced) account on the subject, D. Zach Flanagin concludes, "such a balancing act [between scripture and the church] lacking any real systematic coherence could not be maintained in the end."[42] Trying to juggle all these competing interests within his exegetical theory, Flanagin suggests Gerson is something of an exegetical failure, albeit an ambitious and daring one.

While I concur with Flanagin's readings of Gerson's hermeneutics with reference to individual passages, I argue that a recognition of the Navarrists' hermeneutics of contingency and semiotics of deferral requires a reassessment of the coherence and success of his method. Put otherwise, the scholarly literature has continued to take sixteenth-century categories of church and scripture, as well as a desire for certainty, to be operative *a priori* among the Navarrists.[43] I do not. In particular, I aim to depart from scholarly treatments that foreground the question of authority—to be sure, a locus of strident debate between Gerson and the Prague faction, for instance—to the extent that it eclipses hermeneutical questions of how a text is to be read.[44] Here too is a point of marked difference about certainty's place in the practice of interpretation. I

[42] Flanagin, "Making Sense of It All: Gerson's Biblical Theology," 174.

[43] Susan Schreiner, though focused beyond the ken of the Navarrists, is a welcome exception in discerning that fourteenth- and fifteenth-century anxieties about certainty do not demand it to be understood as an axiological necessity. See: *Are you Alone Wise?: The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 391–93 et passim.

[44] I am not arguing that authority is not a central concern for Gerson, especially in *De sensu litterali* which devotes a number of theses to buttressing the Church's claims to interpretive authority. However, my argument below proceeds on the hypothesis that Gerson's disputation about the extent to which certainty may be grounded in an act of textual interpretation is analytically distinguishable from his view of authority. The apparent reliability of the essentials of the faith proffered by the magisterium (with the Holy Spirit's guiding) in Gerson's account has caused scholars to ignore his line of critique against interpretive certainty itself.

argue, breaking with the historiography's tacit assumption of certainty's value to all interlocutors, that Gerson, in accord with d'Ailly's *Recommendatio,* seeks a biblical hermeneutic that disambiguates certainty from reliability, due to a commitment to language's own tendency to defer and to recur that precludes exegetical certainty *in statu viae*.

Enter Jan Hus, emblematic of new reformist movements fomenting in the orbit of the University of Prague (often termed, on his account, Hussite), the enormously popular Czech preacher. He, like many at Prague, had been exposed to the writings of the (ecclesially condemned) English theologian John Wycliff and advanced a theological agenda that, at least to hostile observers, seemed dangerously similar to that of Wycliff. Hus asserted that authority resided with the invisible rather than institutional church, that utraquism in the Eucharist should be available also to the laity, that indulgences were erroneous, that the visible church lacked the authority to invoke coercive violence (e.g., a crusade), that immoral prelates need not be obeyed, and that determinative authority should be afforded to the plain, literal sense of scripture.[45] He had been excommunicated (by the Pisan pontiff, Alexander V) in 1410 for his defense of Wycliff, and the Council of Constance at the particular urging of the Paris delegation brought him to formal trial for heresy. The condemnations of Hus's teachings were ratified, he refused a full recantation on the basis of conscience, and he was summarily executed by burning in 1415. In this life-and-death scenario, Gerson penned his *De sensu litterali* as part of the trial proceedings against Hus.

De sensu litterali asserts that Hus, despite his own protestations to the contrary, does not in fact grasp the literal sense of sacred scripture. The text presents twelve theses to that effect,

[45] Thomas A. Fudge has written extensively on Hus. Most pertinently, see: *The Trial of Jan Hus: Medieval Heresy and Criminal Procedure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

with some framing commentary before and after, before a sudden pivot to a discussion of psychology and epistemology with its own attendant theses. It opens with a citation of Mark 3:29, "But he who has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit will not have forgiveness in eternity, but rather will be guilty of eternal transgression."[46] Wryly, Gerson notes that this text has been extensively treated by a number of authorities; one of the species of eternal transgression enumerated by the fathers is a "hostility toward recognized truth."[47] The context is thus immediately set within the question of both the interpretation of scripture and that of how one's interpretation relates to those of others (in addition to a grim warning of mortal punishment).

After some rather alarmist grandstanding about the spread of novelties in biblical interpretation across Europe (even, he is pained to note, in France!), Gerson acknowledges that the focal terrain of the disagreement regards "sacred scripture and its true, literal sense."[48] Gerson's willingness to accept this starting point is apparent in his first, uncompromising thesis: "The literal sense of holy scripture is always true."[49] As he himself indicates, his eagerness to maintain the same axiom as even his Hussite interlocutors is rooted in his opposition to the Burgundian parties who championed the dictum, "The letter kills" (2 Cor 3:6), as an argument for rather radical interpretive license with holy writ.[50] This bold, literalist starting point is no doubt behind some scholars' description of Gerson as a functional biblicist.

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[46] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 333. "Qui autem blasphemaverit in Spiritum Sanctum non habebit remissionem in aeternum, sed reus erit aeterni delicti. Marc. 3."

[47] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 333. "Inter illa vero species peccati quod textus noster appellat aeternum delictum, numeratur impugnatio veritatis agnitae."

[48] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 334. "Amplius, quia seminatores haeresum talium et impugnatores veritatis… dicunt fundari dicta sua in Scriptura Sacra et ejus sensu vero litterali."

[49] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 334. "Propositio prima: Sensus litteralis Sacrae Scripturae semper est verus."

[50] Of course, Petit and the Burgundian masters will be treated below. Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 334. "Oppositum hujus est nuper Parisiis condemnatum; et reputata est expositio vel allegatio distorta quae inducit ad hoc, illud Apostoli Littera occidit, etc."

Nonetheless, Gerson quickly pivots to a tone familiar from his works on philosophy of language, writing, "The literal sense of holy scripture should be understood not according to the force of logic or dialectic, but rather according to customs of speech in rhetorical discourses and according to tropes and figures of speech which common use has established."[51] This phrasing, wholly consonant with the Navarrist account of the hermeneutics of contingency, has the effect of moving out from any posited grammatico-logical letter immediately; interpretation is an expansive rather than narrow enterprise. Crucially, he proceeds to explicitly classify the study of holy scripture as of a piece with moral and historical sciences insofar as its logic is that of rhetoric (rather than Aristotelian demonstrative proof).[52] So while Gerson strongly avers the truth of scripture in the first thesis, his second thesis cautions that absolute clarity is dependent on genre. In effect, he is laying the groundwork for a non-apophantic reading of holy scripture. This latter theme gets treatment in subsequent theses, interspersed with parallel arguments about ecclesial and conciliar authority and the grounds for punishment of interpretive error as heresy.

For instance in thesis four, Gerson parses how the scriptures' use of figures of speech and rhetorical forms necessitates that most of its statements are "indefinite."[53] He specifies that "such an indefinite manner of speaking is not always just an excuse for declaring something false, but

[51] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 334. "Secunda: Sensus litteralis Sacrae Scripturae accipiendus est non secundum vim logicae seu dialecticae, sed potius juxta locutiones in rhetoricis sermonibus usitatas et juxta tropos et figuratas locutiones quas communis usus committit."

[52] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 334." Habet enim Scriptura Sacra, sicut et moralis et historialis scientia, suam logicam propriam, quam rhetoricam appellamus."

[53] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 335. "Quarta: Sensus litteralis Scripturae, praesertim in sermonibus moralibus, utitur plerumque indefinita pro universali iuxta communem modum accipiendi."

rather it supposes that what is indefinitely stated may be true in some particular instance."[54] By qualifying the grounds for adjudicating verity and falsity, Gerson is here building on Aristotle's discussion of apophanticism in *De interpretatione*:

> But while every sentence has meaning…, not all can be called propositions [*apophantic*]. We call propositions [*apophantic*] those only that have truth or falsity in them. A prayer is, for instance, a sentence but neither has truth nor has falsity. Let us pass over all such, as their study more properly belongs to the province of rhetoric or poetry.[55]

It follows that scripture, strictly speaking, cannot be described as propositionally true or false as it is fundamentally a species of rhetoric.

Boldly, the following thesis asserts that even if something is established as logically true (as a necessary demonstration) in a theological argument, that does not carry decisive weight over the "theological literal sense" (i.e., rhetorical, non-apophantic sense) of a biblical text. The rhetorical features of the text provide a more appropriate way to assess scripture than its relationship to dialectic argument.[56] The implicit question to Hus is how could one even extract a clear, certain interpretation from a text in a rhetorical mode. Gerson's critique is thus not purely about interpretive authority or literalism, but also about the conditions for the possibility of interpretive certainty, the interpretive limits afforded by the semiotics at work in a non-

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[54] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 335. "Propterea talis indefinita locutio non excusat semper asserentem a falsitate, supposito quod sit in aliquo particulari casu verum illud quod indefinitum positum est."

[55] Aristotle, *Categories. On Interpretation. Prior Analytics*, trans. H. P. Cooke and Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 120–21. "IV.… Ἔστι δὲ λόγος ἅπας μὲν σημαντικός, οὐχ ὡς ὄργανον δε, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς προείρηται, κατὰ συνθήκην. ἀποφαντικὸς δὲ οὐ πᾶς, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ᾧ τὸ ἀληθέμειν ἢ ψεύδεσθαι ὑπάρχει. οὐκ ἐν ἅπασι δὲ ὑπάρχει, οἷον ἡ εὐχὴ λόγος μέν, ἀλλ᾽ οὔτε ἀληθὴς οὔτε ψευδής. οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι ἀφείσθωσαν ῥητορικῆς γὰρ ἢ ποιητικῆς οἰκειοτέρα ἡ σκέψις." Translation theirs.

[56] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 335. "Quinta: Sensus logicalis verus in assertione theologica, non excusat asserentem quin talem assertionem debeat revocare si falsa sit in sensu theologico litterali, aut si sit scandalosa vel piarum aurium offensiva, aut aliter male sonans. Haec sequitur ex praedictis."

apophantic text. That is to say, Gerson is not attacking the primacy of the letter, or even specific readings advanced by Hus, but rather Gerson is disputing the endeavor to derive certain meaning from the biblical text.

Accordingly, the interpretive pattern of displacement, operative in d'Ailly's *Recommendatio* discussed above, also receives treatment in the opening propositions of *De sensu litterali*. Gerson presents an apparently uncontroversial description of the literal sense: it was revealed by Christ and then the apostles, confirmed by the martyrs, articulated by the doctors of the Church, councils, and modern theologians.[57] While largely rehearsing staid accounts of the handing down of the gospel message, there are three important wrinkles. First, the literal sense of scripture becomes dissociated from the letter of the text itself; the literal sense is temporalized and deferred from being fully present, even hypothetically, in the revelation of the Holy Spirit within the Christian scriptures. Second, Gerson sees this temporally plotted discourse as providing a mechanism to tend toward "definition," in contrast to scripture's own indefinite use of language. He explains, after conciliar declarations and doctrinal disputes among theologians, that the literal sense "came to be defined by the Church weightily."[58] Definition then is a function not of the text itself, but an iterative process of an interpretive community. However, third, even this discursive mechanism of definition is processual and unending (presumably, for

[57] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 335. "Sensus litteralis Sacrae Scripturae fuit primo per Christum et Apostolos revelatus et miraculis elucidatus, deinde fuit per sanguinem martyrum confirmatus, postmodum sacri doctores per rationes suas diligentes contra haereticos diffudius elicuerunt praedictum sensum litteralem et conclusiones ex illo clarius vel probabilius consequentes; postea succesit determinatio sacrorum conciliorum ut quod erat doctrinaliter discussum per doctores fieret per Ecclesiam sententialiter definitum."

[58] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 335. "…postea succesit determinatio sacrorum conciliorum ut quod erat doctrinaliter discussum per doctores fieret per Ecclesiam sententialiter definitum." On the use of *sententialiter* with reference to ecclesial decrees, see Gillian Rosemary Evans, *Law and Theology in the Middle Ages* (Psychology Press, 2002), 155–56.

Gerson, at least before the eschaton). The ongoing rulings of canon lawyers and judges against heretics are, he maintains, part of this ongoing handing down of the literal sense, and this will not end, "because in disputing and arguing against the truth there is no end among many."[59]

This is, to say the least, a complex and not-wholly-satisfactory argument. Taking the indefinite nature of rhetorical language seriously, Gerson perspicaciously acknowledges that any process of definition must needs be in some way extra-textual. Further, a temporally iterative interpretive community is not an implausible avenue toward increasing definition. However, Gerson's only warrant for what authorizes the Latin church as this community seems to be an appeal to its (self-asserted) historical primacy and continued transmission of interpretation. While there is some rhetorical consonance between the temporal deferral underscored by Gerson (and indeed d'Ailly) and the eschatological orientation of much Christian thought, this thesis comes across as Gerson attempting to link his language-philosophical concerns over Hus's biblicism to the ubiquitous debate over the question of authority in the declaration of Christian truth. Yet, I would suggest, the very awkwardness of this rather artificial pairing demonstrates the importance for Gerson of asserting the indefinite, non-apophantic nature of most scriptural texts—he could have just opted for a more typical appeal to ecclesial authority. Gerson's avowal of a semiotics of displacement grounds a line of attack against Hus that does not neatly cohere with the general assertions of the magisterium's interpretive primacy in late-medieval Christendom.

[59] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 335. "Appositae sunt tandem poenae per judices tam ecclesiasticos quam saeculares contra eos qui proterva temeritate nollent ecclesiasticae determinationi subjacere. Et hoc necessaria provisione factum est, quoniam in ratiocinando et altercando adversus veritatem non est apud multos finis."

After the twelve theses on the literal sense, Gerson considers the sources of the Hussite errors. Here, the awkward combination of themes in the treatise comes together to put his opponents in a difficult bind: if one does not have an interpretive tradition and the text itself is unable to offer certainty, how can one reasonably offer a confident interpretation? Of course Gerson finds a ready answer in Augustine: "inordinate desire, i.e. a privation of will."[60] He turns to explicate this over the course of eight enumerated species of error, but gives a telling prefatory note: "Therefore let us explain now what we have said and what we mean, and we will do this better by narrating rather than by disputing or speaking conclusively."[61] On the one hand, this may be an excuse for brevity (though, to be clear, this constitutes an entire second half of the text), but on the other Gerson is likely signaling the enduring importance of identifying the genre of language at play and discerning the degree of certainty that it may or may not entail. He thus gains a degree of rhetorical flexibility to attack his opponents even as he doubles down on his skeptical arguments about their confident biblicism. Further, he is signaling his switch to the rhetorical mode away from deductive argument against Hus; Gerson is announcing a generic pivot to semionautics.

[60] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 337. "Et dicamus summatim et velut ab alto, quod omnium errantium primaria radix, principalis origo fuit et est inordinata affectio vel voluntatis depravatio. Hoc vidit Augustinus dicens: approbare falsa pro veris non est natura instituti hominis sed poena damnati."

[61] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 337. "Declaremus praeterea istud quod nunc diximus et intendimus, et hoc narrando potius quam disputando vel conclusive loquendo."

These reasons for error springing out of disordered affections largely center on the noetic limits of the human intellect. It is ignorant of its own limits,[62] is predisposed to disbelieve truth,[63] and is poorly suited to discerning nuance.[64] These causes are mutually reinforcing. To illustrate, Gerson dilates on metaphors of sight. The human mind does not see spiritual things clearly. Because of its limits it is like a person with blindness, but even more the spiritual matters of belief are not just visible objects, but nuanced details like color.[65] Spiritual perception is thus doubly closed from the human mind, and arguments about them become a fraught endeavor. (To be sure, the textual skepticism outlined earlier in the treatise only compounds these obstacles.) Gerson, in an unusually pithy moment, summarizes, "The human gaze does not see whatever an eagle's sees."[66] The text concludes with a stock series of theses denouncing arrogance, pride, and assault on revealed truth all contributing to the ruin of the University of Prague, drawing on language from the beginning of the section.[67] This concluding part of the text illustrates a certain flexibility, moving between various condemnations of unbelief, overconfidence, aphorisms, and metaphors. Similar to d'Ailly's performative instantiation of the semiotics of deferral in the *Recommendatio*, Gerson is showing how meaning grows out of a back and forth.

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[62] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 338. "Prima causa erroris est ignorantia capacitatis intellectus humani. Quidam enim non attendentes limitatum esse intellectum humanum, credunt eum capacem esse omnium, et ideo credunt illud non esse quod ab eo non capitur."

[63] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 338. "Secunda est aversio intellectus a credendis, et ab his quae possunt hominem inducere ad credendum, et conversio ad errores. Quidam enim sic amant errores suos, ut contraria eis non velint cogitare vel audire."

[64] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 339. "Tertia, est rerum subtilitatis et intellectus grossities. Qui turbidum habet visum, pilum qui ab aliis videtur non videt; non ideo contendere debet eum ibi non esse."

[65] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 339. "…ipsi sensum volunt habere ducem ad credenda, qui caecus est quantum ad ea. Unde sic disputant de spiritualibus, sicut caeci de coloribus."

[66] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 339. "Non videt visus humanus quidquid videt aquilinus."

[67] Gerson, *De sensu litterali*, 340. "Tales [haeretici in affectum cordis] infecerunt Regnum Angliae, destruxerunt Studium Pragense, et usque ad Scotiam venerunt."

Gerson's insistence on both the indefinite character of rhetorical texts and the noetic limits of apprehension form central planks in the argument of *De sensu litterali*, and they can—indeed must—be seen as analytically distinct from the arguments concerning ecclesial authority therein. These concerns, which ultimately bound interpretive certainty, show that the hermeneutics of contingency Gerson appealed to in philosophical and intra-scholastic settings also pertain in his public disputes on applied biblical hermeneutics. But more specifically, the temporal inflection of interpretation, due to a semiotic displacement from the letter itself to other terms, likewise comports with d'Ailly's own musings on sacred scripture in the *Recommendatio*. This double limit, both of the human mind's subjection to contingency and of language's own semiotic displacement, has not been fully acknowledged by previous scholarship.

Gerson's quarrel with Hus then is not with his textualism per se, but with Hus's perceived overconfidence in the certainty that the biblical text can offer qua non-apophantic text. Put otherwise, Gerson is not concerned with the specific mode of reading (literal or allegorical) or strong declarations of scriptural authority as much as he fears individual claims to certainty without grounds for that epistemic confidence. Both the human mind and the nitty-gritty mechanics of language mitigate against certainty, even in the case of the Bible that Gerson takes to be wholly reliable. Gerson's arguments against Petit and the Burgundian faction of theologians tellingly follow the same pattern: at stake is not so much the interpretive operation or method, but the extent to which an individual can appeal to indefinite interpretations as offering certainty. Gerson is not navigating a *via media* between Hussite literalism and Burgundian allegorism;[68] instead Gerson's semiosis of deferral offers a critical *tertium quid* that pushes back

[68] *Pace* Flanagin: "However, while defending the Scriptures from Petit's over-spiritualizing, he never took an eye off the ever-present, Hussite danger of over-literalizing;" "Making Sense of It All: Gerson's Biblical Theology," 139–40.

against both interpretive theories. The fact that he levels parallel arguments against both of these competing factions illustrates this decisively.

2.4 Gerson Against the Allegorists

Throughout the Navarrists' careers, France was in the throes of the Hundred Years' War. While the kingdoms of England and France were the primary combatants, the Duchy of Burgundy took the French crown's increasing weakness as an opportunity to assert greater independence. During the reign of Charles VI, who suffered from sustained bouts of non-lucidity, his brother, Duke Louis of Orléans, was perceived to be exerting increasing control over the king. Seeing this as a threat to his growing power within France and the Low Countries, the Burgundian Duke Jean Sans-Peur had Duke Louis I of Orléans assassinated in public in Paris in 1407. This constituted a major diplomatic incident, and French supporters of the Orléanist faction (including the Navarrists) were incensed.

Nevertheless, the Burgundian faction wanted to maintain a sense of legitimacy, particularly as they aimed to cement ties with the Empire and England beyond the Valois orbit. Here enters Jean Petit, a Paris-trained doctor in theology, who rose to the challenge to defend his patron Jean Sans-Peur for a blatantly politically motivated murder. At a royal audience in 1408 he offered a long defense that presented an exhaustive justification for tyrannicide, with heavy reliance on allegorical readings of scriptural passages that seem to condemn violence or murder. While it took years, the University and Archbishop of Paris had Petit and a number of his propositions condemned in 1414. The *Réponse à la Consultation des Maîtres* constitutes Gerson's petition to have the general Council of Constance ratify these same condemnations against Petit. (The move ultimately failed, with most conciliar representatives citing a desire to

avoid a "political" issue and a likely consensus that burning Hus alive earlier in the year was sufficient action to appease the Parisian delegation.)

Gerson introduces the treatise with an appeal to his credentials—singling out his agreement with now-cardinal d'Ailly on the issue at hand—[69]and explains his intention to explicate the nine propositions of Petit condemned prior in Paris under four headings based on the category of argument needed in each case.[70] At the start of this, by Gersonian standards, rather disorganized and apparently minimally edited text, he wastes no time getting into the weeds, pointing out how loaded terms such as "vilain," "meurtrir," and "assassinus" appear in Petit's apology.[71] As Gerson sees it, Petit is not just defending a vassal raising arms against a lord but also those "thugs… who cut down people in the woods and elsewhere."[72] A long-winded affirmation of lords' dignity and constant rights to life and respect by subjects in a private capacity ensues.

It is somewhat surprising then that the second section of this text moves from a legal consideration of private and public action against an unjust lord to an extended treatment of, once again, the literal sense of scripture. Petit had averred, "that the literal sense may sometimes not be true and does not always have to be held to."[73] In contrast, Gerson argues that the truth of the literal sense is rooted in the necessary truth of the author's intention: the Holy Spirit cannot

[69] Gerson, *Réponse*, 233. "Sto praeterea in deliberatione reverendissimi patris, domini Cardinalis Cameracensis publice tradita quod haec doctrina est erronea in fide et moribus."

[70] Gerson, *Réponse*, 233. "Nihilominus pro elucidatione majori materiae, distinguo novem has assertiones in quatuor partes, juxta diversitatem materiae."

[71] Gerson, *Réponse*, 234.

[72] Gerson, *Réponse*, 234. "…unde dicuntur meurtriers sive meurtrarii qui taliter occidunt homines in nemoribus et alibi." The classist dog-whistle of the royalist Gerson is particularly strident here.

[73] Gerson, *Réponse*, 239. "…quod sensus litteralis non sit verus aliquando et non semper tenendus."

be false.[74] Gerson proceeds, invoking Augustine (and, uncredited, Aquinas), to lay out his counter-thesis: "[the literal sense] is always true, and in this way there cannot be a compelling argument [from scripture] unless it is grounded in the literal sense."[75] Gerson is complicating Petit's assumptions about what complicates a "true" reading. Petit's accounting plainly relies on an apophantic reading of scripture as propositional. When a proposition can be found to be false, Petit suggests one has license to allegorize. Yet what constitutes exegetical truth for Gerson, in contrast to this apophantic definition, remains to be explained.

Gerson moves to a maximalist survey of well-trod guidelines on reading scripture from Augustine, Pseudo-Denys, Lyra, Oyta, and Tychonius. He multiplies all these different taxonomies for distinguishing different senses of scripture or approaches to its interpretation. Given this multiplicity of licit interpretive approaches within the church's tradition, he draws out a clever implication: the flexibility, self-referentiality, and indeed plurality of the literal sense makes it difficult to be falsified outright without declaring the entire biblical text false (!).[76] For instance, the signs of the sacraments can be read as present in both the old and new laws, but these laws are also signifying moral actions for people today. The stories of David are also about

[74] Gerson, *Réponse*, 239. "…notandum est quod sensus litteralis cujuscumque locutionis est ille sensus quem principaliter et de directo intendit ipse loquens; unde idem est dicere: non est tenendus sensus litteralis, et dicere: non est capienda intentio loquentis. Cum igitur Spiritus Sanctus sit ille qui in Sacra Scriptura loquitur, erroneum est dicere quod sensus litteralis non sit verus aliquando et non semper tenendus."

[75] Gerson, *Réponse*, 239. "Propter hoc dicit Augustinus quod semper est verus, sic quod non est efficax argumentum nisi in sensu litterali fundatum."

[76] Gerson lays out the schematic of scripture signifying by either words, things signified by words, or by words alongside the things signified thereby (239-240), the need to take into account the historical circumstances of the original composition (241), and the abundant use of figures of speech throughout holy scripture (241). He continues: "[after the listing of so many taxonomies of interpretation] Unde patet quod perniciosissimum est dicere sensum litteralem sacrae Scripturae quoquo modo falsum esse, quia est infirmare totam sacram Scripturam et invalidam reddere ad aliquid concludendum et irrisioni audientium exponere." Gerson, *Réponse*, 241.

Christ and also about the provision of moral exempla.[77] How can all of this be pinned down in a certain, logical sense? Its non-falsifiability, given its fullness of possible meanings, reveals that, as rhetoric, it is non-apophantic.

Thus, like Hus, Petit is too quick to claim to know what is going on in the literal sense. A rhetorical, rather than a logical or dialectical, mode is the proper mode of biblical texts.[78] The fact that scripture has its own rhetoric or style, gives it a unity. Indeed, the literal sense of any individual part is functionally indistinguishable from sacred scripture as a whole.[79] As scripture must be true, it follows, that truth in any individual case be understood as rhetorical, rather than logical. In sum, Gerson sees the uniqueness of scripture as a function of its own network of semiotic displacement and recursion. He does not make a fideist appeal to a plain sense or special, non-logical revelation of direct truth.

Gerson ends this section by anticipating counterarguments, cleverly turning them to his own ends. Many groups have been condemned as heretical for appealing to the literal sense, but this just exemplifies the inability to pin down the literal sense with excessive precision.[80] Further,

[77] Gerson, *Réponse*, 240. "et hujusmodi locutiones duplicem habent sensum litteralem; et sunt locutiones illae quae non solum erudiunt intellectum ad aliquod spirituale sed etiam excitativae vel exercitativae sunt effectus, ut circa sacramenta in Veteri et Nova Lege, circa ceremonialia in Veteri; similiter sunt plures historiae David ceterorumque regum quibus non solum figuratur Christus sed eorum gesta morum sunt exempla."

[78] Gerson, *Réponse*, 241. "Apparet denique quod Sacra Scriptura non est exponenda secundum vim logicae seu dialecticae quae deservit scientiis speculativis. Sic facientes sophistae se turpiter decipiunt. Sed habet Scriptura Sacra suam propriam logicam et grammaticam, quemadmodum scientiae morales habent pro logica rhetoricam."

[79] Gerson, *Réponse*, 241. "Ex quibus apparet rationabilitas octavae assertionis; quoniam sensus litteralis Sacrae Scripturae dicitur antonomastice et proprie sensus ejus. Et sic idem est dicere Sacram Scripturam esse falsam sicut sensum litteralem esse falsum in aliquo; primum autem."

[80] Gerson, *Réponse*, 242. "Et si forsan inveniatur quod per Ecclesiam vel praelatos vel doctores aliquos reprobati sint quidam haeretici dicentes quod Scriptura Sacra semper est vera ad litteram secundum sensum grammaticalem, vel ad litteram secundum intellectum Judaeorum."

the church has rightly, according to Gerson, condemned contradictory statements (e.g., both "God creates evil" and "God does not create evil" are theologically false), and this shows that there are "various usages of terms and numerous ways of talking" in the theological enterprise that cannot be easily taken at face value.[81] Gerson is pushing the case further, describing how even these doctrinal conclusions derived from scripture are also non-apophantic. A non-dialectical, rhetorical approach is called for when interpreting and teaching from scripture.

While the enumeration of established exegetical rules can be read as a tacit rebuke to allegedly free-wheeling allegorical readings, Gerson does not make that attack explicit. His actual arguments consistently, on the contrary, go to great lengths to complicate an easy singling out of a literal sense. So while Gerson declares himself a champion of the literal sense here, he defends it by making it too fuzzy a target for Petit's logical critique. The literal sense is, for Gerson, multifaceted, variable, self-referential, and able to be read in a number of complementary ways according to different frameworks. The literal sense is not the grammatico-logical meaning of the letter and is not necessarily apparent. Scripture's true sense cannot be isolated to individual signs expressing a certain meaning, but rather consists of the continual movement between elements across the whole of the text.

Gerson's account of scriptural interpretation here thus incorporates the interpretive modes of displacement and recurrence suggested by d'Ailly (whose authority was invoked at the start of the *Réponse*), even if not along the same temporal axis. The literal sense is not identified with the letter *per se*, an error of exegetical laziness that he lays at Petit's feet. Gerson, moreover, does

[81] Gerson, *Réponse*, 242. "…haec utique reprobatio stare potest cum reprobatione seu reprobationis modo hujus octavae assertionis juxta diversas acceptationes terminorum et varias dicendi causas, sicut istae duae vocaliter contradictoriae damnatae sunt ab Ecclesia: Deus creat malum; Deus non creat malum. xxiv Q. ultima."

not give a neat list of guidelines to arrive at a precise interpretation of a biblical text. On the contrary, he layers an accumulation of interpretive schemes as valid approaches to ferreting out the literal sense. This maximalist angle toward biblical hermeneutics cuts against any singular interpretation and continues to decenter the interpretive task from any "plain" meaning. Beyond this interpretive displacement in the seeking of meaning, Gerson also has noted in the *Réponse* the self-referentiality of scripture. One cannot read part of it in isolation; good interpretation requires sustained recourse to other parts of holy scripture and other interpretive guides. This back and forth rhythm of displacement and recurrence, captured well in the dense prose of Gerson in this text, illustrates the Navarrist application of a semiotics of displacement to the task of biblical interpretation.

2.5 Semionautic Exegesis

In this chapter I have argued that d'Ailly and Gerson maintain that the contingent nature of language's signification, which mitigates the logical precision and demonstrative clarity the human mind often demands of it, is not superseded by an appeal to divine clarity in the case of scriptural texts. In particular, the semiotic patterns of deferral and recursion within the bible demonstrate that it is non-apophantic, not propositionally true or false, strictly speaking. To be sure, holy scripture is, for the Navarrists, absolutely reliable, but on account of the third person of the Trinity's guiding of the Church. There is not a plain, clear literal meaning of the biblical texts that presents itself, much less one that bears authority. Historiographic confusion over whether or not they presented a coherent interpretive theory has been flawed insofar as it has set the terms for such a theory by the lights of external standards of certainty imported from other Christian interpretive discourses. Neither d'Ailly nor Gerson is trying to outline a precise

method; when they dilate on the topic of scripture they instead consistently displace certainty from the text itself and encourage iterative hermeneutical engagement.

The Navarrists complicate many narratives about the exegetical traditions of the later Middle Ages. On the one hand, contrary to a posited trajectory from Aquinas to Luther of heightening focus on how to determine a precise literal meaning through increasingly historicizing exegesis, the Navarrists find themselves content not to subject the biblical text to the operations of dialectic and logical analysis and accordingly not to locate certainty therein. On the other hand, contrary to interpreters who associate fourteenth- and fifteenth-century theories of revelation with a fideism not subject to rationality, the Navarrists subject the biblical text to a thoughtful semiotic analysis grounded in an Aristotelian account of rhetoric as non-apophantic. Moreover, while the Navarrist semionautic endeavor of moving about within the interplay of signs across the biblical text resonates with twelfth-century reading practices of dwelling amid the text, they do not make recourse to a participatory metaphysics of ethical transformation—well-attested in late-medieval tropological exegesis—[82] in describing the semiotics of deferral. The semionaut, traveling between terms of the text, is resolutely a *viator*. This raises a series of questions for further consideration.

First, the untidiness of the Navarrists' fit in most of these grander narratives about the history of exegesis suggests the need for reexamination of a number of questions. To what extent is the apophanticity of scripture or the availability of certainty actually presumed among other exegetes? Given Gerson's use of highly traditional exegetical authorities, can we reassess the

[82] Ryan McDermott, *Tropologies: Ethics and Invention in England, c. 1350–1600* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 12. A form of non-metaphysical participation, which they indeed endorse for the Christian more generally, will be a central theme of Chapter Five, "The Wayfarer as Lost."

semiotics at work in other medieval exegetes' approaches to scripture as potentially non-linear? To the extent that the Navarrists represent a break from a logico-grammatical literalism, how can we reconceive of late-medieval philosophy (of language, in particular) as a creative and not purely critical endeavor?

Second, the bold application of the apophantic/non-apophantic distinction to the genre of scripture bears consequences for other scholarly conversations about the postscholastic era. To what extent can the question of non-apophanticity be disambiguated from theories of "double-truth," if at all? More fundamentally, how do the Navarrists allow us to perceive an archaeology of relativism in the Latin west apart from early-modern retrievals of classical sources?[83]

Third, and as later chapters will bear out, the Navarrists' semionautic reading practices bear striking resemblance to modes of reading and knowing associated with poetry in the later Middle Ages. Accordingly, it remains to be explored how the Navarrists approach poetry outside of the biblical domain. How is it to be read? What is at stake in its interpretation? How and to what extent is it different from biblical poetry? Indeed, specifying how language is understood to be rhetorical, i.e. poetic, by the Navarrists constitutes Part I of this dissertation. Thus, having explicated the hermeneutics of contingency and the semiotics of displacement, we turn in the next chapter to the vernacular-poetic engagement of the Navarrists.

[83] We may have a prolegomenon in: Christophe Grellard, "Y a-t-il une tradition sceptique au Moyen Âge?," in *Regards sur les traditions philosophiques (XIIe-XVIe siècles)*, ed. Dragos Calma and Zénon Kaluza (Leuven University Press, 2017).

CHAPTER THREE

The Moralist as Littérateur

What we've got here is failure to communicate.
—The Captain, *Cool Hand Luke*

What we got here is failure to communicate.
—Luke, *Cool Hand Luke*

The breadth of the Navarrists' engagement with language questions is demonstrated in that, beyond technical discussions of philosophy of language and creative interventions in biblical hermeneutics, they maintained sustained engagement with the contemporary literary scene of late-medieval Paris. Pierre d'Ailly himself was responsible for the acquisition and dissemination of numerous texts from Italy.[1] For his part, Jean Gerson was nested amid the court literary scene.[2] Nevertheless, Gerson's engagement with vernacular sources is often marked by

[1] McGuire, *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, 32.

[2] A number of studies have noted, to various degrees, Gerson's enmeshment in his literary orbit. See, for instance: Max Lieberman, "Jean Gerson et Philippe de Mézières," *Romania* 81 (1960); Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378-1417* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 104–05; Lori J. Walters, "The 'Vieil solitaire' and the 'Seulette': Contemplative Solitude as Political Theology in Philippe de Mézières, Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson," in *Philippe de Mézières and his Age: Piety and Politics in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kiril Petkov (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Rachel Geer, "Intimate Politics: The Poetics of Social Engagement during the Hundred Years War" (PhD Dissertation University of Virginia, 2014), 6–8; Daisy Delogu, *Allegorical Bodies: Power and Gender in Late Medieval France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 9–10, 85–124; McLoughlin, *Jean Gerson and Gender: Rhetoric and Politics in Fifteenth-Century France*, 19–39. There is also a cottage industry about the relationship between Gerson and de Pizan: Earl Jeffrey Richards, "Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson: An Intellectual Friendship," in *Christine de Pizan 2000: Studies on Christine de Pizan in Honour of Angus J. Kennedy*, ed. John Campbel and Nadia Margolis (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000); Lori J. Walters, "The Figure of the *seulette* in the Works of Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson," in *Disereuse de plus avant enquerre... Actes du VIe Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan (Paris, 20–24 juillet 2006): Volume en hommage à James Laidlaw*, ed. Liliane Dulac et al. (Paris: 2008); Lori J. Walters, "Gerson and Christine, Poets," in *Poetry*,

suspicion, e.g. his activity against the Flemish mystic Jan van Ruusbroec.[3] Of especial relevance to this chapter, both d'Ailly and Gerson were active in the debate surrounding the massive and germinal thirteenth-century poem, the *Roman de la Rose,* comprising a portion by Guillaume de Lorris and a much longer addition by Jean de Meun. Both of these Navarrists were critical of the poem and its warm reception in many corners of the literary world. This chapter interrogates how their rather negative reaction to the *Rose* comports with their larger understanding of language.

Beyond simply assessing the Navarrists' criticism of the *Rose,* in this chapter I also read relevant passages from the *Rose* side by side with the creative literary responses of d'Ailly and Gerson. In so doing, I clarify the Navarrists' understanding of poetry, ethics, and interpretive orientation vis-à-vis a text that is, I will suggest, actually quite proximate to their own semionautic projects. Insofar as the *Rose* is a text that itself celebrates contingency and deferral—which d'Ailly and Gerson both understand to be phenomenologically ubiquitous—it verges on the Navarrists' own preoccupation with those features of human language. Thus, this chapter's intervention pertains not only to the Navarrists' vernacular work, but it also enhances the accounts of hermeneutics and semiotics unpacked in the earlier chapters of Part I.[4] Further, I

Knowledge, and Community in Late Medieval France, ed. Rebecca Dixon and Finn E. Sinclair (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 33; Earl Jeffrey Richards, "Jean Gerson's Writings to His Sisters and Christine de Piza''s *Livre des trois vertus*: An Intellectual Dialogue Culminating in Friendship," in *Virtue Ethics for Women, 1200–1500*, ed. Karen Green and Constance J. Mews (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011); Maureen Boulton, "'Nous deffens de feu,... de pestilence, de guerres': Christine de Pizan's Religious Works," in *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (London: Routledge, 2014), 215–16.

[3] Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 138; Daniel Hobbins, "Gerson on Lay Devotion," in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

[4] Chapter One, "The Scholastic as Humanist," puts forward the term "hermeneutics of contingency," pp. 19–20: " a skepticism of dialectical demonstration and the systematic doctrines it grounds rooted in an awareness of the contingency of language (informed both by humanists' attentiveness to context and terminists' attentiveness to verbal particulars) that precludes straightforward appeals to deductive logic or necessary proof." Chapter Two, "The Exegete as

argue that d'Ailly and Gerson do not see themselves as moralizing outsiders condemning a lascivious work. On the contrary, I contend they understand themselves to be undertaking a literary critique of the *Rose* from within its own tradition. Put otherwise, they are trying to write themselves into the *Rose*'s already multi-authored lineage and thereby alter the trajectory of late-medieval French poetic discourse by aligning it with their devotional and theological objectives.

We must begin then by orienting ourselves, broadly, toward the *Rose* and its own poetics. While some scholars have indeed interpreted the *Rose* as a systematic allegory with a clear ethical aim,[5] Jonathan Morton neatly summarizes an emerging consensus among many scholars of the *Roman de la Rose*: "Since the 1980s the main lines of interpretation of the *Rose* as a whole, and of Jean de Meun's part more particularly, have focused on uncertainty, internal difference, irony, contingency, and deceit as the chief characteristics of the poem."[6] Some of these features, notably uncertainty and contingency, resonate with the Navarrists' approaches to textual interpretation and theorization of language.[7] Nonetheless, irony and deceit raise potential problems for Christian morality as understood by the Navarrists. In order to account for these tensions within the Navarrists' work, this chapter takes as an analytic starting point that the *querelle* surrounding the *Roman de la Rose*, along with attendant questions about the stakes of

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Semionaut," similarly defines semiotics of displacement, pp. 79 & 98: an "exegesis that emphasizes the iterative process of meaning-making."

[5] Notable studies of this sort include: John V. Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969); René Louis, *Le Roman de la Rose: essai d'interprétation de l'allégorisme érotique*, Nouvelle bibliothèque du Moyen Âge, (Paris: H. Champion, 1974).

[6] Jonathan Morton, "Le Roman de la Rose," *French Studies* 69, no. 1 (2015): 81. This article also provides a robust survey of major scholarship on the *Rose*.

[7] Scholars of the *Rose* have long seen contingency as of central concern within the text. For an overview of its place in the interpretation of the *Rose*, see: Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces: The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 7–10 et passim.

poetry more broadly, presents an especial challenge for d'Ailly and Gerson's working out of their theories of language. As I shall lay out, the affinities between the *Rose* and many Navarrist interpretive strategies brook no easy dismissal by Gerson and d'Ailly, but rather demand a nuanced reply. Their very proximity to each other sets the terrain for the debate. This chapter reads portions of the *Rose* alongside d'Ailly and Gerson's literary responses thereto to trace the nexus of poetic signification, ethical orientation, and discerning modes of interpretations that the Navarrists see as an alternative to de Meun's more radical, "even… paranoid," poetics.[8]

To put it otherwise, the Navarrists largely concur with the criticism of certainty and stability of meaning rehearsed again and again over the course of the *Rose.* However, they depart from de Meun insofar as the potentially deconstructive, or even suspicious, angles of the *Rose*—notwithstanding, to be sure, its concomitant elements of play, discernment, and encyclopedism—constitute a central locus of the poem. The Navarrists themselves in the course of the debate model an alternative outlook; a recognition of language's inherent contingency is the starting point rather than the conclusion of a proper poem (at least as they would define it). The orientation of a pilgrim toward divine love, the Navarrists maintain, provides an ethical signpost to help navigate and discern the challenges of uncertain meaning rather than becoming another casualty of the same.

This chapter explicates the Navarrists' poetics vis-à-vis those of de Meun through a close reading of d'Ailly's *Le jardin amoureux* and Gerson's *Traite contre le Roman de la Rose*, their principal respective contributions to the *querelle* of the *Rose*. The former models a careful synthesis of an abundance of meaning while maintaining a clear orientation, even if achievement

[8] Jonathan Morton, *The Roman de la Rose in its Philosophical Context: Art, Nature, and Ethics*, Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1.

of the goal is deferred to the eschaton. The *Jardin* is clearly meant as a rewriting of the opening of the *Rose*, and we will analyze it side by side with portions of de Lorris' opening section of the *Rose*. Gerson more directly engages with de Meun's text, drawing crucial distinctions between criticism and rejection, proliferation and moderation of potential meanings, nonsense and meaning. Gerson's *Traite* will accordingly be read in conversation with passages from de Meun's portion of the *Rose*.

Two caveats are in order. First, this chapter is analyzing the Navarrists' understanding of poetry, by means of their own selected interlocutor: the *Rose*. It is not an exhaustive, or even summary, treatment of d'Ailly and Gerson's places in the debate around that text.[9] Second, while current scholarship on the *Rose* is at points referenced and readings of primary passages are offered, this chapter's argument is not principally concerned with offering an interpretation, much less an original one, of the *Rose,* though it does contribute to understanding its reception in late-medieval Paris.

3.1 Gardens of Love: d'Ailly's *Jardin* and de Lorris' *Rose*

Turning to d'Ailly's *Le jardin amoureux*, a vernacular prose text with a poetic conclusion dated to 1401/02, one finds a comparatively brief rejoinder to the *Rose*. The *Jardin* is organized into twelve, quite short, chapters of Middle-French prose, each recounting another stage in the pilgrim-soul's journey to meet her lover believed to reside in the garden of love. At the end, the

[9] Gerson directly addresses the *Rose* in works not considered in this chapter: the *Poenitemini* sermon series, delivered on 17, 24, and 31 December 1402, and an epistle of winter 1402/03: Jean Gerson, "Poenitemini: Contre la luxure I," in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 7b, l'œuvre française (sermons et discours)*, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1968); Gerson, "Poenitemini: Contre la luxure II."; Gerson, "Poenitemini: De la chasteté."; Jean Gerson, "Gerson à Pierre Col. *Talia de me scribis...*," in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol. 2, l'œuvre épistolaire*, ed. Palémon Glorieux (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1960).

protagonist, the beloved soul, bursts into a song which forms a metrical coda to the whole work. Its short length suggests d'Ailly was eager for it to be easily read and circulated.

David Hult, representative of the very small body of scholarship on the *Jardin*, has suggested that it takes the structure of Guillaume de Lorris' opening to the *Rose* but then "substitutes" in Christian elements to criticize the depiction of the god of Love by de Meun.[10] There is much to commend this reading; d'Ailly is certainly deploying a counter narrative to the *Rose*, a counter narrative he considers to be more in accord with Christian teaching. But it is questionable to stop there and presume the *Jardin* offers just a simple substitution of Christian for licentious elements; we should be attentive to d'Ailly's sustained engagement with literary circles beyond didactic moralizing. After all, d'Ailly was—decades earlier—writing his own ekphrastic narratives that involved allegorizing and personifications.[11] Further, we know d'Ailly treated the *Song of Songs*, itself then read as an allegorical account of the soul and love set in amorous garden scenes.[12] The *Jardin*, I would argue, complicates any simple reading of itself as a "Christianized" version of a vernacular poetic text, wherein d'Ailly simply changes allegorical referents from the profane to the sacred. Instead, the *Jardin* actively engages the *Rose* on a literary level, raising theoretical questions about what poetry is, how it functions, and how it may relate to spiritual practice. At the same time, the *Jardin* constitutes another retroactive alteration of Lorris' poem, displacing de Meun's canonical addition.

D'Ailly uses the *Jardin*, in fact, to articulate a standard for evaluating poetry that—apart from specific changes of content, such as d'Ailly's substitution of a Christic lover for the *Rose*'s

[10] Christine de Pizan, *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 71.

[11] The *Recomendatio sacrae scripturae* (see Chapter Two, "The Exegete as Semionaut," pp. 89–98) is a prime example.

[12] This commentary is explored in Chapter Four, "The Theologian as Poet," pp. 165–170.

god of love—departs in two crucial ways from the poetic program of the *Rose* (at least as d'Ailly interprets it). First, d'Ailly's *Jardin* suggests that poetry should be oriented toward an end, even while conceding that achievement of that end may be fraught, with any path toward it marked by contingency. Thus, his specific criticism is not with deferral, diversity, or displacement of meaning—characteristics of both the *Jardin* and the *Rose*—but rather with poetic works that lack an ethical aim, however so defined, that can ground the necessarily complicated work of hermeneutics. D'Ailly identifies this aim with an ethical orientation toward divine love. Second, I maintain, d'Ailly sees good poetry as overflowing with an abundance of meaning. The *Jardin* advances a set of criticisms of the *Rose* as, despite its play with various meanings, ironically exhibiting a privation of meaning. This lack of meaning, d'Ailly suggests, signals the *Rose*'s failure to function as (ethically) good poetry. Both of those characteristics of proper poetry, on d'Ailly's account, demand discernment and work of the reader.

D'Ailly levels these criticisms though within the literary trappings of his own allegorical tale of a protagonist seeking to gain entry into a garden to find a lover. By choosing not to merely write a treatise that lays out a list of his concerns with the *Rose*, but by opting to write in a similar genre to the text itself, d'Ailly signals that he is not advocating for a wholesale dismissal of allegorical love poetry. It suggests while he may take issue with the *Rose* at points, his aim is to show how the *Rose* could have been better. In short, d'Ailly aims to outdo Lorris at his own game, thereby illuminating his specific points of divergence from the *Rose*'s project.

A brief methodological note is in order. The *Jardin*, while mostly comprising non-metrical prose, would have been readily understood as a poetic text within its late-medieval

context.[13] To an extent, I find this justified by the fact that the *Jardin* was written as a reply to the *Rose*. By entering this terrain, d'Ailly signals his engagement with the literary questions raised by his poetic interlocutors. Further, the *Jardin* includes a metrical portion; it could be considered a prosimetrum or, even more, a prose text that itself transforms poetry. Finally, as the previous chapters have shown in other specific regards, the Navarrists were steeped in the Aristotelian tradition. Aristotle himself, in texts well known in the late-medieval university milieu, notably distinguishes poetry from meter, arguing that the former is defined by its mimetic character rather than formal qualities of the language.[14] I use the term poetic here, concordantly, to refer to a text that is directly concerned with its own literarily wrought character, questions of representation, and the ethical formation of its reader.

Diving into the *querelle* of the *Rose,* d'Ailly's *Jardin* does not opt for suspense, immediately describing the titular garden:

> The soul's romantic garden, planted in the abbey of devoted religion.
>
> In this earthly desert there is the garden of loving consolation where the true God of Love dwells; this is the gracious garden where sweet Jesus resides and to which He calls His beloved when He says in the book of little love songs: *come into my garden, my sister, my betrothed*.[15]

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[13] A discussion of poetry as distinct from meter is provided in Chapter Four, "The Theologian as Poet,"pp. 163–164.

[14] Aristotle, Longinus, and Demetrius, *Aristotle: Poetics; Longinus: On the Sublime; Demetrius: On Style*, trans. Stephen Halliwell, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 30–31. In discussing the art which he will label poetry, he remarks: "…the art which uses either plain language [i.e., prose] or metrical forms (whether combinations of these, or some one class of metres) remains so far unnamed;" "…ἡ δὲ μόνον τοῖς λόγοις ψιλοποῖς ἢ τοῖς μέτροις καὶ τούτοις εἴτε μιγνῦσα μετ' ἀλλήλων εἴθ' ἑνί τινι γένει χρωμένη τῶν μέτρων ἀνώνυμος τυγχάνει οὖσα μέχρι τοῦ νῦν."

[15] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 255. "La jardin amoureux de l'âme / En l'abbaye de devote religion fondee. / En ce mondain desert est le jardin d'amoureuse consolacion ou le vray Dieu d'amours habite; c'est le jardin gracieux ou habite le doulx Jesus et ouquel il appelle sa mie quant il dit ou livre des chansonnettes amoureuses: *Veni in ortum meum, soror mea, sponsa mea*." The translations of the *Jardin* given, unless otherwise indicated, are McWebb's own. The italics here signal Latin, rather than vernacular, text. The translation of the Latin here is my own.

This first chapter continues as a song of Christ calling to his beloved to enter into the garden. In the second section, the soul responds and calls for her love, but is at a loss as her feet are weak and the garden dense and difficult to enter. As the *Jardin* continues, short sections—with disarmingly encyclopedic precision—describe the garden and catalogue the allegorical meaning of each element along the way. Eventually the beloved soul is kept from entering the garden proper until undergoing penance, stumbles upon the site of the crucifixion, mourns over her lost lover (Jesus), is comforted by personifications of the theological virtues, rejoices at the small birds of pious souls flying up to heavenly repose while singing their own love songs, and ultimately is trained in the love of God, comes to see her lover, and joins with the beatified company in singing praises. The text then concludes with a metrical portion, presented as the little love song sung by the beloved soul herself.

The text's opening functions to establish a series of clear parameters for the ensuing allegory. D'Ailly provides clear interpretations for the terms: the garden is that of loving consolation. The protagonist is the holy soul already infused with charity. These signposts serve limiting functions that constrain the semiotic field of the poem. By carefully demarcating the hermeneutic outer limits at the outset, d'Ailly delivers on the one hand a degree of interpretive focus and on the other curtails the potential scope of interpretive skepticism.

Nevertheless, from the very beginning, d'Ailly also takes care to alert the reader that there is a potential disparity between words and their meaning. The first section concludes, "Here, then, are small words full of great meaning, kindled by desirous love and nourished by

love's tenderness."[16] The section itself illustrates what this means. Christ calls to—in the words of the *Song* quoted above—his sister, his spouse. D'Ailly proceeds to identify three different valences of each of these titles. He thereby gives the reader the hermeneutic key for his text: words open up into a variety of meanings that are nonetheless constellated around divine love. This formal structure of multiplicative meaning is consistently deployed by d'Ailly throughout the course of the *Jardin*.

This multiplicative hermeneutic is accordingly reinforced in subsequent passages. The soul, hearing the voice of sweet Jesus, seeks after him, but always with series of verbs: "And from the great desire she has to run, to search, and to enter, she trembles, jumps, and staggers; and from the ardent desire she has to find her friend, her heart sighs, her eyes fill with tears, and her face grows pale."[17] While chasing after Jesus, the soul is beset by stones, themselves conveniently organized into a triad: the adversaries of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. D'Ailly in using these multiplied tricolons, Ciceronian flair notwithstanding, enjoins the reader to be engaged in both a full imagining of the allegorical scene (all the actions and nuances of the beloved soul) and in constellating a whole series of meanings around narrative elements (e.g., the stones of temptation). D'Ailly is cultivating a middle ground where the reader actively works to practice discernment as an interpreter of a complex semiotic field, but a field for which the author has already clearly set parameters. For d'Ailly the limited scope seems to be a precondition for productive hermeneutic engagement on the part of the reader.

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[16] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 254–55. "Vecy doncques petites paroles et pleines de grants entence, embrasee de ardent amour et arrousee de amoureuse doulceur."

[17] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 256–57. "…et de la grant ardeur qu'elle a de courir, de querir et d'entrer, elle fremit, tressault et chancelle; et de l'ardent desir qu'elle a de son amy trouver, son cuer soupier, ses yeulx larmoient et sa face palit."

De Lorris' beginning to his poem shows a clear series of contrasts. The opening lines, rather than lay out parameters for interpretation, undercut any preexistent expectations on the part of the reader: "Many people presume that dreams/ Speak only in lies and deception./ But one can have the sort of dreams/ That do not lie at all,/ That subsequently are fully proven."[18] The repeated rhymes between forms of "dream" (*songe*) and "lie" (*mençonge*) signal an initial ground for skepticism about the contents of the subsequent text, as the narrator explains a few lines later that the ensuing story was "a dream had while sleeping."[19] By then raising the possibility of truth, however, de Lorris is not narrowing the potential interpretation but blowing it even more wide open. Dreams may tell the truth, but that is only one possibility. The *Rose* may be a deception or it may be true. Unlike d'Ailly, de Lorris opens his text by breaking down any expected limits about the interpretive range open to the reader.

In the beginning of his text, d'Ailly proceeds to offer the reader a degree of optimism amid the unfolding meanings of his allegory. The soul is, of course, laboring to approach her Lover in his garden, but there is meaning, progress, and a hope in her ability to overcome any hindrance.[20] In the second quarter of the text, however, d'Ailly begins to modulate this tone. As the soul gets trapped in a thorny thicket, conveniently labeled "penitence," d'Ailly dwells on the suffering of the pilgrim. While the prick of penance is ultimately salutary, the soul is forced to linger, and indeed undergo more severe pain to more quickly be healed: "O, little thorn, little thorn, your point is very sweet, for the more deeply you penetrate the heart, the sooner you will

[18] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1965–1970), ln 1–5. "Aucunes genz dient qu'en songes/n'a se fables non et mençonges;/ mes l'en puet tex songes songier/ qui ne sont mie mençongier/ainz sont après bien aparant."

[19] de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ln 26. "et vi un songe en mon dormant."

[20] This parallels the late-springtime abundance and beauty of the beginning of the *Rose*: de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ln 45–73.

bring healing to it."[21] The soul's progress is for the first time slowed. When this healing has been effected, nonetheless, the soul still cannot move on further as she is confronted by a secured gate and a high wall. Indeed, she "then sits at the foot of the wall, and cries and sighs and feels great pain."[22] There is a push and pull, a forward and back movement to d'Ailly's text. This will be reinforced in the remainder of the *Jardin*, but importantly it itself maps onto the deferrals so notoriously embedded into the structure of the *Rose*. We here see d'Ailly opening up some of the ambiguity that de Lorris foregrounded at the beginning of the *Rose.* How then does d'Ailly see the *Jardin* as distinct from the *Rose*'s own self-presented interpretive strategies? De Lorris' own account of the hindrances to entering the garden serves to clarify.

De Lorris' dreamer strolls merrily through the May-time landscape until, at the end of his path, he scries a "vast, sprawling orchard/ entirely enclosed by a high, fortified wall,/ sculpted and decorated on the outside/ with numerous rich inscriptions."[23] This barrier suddenly alters the trajectory of the narrative. The dreamer now proceeds along the wall, as the narrator engages in ekphrastic description of personifications depicted along it. The first personifications are of vices, namely Hatred (*haine*) and Cruelty (*felonie*),[24] which contrast glaringly with the joyful vernal imagery heretofore. This transition comes as sudden and unexpected, and at the moment of this shift Lorris underscores the uncertainty of the narrative yet again: the speaker will describe the images "as the memories come back to [him]."[25]

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[21] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 258–59. "O, espinette, espinette, moult est ta pointure doucette, car plus parfoint au cuer et plus tost donne garrison."

[22] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 258–59. "…lors la belle se pied au pié du mur et ploure et soupier et maine grant douleur."

[23] de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ln 130–34. "si vi un vergier grant et lé,/ tot clos de haut mur bataillié/ portret dehors et entaillié/ a maintes riches escritures."

[24] de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ln 139–55.

[25] de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ln 137–38. "de ces ymages la semblance/ si com moi vient a remenbrance."

There are two primary contrasts that emerge here between the *Rose* and the *Jardin*. First, d'Ailly has worked to prepare the reader for the expectations of obstacles for the protagonist soul (particularly in his account of the thicket of penitence). This diverges dramatically from the sudden break in de Lorris' poem, where the path ends suddenly in a high wall and the protagonist diverges from the path. D'Ailly's uncertainty is carefully curated within a set of parameters laid out in advance for the reader. Lorris' uncertainty does not seem to stay within any predetermined lines. Second, d'Ailly maintains a coherent trajectory in his poem: the soul is continuing to travel ever closer to her Lover, Christ. While there are hindrances, there are not detours. The *Rose*, on the other hand, pivots dramatically. If the *Jardin*'s displacement happens along a linear axis, that of the *Rose* at points breaks along new axes and into new spaces without warning.

Even as both of these texts raise questions about the precision of meaning and knowledge, they differ in how they see the author vis-à-vis the navigation of uncertainty. Lorris, for his part, constantly opens up the scope of possible meaning by underscoring ambiguity and displacing the narrative in unexpected ways. The author heightens uncertainty, leaving a wider field of possibility for the reader's interpretive task. In contrast, d'Ailly places parameters at the outset and within the text. Even though the reader is enjoined to practice discernment and make interpretive decisions, the author is helping them in that undertaking by narrowing the scope of possibility. D'Ailly is putting a set of training wheels, so to speak, on the genre of the allegorical love poem. By setting clear boundaries, he hopes the text can provide more training for the readers in orienting themselves toward divine love and practicing discernment. This will be more apparent as the *Jardin* reaches its conclusion.

The tenth section of d'Ailly's text, wherein the soul finally proceeds into the garden itself and revels amid the flora, specifies and reiterates the multiplicative structure of the *Jardin*. The

usual pattern of listing a host of elements recurs (for example, "the pleasant odor of grass and flowers, and the intense sweetness of trees and fruit," or, "the earth of our mortal corruption cultivated by spiritual correction and diligently plowed by virtuous exercise, and softly watered by divine inspiration").[26] Here, d'Ailly introduces a new wrinkle, however. This abundance of images and allegorical valences exceeds the human intellect and its descriptive capacity, "[these various spiritual goods] grow in such abundance that human understanding can scarcely count them nor can human speech describe them."[27] D'Ailly articulates, albeit incompletely, an excess of meaning. Crucially, however, this abundance comes after the soul has entered into the garden of love. Failure of understanding can be a function of the extent of divine love and consolation. It is at this moment that d'Ailly's narrative undergoes an important transmutation.[28]

At this point, the soul—within the poem—begins to reenact the same literary production that d'Ailly as author has been practicing in the *Jardin*. "She [the soul] makes a garland out of [the fruits and flowers of the garden] with which to adorn herself in order to better please her beloved. This garland is very beautiful and graceful, more so than any other adornment pleasing to the God of Love, particularly because it is made with lowly grass."[29] As the text glosses, this garland is itself a poem: "This is the gift He asks of His many beloveds when He says in the

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[26] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 262́–63. "…elle procede plus avant au jardin pour sentir la plaisante odeur des herbes et des fleurs et la tres grant doulceur des arbres et des fruits;" "La, voit elle la terre de nostre mortelle corruption cultivee de spirituelle correction et diligemment labouree par vertueuse exercitation, et doulcement arrosee par divine inspiration."

[27] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 262́–63. "…et generalement la croissent les biens de grace en si grande abondance que a peine les pourroit humain entendement nombrer ou langue raconter."

[28] It should be noted that this shift, like that discussed earlier in de Lorris' *Rose*, happens amid a scene of picturesque natural abundance.

[29] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 262́–63. "Si en fait ung chapelet pour soy parer et pour mieulx plaire a son amy. Moult est ce chapelet bel et gracieux, et sur tous autres paremens plaisant au Dieu d'amour et mesmement que on quent l'herbe menue."

Canticles: little daughters of Jerusalem, adorn Me with flowers, surround Me with little apples, for I long for love songs."[30] So the soul, within the *Jardin*, is commended for acts of new combination: of virtues, of various registers of praise, of different colors of flowers. The abundance of the text's narration is reinstantiated within the narrative of the text by the soul's act of virtuous performance upon entering into the garden of the lover. The ethical orientation of the soul's longing is thus linked not only to the horticultural bounty within the garden, but is refracted back onto the *amourette* genre itself: that of a little love song.

This linking of d'Ailly as poet with the intratextual soul as poet clarifies how d'Ailly sees the *Jardin* as providing for the ethical formation of its readers. The soul performs a reductive action of combining new permutations of meaning from a garden of vast potential meanings. This activity is oriented toward and guided by divine love. However, describing this action as the composing of love poetry—which is unambiguously how d'Ailly terms the *Jardin* as a whole—makes the reader look back on d'Ailly's authorial activity as a form of this same devout practice. D'Ailly's establishment of parameters of meaning becomes inflected now as a religious practice that indicates not so much a censoring of possibility as a modeling of the sort of interpretive discernment called for from a devout follower of divine love. Insofar too as a poem about devout Christian souls becomes normative for Christian readers, the (Christian) reader becomes knit into this same series of diverse performances of interpretive discernment as a working out of one's love for God. D'Ailly's *Jardin* is an invitation to love. While de Lorris blurs the line between his authorial voice and the protagonist Lover in his effort to remove preconceived notions of meaning, d'Ailly is working along a different tack to construe a continuity between his writing as

[30] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 262́–63. "C'est la present qu'il demande a ses amies quant il dit ou livre des Cantiques: fillettes de Jerusalem, garnissez moi de florettes, environnez moi de pommettes car je languis d'amourettes."

author, the actions of the protagonist in the text, and the reader's interpretive discernment of the text. D'Ailly's compositional choices then are keyed to ethical directives he seeks to enjoin on his audience.

The next passage of the *Jardin* features another moment of deferral—and at the risk of being as repetitive as the text itself, I note this too echoes the structure of the *Rose*—where amid the plants of the garden the soul finds the tree of the cross and is confronted with the memorial of the Lover's crucifixion and subsequent absence from the garden. The soul again craves consolation, and again some personifications show up to provide it: the three theological virtues (Faith, Hope, and Charity), bearing "burning words."[31] They explain that the Lover, sweet Jesus, is currently in heaven. They list extensive sources of hope and joy that issue from his sacrifice and affliction upon the cross. In this central passage they thus both reiterate the multiplicative hermeneutic of the *Jardin*, and they orient the soul to look ahead to heaven as the realization of her virtuous practice and love-song singing. Importantly, they render explicit that the soul must await death for the realization of loving union, making appeal to the scriptural text.[32] D'Ailly hereby forecloses the possibility of totally lucid meaning or precision on this side of death. Certainty is not available to humans *in statu viae,* but it is to be asymptotically approached. Thus, d'Ailly's *Jardin* labors to constellate a potentially thorny admixture of a diversity of meaning, a foreclosure of absolute certainty, an orientation toward divine love, a set of parameters to guide discernment, and a practice of ethical formation within these constraints.

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[31] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 266–67. "…leurs ardentes paroles."

[32] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 266–67. "Car il [Jhesucrist] mesme di ten la sainte scripture que oeil ne vit ne oreille ne oy, ne cuer ne donne, ne ne puet comprendre les biens qu'il a appareillez a ses loyaux amis et amies. Quant la sainte ame oit ces Nouvelles: hélas, dit elle, et quant venra la mort, et quantvenra le jour qu'elle me separera de mon corps; certes je desire ester du corps separee et ester avec Jhesucrist."

This displacement of Christic union plays out differently than does the appearance of the god of Love in de Lorris' text. There, the Lover meets [the god of] Love, hears a long discourse, but then suddenly experiences his own deferral. The end of Love's speech is a particularly illuminating foil to d'Ailly's text:

> 'Now you [the Lover] know what will comfort you,/ So you will at least have hope,/ And thus you'll have pleasant thoughts without doubt,/ And pleasant speech and a pleasant gaze./ I will that each of these will protect you/ Until you're able to grasp that/ Other goods that are no less,/ But greater, you will have./ But I give you these for the moment.'
>
> As soon as Love had/ Told me his will, I could not speak a word:/ He had vanished/ And I was greatly amazed by it,/ Since I could not see any person beside me.[33]

De Lorris at first blush seems to present a similar dynamic to d'Ailly. The Lover receives abundant consolation, promise of an even greater future reward, and is confronted with the absence of full consummation with Love (namely his beloved rose).

Nevertheless, certain features of this account stand in contrast with d'Ailly's later reimagining. First, while de Lorris certainly seems to nod to 1 Corinthians 13 with the offer of hope but promise of a later fuller joy, d'Ailly's narrative hews much more closely to the Pauline text (especially with its inclusion of the theological virtues): "Now then remain these three: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love."[34] The prior verse—quoted explicitly in d'Ailly's text[35]—also contrasts a present partial knowledge to an eschatological, more full

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[33] de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ln 2754–67. "«Or sez qui te fera confort,/ car au mains avras Esperance,/ s'avras Douz Pensers sanz doutance,/ et Douz Parler et Douz Regart,/ Chascuns de ceus veil qu'i te gart/ jusque tu puisses meiuz atendre,/ qu'autre biens, qui ne sont pas mendres,/ mes greignor, avras ça avant;/ mes je te doing a ja itant.»/ Tot maintenant que Amors m'ot/ son plaisir dit, je ne soi mot/ que il se fu esvanouiz;/ et lors je fui mout esbahiz/ quant je ne vi lez moi nului."

[34] 1 Corinthians 13:13, Vulgate. "Nunc autem manent fides, spes, caritas, tria haec: major autem horum est caritas."

[35] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 264–67. "Car s'il est de vous absent corporellement et vous ne le veez maintenant fors en semblance obscure, si le verrez vous apres face a face clerement."

knowledge.[36] D'Ailly thus preserves the weight of deferral achieved by de Lorris' disappearing god of Love, but while maintaining a clear trajectory and orientation thereunto. Second, d'Ailly much more directly incorporates the reader into his narrative. His reference to scriptural texts signals the place of reading in this trajectory toward full consolation. Further, d'Ailly underscores the bodily displacement necessary for the devout soul ("when death separates me from my body, I desire to be separated from my body and to be with Jesus Christ") in contrast to the bodily absence of de Lorris' disappearing Love.[37] Similarly, instead of "pleasant speech," the Soul is confronted by "burning words." D'Ailly is underscoring the importance of the hard work of ethical formation on the part of the Christian. As he has already implicated his Christian readers into his own narrative, this passage strikes with a prescriptive force not present in the de Lorris passage.

The final stretches of d'Ailly's *Jardin* recapitulate the issues of multiplicity and orientation through the device of the "love song." The soul, having been instructed by the virtues to look toward heaven, now perceives:

> …the sweet songs of the birds which fly and sing. These are the pious souls, flying from up high from below, climbing from the active life to the contemplative life by leaving behind lowly terrestrial things in order to attain the things of heaven. They are the little birds which fly from the earth to the sky, shedding the feathers of their cogitations of worldly preoccupation and moving the wings of their affection through divine meditation. Thus the pious souls fly deftly and ascend to great heights. And as they fly and climb, they sing very sweetly, and lovingly recite spiritual songs. … This song is very melodious, for it is sung very sweetly, more by means of grace than by nature. There is

[36] 1 Corinthians 13:12, Vulgate. "Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem. Nunc cognosco ex parte: tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum." As shown earlier, this verse is crucial to Gerson's schema of wayfarer and homeland theology; see Chapter One, "The Scholastic as Humanist," pp. 67–77.

[37] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 266–67. "Et quant venra la mort, et quant venra le jour qu'elle me separera de mon corps; certes je desire estre du corps separee et estre avec Jhesucrist."

> neither discord nor false or affected rhythm or music, but the heart and mouth are in full harmony and there is perfect concordance between voice and thought.[38]

Meditating on this, the soul eventually becomes able to witness all the saints praising Jesus in unison and compose her own song to join in.

The soul's beholding of the singing soul-birds constitutes a meticulous unpacking of the relationship between language, thought, and divine love by d'Ailly. The birds, singing poetry unto the God of love, move from ratiocination to affective knowing. Thus, d'Ailly suggests, poetry serves to infuse language with an affective element missing in non-poetic words. Also, the birds are moving upward, though importantly no precise endpoint is specified (rather they maintain their rejoicing). This multiplication of their song, and constantly climbing higher in the air to proclaim it, accords on the one hand with the Christian traditions of theosis and apokatastasis—frequently linked to notions of mystical ascent. On the other hand, d'Ailly also lays out a clear goal for good poetry: it is to follow ascent toward divine love. The multiplicative hermeneutic is oriented toward an aim, rather than perpetually wandering permutations. Finally, this passage comes to foreground a concordance between "voice and thought," that is between verbal and mental language. The *Jardin* sees convergence as the goal of poetry. While there is an

[38] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 268–69. "…[mais moult lui accroissent son soulas et sa joie] le doulz chant des oiseaulx qui volent et chantent. Ce font les ames devotes qui volent de bas en hault en montant de la vie active en la vie contemplative, en deslessant les basses chose terreniennes pour avenir aux choses celestiennes. Ce font les oyseillons qui de terre volent au ciel en ostant les plumes de leurs cogitations hors mondaine occupation et en mouvant les ailes de leurs affections par divines meditations. Ainsi volent legierement et montent haultement les ames devotes. Mais en volant et en montant elles chantent tres doulcement et dient amouresement chansons espirituelles, [en donnant au Dieu d'amour louanges et exaltations, en lui rendant grâces et benedictions. C'est le doulz et amoureux chant de parfaite oroison faite en vraie devotion qui commence a basse voix de secrete confession, et moyenne en hault son de discrete exultation, et finablement persevere en ton de jubilation.] Ce chant est moult melodieux car il est moult doulcement chanté plus par grace que par nature; n'il n'y a descort ne demesure, ne faulse ne fainte musique, mais il y a plein assent entre le cuer et la bouche et concordance parfait entre la voix et la pensee."

abundance of images, of meanings, of language, they all tend toward divine love and move toward a convergence there. The readers navigate these discursive arrangements, with the implied hope that they too are incorporated into this movement—following the guide of the author who has modeled that same process. Put otherwise, d'Ailly believes that good poetry creates the necessary conditions for a semionautic reader to align thoughts, feelings, and the text with divine love. Within this context, this love contains two primary aspects. First, divine love here accords with poetry as each binds both intellect and affect in a form of knowing. Second, divine love links active and contemplative modes of love, so that the reader not only considers the divine but also enacts works of love in life. For d'Ailly, poetry entails proper ethical formation.

In the *Jardin*'s conclusion, the notion of the little love song (*amourette* or *chansonette* in the text) becomes the capstone of d'Ailly's poetico-theological theory. This song is not fully realizable in this life, but it can still be meaningfully participated in. This participation moreover requires a constant diversity of elements and performances that nonetheless cohere in their common orientation toward desire for Christ, the divine lover. Thus multiplication, multivalence, displacement, and deferral—poetic devices ubiquitous in the *Rose*—are here theorized as an avenue toward an abundance of diverse but harmonious meanings. The implicit rebuke of the *Rose* centers on the inability to meaningfully harmonize the text as a whole. The *Rose* offers only diversity, but without any unity. Lorris' *Rose* foregrounds contingency and the challenges of hermeneutics, but does not offer a path to, even tentatively, work through that. Its apparently untimely and abrupt conclusion only sharpens the charge. Just as Aristotle distinguished having the form of meter from truly being poetry, d'Ailly seems to chide his interlocutor for writing in the form of poetry while actually lacking the substance thereof.

As we shall presently see, Gerson takes a not dissimilar tack in his criticism of the *Rose*, but he does so in a much more directly adversarial manner. If d'Ailly wants to outshine Lorris, Gerson seeks to lay de Meun to rest.

3.2 Prosecuting Love: Gerson's *Traite* and de Meun's *Rose*

On the eighteenth of May, 1402, Gerson issued his most substantive statement in the debate surrounding the *Rose*. His *Traite contre le roman de la Rose* is a dramatic prose allegory in which the *Rose*'s protagonist, the Foolish Lover, stands trial in absentia within an otherworldly court populated by the virtues and various personages. The abundance of allegorical figures, the use of a dream framing device, and the variety of dialogic and oratory passages broached in the *Traite* all underscore the seriousness with which Gerson takes the *Rose* as a literary paradigm; he is not *just* condemning it for illicit sexual content like a moralizing preacher.

The structure of the *Traite* is fairly straightforward. The first-person narrator finds himself, while on the threshold between dreaming and waking, suddenly transported on visionary wings (a likely nod to the songbirds of d'Ailly's *Jardin*) to the "holy court of Christianity" where the virtues preside.[39] Chastity steps forward, claiming injury and bringing charges against a certain Foolish Lover, identified as the author of the *Roman de la Rose* (indeed, the Foolish Lover is systematically conflated with Jean de Meun himself throughout the *Traite*). She issues her complaints, and, as de Meun is dead and unable to answer the charges in person, a throng of *Rose* partisans rallies to his defense, offering a series of arguments to exculpate him. The next and longest portion of the text centers on the prosecutor, Theological Eloquence, who presents a

[39] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 272–73, ln 5–6. "…la court sainte de Crestienté."

series of rebuttals to the defenses on behalf of the Foolish Lover and further develops the charges presented by Chastity at the outset. As Theological Eloquence concludes his rousing closing arguments and the court readies to give a ruling, the narrator suddenly finds himself awake back in his bed.

More relevant to my argument here than the specific charges allegorical figures level in the *Traite* are the meta-critiques that Gerson, as author, fashions in opposition to the *Rose*. These meta-critiques cast light on questions of language and poetry per se, questions which animate Gerson at least as much as concerns about the *Rose*'s potential inflaming of misdirected desires. Two specific, interrelated Gersonian ripostes will be unpacked in my reading of the *Traite* below. First, Gerson seeks to distinguish between a destructive account of semiotic relativism (which he finds to be present in the *Rose*) and a critical poetics that nonetheless still stretches toward resolution and meaning. Second, and from the opposite side rhetorically, Gerson advances a sustained criticism of de Meun's excessive proliferation of possible meanings and verbosity. By saying everything the *Rose* means nothing. Thus, for Gerson, the central issue is how to navigate the immense number of possible meanings that poetry will always proffer, due to its contingent, self-subverting, and displacing qualities. In response to this dilemma, Gerson—just as d'Ailly before him—makes recourse to notions of parameters on possible meaning, orientation toward divine love, and the ethical duty of discernment.

Questions of proliferation, then, become foregrounded from the outset of the *Traite*. The narrator, when being carried away to the court, does so "equipped with feathers and wings made of various thoughts."[40] Upon arriving in the court, the narrator identifies nineteen (!) distinct

[40] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 272–73, ln 4–5. "…moienans les plumes et les esles de diverses pensees."

allegorical figures there, while noting they are joined by both "numerous" and "several others."[41] Further, this august court is faced with "several petitions" in addition to that of Chastity.[42] Likewise, Gerson straightaway underscores the fraught nature of language here. The narrator claims, and then mitigates, authority for his memory: "[There was a petition] which, if I remember correctly, recounted word for word this lamentable complaint of Chastity."[43] The uncertainty already evoked by the use of a dream-vision frame is only thrown into sharper relief.

Next, Chastity enumerates her eight accusations against the Foolish Lover. These are marked above all by an emphasis on the *Rose*'s inability to draw distinctions. The first charge, which targets the *Rose*'s alleged endorsement of sexual activity, notes that it is addressed to "*all* young girls" and that it suggests they "[give] themselves freely to *any kind* of carnal filth—to cleric, laymen, or priests, *without distinction*."[44] The second charge, about the *Rose*'s dismissal of marriage, only heightens this tone. "[The Foolish Lover] wishes to prohibit marriage, *without exception*," and he "accuses all women, *without exception*, of being vengeful toward *all* men."[45]

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[41] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 272–73, ln 15 & 20. "…aultres a grant nombre," "…et autres plusseurs."

[42] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 273–74, ln 28–29. "Conscience tint en sa main et en son saing plusseurs supplicaciones."

[43] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 273–74, ln 29–30. "…entre les aultres en y o tune qui mot a mot, bien m'en remembre, contenoit ceste complainte pitable de Chasteté."

[44] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 274–75; ln 45–46, 48–51. "…qui ensaingne, monstre et enhorte comment toutes juesnes filles doivent vendre leurs corps," "…et ne fassent force ou dangier de se donner hastivement, tant que ells sont belles, a toutes villainnes ordures de charnalité, soit a clers, soit a lays, soit a prestress, sans differance." Emphases mine.

[45] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 274–75; ln 53, 57–58. "Il vuelt deffandre mariaige, sans exepcion," "…et blasme toutes fames—sans quelconque en oster—, pour les rendre hayneuses a tous les hommes," emphasis mine.

The third charge, that the *Rose* similarly attacks religious vows of celibacy, again invokes absolutist language, "*by nature,* [the religious] will *always* try to leave the religious life."[46]

This line of rhetoric ramps up in the later accusations, which themselves become broader criticisms than objections to specific moments in the *Rose*. The fifth accusation crescendos to the lamentation, "indeed, he declares war against all virtues."[47] The seventh, a(nother) generalized complaint about the *Rose*'s alleged exhortations to sexual activity, for the first time combines the "all men," "all women," and "without distinction" clauses: "He promises paradise, glory, and laurels to *all men and women* who will fulfill carnal works, even outside of marriage, because he advises them to follow his example, trying out *all* kinds of women, *without distinction*."[48] There is an accumulative character to the *Rose*'s poetry, which culminates in the conclusion of the final charge:

> He does this by assembling various topics which often have nothing to do with his argument, aside from the above-mentioned objective, and thus one believes him more easily and attributes greater authority to him, so it seems as though he has seen and studied more than he in fact has.[49]

Alongside implying that this profusion evidences a lack of discernment on the author's part, Gerson here suggests that it is downright deceptive.

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[46] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 274–75, ln 62. "…que tousjours tendent a en issir, de leur nature," emphasis mine.

[47] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 276–77, ln 77–78. "Certes il prent guerre a toutes vertus."

[48] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 276–77, ln 84–87. "Il promet paradis, gloire et loyer a tous ceulx et celles qui acompliront les œuvres charnelles, mesmement hors mariaige; car il conseille en sa propre persone et a son exemple essayer de toutes manieres de fames sans differance," emphasis mine.

[49] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 276–77, ln 100–03. "…et ce fait il en assemblant matieres diverses, qui bien souvent ne font gueres a son propos si non a cause dessusdicte, et pour ce qu'il fut mieulx creu et de plus grande auctoritey de tant que il sambleroit avoir plus veu de choses et plus estudié."

The notion that the *Rose*, by its very containing of multiple points of view, could be deceptive forms the second main thread of Chastity's series of charges. At first glance, Gerson is simply deploying the common trope of heretics mixing good and evil to make the latter more palatable. Consider the sixth accusation: "When speaking about holy, divine, and spiritual things he mixes in dissolute and moving words with all kind of filth, yet the filth he describes will never be allowed into paradise."[50] The eighth accusation, largely focused on the *Rose's* relishing of embellishing on sinful acts (itself another form of reckless proliferation),[51] contains a stronger iteration of the accusation of malicious mixing. "The matter becomes still worse, since in order to deceive more skillfully, he mixes honey with venom, sugar with poison; there are venomous serpents hidden beneath the grass of piety."[52] Having an abundance of different sources and outlooks is not just a sign of perhaps unrefined style, but of an admixture of elements that is inherently deceptive.

These elements of deception and proliferation are thrown into immediate contrast with the approach of those prosecuting the *Rose*'s author. The narrator notes that this petition of Chastity's was "read distinctly and openly."[53] And while the virtuous council is justly outraged

[50] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 276–77, ln 80–82. "Quant il parle des choses saintes et divines et esperituelles, il mesle tantost paroles tres dissolues et esmovans a toute ordure; et toutevois ordure ja n'entrera en paradis tel come il descript."

[51] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 276–77, ln 94–97. "… et n'est pas content des injures dessusdictes s'il les a publiees de bouche, mais les a fait escripre et paindre a son pouoir, curieusement et richement, pour atraire plus toute persone a les veoir, ouÿr et recepvoir."

[52] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 276–77, ln 97–100. "Encores y a pis: car afin que plus subtivement il deceust, il a mesley miel avec venin, succre avec poison, serpens venimeux cachiés soubz herbe vert de devocion."

[53] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 276–77, ln 108–09. "[Aprés que ceste supplicacion de Chasteté fut] leue distinteement et en appert."

at the charges, they grant the Foolish Lover a hearing as they are "wise and temperate."[54] At this point, the *Rose*'s defenders emerge to voice a case for the Foolish Lover, and they fit the characterization of the *Rose* within Charity's charges precisely. They are, "a huge crowd of people, young and old of both sexes and all ages who in an unruly fashion and in complete disorder wished either to acquit, defend, or praise him."[55] The champions of de Meun are themselves marked by chaotic quantity and internal disagreement, an inclusive mass without any defining parameters.

De Meun's partisans give voice to a wide range of counterarguments to the charges read by Theological Eloquence. The first three are only briefly laid out: de Meun is to be forgiven as this was a youthful work and he is said to have repented of it later in life;[56] de Meun is an unrivaled master of the French language who demands respect;[57] and de Meun is critical toward people of all walks in life, being no respecter of persons.[58] The fourth defense is unfolded at greater length. While some things in the *Rose* at first glance may seem to be evil, they are only said in the persona of an evil character. Is this not telling the truth about evil? Is this any different

[54] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 277–78, ln 111–12. "Neantmoins, comme sages et attrempés dirent que partie seroit oÿe."

[55] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 278–79, ln 116–19. "[Lors veissiés, a] une grante tourbe et une flote de gens sans nombre, josnes et vieulx de tous sexes et de tous ages, qui—sans garder order, a tort et a travers—vouloient, l'ung excuser, l'autre le deffendre, l'autre le loer."

[56] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 278–79, ln 119–21. "…l'autre demandoit pardon a cause de jonesse et de folie, en aleguant que il s'en estoit repenti quant il escript depuis: «J'ay fait, dit il, en ma jonesse maint dit par vanité.»"

[57] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 278–79, ln 122–23. "…l'autre le soustenoit pour ce qu'il avoit esté tel et si notable clerc et biau parleur sans pareil en franssois."

[58] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 278–79, ln 123–25. "…aucuns pour ce que il avoit dit si proprement la verité de tous estas, sans espargnier nobles ou non nobles, pays ou nacion, siècle ou religion."

than Solomon speaking in the character of a lover in the *Song*?[59] Ironically, given the rest of the *Traite,* Theological Eloquence is being accused of a lack of discernment.

The fifth and final argument in support of the *Rose* raises the issue of discernment more bluntly: cannot one simply sift out the good from the bad in de Meun's work?[60] The speaker expands this critique, noting de Meun is in very good company with Homer and Augustine for having made mistakes in his writing.[61] Gerson has carefully crafted the *Traite* up to this point. While it may seem that the charges are somewhat prudish and overblown and that the Foolish Lover's case is nuanced and learned in contrast, Gerson has already gestured to the central ideas that will constitute Theological Eloquence's rebuttal: discernment and moderation.

Theological Eloquence's demeanor, unsurprisingly, is marked by "great authority and worthy severity" and a "soft and temperate voice."[62] He responds at first to the throng's initial defense of de Meun: that he had an eleventh-hour change of heart. While the defense can be seen as a call for greater nuance rather than a rapid condemnation, Theological Eloquence calls the bluff by diving into the forensic specifics. Indeed, he begins by marshalling even more evidence for the alleged repentance. He wryly notes his agreement with the assertion, "I have come to this

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[59] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 278–79, ln 126–34 (et ff.). "Et quel mal est ce, dit l'ung des plus avisés, quell mal est ce, je vous pry, se cest home de tel sens, de tel estude et de tel renon a volu composer ung livre de personnaiges ouquel il fait par grant maistrise chascun parler selond son droit et sa proprieté?"

[60] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 278–79, ln 146–47 (et ff.). "Et prenons qu'aucun mal fust en son livre, n'est point doubte que trop plus y a de bien: praingne chascun le bien et laisse le mal!"

[61] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 278–80, ln 150–54. "…neis mesmes le grant Omer falli; et qui plus doit encliner a pardon et a beninité ceste saige court de Crestienté, nous avons que saint Augustin et autres docteurs pres que tous errerent en aucuns poins, qui toutefois ne sont pas pour tant accuses ou condampnés, mais honnourés."

[62] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 280–81; ln 163–64, 68. "…et par grande auctorité et digne gravité," "…et a voix raisonnant doulce et moyenne" (note the pun on *raison*/*resoner*).

assumption based on several conjectures:"[63] it fits that someone in their youth would capriciously give into sinful notions and that someone of such productive and great intellect—especially given other non-objectionable books authored by him—would move on.

Theological Eloquence here transitions into what at first blush seems a rather facile critique that de Meun was foolish.[64] He clarifies that he is not just suggesting de Meun had foolish intentions, but rather that his actions render him open to this charge: "Foolish is he who acts foolishly, and folly is not rational; he who defames himself wishes to be insulted and assumes the position of one who is defamed."[65] Theological Eloquence suggests that the foolish quality of the foolish lover is not necessarily the abundance of voices, but the practical consequences that result from his character. He explains that, in the case of sin, "no teacher of any sort is necessary."[66] Humans learn that well enough on their own. This being the case, including any licentious material at all certainly can be expected to stir up vicious living in a text's readers. De Meun's partisans' appeal to a need for a subtle hermeneutical appreciation of the *Rose,* Theological Eloquence insists, are overlooking a basic—and disturbing—problem: the material facts of its reception and how it has (un)ethically formed its readers. This consequentialist argument is merely the beginning, however, as Theological Eloquence wryly

[63] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 280–81, ln 176. "Et ad ce presumer m'esmeuvent plusseurs apparances."

[64] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 280–81, ln 184–85. "Helas! bel amy et subtil clerc! Et n'estoient donques assés folz amoureux au monde sans toy mettre en la tourbe?"

[65] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 280–81, ln 187–89. "Folz est qui foloye, et folie n'est pas sens: trop veult estre blasmé qui se diffame et prant l'office d'ung diffamé."

[66] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 280–81, ln 190–91. "Vices et pechiés, croy moy, s'aprannent trop de legier: n'y fault maistre quelconque."

notes, in a pointed jab at the simultaneously shouted arguments of de Meun's supporters, that he "cannot say everything all at once."[67]

Theological Eloquence, showing his refined cultural sensibilities, cleverly interweaves this portion of his prosecution with appeals to classical authorities. For instance, he invokes Ovid's banishment on order of Augustus Caesar—in the Middle Ages generally believed to be punishment for his risqué love poem, the *Ars amatoria*—which the poet later blamed in his *Tristia* on his "poem and error."[68] If Ovid recognized he did wrong even without any looming fear of eternal damnation, de Meun looks all the more foolish. Theological Eloquence also brings Pythagoras up, crediting even him with discerning that language and images are meant to inform good actions; this is why such elements are carefully curated in religious spaces.[69] Later Gerson lists even more classical figures as witnesses against foolish love: Plato, Archyta of Tarentum, and Cicero.[70] The not-so-implicit argument thus avers that you do not need to be a devout cleric to see the ethical red flags of the *Rose*.

Moreover, the *Rose*'s defenders, clinging to de Meun's supposed late-in-life repentance even while claiming the text itself is not itself problematic, show themselves incapable of rebutting the charge that the *Rose* has stirred up vice in some readers. This internal contradiction

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[67] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 282–83, ln 06–07. "…mais je ne puis mie tout dire a une fois."

[68] Ovid, *Tristia. Ex Ponto*, trans. A. L. Wheeler and G. P. Goold, vol. 151, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), II.207–08. "perdiderint cum me duo crimina, carmen et error,/ alterius facti culpa silenda milli'."

[69] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 282–83, ln 20–22. "Nous veons que bonnes, saintes et devotes parolles, paintures et escriptures esmuevent a devocion, come disoit Pitagoras: pour ce sont fais les sermons et les ymages es esglises."

[70] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 285–86, ln 74. "…Platon, Architas Tarentin, Tulle et aultres."

means that they actually are doing what they say de Meun himself regretted. Theological Eloquence dilates on this accusation:

> They [those defending de Meun] erroneously think that they are defending you, when all they do is to displease and harm you, all the while wishing to please you, like the insolent doctor who wishes to heal but kills, and the stupid lawyer who thinks he is helping his master but ends up destroying his case.[71]

He continues his address, drawing out a contrast between that approach and his own style of engagement with the *Rose* and its author. He explains, "I, on the other hand, because of your [de Meun's] erudition and knowledge will render your soul this service and grant it this pleasure or alleviation. *I will criticize all that you ask me to*."[72] Theological Eloquence, by justly discerning what is good and bad within the *Rose*, presents himself as the ideal follower of de Meun and the most attentive reader of the *Rose*. Theological Eloquence does, however, qualify this by suggesting that de Meun, in fact, wants the scope of criticism to be constrained ("all that you ask me to"). Theological Eloquence's reading of de Meun, while divergent from that of the poet's self-declared partisans, claims to be his true heir.

This moment, similar to some in d'Ailly's *Jardin* (and, to be sure, in the *Rose* itself), enacts a series of superimpositions with the author of the *Traite*. First, the first-person vision frame of the *Traite* prompts the reader to understand Gerson himself as embedded within the proceedings over the *Rose*'s (and its author's!) fate. Second, Theological Eloquence—unsurprisingly given his name—is marked as the premier representative of Christianity within its

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[71] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 284–85, ln 56–60. "Et en ce te confondent en toy cuidant effandre; et te desplaisent et nuysent en te voulant voulant [sic] complaire,—a la samblance du medcin oultraigeux qui veult garir et il occist, et du nice advocat qui cuide aidier son maistre et il destruit sa cause."

[72] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 284–85. ln 261–263 "Je, par le contraire, rendray ce servise a ton ame et ly feray ce plaisir ou cest allegement a cause de ta clergie et estude, que je reprandray ce que tu desires du tout en tout estre repris." Emphasis mine.

celestial court, as he advocates for the interests of the virtues themselves. Crucially, this exemplar is distinguished for his ability to subtly criticize the *Rose* and properly interpret de Meun's aims over and against the crowd claiming to represent him. Theological Eloquence becomes a sort of stand-in for Gerson's own foray into the *querelle* surrounding the *Rose*. Theological Eloquence, whose masculine gender is intensely highlighted to contrast with the feminine gender of the noun, is less some ethereal interlocutor and more a concrete instantiation of a university master, carefully making distinctions to advance his argument and educate his audience.[73] Thus, Gerson understands himself not as a moralizing naysayer, but rather as a true interpreter of de Meun.

To push this reading further: Gerson asserts himself to be an author active within de Meun's own tradition, and he seeks to deliver on what he sees as the unfulfilled critical and epistemic promises offered by the *Rose*. We can see this by looking to Gerson's implicit self-insertion into de Meun's poetic lineage, identifying Gerson's riffs on de Meun's own appropriation of de Lorris' unfinished *Rose*. De Meun's invocation of de Lorris after his own taking up the *Rose* stands as the vital (if lengthy) intertext. The god of Love declares:

> Gallus, Catullus, and Ovid,/ Who knew well how to treat the topic of love/ Would help us now also master it./ But each one of them lies dead and decomposed!
>
> Look now to Guillaume de Lorris/ Whom Jealousy, his enemy,/ Makes to endure so much pain and suffering/ That he is at risk of dying,/ If I do not think to aid him./ He would advise me willingly about this/ since he is wholly, absolutely mine./ And this would be just, since it is for him/ That we ourselves undertook the task/ Of gathering all our barons,/ To seize or free Good Welcome.[74]

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[73] Daisy Delogu has analyzed Gerson's play with gendered personification in asserting the University of Paris' prerogatives, especially vis-à-vis the crown. See: Delogu, *Allegorical Bodies: Power and Gender in Late Medieval France*, 86–124.

[74] de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ln 10526–40. "Gallus, Catillus et Ovides/ qui bien sorent d'amors trestier,/ nous reüssent or bien mestier;/ mes chascuns d'aus gist morz porriz./ Vez ci Guillaume do Lorriz,/cui Jalousie, sa contraire,/ fet tant d'angoisse et de deul traire/ qu'il est en perill de morir,/ se je ne pens du secorir./ Cist m'en conseillast volentiers/ con

It continues, with de Meun inserting himself into the narrative (à la Gerson). The god of Love proceeds, some lines later:

> Then will come Jean de Meun./… And if it happens—whatever the specific case—/ that he makes some mistake,/ as there is no one who does not sin/ (everyone has some fault everyday),/ he will have such a heart for me/ that every day, at least in the end,/ when he feels his guilt,/ of his crime he will repent/ and will not wish to cheat me./ Thus, the *Roman* will be so rich/ that he will yearn to finish it entirely/ if he finds the time and space./ For when Guillaume [de Lorris] leaves it off,/ Jean [de Meun] will continue it/ after his death—no lie!—/ when forty years have passed.[75]

This extended passage provides a focused treatment of literary lineage, the genre of love poetry, death, error, and repentance. As the god of Love describes it, the *Roman de la Rose* is written by fallible authors, but the iterative improvement, by the authors' correction of their own mistakes and by new authors stepping in even after a long gap of time, promises the *Roman* a path toward its own improvement and ever more perfect realization.

Gerson invokes, and indeed builds on, virtually all elements of this passage in his own *Traite*. For instance, de Meun bends time and narrative voice to authorize his extending of de Lorris' *Rose*. Importantly though, this authorization depends upon an intra-narrative speaker, in this case the god of Love prophesying a completion of the poem from one as devoted to him as de Lorris. In this way, de Meun gives agency to this personification rather than to his own

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cil qui miens est touz entiers,/ et droiz fust, car por li meïsmes/ en ceste paine nous meïsmes/ de touz noz barons assembler/ por Bel Acueill toudre ou embler."

[75] de Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ln 10569–94. "Puis vendra Johans Chopinel,/ au cuer jolif, au cors inel,/ qui nestra seur Laire a Meün,/ qui a saoul et a geün/ me servira toute sa vie,/ sanz avarice et sanz envie,/ et sera si tres sages hon/ qu'il n'avra cure de Reson,/ qui mes oignemenz het et blasme,/ qui plus flerent soëf que basme./ Et s'il avient, conment qu'il aille,/ qu'il en aucune chose faille/ (car il n'est pas hon qui ne peche,/ tourjorz a chascuns quelque teche),/ le quer vers moi tant avra fin/ que tourjorz, au mains en la fin,/ quant en corpe se sentira,/ du forget se repentira,/ ne me voudra pas lors trichier./ Cist avra le romanz si chier/ qu'il le voudra tout parfenir,/ se tens et leus l'en peut venir,/ car quant Guillaumes cessera,/ Jehans le continuera,/ enprés sa mort, que je ne mante,/ anz trespassez plus de .XL."

persona, just as Gerson does with Theological Eloquence in the *Traite*. Likewise, Gerson invokes a similar literary tradition, specifically that of a repentant Ovid, within which to situate de Meun. De Meun is not perfect, but he has repented (by his god of Love's own account); Gerson uses this to sanction his own revisionist model of proper love poetry. Just as de Meun says that de Lorris' work had to be continued for de Lorris' own sake and fidelity to the god of Love, so Gerson suggests the story of the *Rose*'s author must be continued anew for de Meun's sake and fidelity to the explicitly Christian God of Love. By pinging these moments in de Meun's own account of what is at stake in the writing of the *Rose,* Gerson elucidates the goal of the *Traite*: it purposes to alter the reception of de Meun and his *Rose,* ironically effacing the literary import of the latter on its own professed terms of ever renewed commitment to the god of Love in the face of one's impending death. Gerson literarily denounces the *Rose* by writing a path for de Meun's redemption by the God of Love.

This degree of care is called for in Gerson's rejection of the *Rose* precisely because Gerson hopes on the one hand to maintain a longue durée literary tradition incorporating such authors as Ovid, Boethius, Alain of Lille, and even de Meun to position himself within, and on the other to salvage the critical project of the *Rose* with its emphases on skepticism, contingency, and the noetic and epistemic challenges of interpretation. The former element will be taken up in fuller detail in Chapter 5.[76] The latter has already been seen in how the *Traite* itself valorizes a hermeneutics of contingency with Theological Eloquence's careful, skeptical attention to the arguments of de Meun's defenders.

This critical angle of Theological Eloquence, who will "criticize all that you ask [him] to," becomes complemented and clarified in the last movement of the *Traite,* that sees a renewed

[76] See Chapter Five, "The Wayfarer as Lost," p. 237 ff.

attention to discernment and moderation as Theological Eloquence rebuts in greater specificity the defenses offered on behalf of de Meun. He introduces this shift by again pointing to the lack of discrimination in the defenses, just like Charity claimed there was no nuance within the *Rose* in her initial complaint. He thus addresses himself to those "who wish to exempt from all folly and error the one who condemns himself."[77] This line of attack builds. Theological Eloquence declares that de Meun "is heavy with *all* lubricity and carnality, slaying *all* virtues, and igniting flames *wherever* [his name] can;"[78] "does not value parents, *any* friends, or *any* virtues;"[79] and seeks to encourage "*all* that is evil and *entirely* foolish."[80]

These charges become modulated by a specific focus on the length and accumulation of material in the *Rose,* "a long book full of infamy, not only against humanity but against God and all male and female saints who love virtue."[81] While some may suggest that the shortcomings of the *Rose* are meant to warn the reader—like David or Solomon's negative examples with love in the Bible—Theological Eloquence underscores that the scriptural texts do this "without an excess of frivolity."[82] In contrast, in the case of de Meun, "*everything* seems to be said by him;

[77] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 284–85. "…de vous qui voulés excuser de toute folie ou erreur cil qui se condampne."

[78] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 284–85, ln 71–73. "[…ce non importe trop grant fardel] et pesant fais de toute lubricité et de charnaltié murtriere de toutes vertus, bouteresse de feu par tout ou elle puet." Emphases mine.

[79] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 286–87, ln 81–82. "Qui ne tient compte de parens ou d'amis quelconques ou de quelconque vertus?" Translation mine.

[80] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 286–87, ln 85. "…tout mal et toute folie." Emphases mine.

[81] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 286–87, ln 311–13. "…(non pas d'ung) libelle, mals d'ung grant livre plain de toutes infamacions, non pas seulement contre homes, mais contre Dieu et tous sains et saintes qui ainment vertus?" Translation altered.

[82] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 288–89, ln 349. "…que tout se fist sans excés de legiereté."

everything seems to be true as the Gospel."[83] De Meun, Theological Eloquence alleges, fails to provide any metric for discerning truth from falsity amid the avalanche of his *Rose*'s meandering discourses. Theological Eloquence goes further, however. He invokes a comparandum:

> And does the devil not express several truths at once, through demoniacs as well as through his enchanters, magicians, and heretics? Yet he does so only to better disguise his deceit: the more good sinful teaching contains, the better he considers it, and the more harmful it is.[84]

At issue, then, is not just the harmful teaching but the overall quantity of teaching that confuses the possibility for discerning interpretation. De Meun exceeds the parameters that allow for the possibility of ethical interpretation. Theological Eloquence, already noted as a perspicacious reader, declares at a loss: "speech fails me in my attempt to refute it."[85] The *Rose* sprawls so far that it defies language in a fundamental way. In order to find any meaningful way to respond, Theological Eloquence admits he has to follow the outline of Chastity's complaint rather than the material of the *Rose* itself.[86]

Using Theological Eloquence as a mouthpiece, Gerson's prosecution of de Meun's *Rose* consistently raises concerns about the scope of the *Rose*, argues that de Meun fails in his own stated critical goals to explore love, and complicates de Meun's place in a long tradition of poetry while seeking to insert itself therein. While concern about the *Rose*'s lack of conformity

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[83] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 288–89, ln 350. "Tout semble estre dit en sa persone; tout semble estre vray come Euvangille." Emphases mine.

[84] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 290–91, ln 376–80. "Et ne dit pas le deable plusseurs verités a la fois, et par demoniaques et par ses invocateurs les magiciens et aussy les herites? Mais ce n'est que pour decepvoir plus couvertement: si est une mauvaise doctrine de tant pire quant plus y a de bien, et pis vault."

[85] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 290–93, ln 397–98. "…parolle me fault a la reprouver."

[86] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, 292, ln 426–28. "Si abregeray ma parole et ni diray plus que des articles contenus en la supplicacion de dame Chasteté presentés par Conscience."

with traditional Christian morality is indeed present—the major takeaway of most scholarship on the *Traite*—, the text is also replete with a host of concerns about interpretation and poetics, concerns that indicate the Gerson has his sights on larger issues.

3.3 Interpretation as Theologizing

Looking broadly at Gerson's account in the *Traite*, he mirrors d'Ailly's emphasis on a singular interpretive orientation, even amid a diversity of possible contingent readings. In particular, de Meun's failure to differentiate discrete elements within his text forestalls the apparatus of discernment from getting underway. Gerson incorporates ideas of criticism and skeptical uncertainty into his *Traite,* ideas that he explicitly characterizes as resonant with many of de Meun's own aims and that comport with Gerson's technical writings on philosophy of language.[87] In a not dissimilar fashion, d'Ailly's *Jardin* presents an abundance of signs structured around a series of deferrals; his poetics map on tightly with his account of scriptural interpretation as a semionautics of displacement.[88] We may thus conclude that for the Navarrists, issues of language theory and interpretation are widely applicable. Indeed, the ideas of language explored in a number of distinct genres in Part I show themselves to be general convictions of the Navarrists across all writing and reading activity. Chapter Four will consider how these literary ideas about poetry, in particular, become linked to theology among the Navarrists.

This chapter has shown how d'Ailly and Gerson both chose to respond to the text of the *Rose* by writing their own texts that take up its framework. Both authors saw themselves to some extent as literary authors in their own right, not only discussing but actively producing poetic texts. Crucially, this literary activity for the Navarrists is framed as part of their own work as

[87] See Chapter 1, "The Scholastic as Humanist," pp. 19–20.
[88] See Chapter 2, "The Exegete as Semionaut," pp. 79 & 98.

theologians in the University. We can see this in how d'Ailly and Gerson each, in their own ways, turn the *Rose* toward new, more traditionally Christian teachings. Whether through an act of interpretive charity and/or supercessionist presumption, the Navarrists see the *Rose* as a potentially fecund moment for *theologizing*.[89] By this term, I mean that the Navarrists see the practice of discerning interpretation as a sort of pastoral teaching that the University should be offering to society more broadly. This theologizing, modeled in Gerson's Theological Eloquence who practices the careful distinctions and measured investigation of a university master, as both an urgent corrective to lazy, totalizing reading practices and as an avenue to form readers to be ever more attentive to divine love. Scholastic dialectic and humanist rhetoric come together in the *Jardin* and the *Traite* to achieve this.

Gerson's *Traite* goes even beyond the emulation modeled by d'Ailly's *Jardin*, however, in its self-positioning into a poetic tradition. Daniel Heller-Roazen, in discussing the *Rose*, has drawn attention to how de Meun's continuation "necessarily includes the first, which it integrates into itself as its own opening."[90] While the *Traite* did not circulate as an accumulation on the text of the *Rose*, Gerson does envision his work as a continuation of the very narrative action presented in the *Rose*: it offers a post-mortem trial for de Meun in the same way his *Rose*, in the figure of the god of Love, evaluates the already passed de Lorris. Gerson extends the *Rose* to address its apparent interpretive incompletion, in a manner akin to de Meun's completion of the

[89] I take this term from Willemien Otten's study of parascholastic twelfth-century texts. She describes "a certain climate of thinking and doing theology;" studying such a climate asks the scholar "to value the theologizing ambience… quite apart from any appreciation for the individual positions involved." Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm*, 1, 7. Identifying the form of theological production proves as illuminating an approach for the Navarrists as it does for twelfth century figures.

[90] Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces: The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency*, 6.

apparent narrative incompletion of de Lorris' *Rose*. The stakes of this style of literary self-understanding among the Navarrists will be analyzed in greater length in Chapter Five, contextualizing the Navarrists' poetic and literary activity within the *longue durée* of classical and medieval poetry.

Thus, by comparing d'Ailly's *Jardin* and Gerson's *Traite* to the *Rose*, the outlines of a Navarrist theory of literary interpretation and production begin to come into focus. What do these poetic convictions look like in other portions of the Navarrists' œuvres? How does the Navarrists' abiding concern for moral formation relate to their poetic practice? How does an emphasis on contingency and uncertainty function within a constructive theory of language? Unpacking in greater precision and depth this literary theory is the task of Part II of the dissertation.

Part II: Affect

CHAPTER FOUR

The Theologian as Poet

> I'll take articles out of newspapers, poems that I've written, pieces of other people's books, and put them all into this little warehouse, this container of information, and then hit the random button and it will randomize everything. And I'll get reams of papers back out of it, with interesting ideas. And then I'll either take sentences verbatim as it spews them out, or there might be something within a sentence that triggers off an idea.
>
> —David Bowie

The Navarrists' ubiquitous preoccupation with language reaches its greatest intensity in their thinking about poetry. As this chapter will show, poetry is central to the Navarrists' thought because it serves as *the* exemplar of the theological vocation. Poetry, rather than kicking against language's inherent contingency like the scholastics of the *via antiqua*, leans into the particularism and tentativeness of its language as a privileged means of expressing, and more crucially shaping, affect—even as it still engages the intellect like more ratiocinative modes of thought or writing.

Accordingly, this chapter looks at the Navarrists' constructive counterpoint to the more critical discussions of language treated in Part I. The Navarrist advocacy in theological polemics for a hermeneutics of contingency, which recognizes the noetic and contextual constraints of all verbal production and interpretation *in statu viae*; their practice of a semiotics of displacement, which articulates recursive and asymptotic meaning-making in one's reading practices; and the production of their own literary works that orient the reader toward love, toward Christ, all underline the centrality of language for these thinkers. As we have seen, these interventions

involve a critique of dialectic demonstration in scholastic method, a non-apophantic (i.e., not propositionally true or false) reading of scriptural texts, and an attentiveness to broader literary context. These elements all come together to provide theoretical justification for both a departure from scholasticism's business as usual and a turn to the more contingent, affective purchase of poetry.

There have been two principal waves in the study of poetry, broadly construed, in the context of the Navarrists. The first such wave looked to the Navarrists as an extension of the vibrant literary movements of fourteenth-century Italy, particularly Petrarch, and sought to discern in the Collège the first stirrings of a distinctly French form of (literary) humanism.[1]

[1] The late Gilbert Ouy stands at the forefront of this grouping, distinguished by his long career working with Navarrist manuscripts and tracing the textual circulation of "humanism" from Italy through the kingdom of France. He also provides something of a retrospective summary of his scholarship in his chapter: "Discovering Gerson the Humanist: Fifty Years of Serendipity," in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For some of his work focused on the Navarrists themselves, see: *Une lettre de jeunesse de Jean Gerson: ms. B.N. lat. 14909* (Paris: Société des amis de la Romania, 1959); *Enquête sur les manuscrits autographes du chancelier Gerson et sur les copies exécutées par son frère le Célestin Jean Gerson* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1962); *La plus ancienne œuvre retrouvée de Jean Gerson: le brouillon inachevé d'un traité contre Juan de Monzon, 1389-90* (Paris: Franck, 1962); *Gerson, émule de Pétrarque: Le "Pastorium Carmen", poème de jeunesse de Gerson, et la renaissance de l'églogue en France à la fin du XIVe siècle* (Paris: Société des amis de la Romania, 1967); *Gerson et l'Angleterre: à propos d'un texte polémique retrouvé du Chancelier de Paris contre l'Université d'Oxford, 1396* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970); with Nina Catach, *De Pierre d'Ailly à Jean Antoine de Baïf: un exemple de double orthographe à la fin du XIVe siècle* (Paris: Société des Amis de la Romania, 1976). For his more general work to locate a French humanism, see: *Paris: l'un des foyers de l'humanisme en Europe au début du XVe siècle* (Paris: Argences, 1970); *Humanisme et propagande politique en France au début du XVe siècle: Ambrogio Migli et les ambitions impériales de Louis d'Orléans* (Turin: Accademia delle Scienze, 1974); "Jean de Montreuil et l'introduction de l'écriture humanistique en France au début du XVe siècle," *Miniatures, scripts, collections* (1976); *Les Recherches sur l'humanisme français des XIVe et XVe siècles* (Roma: Università di Roma "La Sapienza", 1993). Similarly, G. Matteo Roccati has published extensively on specific Navarrist texts: "Recherches sur les poèmes contenus dans les tractatus de canticis de Gerson," *Le moyen français: rassegna di studi linguistici e letterari* 4 (1981); "En marge de l'édition critique de l'œuvre poétique de Gerson: le manuscrit Paris, B.N. Lat. 3624," *Pluteus* 6/7 (1989); "La 'Josephina' di Jean Gerson (1418): un poema virgiliano di contenuto biblico," *Studi francesi* XLI (1997); "Guillaume de

Relying principally on fundamental manuscript work, this wave considered Navarrist interest in poetry to be an extension of Italian literary innovations, not clearly connected to the Navarrists' theological or scholastic endeavors. The second, more recent, wave of scholarship on poetry and the Navarrists has taken the form of careful study of individual texts of Gerson's, with an eye to synthesizing them within the broader contours of Gersonian thought. The recent critical editions and commentaries on the *De canticis* and *Josephina*, by Isabelle Fabre and Isabel Iribarren respectively, have dramatically reshaped the field by their resolutely interdisciplinary orientations;[2] it is no longer tenable to read Navarrist poetry in isolation from their other works.

Machaut, "Prologue" aux œuvres: la disposition du texte dans le ms. A, Paris, B.N.F., fr. 1584," *Studi francesi* (2000); "Jean Gerson lettore di Albertino Mussato?: la testimonianza dei testi poetici," *Franco-Italica* 19/20 (2001); "A Gersonian text in defense of poetry: "De laudibus elegie spiritualis" (ca. 1422–1425)," *Traditio* 60 (2005). His publications on French humanism, broadly construed, include: "Problemi prosodici e metrici nel primo umanesimo francese: un'esperienza di scansione automatizzata," *Studi umanistici piceni* 10 (1990); "L'umanesimo francese e l'Italia nella bibliografia recente (1980-1990)," *Franco-Italica* 1 (1992); "Metrica e prosodia nella classificazione delle arti tra medioevo e umanesimo in Francia," *Lettere e arti nel Rinascimento / a cura di Luisa Secchi Tarugi* (2000).

[2] Fabre's treatment of *De canticis* relies both on literary studies and musicology to provide the first summary account of a daunting Gersonian text: Jean Gerson and Isabelle Fabre, *La doctrine du chant de cœur de Jean Gerson: édition critique, traduction et commentaire du "Tractatus de canticis" et du "Canticordum au pélerin"* (Genève: Droz librairie, 2005). Iribarren's commentary on the epic-poetic *Josephina*, reliant upon Roccati's critical edition thereof, marks an initial foray toward connecting Gerson's poetic and theological writings: Jean Gerson, *Josephina: l'épopée de saint Joseph,* 2 vols., ed. Isabel Iribarren and G. Matteo Roccati, Bibliothèque scolastique, (Paris: les Belles lettres, 2019). This approach builds on her earlier article: "Le Paradis retrouvé: l'utopie linguistique de Jean Gerson," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 231, no. 2 (2014). While not focused on Gersonian poetry *per se,* Viviane Griveau-Genest's recent doctoral thesis takes a similar approach in synthesizing literary and theological analyses of Gerson's homilies: "L'esthétique du faire croire: étude littéraire des sermons français et latins de Jean Gerson" (Doctoral Dissertation, l'Université Paris Nanterre et l'Université de Genève, 2017). Further work from all these authors, among others, is forthcoming as the proceedings of a 2018 conference organized by Isabelle Fabre: *Jean Gerson écrivain* (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier-III; 4–6 April, 2018); proceedings to be published as: *Jean Gerson écrivain. De l'œuvre latine et française à sa réception européenne (XVe-XIXe s.)*. Ed. Isabelle Fabre. Geneva: Librairie Droz, forthcoming.

The present chapter continues along the crest of this scholarly wave, aiming to contextualize the Navarrist concern with poetry within their constructive thought. My work diverges, however, in considering poetic theology not primarily in conversation with devotional or mystical texts, but rather alongside scholastic texts. As a result, this chapter complements the current conversation on Navarrist poetry by seeing how it connects to academic theology rather than less formalized modes of spirituality. I argue that this shows the full force of the Navarrists' poetic theology: poetry is to be esteemed as the premier method of theological activity, within and without the university.

At the outset, it must be acknowledged that poetry, both for the Navarrists and in late-medieval France more broadly, is a capacious term, expanding beyond metrical form to include certain prose works.[3] Much of poetry's terrain overlaps with that of rhetoric and that of song.

As to the first, for the literary world of late-medieval France, the notions of poetry and of rhetoric were far less opposed than we today often take them to be. François Cornilliat has traced how, since the Romantics, poetry is often taken as a sign of authenticity and rhetoric as artifice, even an "antidiscours;" such a dichotomy does not hold, he maintains, for our period.[4] Likewise, in earlier chapters, we have already seen how figurative language and rhetoric are often presented together in opposition to logic and demonstration. Indeed, Aristotle, as he so often does, offers definitions that may confound more than clarify—especially for a fourteenth-century

[3] Concomitantly, certain forms of verse, such as encyclopediae, may be disaggregated from poetry. On the shifting bounds of *poetrie,* see: Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the 'Rose' to the 'Rhétoriqueurs'* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 12–13.

[4] François Cornilliat, "Au-delà de la rhétorique? La poésie de la Renaissance et le syndrome de Monsieur Jourdain," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 20, no. 4 (2002).

audience that did not reduce poetry to certain metrical forms.[5] Finally, Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay have described how poetic practice in late-medieval France claimed as its prerogative

[5] As we documented in Chapter One, Aristotle ambiguously defines rhetoric as, on the one hand, a counterpart to dialectic and, on the other, as a species of the genus dialectic (see p. 29). Somewhat similarly, in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle presumes (non-metrical) public-speaking genres as the primary locus for rhetorical craft. Nevertheless, as the text continues Aristotle seems to consider poetry a form of rhetoric. He defines epideictic rhetoric as that which praises virtue and censures vice ("ἐπιδεικτικοῦ δὲ τὸ μὲν ἔπαινος τὸ δὲ ψόγος," 1358b, 32; "Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα λέγωμεν περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας καὶ καλοῦ καὶ αἰσχροῦ οὗτοι γὰρ σκοποὶ τῷ ἐπαινοῦντι καὶ ψέγοντι" 1366a, 82), and in the course of unpacking this form of rhetoric he regularly cites poets as prime examples (e.g., Homer at 1365a, 82; Sappho at 1367a, 94; and Simonides at 1367b, 100). He remarks that rhetoric follows poetry in being concerned with style of delivery ("δῆλον οὖν ὅτι καὶ περὶ τὴν ῥητορικήν ἐστι τὸ τοιοῦτον ὥσπερ καὶ περὶ τὴν ποιητικήν" 1403b, 346). Further, when discussing human emotions—fundamental to identifying the means of persuasion—he explicitly notes that he will not repeat portions of this discussion he has already treated in the *Poetics* (1372a, 128). See: Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*.

To be sure, the Greek text of (the extant portion of) Aristotle's *Poetics* was only "rediscovered" c. 1500 C.E. in Latin Europe, though the thirteenth-century translations of Aristotle from the Arabic world—namely the translations of Ibn-Rushd's commentaries by Hermanus Alemannus—included the *Poetics*. Scholarship has tended to downplay the impact of the *Poetics* prior to the rediscovery of the Greek, likely due to a combination of 1) the medievals' own lack of emphasis on the *Poetics* as such, and 2) the lingering effects of the early-modern humanists' express disdain for Ibn-Rushd's Aristotelian commentaries. Nevertheless, the text would have been at hand for the Navarrists. Therein, Aristotle proposes that poetry is a medium of representation (*mimesis*) and that it relies on some combination of rhythm, speech, and melody. ("ἐποποιία δὴ καὶ ἡ τῆς τραγῳδίας ποίησις ἔτι δὲ κωμῳδία καὶ ἡ διθυραμβοποιητικὴ καὶ τῆς αὐλητικῆς ἡ πλείστη καὶ κιθαριστικῆς πᾶσαι τυγχάνουσιν οὖσαι μιμήσεις… οὕτω κἀν ταῖς εἰρημέναις τέχναις ἅπασαι μὲν ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν ἐν ῥυθμῷ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἁρμονίᾳ, τούτοις δ᾽ ἢ χωρὶς ἢ μεμιγμένοις," 1447a, 28.) Nor is poetry reducible to certain formal, metrical features. For example, Empedocles, despite writing in verse, should be counted a natural scientist rather than poet ("οὐδὲν δὲ κοινόν ἐστιν Ὁμήρῳ καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον, διὸ τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν δίκαιον καλεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυσιολόγον μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητήν," 1447b, 30–32). Finally, poetry may be categorized based on the sorts of people it represents, i.e. how it depicts virtue and vice ("Ἐπεὶ δὲ μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας, ἀνάγκη δὲ τούτους ἢ σπουδαίους ἢ φαύλους εἶναι (τὰ γὰρ ἤθη σχεδὸν ἀεὶ τούτοις ἀκολουθεῖ μόνοις, κακίᾳ γὰρ καὶ ἀρετῇ τὰ ἤθη διαφέρουσι πάντες)" 1448a, 32). In this way, poetry bears more than a passing resemblance to epideictic rhetoric, which endeavors to praise virtue and censure vice. See: Aristotle, Longinus, and Demetrius, *Aristotle: Poetics; Longinus: On the Sublime; Demetrius: On Style*.

the ability to speak directly to affect and desire, which was the customary ken of the rhetorical arts.[6]

As to the second, the Navarrists understand poetry and song to be largely synonymous ideas, even if the terms' connotations diverge on some points. This linking of poetry and song is a commonplace in the Latin Christian tradition[7] and medieval Europe more broadly; Ardis Butterfield, discussing France in particular, argues for a reciprocal shaping of song and poetry in the vernacular from the thirteenth century onward.[8] On a similar note, in his study of high-medieval, Latin *conductus* form, Mark Everist notes, "The idea of a medieval 'song'—whether a Latin song like the *conductus* or a *trouvère grand chant*—needs to be conceived as something much more flexible: where the roles of poet and composer are considered as significantly more permeable than [our contemporary sense thereof.]"[9] Finally, Sylvia Huot has shown, taking lyric as a case study, how the fourteenth century saw the composition of song become even more thoroughly associated with ideas of writing and the book form in the wake of late-medieval lyric anthologies and compilations.[10] In addition to these broader discourses of poetry and song's increasing overlap, the Navarrists' particular engagement with song and with canting is largely

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[6] They provide the example of Eustache Deschamps christening Machaut as a "noble retorique" in his *Ballade* 123. Armstrong and Kay, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the 'Rose' to the 'Rhétoriqueurs'*, 8–9. See also: Estelle Doudet, *La mort écrite: rites et rhétoriques du trépas au Moyen Âge*, ed. Estelle Doudet, Cultures et civilisations médiévales, (Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2004).

[7] Dag Norberg, *Introduction to the Study of Medieval Latin Versification*, trans. Grant Roti and Jacqueline de La Chapelle-Skubly (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 130–79.

[8] Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[9] Mark Everist, *Discovering Medieval Song: Latin Poetry and Music in the Conductus*, ed. Mark Everist (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 2.

[10] Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 328–38.

worked out in reference to scripture—the *Song of Songs* and *Magnificat*, e.g., discussed below—and the works of *auctores* like Virgil, Horace, and Boethius. These sources, oral performance and aural consumption notwithstanding, were known to the Navarrists as written texts; such sources exemplify the fusion of poetry and song the Navarrists take as a model. Accordingly, this chapter takes their conceptual linkage as a working presupposition, but over the course of its argument it further demonstrates the explanatory cogency of understanding the Navarrists in this way.

Finally, for the Navarrists and much of the larger literary context of France in the later Middle Ages, poetry should not be understood reductively as a formal category for metrical works alone.[11] Christine de Pizan is an instructive comparanda in this regard: she defines poetry as, "all narrations or introductions apparently signifying one meaning and secretly signifying another or several…, whose end is truth."[12] By foregrounding poetry's method of signification (closely linked here with allegory), rather than formal features of meter, de Pizan's account offers further grounds for connecting poetry to rhetoric, but it also serves to link poetry to longer traditions of biblical interpretation, in which allegorical modes of signification loom large. A

[11] Armstrong and Kay see the more explicit separation of poetry and verse as a development of the late-fourteenth century, with Philip de Mézières as an early example. See: *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the 'Rose' to the 'Rhétoriqueurs'*, 11–13.

[12] "Comme en general le nom de poesie soit pris pour fiction quelconques, c'est-à-dire pour toute narracion ou introduction apparaument significant un senz, et occultement en sengnefie un aultre ou plusieurs, combine que plus proprement dire celle soit poesie." Translation from: Walters, "Gerson and Christine, Poets," 71–73. Her text is Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, ed. Suzanne Solente, 2 vols (Paris, 1936, 1940), 176–177. Walters further suggests that Christine's formulation here parallels Gerson's support for similar formulations about the truth-value of fable drawn from Augustine's *Soliloquies* in their French translation as the *Seul parlers* which introduced a dialogue form. As Walters notes, see also: Geneviève Hasenohr, "Aperçu sur la diffusion et la reception de la littérature de spiritualité en langue française au dernier siècle du Moyen Age," in *Wissenorganisierende und wissensvermittelnde Literatur im Mittelalter; Perspektiven ihrer Erforschung, Kolloquium*, ed. Norbert Richard Wolf (Wiesbaden: 1987), 74.

similar configuration of elements likewise constitutes the Navarrists' own understanding of poetry, as this chapter will unfold.

To trace this argument and outline the substance of their poetic theology, this chapter considers texts wherein the Navarrists consider the role of song and/or poetry within the Bible. The chapter begins with Pierre d'Ailly's *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, his lectures on the *Song* delivered at the University of Paris during his course of study for his *baccalaurius*. We will consider d'Ailly's exegetical approach here as the proliferation and cultivation of possible meanings, carried out by academic theologians and then offered in turn to the audience. The chapter then looks to portions of Gerson's enormous *Collectorium super Magnificat* and its companion poem the "Opus metricum super Magnificat." In this context, I argue that Gerson sees theological poetry as encompassing song and rhetoric to effectively harmonize the soul's affects with the tuning forks of scriptural models. The chapter concludes, as a bookend to its opening section, with a reading of Gerson's *Super Cantica Canticorum*, a commentary on the *Song* composed in the final weeks of his life at the behest of the Carthusian order. Based on these readings, I argue that the Navarrists endorse a normative account of the proper theologian as fundamentally a poet, one who uses rhetoric to harmonize the audience's affects toward divine Love. The paragons of this poetic theology, despite the Navarrists' extensive reliance upon classical *auctores*, are the poets of the biblical canon: David, Solomon, and Mary. Throughout, we will consider what it means for an academic (even scholastic)[13] theologian to take these figures as models for theological method.

[13] It is on this note, in particular, that my reading of Gersonian poetic theory moves further than those present in the historiography. By and large, previous accounts of Navarrist poetry have siloed it away as a distinctive quirk of Gerson and his generally acknowledged eclecticism. Accordingly, Gerson's investment in poetry is contextualized either within the larger currents of literary movements associated with humanism or within a framework of devotional or

4.1 *Song of Songs* and the Harvest of d'Ailly's Exegesis

D'Ailly, following the curricular norms of the faculty of theology, lectured on the Bible during 1374–1376, reading the *Song of Songs* and *Mark* in turn, as a *cursor biblicus*.[14] The former lectures constitute his *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum,* an interlinear gloss on the whole of the scriptural text. While the product of a young d'Ailly (aged around twenty-three) and extremely conventional in its form, the *Expositio* nevertheless shows that even before completion of his *baccalarius* d'Ailly construed poetry as uniquely suited to affective formation and to the theological task, insofar as it is able to bring together affect and intellect into a single form.

D'Ailly opens by noting the variety of titles used for the *Song*, particularly the inconsistency between singular and plural forms.[15] His gloss begins, interestingly enough, on this feature of the *Song*'s reception, rather than the text itself. He describes, "Singularly, it can be called 'a song' on account of the unity of love, because whatever is sung there is love. But

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"practical" spirituality. In Chapter One of the dissertation, we have established how Navarrist preferences for rhetoric and contingent language-usage are not best explained as distinct from late-medieval scholasticism, but rather as a development of the philosophy of language and psychology *au courant* within the universities themselves. With this insight borne in mind, this chapter argues that Gerson understand poetic practice as an urgent methodological course-correction for scholastic theology.

[14] The groundwork for a dating of d'Ailly's career can be found in: Palémon Glorieux, "Les années d'études de Pierre d'Ailly," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 44 (1977). More recently, Courtenay has argued convincingly to move back the dating of his *Sentences* commentaries by one year—an argument furthered to revise other early works' dating by Christopher Schabel. See: William J. Courtenay, "Theological Bachelors at Paris on the Eve of the Papal Schism: The Academic Environment of Peter of Candia," in *Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages: A Tribute to Stephen F. Brown,* ed. Kent Emery, Russell L Friedman, and Andreas Speer, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Christopher Schabel, "Redating Pierre d'Ailly's Early Writings and Revisiting his Position on the Necessity of the Past and the Future," in *Pierre d'Ailly: Un Esprit Universel à l'Aube du XVe Siècle*, ed. Jean-Patrice Boudet et al., Actes de colloque (Paris: Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2019).

[15] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 146v. "Iste liber dicit canticu[m] amoris vel canticu[m] cantici seu ca[n]tica cantico[rum]."

'songs' is said plurally on account of the multiplicity of people speaking therein."[16] This same variety of available interpretations is refracted onto the biblical text. At the outset, d'Ailly explains that the poem's Beloved can be understood as the Church, any upright soul, or "especially" the blessed virgin Mary.[17] In turn the book's content, d'Ailly suggests, is an exhortation for the Beloved to renounce counterfeit loves and cling to the Lover's kiss; reading it as descriptive of Solomon's own sexual exploits would be "a blatant falsehood."[18] D'Ailly's proem in this way establishes two premises of his *Expositio*: The exegetical task in reading the *Song* is principally to establish the allegorical significance of elements within the scriptural narrative, and—as a corollary—these same narrative elements all may well be multivalent. It remains to the reader, it seems, to connect the dots.

His reading of the *Song*'s third chapter illustrates his method at work and reveals its fundamental drive toward hermeneutic proliferation, albeit within the tried-and-true confines of annotations given on the scriptural text, phrase by phrase. Consider the bulk of his treatment of the first verse, spoken by the Beloved:

> In my bed, etc. And [this] is the voice of the Church expressing the desire that she has for the conversion of the Gentiles. In my bed. That is in worldly love or in fleshly pleasure or at leisure untroubled by the racket of the world that is made by the Gentile philosophers. I sought for. Namely, by the leading of natural reason. The one whom my soul loves. By a natural love. Through the night. That is through philosophical arguments or through created things or dwelling in the nights of error, ignorance, and adversity. I sought for. Many times. And I did not find. Because I looked for them incorrectly or not where they

[16] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 146v. "Singulariter eor[um] dici potest canticu[m] propter vnitate[m] amoris. Quia quidquid hic canit[ur] amor est sed pluraliter dicit[ur] cantico[rum] propt[er] diversitatem p[er]sonar[um] hic loquentiu[m]."

[17] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 146v. "…sponsa id est eccl[es]ia v[e]l quelibet anima sancta vel specialiter v[ir]go beata."

[18] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 146v. "Un[um] patet falsitas erro[rum] illo[rum] q[ui] dicu[n]t Salomonem hu[n]c libru[m] co[m]posuisse ob amores co[n]cubine carnalis."

> could be found, or because neither an angel, nor a prophet, nor a doctor has revealed to me the light of faith. And faith comes by hearing the apostles.[19]

In many ways, d'Ailly reiterates the *Glossa Ordinaria* on the verse.[20] At the same time though, he too offers an abundance of supplementary ways of reading the text, which often diverge dramatically. For instance, he gives a number of negative valences to the bed (mostly centering on carnal desire), and he likewise suggests the more positive association of it as repose from the troubles of the world. While both of these Gregorian readings are preserved in the *Glossa*, there they are separated out from each other when discussing different aspects of the verse; d'Ailly has thrown them side by side in striking juxtaposition.[21] D'Ailly takes care to find points of contact with exegetical commonplaces, but he relativizes any individual reading by framing it alongside a near-opposite valence. Over the course of the *Expositio*, d'Ailly frequently enjoins the reader to consult other texts for more information on a particular verse or meaning, with some variation of,

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[19] The underlined phrases in this quote are set off by brackets within the fifteenth-century printed edition, and they indicate the quotations from the scriptural text being commented upon. d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 151r. "In lectulo meo [e]tc. Et est vox ecc[les]ie de gentib[us] desideriu[m] q[uo]d an conuersione[m] habuit exprime[n]tis. In lectulo meo i[d est] in amore mu[n]di vel in voluptate carnis vel in otio quietis a strepitu mundi quod dici[tur] [pro]pter ph[ilosoph]os ge[n]tiles. q[uae]sivi sc[ilicet] ducatu r[ati]o[n]is naturalis que[m] diligit a[n]i[m]a mea naturali dilect[i]o[n]e p[er] noctes id est p[er] ph[ilosophic]as r[ati]o[n]es v[e]l p[er] creaturas v[e]l in noctib[us] pcti[n] error[is] ignora[n]tie et aduersitat[is] existe[n]s q[uae]siui multotie[n]s et no[n] inveni q[uia] non recte vel no[n] vbi erat invenie[n]d[um] quereba[m]. vel q[uia] nec angel[us] nec p[ro]ph[et]a nec doctor mihi lumen fidei revelavit. Fides e[orum] ex auditu est p[ersonaru]m ap[osto]l[icaru]m."

[20] The Patrologia Latina contains a recension of the *glossa ordinaria* mistakenly attributed to Strabo, which I rely on here. Walafridus Strabo, *Canticum Canticorum*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, (Paris: Migne, 1852). D'Ailly favors portions that feature Gregory's exegesis, such as his near quotation of, "Et non inveni. Quia mihi gentilitati non angelus, non propheta, non quilibet doctor in dubiis lumen divinae cognitionis ostendit," 1143A.

[21] Strabo, *Canticum Canticorum*, 1142C & 43A. "Moraliter lectulum sibi sancta anima in nocte facit, dum omnes mundi perturbationes fugiens, secretum, in quo requiescat, comparat. In hoc lecto dilectum quaerit: quia dum a sollicitudinibus vacat, in ejus inquisitione quomodo ad illum perveniat requiescit…;" "proposui in animo meo de lectulo carnalium voluptatum exsurgere."

"see the gloss."[22] In this way, he relativizes his own *Expositio*. It does not offer an exhaustive interpretive schema for the *Song*.

The pedagogical context of the *Expositio,* a series of lectures delivered in the faculty of theology, clarifies d'Ailly's aim here. The profusion of possible meanings presents readers (or listeners, like his students, as the case may be) with a variety of disparate frames that all, nonetheless, find some sort of root within the *Song*'s poetry. The implicit burden upon the audience, then, is to devise a reading from the abundant threads laid out by d'Ailly. The reader's task is to shape meaning from the poetic text. The meaning centers here on affect, namely the love unifying Lover and Beloved.

Even in the brief citation given above from the *Expositio* on 3:1, we have good reason to understand that d'Ailly conceives this exegetical task in contradistinction to the dialectical method *au courant* in much scholastic theology. For instance, he twice refers to philosophy. First, he identifies (one meaning of) the Beloved's lying in bed as solace from the noise of "gentile philosophers," likely referring to non-Christian thinkers of the classical era. The philosophers are thus opposed to the rest offered by the Lover—it is hard to imagine that "the Philosopher," Aristotle, is excluded from this grouping. Similarly, d'Ailly has interpreted the Beloved's unfulfilled longing for the absent Lover as natural love and as the product of "philosophical arguments" rather than a result of divine revelation. The Beloved's bed is that of philosophical inquiry, cold and isolated without the infused love of grace.

[22] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*. As a representative sample, in commenting on the first chapter alone, d'Ailly says, "vide glosam," 147v; "et de his loquitur text[us] et glosa," 147v; "vide glosam Gregorii," 149r; and "De hac domo nota glosam," 149r. This referentiality somewhat escalates over the course of the text; e.g., in the comparatively brief comments on the final four verses, d'Ailly tells the reader successively, "[e]tc. vide glosam," "in glosam," "vide glosam," and "[e]tc. vide glosam" (158r).

D'Ailly suggests that a proper reading, in contrast, looks to draw together the various strands laid out in the text and its attendant glosses into a unified thread: love of God. Given the prologue has told us the object of the whole poem is the unifying love of God, we know that a proper reading will need to outstrip the arguments of philosophy indicated by the loveless bed. Further, the book's title, *Song of Songs*, signals that poetry has an especial place in this formation of love. The semionautic motility at work in the *Expositio*—markedly resonant with the semiotics of displacement discussed in Chapter Two—demarcates a protreptic space for the audience to work out that unifying love, via poetry, themselves. Insofar as love and the biblical text both flow from God, this endeavor serves to affectively stitch the audience into the song.

D'Ailly unpacks this further near the conclusion of his *Expositio*. In what he terms the seventh part of chapter eight (verses 12–13 in modern versification), d'Ailly discusses the Lover's vineyard and the division of its income. The lion's share, one-thousand shekels, is to be dispensed to "the serene, i.e., those who are called children of God."[23] The one thousand that is their return on the vineyard's harvest is the millennium of eternal blessedness and a perfect fulfillment of the decalogue.[24] The abundance is such that two hundred shekels are also awarded to those tending to the vineyard's crop, namely "true doctors and prelates."[25] As the biblical text concludes with exhortations to the friends of the vineyard to make their voices heard and to the Beloved to climb the mountains like a hart, d'Ailly sees parallel injunctions to lead a moral life

[23] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 158r. "vinea mea cora[m] te est. Mille tui pacifici. I[d est] illi q[ui] filii dei vocabu[n]tur."

[24] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 158r.

[25] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 158r. "et duce[n]ti q[uibus] eis duplex fruct[us] seu duplex merces debet[ur]. I[d est] gaudiu[m] essentiale et accide[n]tale vel visio et fruitio. his q[ui] custodiu[n]t fruct[us] ei[us] i[d est] ver[is] doctorib[us] et p[rae]latis q[ui] custodiu[n]t fructus vine d[ivi]ni."

"in word and deed" and to join the ranks of the saints and angels.[26] The enclosed vineyard ends up opening outward and upward, nourishing its friends toward love of God.

It is in this final passage that d'Ailly shows his hand most clearly. First, doctors and prelates are distinguished, in principle at least, from those called to be children of God. Further, their professional task as theologians and clergy is to tend the vineyard, to tend to the salvation of the children of God. This salvation is metaphorically described as itself a song, joined in together by saints and angels. The theologian is a farmhand. Second, the vineyard tended by the doctor, it seems for d'Ailly, is that of the sacred text itself. The association between the page and the vineyard was well established in monastic contexts earlier in the Middle Ages.[27] The form of d'Ailly's *Expositio* shows this: it neatly demarcates the plots within the text and then displays the harvest—the potential meanings—that spring forth from each section. The Lover in the text declares, "Make me hear thy voice,"[28] and d'Ailly, as commentator, labors to equip his audience with what they need to rise to that occasion. The theologian connects the Christian faithful to the biblical song.

4.2 The *Magnificat* and Poetic Theology

Some five decades later, Gerson presents a consonant, if much more precisely theorized, account of poetic theology. While much of the specifics of his understanding of affect and song are parsed in his *De canticis*, it is in his vast *Collectorium super Magnificat* (just shy of four-hundred pages in Glorieux's edition!) that Gerson most clearly relates poetry to his larger theological œuvre. Composed over the course of 1427 and the beginning of 1428, the

[26] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 158r. "…ita age vita[m] vt quidq[ui]d voce v[e]l o[per]e oraver[is] a me dignu[m] sit exaudiri."

[27] Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text a Commentary to Hugh's "Didascalicon"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), esp. 57–58.

[28] d'Ailly, *Expositio super Cantica Canticorum*, 158r.

Collectorium is a mixture of original work and earlier shorter treatises integrated into a larger structure.[29] The meta-structure of the work is a division into twelve tractates, which sequentially are oriented toward lines of the Magnificat. Thus, for example, Tractate I treats "Magnificat anima mea Dominum," Tractate II "Exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo," etc. The tractates all vary with regard to their own genres. Most are explicitly Socratic dialogues between a teacher and student, some are soliloquies in character (typically that of Mary herself), and others are prose meditations. Some tractates combine multiple of these generic approaches internally. Finally, though there is conspicuous silence concerning the poem in the *Collectorium super Magnificat*, Gerson did compose an "Opus metricum super Magnificat," dedicated to Charles VII in 1428 (though it does incorporate some couplets from earlier poetic works of Gerson's), that treats the Magnificat in parallel form to the *Collectorium*.[30] Gerson has proliferated the styles and approaches for thinking about Magnificat at the very outset—like d'Ailly's theologian tending the vineyard.

In treating the Magnificat, Gerson dilates upon the idea of affect. As we noted in the introduction to the dissertation, affect includes a vertical axis—internal emotional responses and sensations that may be higher or lower than ratiocinative and intellective faculties—as well as a

[29] Gerson's overview to the text alerts the reader that Tractate III includes the elsewhere-published *De oculo triplici, De una pretiosa margarita, De oculo spirituali, De triplici vision Dei*, and a redaction of *De Concordia theologiae mysticae cum scholastica*; Tractate V incorporates *De conceptibus* and *De modis significandi*; Tractate VIII includes *De centilogio super impulsibus*; Tractate IX has appended *De causa finali*; and the final Tractate XII relies upon an unspecified earlier centilogium. See his own description: Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 163–64.

[30] Glorieux has done much text-critical work identifying the poem's constituent parts and sources from across Gerson's career. See his *Note sur le Carmen super Magnificat de Gerson.*

horizontal axis—describing how people are affected by external force and circumstance.[31] While the latter aspect will be discussed in the next chapter, here Gerson is deeply concerned with the inner affective life and how it may be said to cohere with the emotional resonances of poetry. Just as in composing a song one arranges chords and lyrics to produce a sequence of affects in the listener (or performer), Gerson understands the human heart to be a poetic instrument. Song lets one compose one's inner affective life. Poetry, far more than serving as a facile metaphor for the heart's emotions, becomes the avenue to actively form and influence affective interiority.

With this in mind let us turn to the first tractate of this work, Gerson's consideration of the song's first four words: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. The tractate proceeds as a dialogue, between a student and a teacher, as they discuss the scriptural line at hand. Nonetheless, given its position at the start of the enormous *Collectorium*, the opening portions of it discuss the Magnificat as a whole and its place within the larger scriptural arc. Serving then as an opening to the larger text, this first tractate itself lays out as if in miniature the larger course of Gersonian poetic theology. First, Gerson here understands scripture itself to give pride of place to song or poetry. Second, Gerson moves through a series of technical definitions and distinctions to both describe song and then the internal constitution of the human mind. Third, Gerson subsumes these "scholastic" moves within the larger framework of a poetic theology, which takes scripture as its exemplar. Finally, the arc of this first tractate construes a relationship between theology and scripture that privileges an affective performance of the text in place of a traditional exegetical model—a fourfold schema Gerson sees as less attuned to lived reality.

[31] For a different account of affect in Gerson, more focused on the mediation of public and private domains, see: Geer, "Intimate Politics: The Poetics of Social Engagement during the Hundred Years War."

The first question, from the student, is fairly direct, "Why did that blessed and most beautiful of women... begin her song by magnifying God?"[32] The student goes on to explicate his own situation: his zeal for knowledge and longing for consolation both are searching for peace amid his "raving age."[33] The teacher takes this opening to expand the scope of the discussion, appealing to the Psalmist's raising of his own song in the night of trouble out of hope for consolation. He continues by charting a lineage of such biblical songs, from Miriam to David to Mary—noting the language of magnification in both of these forebears. As the student continues to pose questions, the teacher's reply is telling, "You don't understand scripture."[34]

The student, undeterred, presses further for an enumeration of the magnifications of the Lord that could be referenced in this line of the Magnificat, insofar as they can be grasped. The teacher responds to this scholastic instinct with a metaphor. The Magnificat is:

> …the ten-stringed lute [or decachord] of Mary, which has ten verses just as it has ten most resonant strings. This stands in conformity to that cosmic decachord of the entire rational creation, which spans the nine orders of angels—as if nine melodious faiths—and the tenth order of humans, which, broken through the sin of our first parents, our lofty harpist [sc. Christ] has mended so that he may play a joyous psalm upon this harp.[35]

The words "My soul magnifies the Lord" are thus the first cord of the harp, a melodious declaration of faith, resounding with the loftiest angelic order. By composing this metaphor, the teacher reorients the entire dialectic investigation. The song of this decachord reiterates the

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[32] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 165. "...quo pacto beata et pulcherrima mulierum, (post salutationem Elisabeth, post exsultationem Joannis in utero, post collaudationem quia crediderit, erumpens in jubilum) cepit a magnificatione Dei canticum suum."

[33] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 165. "...tum sciendi studio, tum consolationis desiderio;" "...saeviens tempestas."

[34] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 166. "...non intelligens Scripturas."

[35] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 166. "psalterium Mariae decachordum, habens decem versus quasi totidem chordulas sonorissimas, conformiter ad illud universale decachordum totius rationalis creaturae, quod connectitur ex novem ordinibus angelorum, quasi novem fidibus argutis, juncta ex hominibus decima, quam in primis parentibus per peccatum ruptam summus noster citharista reparavit, ut concordaret psalterium jucundum cum cithara."

poetic lineage stretching from the psalmist, but now it extends to inhere Christ's restorative work as the lofty harpist. The poet's instrument also recapitulates the angelic hierarchies (themselves associated with music-making),[36] who, as far back as Pseudo-Dionysus, were understood to provide the interface between humanity and the divine. Hereby, song is posited as a privileged mode of access to God.

The imagery here—particularly the language of *decacordum*—recalls from Gerson's earlier treatise on songs a certain notion, which Isabelle Fabre has called, "la théorie du *Canticordum* ou Chant du coeur."[37] While a fuller account of the *canticordum*[38] will come into view in the course of our own reading the *Collectorium super Magnificat*, a few provisional notes on its earlier appearances in Gerson, studied by Fabre, are warranted. First, the theory of the *cantichordum*, in which the heart itself is a musical instrument that performs affect in a way homologous to the mouth's performance of song, is markedly consistent across Gerson's works, even when put to diverse use in various contexts.[39] Put otherwise, it is a doctrine and not simply a regular *ad hoc* metaphor. Substantively, Gerson argues that when one sings with one's mouth (*canticum oris*) one relies on three elements: *littera* (the verbal text), *resonantia* (the sound of the vocal cords), and *figuratio* (the notation of the tune).[40] These are echoed in the heart-song

[36] For a nice overview of this association in the late-medieval era, see: Oliver Huck, "The Music of the Angels in Fourteenth- and Early Fifteenth-Century Music," *Musica Disciplina* 53 (2003).

[37] Gerson and Fabre, *La doctrine du chant de cœur de Jean Gerson: édition critique, traduction et commentaire du "Tractatus de canticis" et du "Canticordum au pélerin"*, 9.

[38] "Canticordum" is an apparent Gersonian neologism, meaning roughly "heart-song," that puns on the names of stringed instruments, e.g. "decachordum."

[39] E.g., "Proposant une vue synthétique du système gersonien, ils apparaissent comme une cadre théorique destiné à recevoir diverses applications et à assumer de multiples fonctions." Gerson and Fabre, *La doctrine du chant de cœur de Jean Gerson: édition critique, traduction et commentaire du "Tractatus de canticis" et du "Canticordum au pélerin"*, 52.

[40] Gerson and Fabre, *La doctrine du chant de cœur de Jean Gerson: édition critique, traduction et commentaire du "Tractatus de canticis" et du "Canticordum au pélerin"*, 53–54.

(*canticum cordis*) that combines cognition, affect, and a unified meditation.[41] Second, the paradigmatic affect of the *canticordum* is repentance. Cognitive awareness of one's sinfulness and a deep, corporeal feeling of grief come together toward a true spiritual sense of contrition that orients oneself along the *regressus* to God. Playing the heart-song well, then, entails a proper awareness of one's various affects and an effort to modulate each appropriately so that one's soul is harmoniously ordered.[42] Just as song, or poetry, arranges disparate elements into something unified in spoken song, so must everyone tend to the song inside themselves.

Returning to the course of Tractate I in the *Collectorium super Magnificat,* Gerson increasingly links this understanding of song to the scriptures themselves. After presenting the metaphor of the decachord the teacher raises a further question: "But what would you think if we were to make all the various melodies of all the instruments of Holy Scripture—nay rather the sounds of every kind of music [*voces omnis generis musicorum*]—harmonize with this ten-stringed lute of Mary's?"[43] Indeed, he continues, "Our minstrel [Mary] most fully and clearly makes the voices of all music sound forth."[44]

This bold assertion—that the Magnificat, as a microcosm of the decachord of rational creation, epitomizes all music—leads Gerson to guide the dialogue toward a consideration of musical theory. The teacher, in the longest stretch of uninterrupted speech in the tractate, articulates a nuanced account of the five notes that comprise all music (cf. do, re, mi, fa, sol).

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[41] Gerson and Fabre, *La doctrine du chant de cœur de Jean Gerson: édition critique, traduction et commentaire du "Tractatus de canticis" et du "Canticordum au pélerin"*, 54.

[42] Gerson and Fabre, *La doctrine du chant de cœur de Jean Gerson: édition critique, traduction et commentaire du "Tractatus de canticis" et du "Canticordum au pélerin"*, 125–29.

[43] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 167. "Quid vero censeres si varios omnium organorum Sacrae Scripturae modulos, immo voces omnis generis musicorum concordare faceremus cum hoc Mariae psalterio decachordo?"

[44] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 167. "...nostra psaltes copiosissime et distinctissime faciebat resonare voces omnium musicorum."

These five are introduced as "the five immaculately clean stones drawn from the stream of the Scriptures" that David used to lay low Goliath.[45] How are these (s)tones understood to be drawn from the scriptures?

The starting point is the Apostle's words in 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will psalm with my spirit. I will psalm with my mind also." This linking, as Gerson conceives it, of affect and intellect is the essence of music. As attested in his earlier writings, the "letter" of any song is the subject of its text (*materia*) and the "resonance" is the sung tone. Both of these are signified by the "figure," the notations and markings on the page themselves. Crucially, the vocabulary chosen bears strong resemblance to the terminology surrounding scriptural exegesis. *Littera* and *figuratio* are standard terms used with regard to literal and allegorical interpretation, respectively. By construing these as constituent elements of both, the category of song is rendered congruent to that of scripture. Song bridges the Bible and other poetic compositions. Further, the language of resonance draws on a long classical tradition of a poet's creative outpouring being a response to the Muses' inspiration. Song, scripture, and poetry come to converge.

At this point, the tenor of the tractate begins to shift. As the teacher carefully parses his account of music, he meticulously enumerates the various affects and meanings associated with each musical note. Gerson lays out the five notes by descending tone, labeled in turn by the five vowels. These fundamental notes are then mapped onto what Gerson terms “the affects:” “A” represents joy, “E” hope, “I” compassion, “O” fear, and “U” pain.[46] Notably, Gerson is constructively adapting and expanding the four Stoic passions to fit his five affects.

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[45] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 168. “...cum quinque lapidibus limpidissimis de torrente Scripturarum, (Goliam, idest Satanam, sternat, alter David puer factus.)”

[46] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 169. “Hac super re dabuntur pauci versus quorum sententia plus elucidabitur, et hoc per triplex quinarium: quinque verba pro littera: Magnificus, largus, pius est, Justus, miserator. Quinque affectus pro harmonia: Gaudia, spes, pietas, hinc timor atque

Gerson's most probable primary source on ancient Stoicism is Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations,*[47] which recount Zeno's theory of the passions. Cicero explains the four passions are taxonomized by the Stoics into two agitations set in the present and two that look ahead; in each case, one expects a positive and one a negative—for the Stoics all such longings are vicious. Cicero enumerates them as "lust and delight" (responses to future and present good) and "fear and distress" (responses to future and present evil).[48] He goes on to explain that just as the body has various components that may fall play to various illnesses or injuries, so the soul may be beset by these various disorders that require ethical practice of detachment to counteract.[49] Although Cicero makes his partiality to the Stoic account explicit,[50] he also records Peripatetic arguments that do not see passions *per se* as vicious, reserving that judgment for inordinate passions that surpass the mean.[51] One moment in particular may have stood out to Gerson. Cicero says that, "[The Peripatetics] say too that the remaining subdivisions are useful,

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dolor. Adaptatio quinque vocalium ad voces quinque affectionum: 'A gaudens amat, E sperat, et I miseretur/ O timet, U qua dolens sodit et ista notes.' Conformatio ad quinque notulas: sol, fa, mi, re, ut."

[47] Bryan Patrick McGuire records that d'Ailly, Gerson's mentor, included Cicero as the central authority for the curriculum in rhetoric: *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, 32. Further, Louis Mourin demonstrates Gerson's practical familiarity with Cicero as a preacher: *Jean Gerson: Prédicateur français* (Brugge: De Tempel, 1952), 368–77.

[48] Cicero, *18. Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J. E. King, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), IV.6. "Partes autem perturbationum volunt ex duobus opinatis bonis nasci et ex duobus opinatis malis, ita esse quattuor: ex bonis *libidinem* et *laetitiam*, ut sit laetitia praesentium bonorum, libido futurorum, ex malis *metum* et *aegritudinem* nasci consent, metum futuris, aegritudinem praesentibus." Emphases original.

[49] Cicero, *18. Tusculan Disputations*, IV.15.

[50] Cicero, *18. Tusculan Disputations*, IV.5. "…utamur tamen in his perturbationibus describendis Stoicorum definitionibus et partitionibus, qui mihi videntur in hac quaestione versari acutissime."

[51] Cicero, *18. Tusculan Disputations*, IV.17–20. Cicero's disdain for the Peripatetic view shines through; he describes their teachings on this point as "mollis et enervata" (section 17).

compassion (*misericordiam*), for instance, to make us give assistance and relieve the misfortunes of people who do not deserve them."[52]

Gerson then has reconstrued lust and delight, respectively, as hope and joy. In parallel fashion, fear (*metus*) and distress have become fear (*timor*) and suffering.[53] Gerson's added, fifth affect is compassion—which he explicitly associates with *misericordia*[54]—and it bears similarity to the Peripatetic urge to help those suffering undeservingly, but here focused into a co-suffering. Evidencing an indebtedness to Augustinian models of proper affect,[55] Gerson gives a robust description of what forms affect may take in human life. To synthesize and paraphrase, we may say that, for Gerson, affect refers to both the reseau and the individual threads that plot human souls in relationship to other subjects and objects.

These connections render us affected. Gerson describes how these fundamental affects are prompted by our relationships to God and neighbor. Gerson says that they may each be understood as a response to characteristics of others: joy reacts to the magnificence of God, hope to the generosity of God, compassion to the mercy of God, fear to the justice of God, and suffering to the misery of humanity.[56] Each heart-song, by combining certain notes emblematic

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[52] Cicero, *18. Tusculan Disputations*, IV.20. "Reliquas quoque partes aegritudinis utiles esse dicunt, misericordiam ad opem ferendam et calamitates hominum indignorum sublevandas." Translation altered for inclusivity.

[53] While *metus* and *timor* both overlap with our term "fear," Gerson's alteration of the term connotes the possibility of reverence, as in "fear of God," in addition to denotation of dread.

[54] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 169. "I: Compassio: Misericordia."

[55] Richard Sorabji explicates how Augustine similarly favors a Peripatetic account of the passions, precisely on the point of care for one's fellows' suffering, explicitly in contradistinction to hard Stoicism. *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Gifford Lectures, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 397–99.

[56] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 169. "Quisquis animadvertere diligenter voluerit, inveniet quod omnis meditatio salubris tam divinarum quam humanarum scientiarum, reduci potest ad quinque verba, quorum quatuor prima Deum respiciunt, scilicet magnificentia, munificentia, misericordia, justitia; quintum est homini speciale, scilicet miseria."

of these relationalities, composes a certain configuration of the soul to God and neighbor.[57] In contrast to the Stoic view, that presupposes the soul as an island that can be—indeed ought to be—disentangled from the tides of emotion, Gerson sees the soul as necessarily enmeshed with God and other humans. Affects are not soulless forces from without, but forms of connection.

What does Gerson achieve by this schematic presentation of emotion as intertwined with song? First, it serves a clear mnemonic purpose. He mentions how the sequence of five affects, five tones, and five letters can be easily remembered with reference to the fingers on one's hand.[58] Gerson explains how this can equip lay people, particularly those lacking education, with a robust toolkit for devotional management of their affects: "For example, when you hear the tone 'A' during a psalm, focus your meditation toward the greatness of God and then let your heart form the sound of joy or [at least] desire to formed."[59] Second, Gerson establishes connections between readers and texts, in the form of an affective interpellation he takes to be more direct than the cognitive processes of interpretation: the kindling of desire. As just cited, Gerson says that when dwelling on any given tone, the listener should form that affect or, lacking

[57] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 169. "Omne siquidem canticum cordis et spiritus habet formari secundum alterum quinque verborum, seu duorum, seu trium, seu omnium simul praedictorum. Possent similiter omnes cordis et spiritus affections ad numerum deduci quinarium."

[58] The hand technique was a commonplace in musical instruction in the era. Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 169. "Demum quinque vocales ordine naturali positae notulae sunt indicantes cui voci littera sit accomoda etiam per depressionem et elevationem, ad instar gammae manualis: sol, fa, mi, re, ut." The standard study on medieval memory practices remains Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[59] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 170. "Sed sunt qui nec sensum litterae quomodolibet intelligunt, neque quomodo se meditando recolligant inveniunt. Proderit haec ars praeciupe talibus cum exercitio paulativo quantumcumque laici sunt. Verbi gratia tu audies A vocalem, in una parte psalmi; dirige meditationem tuam ad magnificentiam Dei, ac proinde formet cor tuum vocem gaudii vel formari desideret."

that, desire for it to be formed. After all, “the Lord grants a hearing to the desire of the poor.”[60] Further, Gerson says that virtually anyone—“however dull”—is able to, at the very least, achieve desire for rightly ordered emotions in short order.[61] This desire does not even need to be the result of a concerted, willful effort. Even if the will is “sluggish,” the heart itself sometimes leaps with desire as if a suddenly stirring swarm of locusts.[62] By taxonomically suturing affect and song, Gerson asserts that poetry is formally matched with the messy phenomenological reality of being human, errant desire and all.

At the close of this extended passage, almost exactly at the midpoint in the tractate, the student states that he is "moving on to other questions."[63] This latter half proceeds by charting distinctions. Instead of being framed by a taxonomic classification of song and affect, it is guided by the student's question: "why did the blessed Mary, when she sang this song, divide spirit and soul and put them in different lines, saying the one 'magnifies' and the other 'has rejoiced'?"[64] Unlike before, where he chastised the student's poor understanding of scripture, the teacher now replies, "You're asking good questions."[65]

What follows in response, unlike the appeal to a long poetic tradition of song, is a turn to *doctores* and received philosophical teachings, a use of church tradition to complement the earlier argument. Thus, the basic distinction is asserted from authority: spirit and soul are both

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[60] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 171. “…quia desiderium pauperum exaudiet Dominus.” Cf. Psalm 10:17.

[61] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 171. “Et quis est, obsecro, tam hebes aliquis qui non possit sub morula temporis haec addiscere, meditari, meditataque exsequi vel desiderare exsequi.”

[62] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 171. “…et si non volatu contemplationis saltem lento nonnunquam saltu cordis instar locustarum.”

[63] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 172. “Transeo nunc ad inquisitiones alias.”

[64] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 172. “Una, cur beata Maria cum cecinit hoc canticu, varie posuit et divisit spiritum et animam dicens de anima: magnificat; addens de spiritu: exsultavit.”

[65] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 172. “Vocas ad me quaestiones cognitu dignas.”

terms for the rational soul, though they specifically connote understanding and animating respectively.[66] This is clarified through a series of comparisons and contrasts between their functioning in Christ, a perfect human; Mary, a sinless human who nonetheless was not in a state of innocence; and Paul or John, holy but ontologically typical humans. Essentially, Gerson asserts, through the voice of the teacher, that the spirit is able to operate without the working of the sensitive soul (unlike the soul itself).

However, the explicating of these distinctions doesn't change the fact that the spirit and soul are coincident and not clearly separable. Thus, as the dialogue progresses the teacher makes recourse to metaphor, once again, to clarify further points of distinction between the spirit and soul. For instance, the spirit functions "in its activity in accordance with the image of a lightning flash or a twinkling star,"—the language here drawn directly from the Vulgate account of the vision of the cherubim in Ezekiel 1.[67]

From here twin metaphors are constructed to describe the soul and spirit, which maps onto a distinction between basic, natural responses to *phantasmata* and the abstracted ascent from there toward knowledge of divine things.[68]

The first is that of a mountain, whose peak glistens in the sunlight, although it can't be seen from the base due to intervening clouds. The whole mountain is the soul and the glistening

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[66] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 172. “Accipe quod ipsius animae rationalis quae et forma hominis essentialis secundum determinationem Ecclesiae, sunt principaliter duo actus vel officia: intelligere scilicet et animare. Propter primum dicitur spiritus; anima vero propter alterum.”

[67] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 174. “Unus est dum spiritus efficitur in actu suo ad similitudinem fulguris coruscantis aut emicantis scintillae solum in quodam transitu repentino, non in tali valens consistere claritate.”

[68] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 177. “Nunc applicemus extra duo proposita, unum de monte, alterum de carbone, et dicamus quod si sit in eodem cerebro pars una phantasticae virtutis, similiter et imaginativae ac aestimativae quae sit actuate spiritu animali lucido et sereno et claro habeatque dissimilia phantasmata quae nata sunt ducere in cognitionem divinorum per abstractionem intellectus agentis.”

peak is the spirit. The second is that of a heated coal. Some of the fire, or spirit, burns within the lit coal itself, but this can't be distinguished from the actual carbon, or soul. However, from time to time, bright sparks of flame will jump from the coal. Even if they are fleeting, they can be distinguished from the coal just as certain moments of activity (such as mystical ecstasy) can be isolated as proper to the spirit and not the soul. An alternative to this second image is that of a storm cloud. It hangs black in the sky, although lightning is coursing inside of it. Like the sparks from the coal, sometimes the lightning flashes forth from the cloud. At this point, Gerson invokes the authority of Boethius who "sang" this image in various meters of the *Consolatio*.[69]

As the dialogue here builds toward its conclusion (or at least the conclusion of this tractate), the student speaks up and begins to perceive what the teacher has been doing: "It seems you've had a reason for how you've directed the conversation about the division of spirit and soul."[70] The student explains that these metaphors "harmonize" with the scriptures, giving citations from the Psalms that refer to mountains and fire.[71] Their treatment of the scholastic distinction of spirit and soul has brought them to the scriptural account of the same.

But the teacher counters with a gentle "not so fast," stating that a third image is missing: water. He says “one of the fathers” used this image,[72] and he then turns to Virgil and unevenly cites some five lines from the *Aeneid*. Within Virgil, the lines describe Aeneas, unsettled and

[69] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 177. “Adde coruscationes in nubibus seu fulgentias, et ita de varietatibus. Quod exemplum secutus Boetius cecinit: ‘Tunc me discussa liquerunt nocte tenebrae./ Luminibusque prior rediit vigor, etc.’” Gerson’s reception of Boethius will be explored more fully in the subsequent chapter.

[70] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 177. “Sentio me non sine causa contulisse sermonem super hac divisione spiritus et animae.”

[71] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 178. “...consonare.”

[72] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 178. “Quid si tertium exemplum junxerimus de aqua vasis vel fontis vel maris, quale posuit unus Patrum.”

uncertain, amid the beginning of the war waged in Latium to secure his divinely ordained claim to rule. Compare the two redactions, with Gerson's omissions from the Virgil underlined:

> (Virgil, *Aeneid* VIII, ln 20–25)
> <u>atque</u> animum <u>nunc</u> huc celerem nunc dividit illuc
> <u>in partisque rapit varias perque omnia versat</u>:
> sicut aquae tremulum labris ubi lumen aënis
> sole repercussum aut radiantis imagine lunae
> omnia pervolitat late loca, iamque sub auras
> erigitur summique ferit laquearia tecti.
>
> ([Virgil's redaction:] …and now this way, now that he swiftly throws his mind, casting it in diverse ways, and turning it to every shift; as when in bronze bowls a flickering light from water, flung back by the sun or the moon's glittering form, flits far and wide over all things, and now mounts high and smites the fretted ceiling of the roof high above.)[73]
>
> (Gerson, *Collectorium super Magnificat* I)
> Animum celerem huc, nunc dividit illuc
> [line omitted by Gerson]
> Sicut aquae tremulum labris ubi lumen ahenis
> Sole repercussum, aut radiantis imagine lunae.
> Omnia pervolitat late loca, jamque sub auras
> Erigitur, summique ferit laquearia tecti. [74]

Gerson here has textually divided up Virgil's text, blatantly excising words and (possibly) a full line.[75] His act of citation mirrors the same division undertaken by Aeneas to corral his racing thoughts. Specifically, Gerson has removed any context from his citation; the teacher uses the

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[73] Virgil, *2. Aeneid VII–XII, Appendix Vergiliana*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough and G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 60–63.

[74] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 178. Glorieux notes the citation of Virgil but does not comment on either the altered or the omitted line.

[75] While care must be taken in advancing any argument that is in principle *ex silentio*, given that we lack the Virgilian text as it was available to Gerson, the grating irregular metricality of Gerson's proferred first line signals that he wants his reader to know the text has been altered. Further, while the appearance of this couplet in Book IV (see below) has some detractors among the manuscript witnesses, lines 20–21 in Book VIII are preserved without contamination in the reception tradition. (Virgil, *Vergili Maronis Opera*, Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis, (Oxford: Oxonii E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1980), 185, 282.) It thus seems unlikely Gerson did not have line 21 in the Virgil he read; deliberate alteration for a literary purpose or simple misremembering (perhaps a mixed recollection with a contaminated form of Book IV lines 285–286?) are more plausible explanations.

image of the soul as reflections upon water, but divested of the martial politicking taking place in Latium. Gerson has discerned a lesson from the tumult of the text.

However, the first line quoted by Gerson is repeated (nearly verbatim) from earlier in the *Aeneid.* (The line omitted by Gerson also reoccurs at this juncture.) Here, Aeneas has just received a supernatural visitation from Hermes, who has chastised him for forsaking his divine mission to found Rome and instead getting a bit too comfortable at Dido's side in Carthage. The poet describes Aeneas nonplussed and anxious over whether and how to tell Dido:

> heu! quid agat? quo nunc reginam ambire furentem
> audeat adfatu? quae prima exordia sumat?
> utque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc
> in partisque rapit varias perque omnia versat,
> haec alternanti potior sententia visa est.
>
> (Ah, what to do? With what speech now dare he [Aeneas] approach the frenzied queen [Dido]? What opening words choose first? And as he casts his swift mind this way and that, takes it in different directions and considers every possibility, this, as he wavered, seemed the better counsel: [sc. to ready his crew in secret and ghost Dido].)[76]

Aeneas' speechlessness comports with his racing thoughts and loyalties divided between his lover and a fated divine mission. This dividing of his rational soul (*animum dividere*) serves to adjudicate among the various contraries and ferret out a solution, a course of action. The context too, in which Aeneas' divine mission is incompatible with his earthly love, is one of affective intensity. Nevertheless, in reaching a conclusion through this dialectic process of division, Aeneas reveals a certain scholastic bent.

The student steps in to interpret this Virgilian image of the light from a heavenly body striking agitated water in a vase so that its reflections dances about the vessel. The student cuts in quickly, describing how the light seen playing above the water in the vessel is the spirit, and the

[76] *Aeneid* IV, ln 283–287. Text and translation from: Virgil, *1. Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–IV*, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

lower, comparatively less vibrant water, is the soul. As he interprets it, the metaphor can be directly mapped onto a metaphysical distinction: "Surely that is the distinction between spirit and soul?"[77]

"I don't think so," comes the teacher's reply. He continues, "but rather it is a disposition toward it."[78] Here, at the final crescendo of the tractate, the master describes that separating spirit and soul is actually a practice, even a sort of spiritual exercise. One needs to through contemplation and reflection cultivate love and virtuous habits. In this way, one can then come to delight in and love higher things, rather than earthly things. "Thus, such a labor effects the division of the spirit from the soul."[79] The discussion of a static definitional separation, pursued by dialectic, has been brought around to an account of ongoing meditative spiritual practice, exemplified by the iterative performance of poetry.[80] Like a song, this division is something performed more than defined.

The teacher concludes this discourse with a scriptural citation from Hebrews: "The word of God is living and efficacious, piercing so far as to divide spirit and soul."[81] The scriptural text confirms this ongoing operation of dividing, with the active connotations of *vivus* and *efficax* and the continuing sense of the present participle *pertingens*. The verse becomes the capstone of the dialogue, marking the convergence of poetry, scholastic method, and affective contemplation.

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[77] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 178. “Nonne erat ista dispositio spiritus et animae?”

[78] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 178. “Non existimo, sed ad illam erat dispositio.”

[79] Gerson, *Super Magnificat*, 178. “Talis igitur operatio causat divisionem spiritus ab anima.”

[80] The idea of poetry being able to perform its own kind of dialectic (in the sense of resolving contraries, not that of Aristotelian demonstration) is not at all distinct to the Navarrists in the medieval period. See, for instance: Emily Kate Price, “Troubadours in Time: Remembering the Old Occitan Lyric in Catalonia,” *French Studies* 71, no. 4 (2017).

[81] Gerson, *CSM*, 179, “Vivus et efficax est sermo Dei, pertingens usque ad divisionem spiritus et animae.”

Moreover, it marks the one cultivating their own division of spirit and soul as taking part in the very same activity of scripture itself: a tradition of song stretching back through the scriptural text as a microcosm of the rational creation.

We can see here that the first tractate has proceeded from a poetic metaphor of scripture as a decachord lute playing a song to a careful discussion of the nature of song itself. This technical account continues into an analysis of spirit and soul, which in turn returns to a series of poetic metaphors that climax in the scriptural passage from Hebrews. Further, as the text unfolds, the conversation of the student and teacher performs both the consolation the decachord first played for—insofar as the separation of the spirit from the soul and worldly concerns offers peace—and then, retrospectively, enacts a division between spirit and soul by iteratively parsing out how to discern between the two (just like the Magnificat was purported to do). This is not a commentary on the first line of the Magnificat as much as an attempt to perform theology in the same mode as that line. That is to say, Gerson's text strives to downplay the distance between itself as hypertext and the biblical song as hypotext. Instead, Gerson presents his commentary as a taking back up of the same song in his own words. Gerson is more a poet than a glossator.

Scripture is being used not simply as content from which to derive theological doctrines, but as a practicable model for how to pursue affective formation by means of poetry or song. Further, Gerson conceives of his writing on the Magnificat not as a disconnected, discrete commentary or gloss on the text, but rather as itself performing another rendition of that same consoling song of praise. The reader becomes invited to join in with yet another repetition of seeking the division of soul and spirit, an activity that Gerson here suggests is quintessentially poetic and a practice of affective formation. This, I would suggest, may be described as a poetic theology. Space is made for dialectic and more traditional scholastic topics, but within the larger

framework of a consoling song sounding forth to the Divine. Indeed, as Gerson's commentary formally instantiates, the song (sc. the Magnificat) is both prior and subsequent to the master and student's dialectical examination of the matter at hand. Scholastic method, as typically understood, is not the architectonic epistemic frame, but one tool in the theologian's songbook.

4.3 Putting the Poetry in Poetic Theology

The opening strophes of Gerson's "Opus metricum super Magnificat" provide an instructive comparandum inasmuch as it provides a similar account of poetic theology but from a very different starting point. This poem, comprising twenty-five strophes totaling five-hundred lines (as well as a defective twenty-sixth strophe with eight lines), came to anchor a larger poetic compendium of Gerson's writings, almost certainly compiled by his brother Jean the Celestine.[82] The first strophe, fittingly beginning with "Magnificat anima mea te Dominum," adapts the trope of poetic invocation of the Muses. While "others record events with their pen, to remember the misery of their time," Gerson simply seeks wisdom instead.[83] Gerson does not ask for divine inspiration, but rather entrusts his writings—however much or little may be preserved—into the hands of God, echoing Christ's words of surrendering his own spirit to the Father at his crucifixion.[84] Gerson's poem *cum* soul, like a word on a wing, aims to help people "know themselves, inside and out" and, further, to direct them to the "dense…, self-referential" text of

[82] There is some evidence to suggest this larger compilation was envisioned by Gerson himself, though the extent to which he directed and arranged the process is difficult to determine. In this section we will limit our consideration to the twenty-five (or -six) strophes composed alongside the *Collectorium super Magnificat* in 1428.

[83] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 115, ln 9–10. "Gesta stylo memori miserandi temporis hujus/ Dent alii, nobis diva sophia placet."

[84] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 115, ln 13–14. "Me mea scripta tuis committo, Pater, manibus, fac/ Quantum quamve parum vis fieri maneant." Cf. Luke 23:46.

scripture.[85] Thus far, Gerson's poem largely recapitulates the first Tractate of the *Collectorium super Magnificat*. It uses its poetic form as a vehicle for iteratively cultivating self-knowledge and affective formation by rooting oneself into the larger arc of scriptural song.

The poem is structured as a back and forth, with one speaker, "the Aged" (*senex* and/or *senium*), responding to a series of critiques of poetry posed by an interlocutor. Its form, and some of its content, matches an earlier Gersonian verse in defense of poetry: "De laudibus elegie spiritualis."[86] This earlier work, composed over the course of 1422–1425, involves a similar pair of interlocutors who successively discuss traditional critiques of poetry, the poetic aims of classical and biblical texts, and then the marriage of *spiritus* and *anima* that the "spiritual elegy" of the poem aims toward.[87] The "Opus metricum" comports with this structure generally, but its conclusion homes in on the mind's striving to know God and—perhaps unexpectedly—ends with a description of a mind, in thrall to the passions, stumbling as if drunk with no hope of reaching God.[88]

Much of the second strophe meditates more directly on what poetry *per se* has to do with this process, mostly offering a negative perspective. Gerson cants:

> Cur speculativas claudo sub lege metrorum
> Materias, quaerit cor juvenile seni.
> Metrorum levitas an non minuit gravitatem
> Sensus, et proprium pondus habere vetat?
> Dedecet an senium ludus juvenilibus aptus
> Aetatem proprium quamque decet stadium

[85] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 115, ln 15–18. "Maxima pars monet et supponit noscere sese/ Viribus in propriis intus et exterius/ Se scripturarum manifestant dicta vicissim/ Crebro latent sola, perlege, se referant."

[86] A brief commentary, English translation, and critical edition of the poem may be found in: Roccati, "A Gersonian text in defense of poetry: "De laudibus elegie spiritualis" (ca. 1422–1425)."

[87] Roccati, "A Gersonian text in defense of poetry: "" De laudibus elegie spiritualis" (ca. 1422–1425)," 371–72.

[88] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat."

Grandior es, pudeant puerilia nunc lacrimarum
  Tempus, nunc lacrimis corda pianda piis.
Ludicra pone senex puer ut non sis maledictus
  Seria res agitur, mors volat ante fores.
Parce seni juvenis, paucis confuse resolve
  Mens gaudet numeris arctius arcta tenet.[89]

"Why cloister under meter's law speculative
  matters?" the young heart asks the Aged.
"Doesn't the lightness of meter temper the force
  of meaning and refuse to pull its own weight?
At the least, elders' playfulness—fit for youth—ill
  suits their age, which earnest study befits.
You're past that; playthings are shameful at this
  tearful time, time to cleanse hearts with pious tears.
Put aside games, foolish Aged, lest you be cursed.
  Grave times are afoot; death hovers at the door.
O Aged, quit immaturity; leave that mess for little ones.
  The mind rejoices in meter the more narrowly it keeps the beat."

The youthful heart, disdainful of the Aged's practice of poetry late in his life, founds his argument on the premise that certain seasons of life are more suited for different pursuits. More or less, fun and games are for youth and hard work for elders. Yet he reveals a few other suppositions: old age requires more pious activity given the proximity of death, and the constraints of metrical form are homologous to vacuity and a dearth of meaning.[90] Further, meter is associated with play unlike the mournful affects more suited to old age.

[89] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 116, ln 21–32. For more on the trope of "puer senex" or "senex puer" in Gerson, see: Roccati, "A Gersonian text in defense of poetry: "De laudibus elegie spiritualis" (ca. 1422–1425)," note 28. As Roccati notes, for more on this trope, see: Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1953), 98–101.

[90] Earl Jeffrey Richards gives a brief survey of this sort of criticism in the context of Christine de Pizan's shift from verse to prose amid the "'crisis' of medieval vernacular lyric." See: Earl Jeffrey Richards, *Christine de Pizan and Medieval French Lyric* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 2–4. Gerson's rejection of this line of attack, despite largely concurring with Christine's model of *poetrie*, is striking.

Accordingly, the response unfolded in the poem argues that verse can be a serious form of religious practice. The Aged sees the implicit parallel the critique poses between an ascent of activities over the course of life and spiritual ascent. However, he asks:

> Contemplativos ratio demonstrat amicos
> Esse Dei quibus et paucula sufficiunt.
> Signat amicitiam perquirere conditiones
> Dilecti de quo cogitat et loquitur
> Hoc contemplator praesertim theologizans
> Nonne docendo facit vel meditando silens?[91]
>
> Reason shows that contemplatives are friends
> of God for whom even trifles suffice.
> Friendship is shown by examining the status
> of the beloved about whom one thinks and speaks.
> The contemplative does this—especially when theologizing—
> surely when teaching or in silence when meditating?

Cutting to the heart of the matter, the Aged disputes a model of the contemplative life that lets it be cut off from helping others. It is not necessarily a life of erudition, as simple trifles are enough for true friends of God.[92]

The continuation of the poem enacts the theological potential of poetry described here. The text advances to treat the interrelationship of interior faculties: "Spirit and mind are essences. We arrange them as one soul within ourselves; we connect (*consociamus*) them."[93] These interconnections—which Gerson notes we ourselves effect—reveal Gerson's investment in the affective consequences of contingency. In one couplet, he says, "The spirit is ruler over all the powers of the soul. Such a thing happens (*contingit*) under the rule of reason."[94] Gerson here

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[91] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 117. ln 105–110.

[92] Earlier in the poem Gerson explicitly discusses the limitations of philosophy in trying to ascend to God and the superfluity of anything beyond faith, hope and love. See lines 81–100.

[93] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 120, ln 203–04. "Spiritus et mens sunt essentia ponimus unam/ In nobis animam, consociamus eis."

[94] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 121, ln 275–76. "Spiritus arbiter est vires animae super omnes/ Qualis contingit sub ratione regi."

follows common scholastic idiom, by using a clause introduced by *sub* to modify the scope of *contingit*, but the term foregrounds—based on its other ubiquitous meanings—notions of bordering, touching, and affecting. In this way, drawing on vocabularies common to both modal logic and Christian mysticism, Gerson multiplies (and repeats) verbs not just denoting interrelationship, but also connoting contact, throughout: impresses (*imprimo*), seals (*sigillo*) overtops (*superemineo*), inserts (*insinuo*), joins (*jungo*), binds together (*colligo*), and affects/pertains (*contingo*). Thus, the poem comes to argue that just as the contemplative may indeed reach heights in isolation but is still inextricably bound to the larger community of his fellow believers (e.g., in teaching), so too are even synderesis and the most preeminent powers of the soul implicated with the passions and phantasms of human life.

In a sort of corollary to the prose *Magnificat* commentary's strong call to divide soul from spirit through the affective discipline of poetic meter, the metrical *Magnificat* commentary at hand ends by considering the resolute inextricability of soul and spirit, at least left to the devices of human agency. Humans' "free will contingently acts outside itself, inserting itself in various ways."[95] While on one level this allows one to reach toward God, it flags a fundamental risk of free will: its inability to be contained. Our actions run beyond ourselves. Gerson writes, "Our mind does not know in advance what may happen (*contigerit*) to us, but one cannot doubt that God foresees [what will happen]."[96] God must be relied on for the clarity and discernment that our own muddled up internal selves lack. While a "clear vision teaches everyone in the

[95] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 125, ln 407–08. "Contingenter agit extra se prima voluntas/ Libera se variis insinuando modis."

[96] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 126, ln 449–50. "Quidquid contigerit nobis nec praescia mens est/ Praevidisse Deum non dubitare potest."

Word…, so many clouds cover up us damn wretches."[97] Indeed the poem's final lines end not with a triumphant breaching of those clouds, but with a vivid image of the passions leading even a pious person along:

> Passio judicium variat prout ebrietatem
> Non uno faciunt fumida vina modo
> Hic silet, hic loquitur, furit hic, ridet pius ille
> Hic vigil, hic stertit; fit ratione nihil.[98]
>
> Passion changes its judgment just like intoxication;
> Musky wines don't all act the same way.
> This one is quiet, this one talks, this one rages, that pious one laughs,
> This one is wakeful, this one snores; nothing happens with reason.

The pilgrim *in statu viae* is, quite metaphorically, a drunk stumbling in an alleyway. The constraints of meter no longer seem puerile, but offer the promise of checks on the ever-lurking, intoxicating passions.

Scripture is a sword to divide soul and spirit, to attain to God. But it is poetry that allows one to not only encounter God's word, but also work to order (however contingently) one's internal affections—in contrast to the freewheeling curiosity of vicious academic speculation. Gerson's twin works on the *Magnificat* thus cooperate to use biblical citation, poetic innovation, and affective discipline so that the reader is primed to go under the knife, so to speak, and undertake their own poetic practice.

4.4 The Reaping of Medieval Theology: Gerson on the *Song*

A further development of Gerson's thinking on poetry as theological method may be found in his commentary on the *Song of Songs*, written up until his death in 1429, wherein we find a consonant vision of both theology and poetry. Gerson wrote his *Super Cantica*

[97] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 126, ln 461–62. "Omnes namque docet in Verbo visio clara;/ At nos vae miseros nubilia tanta tegunt."

[98] Gerson, "Opus metricum super Magnificat," 127, ln 505–08.

Canticorum in Lyon, with an apparent degree of self-awareness of it as a final published word on his part.[99] It proves an apt bookend to d'Ailly's own *Expositio*.

Gerson, at the outset, provides a programmatic overview of the sort of love he will be talking about while reading the *Song*—an opening miles apart from that of d'Ailly's conventionally structured *Expositio*. I quote at length:

> I am… only holding my gaze to the love of God, such as Peter did when he said, "I love you."[100] Moreover our love for God is triple in kind (just as was said before). And the three letters of this word, "love" (A-M-O), signify in mystery: A the beginning, M the middle, and O the end. From this habitual, triple love—or, should I say, preeminent triple life—results an act of love, perfect, meritorious, and pleasing to God. And the *Song of Songs* is principally about this alone, through anagogy.[101]

The "this" (*quo*) bears an artfully ambiguous referent. "God" is an obvious proximate antecedent, but parallelism with the earlier *quo* in the passage suggests "love" (or the "act of love"). The three-lettered *amo* evokes trinitarian theology as well as procession and return from God, beginning and end, recapitulated in the love that begets acts of love for God, who is love. Thus, Gerson, with considerable rhetorical flourish, concisely establishes his commentary's prime thematic: love is unity amid plurality and, accordingly, is God.

The structure of his commentary aims to body forth this central thesis. Accordingly, it is divided into three parts. The first consists of a series of theses on what love is. Gerson plays up

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[99] Gerson tells the Carthusians, to whom the work is addressed, that it is a product of "vacua senectus mea," which he has put off until his other affairs are in order. Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 565.

[100] Cf. John 21:16.

[101] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 566. "Dimisso iterum sermone de amore pure naturali, vegetativo et animali, et habito tantummodo respectu ad amorem Dei sicut habuit Petrus dicens: amo te, est autem amor noster ad Deum triplex in genere prout statim dictum est; et hujus verbi AMO tres litterae signant in aenigmate: A principium, M medium, O finis. Ex quo triplici amore habituali tamquam triplici vita prima, resultat actus amoris perfectus et meritorius fruitivus Dei de quo solo principaliter Cantica Canticorum sunt per anagogiam." Consider how A and O here seem to stand in for the alpha and omega of Apocalypse 22:13.

the scholastic language when he describes it as, "propositions about the quiddity of love in its species."[102] The second section will offer, Gerson claims, fifty considerations about the burning character of love, signifying both the fiery ardor of the seraphim and the fifty days of Pentecost marked by the tongues of fire.[103] In practice, this second section gives ten couplets, composed by Gerson, that serve as a mnemonic précis of the entire *Song*. Then, Gerson discourses at length about each of these couplets—a commentary once removed from the biblical text itself—and in the process enumerates fifty properties of love, each of which Gerson ties to a moment in the scriptural narrative.[104] The third, incomplete part of the commentary will stand as a capstone atop the prior two, like the golden apex of a pyramid unifying all the trajectories below it into the singular phrase, "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth."[105]

After his bold introduction, Gerson dives directly into the scholastic theses on love. Here, Gerson uses the most technical language of a University theologian to closely parse a series of definitional statements on love, with particular attention to how it relates to the Deity. He begins with five theses on the first form of love: free, or unconditional, love. This unconditional love is

[102] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 566. "…praemittet aliquas considerationes de quidditate amoris in speciebus suis, et hoc pro prima partitione."

[103] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 566. "Proinde secunda partitio continebit considerationes quinquaginta secundum totidem dies jubiliei Pentecostes quando Spiritus Sanctus his diebus in linguis ligneis apparens mentes carnalium in sui amorem, ait Gregorius commutavit. Amor siquidem ignis est, unde nominatur seraphicus, quod ardorem significat, et quinaquaginta proprietates suas quasi totidem linguas igneas quibus eloquitur et se aperit, dispertitas ostendemus."

[104] E.g., the first three of the fifty properties are: "Oscula poscit amor," 579 (cf. 1:1 "Osculetur me osculo ore sui"); "Amor delectat," 581 (cf. 1:1 "quia melior sunt ubera tu vino"), "Amor lenit," 584 (cf. 1:2 "Oleum effusum nomen tuum"). Gerson, *Super Cantica*.

[105] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 566. "Tandem partitio tertia consummabit velut in cuspide pyramidis flameae, universum amoris sermonem ad primam et unicam proprietatem super illud: osculetur me osculo oris sui, se reflectens."

"created alongside us."[106] Its cocreation with humanity, Gerson posits, is within the image of God. It is "fundamental to every other mental affect."[107] Interestingly, Gerson maintains that this unconditional love is also free in that it is not prompted by a logical cause; it does not depend upon our thinking or even, per Aristotle, our exercise of the rational will.[108] Unconditional love delights in God.[109]

Gerson gives similar accounts of the other forms of love: willful love, voluntary love, and assembled love.[110] Indeed, the first three forms of love become—even for the well-honed razor of scholastic jargon—nearly inextricable from each other, labeled as they are with overlapping near synonyms: *liber*, *arbitrarius*, and *gratuitus*. Gerson plots these three along a succession, so that *amor liber* is the inborn orientation toward God, *amor arbitrarius* is the love cultivated by the human will for good or ill in this life, and *amor gratuitus* is the love infused by divine grace. When these three overlapping forms of love cohere, the fourth form, *amor collectus* is apparent. The three letters of *amo* and Peter's triple repetition of "I love you" to Christ both instantiate this assembled form of love, which mostly accurately captures what is meant by "love of God."[111]

Artfully utilizing scholastic precision in this first section, Gerson provides a practical demonstration of how such discourse strains to give a full account of love. The neatly divided

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[106] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 566. "Consideratio prima: de primo amore libero nobis concreato."

[107] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 567. "Consideratio secunda. Amor ille Dei liber fundamentalis est ad omnem affectionem alteram intellectualem."

[108] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 567. "Amor iste Dei liber non habet actum secundum qui sequitur cogitationem et consilium… Amor iste Dei liber et impressus, non causatur in voluntate rationali vel intellective ex amicabilibus quae sunt ad se; sicut dicere videtur Aristoteles et auctor De Causis, sed e contra amicabilia ad se oriuntur ex isto amore ad Deum."

[109] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 568.

[110] Gerson, *Super Cantica*. "Amor arbitrarius," 568; "amore gratuito," 570; "amore collecto," 572.

[111] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 572.

quintets of propositions on love belie the amount of overlap in what they say. Thus, it is not surprising that in the concluding theses concerning assembled love, Gerson begins to describe how to enact this true love of God. In this regard, he endorses "Mary, Solomon, and the *Song of Songs*"—two biblical poets and a love song unifying two diverse voices.[112] It can also be construed as the love flowing out of the perfect union of anagogy and tropology; Gerson suggests the *Song* and the final chapter of *Proverbs* should be read as companion pieces in this way.[113]

The second portion of the commentary has its own implicit and even its own *prohemium*. It begins, fittingly with, "I love you."[114] Instead of logic-chopping, Gerson here considers the different types of imagery and figuration contained within the *Song.* Riffing on Pseudo-Dionysius, Gerson argues that just as pure light requires color to be perceived, so pure love must be cast as nuptial imagery to be apprehended by the human mind.[115] Images, mixing various forms of signification, can thus be followed along to reach higher truths. The faithful reader, through "the work of true prayer," can "compress" (*coarcto*, a common term too for rendering words in meter) the text toward the anagogical sense.[116] The second portion of this commentary

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[112] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 572. "De quo triplici actu amoris simul conjuncti amorissimae feminarum Mariae, Salomonem, Cantica Canticorum."

[113] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 572–73. "…nominatim de duplici modo desponsationis anagogicae et moralis seu tropologicae. Prima desponsatio cantatur per epithalamium Cantici Canticorum; altera per epithalamium capitula ultimi Proverbiorum, cujus initium est: mulierem fortem quis inveniet… Constituuntur in alia desponsatione spiritus Deiformis et Sapientia tamquam sponsus et sponsa magis per tropologiam et allegoriam, tamquam in vita active quam per anagogiam in vita contemplativa."

[114] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 576. "Secunda partitio. Et primo prohemium./ Amo te."

[115] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 576. "…impossibile nobis relucere divinum radium nisi sacris et archetypicis exemplaribus vel symbolis circumvelatum, quemadmodum pura lux materialis sine coloris admixtione non videtur. Propterea compositus est liber Canticorum sub tropis et similitudinibus ad hujus fruitive amoris exercitium sub typo nuptiarum."

[116] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 577. "Placuit igitur, duce Spiritu Sancto, verarum ope precum coarctare sermonem et aptare principaliter ad sensum anagogicum de amore sponsae."

will dwell on the scriptural images then to effect the reader's movement toward divine love, an explicit departure from the "more scholastic than rhetorical" propositions of the first part.[117]

The introduction concluded, Gerson gives "ten elegiac verses" that summarize the biblical text—a task that Gerson says relies on both the leisure of old age and the recollection of youth's study.[118] Looking at one of these verses illustrates Gerson's method at work:

> Oscula poscit amor, delectat, lenit, et ardet
> Ingreditur cellas, pulcher et ipse niger[119]
>
> Love begs for kisses; it delights, softens, and burns.
> It enters storerooms, itself beautiful and dark.

The highly demanding elegiac form, wherein each couplet combines an epic line of dactylic hexameter with a line of dactylic pentameter with precisely dictated quantities for all its later feet (in contrast to the relative flexibility of all but the ultimate dactyl in epic), both heightens its mnemonic potential and displays Gerson's technical ambition. Yet, densely packed into this single verse, Gerson alludes directly to six separate images of love in the biblical text.[120] Each of these images then is the object of sustained attention as Gerson enumerates fifty properties of love over the course of this part of the commentary. The readings of the images themselves are

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[117] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 577. "Hic enim modus tractandi proximior est scholastico quam rhetorico stylo, quali hactenus utique studuimus, permixtione quadam facta."

[118] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 577. "…decadem versuum elegiacorum in qualibus nunc oblectat se otiose senectus mea, studii memor puerilis."

[119] Gerson, *Super Cantica,* 577.

[120] Gerson makes the allusions explicit later in the course of explicating the images. "Oscula poscit amor," cf. 1:1, "Osculetur me osculo oris sui;" "delectat," c.f. 1:1, "quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino;" "lenit," cf. 1:2, "Oleum effusum nomen tuum;" "ardet," cf. 1:3, "Trahe me, post te curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum;" "ingreditur cellas," cf. 1:3, "Introduxit me rex in cellaria sua;" "pulcher et ipse niger," cf. 1:4, "Nigra sum, sed Formosa." Given that the first tenth of his poem only covers four verses of the *Song*, Gerson may be accused, like Bernard, of dilating too long at the beginning.

not remarkable, largely recapitulating well-trod tropes of Christian anagogy, but his inventorying of them is noteworthy for how it calls attention to its own highly wrought interpretive procedure.

The form of this second section becomes particularly illuminating for discerning how Gerson understands poetic theology. Functionally, Gerson gives an extensive commentary on his own versified précis of the biblical text. This approach serves to telescope out the biblical text through a series of reiterations (scholastic theses on love, a poetic summary, a gloss on the summary), each of which is given as commenting on scripture. Over the course of the text, through these successive displacements, the reader gains an extensive world of images and associations in which to think on the mystery of divine love. In sum, Gerson's *Song* commentary functions as a prosthesis to the biblical text itself, expanding the terrain in which the reader may practice creative, dynamic, non-linear interpretation through a semiotics of displacement.[121]

As a result, the apparent aim of this text is for the reader themself to become ingrafted into biblical song itself, inhabiting its poetry and effecting a formation of their affective faculties to be ever more aligned with love. As we noted above, the notion of even human-to-human connection through divine love was invoked in the introduction to the *Song* commentary, where Gerson lauded the affective bonds tying him to the Carthusian brothers in Lyon. Further, the commentary promises that the accumulation of these bonds of love grounds the possibility of reaching still higher knowledge as one's soul and spirit are ever more attuned to the affective form of love. In particular, Gerson had noted that the third portion of the commentary would build atop the prior two, like the capstone of a pyramid, and draw both the scholastic and rhetorical portions together into a higher form of reflection on divine love in the *Song.*

[121] Semiotics of displacement were defined and analyzed in Chapter Two, "The Exegete as Semionaut," pp. 79 & 98.

Gerson died before any such promise was delivered on—as the appended explicit by his brother and secretary, Jean the Celestine, clarifies at the end of the text.[122] Thus, the ambition of the work finds itself subverted at the end. Higher, mystical knowledge of love remains elusive, and the shadow of death looms large and threatening. Nevertheless, Jean gives the text his own brief sendoff, addressed to his departed brother: "Farewell, my lord and brother, and do not stop piously interceding before the Lord for your solitary Celestine brother, formerly dear to you, now left in the mire."[123] This poignant valediction calls attention to potential hurdles facing a poetic theology: its iterative nature seems to preclude the possibility of a conclusive, final meaning, and calls for affective formation must grapple with the ubiquitous reality of hardship, trauma, and pain that unflinchingly steal into even the most privileged cloister. It is with these concerns, with how poetic theology may be understood as a form of lament, that the final chapter will deal.

[122] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 639. "Complevit iste doctor elevatus hoc opus egregium super Cantica Canticorum apud Lugdunum Galliae, anno Domini 1429, die sabbati 9 mensis julii."

[123] Gerson, *Super Cantica*, 639. "Vale mi domine et frater, et unici tui germani Coelestini quondam tibi cari in hoc coeno relicti, curam apud Dominum piam agere non desiste."

CHAPTER FIVE

The Wayfarer as Lost

Never lament casually.
—Leonard Cohen[1]

This project has been concerned with how language may, and frequently does, fail. For the Navarrists, language's contingency, coupled with its tendency to variably displace and defer meaning, dictates the ubiquitous possibility of uncertainty. Failing to recognize these inherent limits of language constitutes *language failure*: reifications of meanings that are not warranted from language or that contradict prior beliefs (primarily the tenets of the Church, in the case of the Navarrists). In the previous chapter, however, we surveyed—a survey deferred throughout Part I—the substance of the Navarrists' claim that theologians should look to poetry as *the* privileged method for pursuing their vocation, because it mitigates the specter of language failure. In particular we saw that, for the Navarrists, the diversity and mutability of human emotions is congruent to the expressive range of poetry; poetry is suited to give voice to even moments of longing, heartbreak, and grief. In this final chapter, we turn our sights beyond an individual's emotion, figured as internal, to consider other facets of affect, defined here as a degree of autonomy from the will and ratiocination, irreducible to any individual subject. The Navarrists also use poetry (be it in meter, prosimetrum, or even highly stylized prose) to confront moments of failure that seem to bleed beyond the boundaries of the self. The Navarrists, in so

[1] Speech to the Fundación Principe de Asturias on the occasion of his acceptance of the Prince of Asturias Award for Poetry. 21 October, 2011.

doing, construe a phenomenology of melancholy and, in concert with that, advance a critique of any notion of an atomistic, discrete self.

The primary texts grounding the argument are first a set of lamentations over early-fifteenth-century crises: the *Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae* of de Clamanges, written in response to the competing papal claimants of Avignon and Rome in 1407, and two *Deplorationes* (*studii parisiensis* and *super civitatem*) by Gerson, both in response to the 1418 Paris massacres. The chapter then concludes with a sustained reading of Gerson's cryptic prosimetrum, *De consolatione theologiae*, also written in the aftermath of 1418's violence. In all of these instances, the text's genre suggests that it is a form of lament. The three *deplorationes*, despite occasional gestures toward hope, subvert any clear consolation offered as human limits and failures are foregrounded. In Gerson's larger *De consolatione* too we find that hope is at a premium, even in a text generically oriented toward offering consolation amid despair. However, the Navarrists take this pessimism as an opportunity to move beyond the self: the very pain that affects communities counterintuitively marks them as sites of solidarity. For Gerson especially, it is human finitude that potentially forces the individual beyond themself; this is the species of consolation available *in statu viae*.

5.1 Navarrist Deplorations

De Clamanges' *Deploratio* comprises 129 lines in dactylic hexameter, opening with an invocation of Christ's mercy and continuing to an appeal for bilateral papal action to resolve the Schism. Likely composed in 1408, in response to a failed rapprochement between Benedict XIII and Gregory XII that January, it does not seem to have circulated far beyond de Clamanges' own

circle.[2] Three elements of the poem will be examined here: its use of classical allusion, its generic form, and its concluding call for action.

Unsurprisingly for an author deeply enmeshed in the Collège de Navarre and the humanism *au courant* in the French literary scene, de Clamanges has packed his poem with classical references. Some are rather expected for a schism with competing heads: "There was no poison to be found more lethal than this terrifying monster, this dire hydra of Schism;" "Here the monstrous Charybdis and hostile Scylla call and respond with canid barking."[3] Other references are more systematically embedded in the poem, deeper than a baroque veneer. The first third of the poem builds a contrast between the Church and a diabolic other: the fury Alecto. The latter has now grown bold enough to burst forth from the lower regions bearing their noxious fumes and fiery afflictions to the earth itself. Both the Church and Alecto are feminine nouns, and de Clamanges artfully demonstrates the confusion of the two wrought in the Schism by ambiguously using the same pronouns for each interchangeably.

> Sustulit haec nobis que munera cara dedisti,
> She [*haec*, Alecto] has carried off the dear gifts you gave us,[4]
>
> …tamen Ecclesiam magis illa fatigat.
> …Moreover she [*illa*, Alecto] especially torments the Church.[5]
>
> Illam dissidiis majoribus, atterit intus
> Viribus externis oppugnat acerbius illam,
> From within, she [Alecto] weakens her [*illa*, the Church] with greater discords,
> With external forces she assaults her [*illa*] more bitterly.[6]

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[2] For the (scant) historical background, manuscript record, and a critical text, see: Alfred Coville, *Recherches sur quelques écrivains du XIVe et du XVe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1935), 260–64.

[3] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae." "Hoc monstro horrifico diraque hac Schismatis ydra/ Non capitale magis fuit inventura venenum," ln 51-52; "…hinc vasta Charibdis/ Scillaque latratu resonans infesta canino," ln 97-98.

[4] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," ln 11.

[5] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," ln 26.

[6] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," ln 28–29.

Omnis in hanc insurgit, eam delere laborat,
Everyone rises up against her [*haec*, the Church], everyone labors to abolish her [*ea*, the Church].[7]

The *Deploratio*'s literary form thus aims to textually reinstantiate the historical confusion of the Schism; the grammatical confusion is a microcosm of the Schism itself. In sum, de Clamanges is drawing on stylistic expertise and classical reference to fashion a response to the Schism that deploys its own literary character to provide comment.

This same intentionality appears in de Clamanges' engagement with generic precedents. Generically, the poem sits in the somewhat amorphous category denoted by the synonymous *deploratio* and *lamentatio* (cf. Old French *déploration*). Mussato, the Paduan humanist, identified this within the genus tragedy. [8] (De Clamanges' correspondence with and self-modeling after Italian humanists is well documented.) [9] Cited in the same text, Boethius provides an authoritative definition of tragedy, identifying it with mourning the blows of "subversive fortune." [10] The medieval Latin and vernacular tradition, in a parallel manner, marked elegy as the overarching genus for a *deploratio.* [11] Although in Occitan it developed into a unique genre

[7] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," ln 30.

[8] Albertino Mussato, "Evidentia tragediarum Senece tradita magistro Marsilio philosopho paduano ab Albertino Musato paduano poeta," in *Scritti Storici in Memoria di Giovanni Monticolo a cura di C. Cipolla, R. Sabbadini, P.S. Leicht ed altri,* ed. Francesco Novati (Venice: Premiate Officine Grafiche Carlo Ferrari, 1922), 188. "quarum [tragediarum] communior est deploratio, seu lamentatio."

[9] See the two monographs of Dario Cecchetti: *Petrarca, Pietramala e Clamanges: Storia di una «querelle» inventata* (Paris: Editions CEMI, 1982); *L'evoluzione del Latino Umanistico in Francia*, Rubricae: histoire du livre et des textes, (Paris: Editions CEMI, 1986).

[10] Mussato, "Evidentia tragediarum Senece tradita magistro Marsilio philosopho paduano ab Albertino Musato paduano poeta," 188. He cites Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae* Book II, prose 2: "quid tragoediarum clamor aliud deflet nisi indiscreto ictu fortunam felicia regna vertentem."

[11] Claude Thiry, *La plainte funèbre*, Typologie des source du Moyen Age occidental, (1978), 29.

with its own metrical rules, the *deploratio* typically was not marked by a precise form.[12] Rather, "ils n'en apparaissent pas moins comme une classe distincte de poèmes, dont l'existence a parfois été perçue de manière assez nette, et dont le style, la substance et les buts ont fait l'objet de commentaires spécifiques."[13] The consensus among the medieval literary world held that the *deploratio* stood as a didactic response to the sufferings from, and threat of, death (as opposed to lamentations for unrequited love, poverty, etc.).[14] And yet, the formal indeterminacy of the genre suggests an ambivalence about how one goes about responding at all to the specter of profound suffering.

Nevertheless, the genre *deploratio* closely allies itself (as Mussato had also perceived) to that of the *consolatio*; it raises the question of if there is comfort to be found in the face of death. This comfort, for de Clamanges, is theoretically within the dual popes' reach. "That task—itself light and easy—calls both together,/ Quiet repose and a shining office in its hands." [15] The task is, essentially, for the two popes to do something, anything, to address the schism. De Clamanges, invoking the Lord's bidding, concludes with a tricolon of calls for action for the two pilots of Peter's ship: [16] "Surpass the dark tides," "Extend help to [one's fellow] man," and "Drive off this sloth!"[17] Evincing a soft conciliarism, de Clamanges uses this text to advocate for personal reconciliation between the popes to resolve the Schism, without the need to sort out the dubious canon-legal status of deposition or the like.

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[12] Thiry, *La plainte funèbre*, 28–29.
[13] Thiry, *La plainte funèbre*, 36.
[14] Thiry, *La plainte funèbre*, 32–34.
[15] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," ln 124–25. "Una omnis labor iste vocat, brevis ipse levisque,/ In manibus tranquilla quies, statioque serena."
[16] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," "Viribus anniti summis iubet," ln 116; "Vos ergo in Petri cymba," ln 126.
[17] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," "Exuperate atros fluctus," ln 117; "Auxilium praebete viro," ln 122; "Somnum/ Pellite," ln 127-128.

This call for action marks a moment of generic novelty in the poem; de Clamanges' *deploratio* also acts as a *declamatio*. The latter was a popular form in late-medieval Europe, following the recovery and circulation of the Pseudo-Quintilianic declamations in Paris and Italy in the late-fourteenth century.[18] The declamation, drawn out of forensic debate, sought to resolve contradictories by a call for the restoration of justice.[19] Thus, de Clamanges has artfully played with generic conventions to bewail the troubles facing the Church and lay out the need for consolation (as a *deploratio*), but proceeds to identify this with a moral imperative seeking resolution of the dispute (as a *declamatio*). Despite a real and even hyperbolic awareness of the dangers—literal and figural—presented by the Schism, de Clamanges still outlines a possible hope for resolution within the form of his poem. De Clamanges inflects *consolatio* as the hope for decisive action that will resolve the crisis of the Schism, even against all the odds.

And yet the call for action is grimly ironic. First, recall the *Deploratio* was composed after a failed rapprochement between competing papal claimants. Urging them to resolve their differences rings hollow after they had recently called of their meeting due to a mutual lack of trust. Further, the call for action is outside of de Clamanges' own sphere of agency; he himself cannot enact the papal reconciliation. (In this way, the *Deploratio* also plays off of much of de Clamanges' other work that privileges personal, moral renewal as an avenue toward societal reform.)[20] Further, assertions of confidence in divine intervention are absent. Christ is mentioned only in an opening apostrophe, a description of the fields sown by Christ being ransacked, a grim warning that a kingdom divided will see ruin, and a cry for help that simply relapses into more

[18] Neil W. Bergstein, *Ethics, Identity, and Community in Later Roman Declamation* (New York: Oxford Unviersity Press, 2013), 151–52.

[19] Bergstein, *Ethics, Identity, and Community in Later Roman Declamation*, 5.

[20] Bellitto, *Nicolas de Clamanges: Spirituality, Personal Reform, and Pastoral Renewal on the Eve of the Reformations*.

lamentation.[21] The text becomes, in this context, de Clamanges' best effort at reform, but it calls attention pointedly to its own shortcomings. It calls for discernment, yet syntactically muddies the waters with repeated use of ambiguous pronouns. It places hope in actors who are known to have recently failed to act. It evokes the language of forensic deliberation, but then gives the devil a seat at the table. At every turn, the composition emphasizes how its lament withholds consolation.

Gerson likewise is no optimist. His own excursions into the genre of *deploratio* occur about a decade later, after the failure of Pisa to end the Schism and the failure of Constance to address a series of problems that Gerson saw as underlying the ecclesiastic chaos. Though a love of innovative style and a certain prurience for graphic images unites his work to that of de Clamanges, Gerson's poetry comports with de Clamanges' presentation of the text as emblematic of its own failure and, simultaneously, the sole avenue available in the face of crisis.

The immediate context to both Gersonian *Deplorationes* is the 1418 Paris massacres, perpetrated by (largely pro-Burgundian) residents after a failed attempt by the Armagnacs to secure the city.[22] Three to four thousand rose up, especially craftsmen and those from lower social strata, on two separate occasions. They brutally massacred victims throughout the city, the total death toll likely around 2,500.[23] The primary targets of violence were the city's prisons—all

[21] de Clamanges, "Deploratio calamitatis Ecclesiasticae," "Christe, graves sponsae, semper miserate labores," ln 1; "Nocte videt mentes, somni expers exit in agrum,/ Semine triticeo sparsum te Christe satore," ln 38–39; "Tu CHRISTE, ore sacro, qui numquam falleris, inquis:/ Omne in se sectum regnum spectare ruinam," ln 62–63; "Quare age Christo pio iam respice lumine maestam,/ Erige deiectam, sana aegram, protege lapsam,/ Languentem refove, fer opem auxiliantis egenti," ln 90–92.

[22] An excellent historical survey of the violence is found in: Michael Sizer, "The Calamity of Violence: Reading the Paris Massacres of 1418," *Proceedings of the Western Society of French History* 35 (2007).

[23] Sizer, "The Calamity of Violence: Reading the Paris Massacres of 1418," 29.

incarcerated people in the city were executed indiscriminately—, bankers, upper bourgeoisie suspected of Armagnac sympathies, and academics linked to the dauphinist Collège de Navarre. In a gesture that horrified many observers, the mutilated bodies of the killed were left in the streets. When the Burgundian occupiers finally quelled the violence with their own, they suspended free assembly (including at the colleges). Gerson lost many friends in the massacres.

The poetic *Deploratio studii parisiensis* primarily addresses the violence suffered by the University during the massacres and the resultant cessation of its activities. The poem immediately calls attention to its literary form through its overt choice of a complex, demanding meter: the Sapphic strophe. Comprising nineteen strophes, the unusual metrical choice recalls Horace, some of whose *Odes* are the prime Roman examples of the meter. Gerson's familiarity with Horace is apparent throughout his corpus. (Ouy identifies at least nine citations in the *Deploratio super civitatem*.)[24] Further, the use of Sapphic strophes recalls the biblical *Lamentations*, alleged by a number of medieval sources to largely appear in this meter in the original Hebrew.[25] In particular, the *Deploratio studii parisiensis* draws on biblical lament to cast a grim, ironic reimagining of Horace's *Odes* 1.12, itself a celebration of Jupiter's transcendent dominion over natural and political order.

Horace's poem opens with an appeal to the Muse to inspire a hymn to the loftiest god, a hymn that will sound forth across nature:

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[24] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 274, note 44.

[25] Cornelia Linde, "John Pecham on the Form of *Lamentations*," in *Form and Function in the Late Medieval Bible*, ed. Eyal Poleg and Laura Light (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 155–56. Linde suggests the root of this tradition is Jerome, *Epistulae*, 1:245 (Ep. 30): "Habes et in Lamentationibus Hieremiae quattuor alfabeta, e quibus duo prima quasi Saffico metro scripta sunt, quia tres versiculos, qui sibi conexi sunt et ab una tantum littera incipiunt, heroici comma concludit; tertium vero alfabetum trimetro scriptum est et a ternis litteris, sed eisdem, terni versus incipiunt; quartum alfabetum simile est primo et secundo."

Quem virem aut heroa lyra vel acri	Whom do you choose to celebrate, O Clio?
tibia sumis celebrare, Clio?	Is it a man? or hero half-divine?
quem deum? cuius recinet iocosa	
nomen imago	Is it a god? Whose name will Echo echo
	Playfully? Upon what mountainside?
aut in umbrosis Heliconis oris	From Helicon's shadows or from the heights
aut super Pindo gelidove in Haemo	of Pindus?
unde vocalem temere insecutae	Or is it cold Mount Haemus whence the
Orphea silvae	trees
	In rapt confusion followed after the voice
	Of Orpheus singing as his mother taught him--[26]

The reference to Helicon, a sacred mountain of the muses, has a rich set of meanings around poetic inspiration. Not simply the preferred haunt of the muses—who themselves inspire poets—the mountain was also the source of a stream that miraculously appeared after Pegasus alighted from its craggy summit, according to Ovid.[27] Thus, the sudden inspiration of poetry, like the nourishing spring from the rock, is linked to ascent: that of Pegasus' flight, the actual height of the mountain, and Horace's crescendo of *vir*, *heroa*, and *deus*. The mountain further allows for an echo (cf. *recinet*), which permits nature to join in the playful lyric. The tight metrical form mirrors the harmonious ordering of the creative world to which the poet is witness.

But water does not always come forth from the rock. Drawing on the same images, Gerson's piece opens with a decidedly darker tenor:

Angeli pacis gemitus amaros	Should they fall to you, craft the mournful sighs
Si cadunt in vos facitote toto	of the angel of peace, with an utter
Mentis enisu reboate coeli	ascent of the mind. O heavens, echo back,
Pallada flete	"Weep for Pallas!"
Palladis templum domus arx, asylum.	The temple of Pallas—home, castle, refuge.
Gaudium vestrum decor omnis orbis	Your delight and the jewel of the whole earth
Corruerunt a scelerum ministris	have tumbled down due to villainous accomplices.

[26] The Latin text and translations of Horace are drawn from: Horace, *The Odes of Horace*, trans. David Ferry (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1997), 34–35.

[27] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.250-268.

Pallada flete	Weep for Pallas!
Ecce fons rivis Helycon cruentis	Lo! Helicon, the spring of gory streams,
Manat, hinc sacrae fugiunt volatu	gushes. Hence flee in augurous flight
Praepeti Musae resonantque tristes	the holy Muses; dejected they call back,
Pallada flete[28]	"Weep for Pallas!"

The Horatian crescendo is replaced by a sinusoidal series of contrasts: the angel weeps, the language of falling is paired with the ascent of the mind, Athena's high castle is cast down, and the last flight of the Muses causes a downhill torrent of gore. Instead of a celebratory song, Gerson offers laments, and the only musical accompaniment suggested is a beating of the chest.[29] As Athena's seat—unambiguously the University of Paris, which bore her as an emblem—has crumbled, poetry itself is transmuted into a new register. The peace of Rome lauded by Horace has crumbled into a second fall of Troy: "The Trojans flee. The bust of Pallas has been/ dragged off. The watchman hands himself over to ruin."[30]

Instead of harmonious order, Gerson layers images of the social order's inversion and breakdown. The once-renowned University is now pitied and given over to insanity rather than learning: "...O storied college,/ having no equal, but now consecrated to raving."[31] The ecclesial hierarchy, once stretching to Christ, has toppled over and thus destabilized the world, depending especially on wordplay with *cardinales* evoking both an ecclesial office and an axial support of

[28] Gerson, "Deploratio studii," ln 1–12. Gerson's negative view of Helicon plays off of not only Horace, but also Jean de Hauteville's poetic masterpiece. See: *Architrenius,* ed. and trans. Winthrop Wetherbee, Cambridge Medieval Classics, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8.1, page 198.

[29] Gerson, "Deploratio studii," ln 14. "Lugeas pectus feriens et hortans."

[30] Gerson, "Deploratio studii," ln 61–62. "Palladis Troiae referunt imago /Custos ablata sibi dat ruinam."

[31] Gerson, "Deploratio studii," ln 20–21. "Te quis o te collegium celebre / Par habens nullum phrenesi sacratum."

the world.[32] In the last strophe before the conclusion, Gerson graphically imagines the overturned social order:

Invicem foedus sociale servant	Together, cleric and soldier preserve the social compact—
Clerus et miles patiente clero	as long as the cleric is taking it as the bottom.
Nobiles vestro statui caventes	Nobles, you should fear for your own position.
Pallada flete[33]	Weep for Pallas!

The doublespeak carries on from before, but here the doubled meanings vividly depict a harmonious relationship replaced by anal rape.[34] Horace's ordered cosmos is replaced by a scene that, to Gerson at least, is profoundly unnatural even beyond its despicable violence. In particular, the poem's equivocation of terms undercuts the very idea that everything has a proper, stable place.

Only furthering the contrast, Horace concludes his ode to Jupiter by asking his blessing upon Caesar:

Gentis humanae pater atque custos,	Far brighter than the light of other lights.
orte Saturno, tibi cura magni	O son of Saturn, Father Jupiter,
Caesaris fatis data: tu secundo	
Caesare regnes.	Guardian as you are of all things human,
	May Caesar reign, your second, guarded by you,
Ille seu Parthos Latio imminentis	And guardian in his turn may Caesar guard
egerit iusto domitos triumpho,	His Romans from all their foes, whether they be
sive subiectos Orientis orae	
Seras et Indos,	The Parthians menacing Latium, the Indians, or,

[32] Gerson, "Deploratio studii," ln 45–48. "Papa qui Christi vice summus uti/Gratularis, vos pariterque mundi/Cardines, fidei cecidit columna/ Pallada flete."

[33] Gerson, "Deploratio studii," ln 65–68.

[34] I am grateful to David Wray for first alerting me to potential euphemisms here. At least five terms in this strophe bear both a general meaning and a more specifically sexual valence. *Foedus* is both a noun for a pact and an adjective meaning disgraceful, base. *Socialis* can refer to both political and conjugal sociality. *Patior* has the common meaning of to endure or suffer, but it is also used to refer to taking the passive role in sexual coupling. *Status* may refer to both one's office as well as one's bodily position; alongside *caveo*, the verb for to take care or to beware, it suggests both carefully maintaining one's social status and "assuming the position." Finally, *caveo* puns on *ceveo*, to act as a "power bottom."

	The Seres beyond the borders to the East.
te minor laetum reget aequus orbem:	May Caesar with justice rule, second to you,
tu gravi curru quaties Olympium,	Across the regions of the whole wide world,
tu parum castis inimica mittes	
fulmina lucis.	While Jupiter's heavy chariot shakes the sky
	And Jupiter's lightning strikes the polluted woods.[35]

The poem has presumed the authority and rule of Jupiter, and thus the imagery is of guardianship; order must be defended from without. The appeal to Caesar to further this good governance is predicated upon an already existent, albeit circumscribed, harmony. Gerson's lament presupposes that even this has already failed. As cited above, the *custos* is ruined, and the golden age is past. In a strident silence, his conclusion offers no invocation of God:

Regii sceptri rogitamus haeres	We entreat you, heir to the kingly scepter—
Clare Delphine repares ruinas	O bright Dauphin!—to recover the ruins
Hosticae cladis miseris vel odis.	from the hatred and wretchedness of the hostile scourge.
Pallada flete	Weep for Pallas!
Tale qui rursus renovare quaeris	O you who seek restoration anew,
Vivito felix quater et beatus	live on and on, abundant and blessed,
Cesset ut plangor dolorosus iste.	such that this sorrowful keening may cease:
Pallada flete.[36]	"Weep for Pallas!"

The land is already in ruins, already lamenting its state. The ambitious register of the opening strophes has been bridled, and, instead of an ascent of the mind echoing back up from creation, there is a call to action to the least likely candidate: the Dauphin (eventually Charles VII).[37]

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[35] Horace, *The Odes of Horace*, 36–39.

[36] Gerson, "Deploratio studii," ln 69–76.

[37] The Dauphin was a mere fifteen years old at the time and was himself evacuated from Paris after Jean sans Peur's seizing of it in 1418 threatened Charles' claims to the inheritance of the Kingdom of France. Further, young Charles was never even expected to be Dauphin in the first place. He had four older brothers, the youngest of whom (Jean) had died on April 5, 1417, leading to Charles' unlikely elevation to the title of Dauphin. All told, Charles was the fourth to hold the Dauphin title during the reign of his father, Charles VI.

Although exhorted to take up the kingly scepter of his dynasty, Charles had not yet attained the majority and had already surrendered Paris. Even this ironic plea is further hampered by the sonorous closing words: “plangor dolorosus iste./ Pallada flete.”

The only hint of order in the poem is its meter. By repeating the same line (*Pallada flete*) for the adonic line concluding each strophe, Gerson gives his anaphorical pleas the liturgical ambience of mourning. Within this superstructure, however, the syntax itself is chaotic. Affected hyperbaton (unintuitively separating adjectives from their concordant nouns within the syntax) suddenly transitions to blunt apostrophe. The text constantly stops and starts given its affected syntax. Amid this backdrop, the adonics are interruptive, their very regularity now heightening the sense of disorder. In sum, the *Deploratio studii parisiensis* charts a downward trajectory, mirroring the gory stream of its Mt. Helicon, wherein the scope of the appeal slowly narrows from the angel of peace to the Muses, the pope, cardinals, schoolmen, the whole estate of the nobility, and finally the young Dauphin. It is an inversion of Horace's *Ode* I.12, and Gerson's careful choice of meter and resonant imagery to heighten this contrast only underscores the desperation of his lament in contrast to the confidence of Horace’s poem.

Gerson artfully weaves classical and biblical resonances to great effect in this concise poem. The less-than-common choice of meter and a few pointed allusions signal it clearly as a counterpart to Horace's ode to Jupiter. By overturning the harmonious echoing between the higher and lower in the original, Gerson deploys the literary form as itself an example of the inversion of the proper order witnessed in the 1418 massacres. However—and not totally unlike how de Clamanges' ironically draws on the conventions of declamation in his *deploratio*—this pushes the poem into new territory generically. The retracing of the cosmic order and its breakdown does not hold out cause for consolation. The didacticism of the genre has been

tempered by the severity of the poem. The appeal to the Dauphin, who had not yet attained majority and was himself in flight from Paris, rings hollow as a hope. Gerson's lamentation does not pretend to consolation.

This holding out hope for someone else to successfully act, while grimly noting the unlikelihood of that occurring, comports fully with the *deploratio* of de Clamanges. Parallel to de Clamanges' layering of morphologically ambiguous pronouns to textually instantiate the confusion of schism, Gerson admixes abstruse syntax and gratingly regular adonics to body forth the complete breakdown of social order in 1418 Paris. In his prose *deploratio,* Gerson will have even greater latitude, given the lack of metrical constraints, to reflect on how language maps affective assemblages.

The *Deploratio super civitatem* muses on, at much greater length, the massacres of 1418. This prose text stylistically seeks to emulate the tenor of the Vulgate text of Jeremiah. The medieval manuscript evidence suggests Lamentations was often seen as an appendix to the text of Jeremiah, perhaps indicating that Gerson at one point intended these two *deplorationes* to be received as a prosimetrum, following the prophet's precedent.[38] It is heavily reliant on frequent quotations of prophetic biblical texts, but these are interspersed with lines from Horace and Virgil. The resultant style, alternatively rhythmic and halting, gives it a curious readability. Gilbert Ouy describes its style as "destiné à suggérer la confusion et le désarroi d'une âme en proie à l'affliction," full of "ces petites phrases hachées, haletantes et comme exhalées entre deux

[38] Although there is no evidentiary basis for determining which of these two texts was composed first or if they were worked out in parallel, they both certainly date from the months immediately following the Parisian violence. Further, only the poetic work circulated immediately, yet this could be due to logistical difficulties related to the greater length of the prose *deploratio*. Gerson was traveling at the time of composition, without the secretarial assistance on hand at the University or his later residence in Lyons.

sanglots. Car, sous l'apparente spontanéité de ses cris et de ses gémissements, la *Deploratio* cache un savant travail de style qui mériterait d'être attentivement analysé."[39]

Gerson deploys a high register of Latin to lament the various ills suffered by Paris. Almost the entire text comprises a litany of unrelentingly bombastic hyperbole. Decrying the violence, the text declares: "The roofs drip with human gore; the streets overflow with bloody and gory streams; everything is full of corpses."[40] The horror is heightened by the former glory of Paris, which like a second Jerusalem, was "the once-powerful city, praised by all, but now bloated with sinfulness and blood."[41]

The situation is most alarming because, as Gerson presents it, it defies explanation. He grasps for words, "What will I bewail first? What will I bemoan most of all? Where do I begin? What words could ever suffice?"[42] No causal account is presented, the various protagonists and actors (known well to Gerson!) are never called out or named directly, and the biblically precedented argument that prior sin has led to this judgment is totally absent. Instead, the language used undercuts assumptions of narrativity. Adverbs like "suddenly" and "at once" abound. Impersonal passive forms populate the text. The relatively brief clauses, generally lacking linking particles, convey an aesthetic of accumulating terror alongside a breakdown of typical prose style.

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[39] Ouy and Gerson, “Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la “Deploratio super civitatem”,” 268.

[40] Ouy and Gerson, “Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la “Deploratio super civitatem”,” 280. “Humano cruore tecta madent; platee natant sanguine rivisque cruentis; repleta omnia cadaveribus.”

[41] Ouy and Gerson, “Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la “Deploratio super civitatem”,” 278. “Urbs quondam valida, quam laudabant universi, nunc plena iniquitate et sanguine.”

[42] Ouy and Gerson, “Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la “Deploratio super civitatem”,” 277. “Que prima querar? que summa gemam? que quibus anteferam? que verba sufficiunt?”

Time and tense also falter. The consistent usage of the present tense with generalized actions performed by unnamed actors, coupled with the emulation of Hebrew parallel poetic style, gives the text a timeless, static quality as it resists clear emplotment into a narrative with clear culprits. The violence does not unfold; it simply is, and then is again. Just as there was no beginning explained, there is not an end in sight. The narrative breakdown seems to render the entire subject atemporal or, at the least, to trap one within the encompassing grasp of a new time marked only by violence.

This undermining of the temporal order recurs throughout the *Deploratio*. The seasons are described as interrupted, and the solar cycle is undone: for instance, "Although it should still be day, the sun has set on [the city]."[43] Gerson furthers this line of reasoning, saying the planetary bodies are unsure themselves of how to respond to the horror. Addressing them, Gerson declares, "Let not the sun see this contagion more clearly, nor the sphere of the stars gaze upon it; neither let the blowing winds be tainted by it."[44] This profound change in the normal order of things becomes infused with apocalyptic flavor.

Again, speaking to Paris, Gerson warns, "Everyone has recognized the nature of your desolation—dare I say that of the Beast!", making reference to the diabolically allied power who appears at the last days in the Johannine Apocalypse.[45] This eschatological space is presented as a rupture from the normal flow of history and time. Natural order is unraveled: "No greater crime than this [the Paris massacres] has been uncovered since that monstrous killing of you, O Christ,

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[43] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 278. "Defecit anima eius [urbis]. Occidit ei sol cum adhuc dies esset."

[44] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 284. "Non videat sol lucidior contagionem istam, neque stellarum globus spectet, ne maculentur aurarum spiramina."

[45] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 277. "Caracterem desolacionis tue – ne dicam Bestie – assumunt universi." Cf. Apocalypse 13.

which nature was hardly able to endure."[46] Invoking the death of God as the nearest parallel, Gerson strongly underscores the profound abnormality of the event. That is to say, it is an affront to nature herself.

In particular, given that the dauphinist Gerson perceives the Burgundian move against Paris as a vassal attacking a liege and the populist massacres as an inversion of the rule of law, language of an overturned natural order abounds. Those in Paris are become unthinkably violent. Gerson addresses the whole city with the second-person plural, signaling the extent of a terror not reducible to a few bad-faith actors: "Days and nights in blood, on this all your effort is spent. You have laid out your net, and you do not stop do not cease from killing indiscriminately. You have destroyed your own like a flock gathered in the fold or a herd shut in the pen. You wound yourself more than it!"[47] This transformation is all the more loathsome given its seditious nature: "The land is destroyed by its own inhabitants. Your peaceful members rise up against you."[48] Layering hyperbolic language insistently, Gerson reaches the first rhetorical crescendo of the text:

> It is just like a civil war (*parum est civile bellum*). A mother does not recognize her child; she does not hear him crying out. A brother does not know his brother; he pursues his own blood. The son flees his father; the daughter does not trust her mother... What will this malice not surpass? Who has ever heard of such things? What is this unprecedented ill will? What is this inhuman ferocity? Why this ever-hard heart? It is unbelievable to describe: prayers avail nothing, neither tears nor government have any effect; nothing happens for the sake of honor or merits; there is nothing loved, holy, or proper. Prayers

[46] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 284. "Nullum crimen maius hoc inventum est post illam prodiciosam [prodigiosam] tui, Christe, mortem, quam vix natura ferre potuit."

[47] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 278. "dies et noctes in sanguine, in hoc sollicitudo tota consumitur. Expandisti sagenam, et interficere non cessas pariter. Sicut gregem in ovili, quasi pecus in medio caularum, tuos peremisti. Te magis ipsa feris."

[48] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 278. "Terra interfecta est ab habitatoribus suis. Pacifici tui insurrexereunt adversum te."

> are uttered to shut-up ears; they bear a stony heart harder and firmer than flint. Neither pity nor humanity avail anything. No place is left for piety.[49]

This locus forms the heart of Gerson's complaint: the violence taking place in Paris utterly defies any order—whether that of reason, the Church, or even nature—to the extent that it precludes any response. The remainder of the lament, while similar in tone and its level of graphic detail, is taken up with either explicating the consequences of this breakdown of order (Gerson is especially concerned with the slaughter of unbaptized infants) [50] or, increasingly, meditating on the problem of putting a narrative of the events into words and/or responding to the horrors in words. In the face of this discursive failure, for Gerson, it could be said that war's horrors have homologies in human language.

As he nears the climax of his lament, Gerson slips quite suddenly into historical time: "Shall I speak or keep quiet about what has happened to you, which I've verified as true by a *fideli narratione* [a reliable witness]? I shall speak, not stay silent, for although my pen lies still, the stones will cry out, the doorframes and lintels will speak."[51] Nestled in between another rhetorical flourish about the difficulty of expressing what has happened and a biblical allusion,

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[49] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 278–79. "Parum est civile bellum. Mater filium non agnoscit; vocantem non audit. Frater fratrem non novit; sanguinem proprium insequitur. Fugit natus patrem; non fidit filia matri. Fratris et fas amor et ius omne perit. Super quem non transiit malicia tua? Quis audivit talia? Quis tam inauditus livor? que tam inhumana ferocitas? que tam dura unquam precordia? Res dictu incredibilis, nil magne valuere preces, nil lacrime, nil insignia valent; nulla honoris aut meritorum gracia; nil carum, nil sanctum, nec pudor erat. Obserratis auribus preces funduntur; cor saxeum gerunt plus silice durum et concretum. Nil miseracio, nil proficit humanitas. Nullus relictus pietati locus."

[50] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 280. "Baptisma tuum, quod nobis sanguine tuo donasti, negatur parvulis statim lucem intrantibus, confessio peccantibus, sacra tuis fidelidbus. Canes tui fideles palam vocitantur."

[51] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 280. "Eloquar an sileam, factum in te quod fideli narracione verum comperi? Dicam, nec tacebo: nam etsi stilus conticeat, lapides clamabunt, postes et limina dicent."

he notes that he has had access to a reliable witness. I turn now to explicate how this comports with the larger reading I have been advancing here.

The opening phrase of this line, *eloquar an sileam*, is a quotation from *Aeneid* III.39, and there these words comprise an aside wherein the Poet wavers on whether he can continue describing the horrible scene. Aeneas has realized that the mysterious bleeding plants he has come upon are in fact the desecrated corpse of Polydorus yet awaiting proper burial.[52] This allusion thus, on the one hand, heightens the sense of unspeakable monstrosity. But, more specifically, it invokes a scene where logic fails. Aeneas slowly plucks plant after plant, horrified at the oozing black blood and unable to account for where it came from. The linguistic aside of the Poet, *eloquar an sileam*, signals the moment of revelation. It promises the missing information that will allow a narrative to be retrojected on the horror, the voice of Polydorus to answer Aeneas' desperate queries.

By this Virgilian reference, and the appeal to a witness, Gerson likewise prepares the reader for the missing data that will put the preceding account into perspective. This proves to be a false promise; the difficulty of composing a lament that would befit the violence is compared to the impossibility of sorting out amid the bodily fragments what actually happened to the victims.[53] He reiterates the impossibility of narrative: "I am not able to describe the extent of your sufferings with my pen, nor would speaking in person suffice at all. No tongue, or any other body part imaginable, is up to the task; no faculties or words at all could do. Unbelievable things

[52] Virgil, *1. Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–IV*, Book III, lines 39–45. "(eloquar, an sileam?), gemitus lacrimabilis imo / auditur tumulo, et vox reddita fertur ad auris... / nam Polydorus ego."

[53] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 281.

don't receive a voice; no measure can seize them in human speech."[54] The reliable witness mentioned earlier seems little more than an ironic aside. His discourse is not a historical account that can offer explanation, but an inadequate response compelled by the horror seen. He calls up images and metaphors laden with affective resonances—a distinctly poetic approach, as we discussed in the previous chapter.

Nonetheless, the phrase *fideli narracione* becomes particularly instructive here due to its own polysemeity. It indeed signifies something like reliable witness, or trustworthy account of things—the immediate context suggests Gerson is claiming to have a good eyewitness account of the actual happenings in Paris. A similar usage occurs throughout medieval hagiographies and early modern histories to introduce the reliability of the narrative. But it also could be interpreted as a "faithful narrative," that is a literary account that is sincere and characterized by trust. Further, every other appearance of *fidelis* in the *Deploratio* clearly refers specifically to the Christian faithful—suggesting that this valence may apply to the phrase in question—including twice in the preceding four lines.[55] The potential double reading, destabilizing in particular the suggestion of an accurate report, suggests that a faithful response is all that is available. The phrase's redeployment signals the broader discursive shift that Gerson sees as appropriate for theology: the shift toward poetry.

This movement, away from an emphasis on language as providing an accurate, direct historical record toward one expressing an affective response that presents an alternative form of

[54] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 281. "Non possum tormentorum mensuram tuorum stilo describere, viva vox neque sufficiet unquam; non lingua valet, neque corporee note; non vires aut cerba ulla sufficient: non recipiunt incredibilia vocem; non capit hec humani sermoni modus."

[55] Ouy and Gerson, "Gerson et la guerre civile à Paris: la "Deploratio super civitatem"," 280. "Baptisma tuum, quod nobis sanguine tuo donasti, negatur parvulis statim lucem intrantibus, confessio peccantibus, sacra tuis fidelidbus. Canes tui fideles palam vocitantur."

insight, echoes the distinction between scholastic dialectic and poetry or rhetoric for the Navarrists. Thus, a moment of abject horror becomes exemplary of the demand for a poetic theology; Gerson's *deplorationes* stand as a test case for this new approach.[56]

The melancholy of horror, crisis, and upheaval—as I have only obliquely noted so far in this chapter—, for the medievals, demanded treatment. That treatment, owing especially to the immense influence of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* across the Middle Ages, was typically understood as the ken of consolation. Consolation offered peace of mind and the chance to escape the paralysis of despair and provide assurance in the workings of providence.

Gerson's keen interest in consolation was perceived as far back as the fifteenth century, when he was occasionally titled the *Doctor consolotarius*. But this consolation, unlike the carefully deduced arguments of Lady Philosophy and Boethius, does not lay out a linear argument or even reiterate biblical promises for deliverance. Rather suddenly, the *Deploratio* concludes by appealing to God to return soon and giving a concluding series of wishes for peace—though lacking any of the strong imperatives characteristic of a traditional *deploratio* or *declamatio.* While one may presume that Gerson has some confidence in God's deliverance from this world of trials, the text itself does not give any such account.

Rather, this unusual prose work gives a response to the disasters and torments of war that foregrounds the affective experience of despair. Through its strong reliance on prophetic texts of the Vulgate, the *Deploratio* evokes a cultic setting. The curtailed prose style echoes liturgical formulae. The frequent declamations of impiety and the suspension of divine offices further underscores that Gerson is offering here a decidedly religious response. This religious response

[56] This turn toward a poetic theology was explored in Chapter Four, "The Theologian as Poet."

deploys particular emotional language—including Latin's rich vocabulary of mourning—rather than a technical discourse on suffering, divine will, or any other subject commonly brought to bear on the problem of violence. Expressing grief, without an explanatory mechanism or framework, is somehow the faithful narrative. Gerson does not try to mitigate or overcome despair in this text. He instead calls attention to it, focuses on it, and gives form to it with his *Deploratio super civitatem*. Despair stands as less the occasion for, and more the subject of, the text.

In all of these *deplorationes*, Navarrist authors craft their language in a manner that instantiates the horror of the lamented event; the failures of language are congruent to the failures of affect. What exactly do I mean by this?

As the opening chapters of this project have argued, the Navarrists share a critical outlook on language's capacity to deliver certainty. It does not have a privileged link to ontological reality, as much logic presumes (Chapter One). Its diverse rhetorical usages cannot be neatly categorized as simply true or false (Chapter Two). The larger contexts of its deployment and interpretation, such as an ethical orientation or reading community, are just as operative as the text itself in assessing its value (Chapter Three). Language is marked by both an incompleteness and an interdependency on other language. The Navarrists, further, advocate for specific modes of reading to mitigate or, perhaps, to lean into the uncertainty of language: a hermeneutics of contingency that acknowledges the limits and provisionality of language when interpreting and a semionautics of displacement that encourages non-linear, recursive, and iterative forms of interpretation.

The previous chapter voiced Navarrist arguments that poetic language is especially fitting for theology, because it is more aligned with affect. That is to say, human experience is always

navigated vis-à-vis the fundamental emotions of joy, sadness, hope, fear, and compassion; poetry includes space for expressing these affects in a way that dialectic precludes. Further, because it incorporates affect, poetry is in fact *truer* than dialectic, which is impoverished by its hewing to ratiocination. Biblical texts—the *Song of Songs* and the "Magnificat" especially—are held forth as exemplars of this poetic theology.

Yet the *deplorationes* examined thus far show that affect can fail too, in multiple ways. First, *affective* responses can overwhelm with emotive intensity, particularly in the case of despair. Second, one can be *affected* and constrained by forces prior to and beyond one's control, such as ecclesial schism, political violence, or disease. Crucially, both of these aspects underscore limits of the individual. On the one hand, the potentially destabilizing weight of despair may confound the will and intellect along with it. With one eye on the doctrine of the bondage of the will—a commonplace of Latin Christianity since, at the latest, Augustine—, we can discern here its interpolation with affect and intellect. The mind and heart are both liable to run amok, subject to forces beyond the control or even the awareness of the individual. On the other hand, the person also faces their finitude externally. Contextual, social, and natural pressures all press and pull, and in the *deplorationes* this is construed as an effacement of control. There is no privileged demesne of agency, no cloister free from the messiness of life.

Life, hemmed in by these shifting and cycling constellations of contingencies, for the Navarrists, begins to look a lot like language. This congruency between language and affect, and the formal similitude of their failures, is the focus of Gerson's *De consolatione theologiae*. There, Gerson makes his way back to language as the, albeit tentative, avenue for response to the weight of affect. Just as a hermeneutics of contingency and semionautic reading practices navigate the failures of language, they also allow for a new approach to understanding oneself—

and the collective—in the face of negative affects. In the limit case of intense upheaval, Gerson all the more tightly holds together language and affect. It is with his *De consolatione*, then, that this study concludes.

5.2 Inconsolable Theology

Gerson penned his *De consolatione theologiae* while wandering the Empire (in pursuit of a patron and financial support) in the immediate aftermath of the Council of Constance. While Burgundy's sphere of influence would diminish in the wake of Jean sans Peur's death in 1419—ultimately allowing Gerson to return to, if not Paris itself, the French city of Lyon—, Gerson in the meantime found himself a political refugee in Rattenberg, Neuberg am Inn, Melk, and Vienna successively.[57] Gerson's contribution to consolation literature is a prosimetrum,[58] placing itself squarely not only in the tradition of the *Consolatio philosophiae* of Boethius but also the

[57] For a summary of Gerson's movements after Constance, see: McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, 286-88. Due to scant evidence, scholars have diverged on where Gerson's composition of the *De consolatione* during the latter half of 1418 took place. Palémon Glorieux dates it to July in Rattenberg, composed alongside the *Josefina*, before Gerson's departure to Neuberg am Inn in August. Palémon Glorieux, *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: introduction générale*, XI vols., vol. I (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1960), 133. André Combes came to argue for a slightly later dating, in early fall after Gerson's arrival in Melk: *La théologie mystique de Gerson: profil de son évolution* (Rome: Desclée et Socii, 1963), 2:306-11. As do Mark S. Burrows and McGuire, I favor Combes' position, particularly given the strikingly similar *Dialogus apologeticus* reliably dated to September 1418 while Gerson was in Melk. See: Mark S. Burrows, *Jean Gerson and De consolatione theologiae (1418): The Consolation of a Biblical and Reforming Theology for a Disordered Age*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1991), 14-15n27. McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, 287.

[58] Unfortunately, in preparing his *opera omnia* of Gerson, Glorieux opted to compile all of the prose sections into a single entry within the volume of doctrinal works and separate out each section of poetry as a discrete poem with its own entry in the volume of poetic works, effectively vivisecting the *De consolatione*. While I here register my objection to Glorieux's editorial decision, for ease of reference my citations will follow Glorieux in referring to poetic passages as discrete poems. However, I will also include book and meter/prose numbers—as is commonplace with Boethius' *Consolatio* and other prosimetra—to situate the cited selection within the larger work.

De planctu naturae and *Anticlaudianus* of Alain de Lille.[59] Resonating with the fraught circumstances of its composition, however, Gerson's text lacks the argumentative coherence of Boethius' or encyclopedic scale of Alain's. Its theology is less one of discerning confidence in the face of adversity than one that queries how to proceed amid profound failures: of the Council, of France, and of Gerson himself.

The question of whether and to what extent Gerson's theology changes after Constance has dogged recent scholarship in the wake of Mark S. Burrows' incisive monograph on the *De consolatione*.[60] Burrows' work here has been salutary for the study of Gersoniana, particularly with respect to his marked attention to the Augustinian character of much of Gerson's thought, to his interest in Gerson's literary work as linked to Gerson's theological project, and to his resistance to traditional heuristics such as "nominalist" or "pastoral theologian" to hem in the reading of Gerson. My reading of the *De consolatione*, however, breaks with Burrows' reading on a number of points. Some of these disagreements—centering on my reticence to count Gerson as a literalist or fundamentalist in any typical sense with regards to biblical interpretation. Here, I

[59] Gerson ubiquitously describes Alain as both a theological and poetic authority. See, for instance, Gerson's recommendation of the Anticlaudianus as well suited for teaching the moral life in a vernacular (!) sermon: Palémon Glorieux, *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: l'œuvre française, sermons et discours*, vol. VII* (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1968), 995; Gerson's care to defend "the great Alain" from guilt by association with Jean de Meun: *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: l'œuvre française*, vol. VII (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1966), 312; Geron's invocation of Alain alongside Boethius and unspecified "holy doctors" in an address to university licentiates: *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: l'œuvre oratoire*, vol. V (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1963), 340; and Gerson's list of commended authors that sets Alain and Boethius beside the likes of Ovid and Bonaventure: *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: l'œuvre épistolaire*, vol. II (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1960), 70.

[60] See: Burrows, *Jean Gerson and De consolatione theologiae*. While largely incorporated into the monograph, the earlier article provides a convenient précis of Burrows' interpretation of Gerson's soteriological stance in the *De consolatione*: Mark S. Burrows, "Jean Gerson after Constance: "Via Media et Regia" as a Revision of the Ockhamist Covenant," *Church History* 59, no. 4 (1990).

note three additional divergences to clarify my relationship with this foundational monograph: 1) on the question of a shift or development in Gerson's thinking, 2) the relative priority of ecclesiology in Gerson's thought, 3) on the relation of Gerson to Ockhamism and/or theological "nominalism."

As to the first, Burrows has advanced perhaps the strongest case for understanding two distinct Gersonian theologies, pinpointing the Council of Constance as a pivot from an earlier Ockhamism toward a thorough-going, "conservative" Augustinianism. As virtually all interpreters concede a degree of fluidity, if not outright and profound contradiction, across Gerson's collected works, Burrows distinguishes his view from those who would argue for an "eclectic" or "syncretistic" account of the internal diversity of Gerson's writing.[61] Burrows points to Combes as also suggesting a shift in the later Gerson's thinking, though he notes that Combes discerns this occurring around 1425 (and postulates a mystical experience as the cause!).[62] McGuire, more recently, has presented a mediating view in his biography; he describes a change in the tenor of Gerson's writings after Constance, but says Burrows "goes too far in seeing the *Consolation of Theology* as a departure from Gerson's earlier teaching of the value of doing one's best (*facere quod in se est*), in a new awareness of the arbitrary grace of God as the only way to salvation." McGuire notes too that Gerson in the 1420s seems to return to a more positive valuation of human effort.[63] Most recently, however, Nancy McLoughlin has provided crucial methodological correctives. First, she points to the (problematic) tendency of scholars to isolate "male" domains—especially, e.g., intellectual history—from the complex and diverse

[61] Burrows, *Jean Gerson and De consolatione theologiae*, 271.
[62] Combes, *La théologie mystique de Gerson: profil de son évolution*, 2:465ff, 557–68.
[63] McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation*, 300.

deployments of gendered discourse in the historical eras under examination.[64] To alleviate this, one ought not silo certain privileged theological discourses as operative independent of political and social forces, instead giving "a history of gender and a history of ideas and institutions" as "these three threads of inquiry cannot be understood in isolation from one another."[65] Further, in her turn to the rhetorical strategies of Gerson, McLoughlin develops a model of intellectual history that does not seek to extract doctrinal propositions from various genres of writing, but instead considers the motivating concerns and forces that an author must weigh. In the case of the *De consolatione*, this entails taking seriously what its poetic form and literary genre convey and the specific goals pursued by Gerson. Based on the previous chapters, I maintain provisional confidence that concerns to calibrate (un)certainty, and to accord writing and reading practices therewith, are ubiquitous in the Navarrists' works; the *De consolatione* cannot be treated as something new without assessing the (dis)continuity between its literary form and strategies. As will become clear in the course of this chapter, I acknowledge that Gerson, after Constance, does undergo a shift in the timbre of his rhetoric—beset by despair to a degree not matched even by his flight in the 1390s—but I maintain that the primary sources continue to pursue strategies of mitigating certainty and enjoining interpretive methods that foreground contingency. (Recall that Chapters One and Four both draw on material from before and after Constance.) If there is a postconciliar Gerson, it is a far more subtle shift than Burrows alleges. For my part, with Ockham's razor in one hand, I note that a more pronounced pessimism amid exile and in the

[64] McLoughlin, *Jean Gerson and Gender: Rhetoric and Politics in Fifteenth-Century France*, 3–8, et passim.

[65] McLoughlin, *Jean Gerson and Gender: Rhetoric and Politics in Fifteenth-Century France*, 18.

wake of the 1418 Paris massacres seems sufficient to describe the shifts in Gerson's emphases after Constance.

Second, in particular, I disagree methodologically with the presumption that certain intellectual commitments logically dictate one's other beliefs in a formal and deductive manner. While in certain cases people do indeed form one belief based on a prior belief, this is far from consistent, generalizable, or predictable. I am wary of conflating Gerson's pastoral concern with the congregation of Christendom with a set of doctrinal propositions on the nature of the Church. I understand this distinction to map onto that between affect, in its etymological sense, and intellect. Gerson himself has already asserted the priority of the former. This study instead has methodologically pursued a synthetic account of an animating concern for Gerson and his Navarrist colleagues, namely the elusive contours of certainty, without reducing that wariness to an itemized list of theses on language. To do so may even presume the Navarrists contradicted their own statements on the limits of certainty. Thus, I would contest Burrow's assertion that "ecclesiology functions as the comprehensive and ultimately determinative horizon of his [Gerson's] theology."[66]

Third, the proposition that the *De consolatione* tokens a departure from Ockhamism is misleading, insofar as Burrows seems to reduce the term to its soteriological valences. D. Zach Flanagin has already shown that even on the question of ecclesiology, Gerson's postconciliar pessimism (or even inconsistency) is not easily distinguished from Ockham's thought on the same questions.[67] In addition, this dissertation itself has argued, based on sources both prior and

[66] Burrows, *Jean Gerson and De consolatione theologiae*, 273.

[67] Flanagin, "Making Sense of It All: Gerson's Biblical Theology," 166–67. For a more recent discussion of the alleged incoherence in Ockham's ethical thought, see: Thomas M. Ward, "The Incoherence of Ockham's Ethics," in *Grounding in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Magali Roques (Leiden: Brill, Forthcoming).

subsequent to the *De consolatione*, that Gerson and the other Navarrists maintain a sympathy for if not outright allegiance to broadly terminist (more precisely Buridanian) theorizations of language *in statu viae*. This chapter's reading of the *De consolatione* further bears out that argument.

Instead of relitigating questions of soteriology in the text, however, I will first turn to the literary qualities, formal, narrative, and poetic, of the *De consolatione*. From there, I will then proceed to sketch an argument that these literary features of the text instantiate a critical model of the self and affect. This understanding of the affected self takes deferral, mutability, and failure as propria of the human condition and looks to chart a non-individualist vision that can attenuate, although not resolve, these constitutive, troublesome aspects of postlapsarian human affairs.

I contend that Gerson's self-subversion within the *De consolatione* demands a revisionist account of any consolation offered in this prosimetrum. The specifics of my reading will be unpacked in the following pages, so let it suffice for this note to record my disagreement with Burrows' description of the *De consolatione* as "a pastoral handbook of comprehensive scope" that aims "to bring consolation to those overwhelmed with desperation and thereby lead *viatores* forward in their journey 'home' to God."[68] (271–272). Rather than comprehensive, the *De consolatione* is programmatically tentative, and any notion of "home"—scare quotes notwithstanding—is indefinitely deferred to the degree that alleging forward progress would require extensive qualification.

Let us briefly survey the *De consolatione*, which will outline the topics for our analysis here. The *De consolatione* has four main characters: the Pilgrim, Monicus, Volucer, and Lady

[68] Burrows, *Jean Gerson and De consolatione theologiae*, 271–72.

Theology. The Pilgrim is never present, but is the main topic of conversation for Monicus and Volucer, who dialogue for the vast majority of the text. Finally, Lady Theology speaks briefly near the end—using Volucer as a mouthpiece—to fire off a verbal salvo before falling silent, rather anticlimactically. With this structure, Gerson draws on, but quite radically diverges from, the literary precedents set by Boethius and Alain. Like Boethius, the text is principally a sustained dialogue between two interlocutors about consolation. However, while Boethius' titular allegorical figure, Lady Philosophy, is one of the primary conversants, Gerson's Lady Theology is strikingly absent for the vast majority of the text. When she does briefly appear, she declaims rather than discusses. Like Boethius and Alain both, Gerson builds his text around a specific character's dilemma. Nonetheless, the pilgrim here is absent, unlike the first-person narrator of Boethius' *Consolatio* or Alain's leading characters, such as Nature in *De planctu* or Fronesis and the New Man in the *Anticlaudianus*. In so doing, Gerson's *De consolatione* underscores absence and defers entirely the sort of narratival resolution the reader would expect given the Latin prosimetrum tradition of medieval Christianity.

The content of Volucer and Monicus' unfolding dialogue takes place over the course of multiple books, each one presented as another day of discussions within the fictive world of the *De consolatione*. The first day introduces consolation as a topic of necessity, given the Pilgrim's despair and exile (Prose I.1), describes theology as outstripping philosophy in the pursuit of hidden truth (Meter I.2–Meter I.3), and juxtaposes the uncertainty of life with a desperate faith that clings to hope (Prose I.3–Meter I.5). The second day opens with a radical defense of divine freedom (Prose II.1-Prose II.2) and calls for ordering the passions—both individually and in collective bodies—as an imitation of Christ (Meter II.2–Meter II.4). The third book begins

explicitly with Monicus turning back to the Pilgrim's consolation,[69] and it goes on to discuss the limits of zeal (Prose III.1–Meter III.3) and love for God amid suffering (Prose III.4–Meter III.4). The fourth and final day surveys human sinfulness (Prose IV.1–Meter IV.1) and the nature of certainty (Prose IV.2–Prose IV.4) before concluding (Meter IV.4–Prose IV.5).

With the context of the whole text in mind, the first prose section deftly signals the major themes at stake. The narrative begins with a bit of exposition, preparing the reader to follow along for Volucer and Monicus' reunion after the Council of Constance; however the reader learns the Pilgrim, who was also at the council, has not returned home. As the dialogue opens, Volucer registers Monicus' surprise at the Pilgrim's absence, and he explains that the Pilgrim is in exile in vague "foreign lands."[70] In his telling reply, Monicus demands certainty: "It suffices, Volucer, if you would be able to *make me certain* about what the beloved of my soul—the love my heart—[the Pilgrim] is doing; surely it *pains me* if he should intend to make himself an exile in an *unknown* and distant region, where he hears *a language which he does not know*?"[71] With this line, Gerson identifies the nexus of topics that the *De consolatione* grapples with: (un)knowing, affect, and language.

5.3 Affected Knowledge: The *De consolatione* and Boethius' *Consolatio*

[69] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 215; book III, prose 1. "Adsum, Volucer, desiderans rursus ex te audire verbum super consolatione peregrini; sollicitam enim suiper hoc aviditatem ex pervigili cordis mei cura, quae te loco temporeque praevenit, intelligis."

[70] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 168; book I, prose 1. "Scito, Monice, quoniam in Constanciensi Concilio generali cum germano tuo conversatus usque ad finalem Summi Pontificis egressum, tandem diverticula quaerens exivi cum eodem qui, juxta cognomen suum, Peregrinus effici maluit in terra aliena quam ad suos huc regredi;"

[71] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 186; book I, prose 1. "Satis est, o Volucer, si certum me facere potueris quid agit dilectus animae meae, quid amor cordis mei; nonne dolet velit exulem se fieri in ignota et longinqua regione, ubi linquam quam non noverat, audit?" Emphases mine.

Knowledge and its limits form a thread running through the whole of the *De consolatione*. Monicus and Volucer's characterizations in particular underscore the text's ambivalence toward knowledge. Monicus is part of a religious order, and Volucer and the Pilgrim's attendance at Constance is immediately contrasted to Monicus' cloistered life. While Monicus fulfills the closest role to that of a student in the dialogue, his cloistered life has rendered him "expert" in spiritual practices of solitude and the pursuit of Wisdom therein—something the Pilgrim had wished he had more opportunity to pursue.[72] Yet despite his apparent prowess in spiritual discipline, Monicus also is something of a naïf. For instance, Volucer explains that the accumulated trials besetting France indicate that "wisdom is not prevailing." Monicus gives an earnest reply, "But believe you me, Volucer, it will conquer sometime; indeed, the truth is strong and great and it will conquer and prevail over everything!" Volucer, as if with a sigh, remarks that there is no guarantee that truth's victory will come soon, and he invokes the prophet Isaiah's own laments about the delay of divine of justice.[73] The dialogue, in this way, constantly contrasts appeals to authorities and personal expertise with less-than-convinced rejoinders, on both sides. While the text explicitly tells us in the narrative prologue that it aims

[72] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 186; book I, prose 1. "V. –… advena noster semper in mediis etiam turbis et urbibus, solitudinem sibi quaesivit et dilexit; solitudinem loquor quae est a curis forinsecis, et hominum calumniis vacatio, probans illud Sapientis, qui minoratur actu, percipiet sapientiam.

M. – Scio, Volucer, et expertus testor."

[73] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 187; book I, prose 1. "V. –… quam [malitiam] ad praesens non vincit sapientia.

M. – Vincet tandem aliquando, crede mihi Volucer; magna quippe et fortis est veritas, et super omnia vincit et praevalet.

V. – Veritas, o Monice, quando vincet nescio; hoc unum propriis oculis inspicio juxta vocem Isaiae, quod conversum est retrorsum judicium et justitia longe stetit, quia corruit in platea veritas et aequatias non potuit ingredi, quoniam facta est veritas in oblivionem, et qui recessit a malo, praedae patuit."

for both characters to have "upright speech,"[74] they will be frequently played against each other in ways that prompt the reader to raise a skeptical eyebrow at each.

In this vein, later, Monicus sheepishly asks why any further discussion of consolation is necessary given that Boethius literally wrote *the* book on it already. Here the professorial Volucer replies at some length:

> Don't be shocked, Monicus, if theology governs philosophy; because just as grace [exceeds] nature, just as a lady her handmaiden and a teacher her [!] student, just as eternity time, just as understanding reason, just as what is unseen the things that are seen, so theology exceeds philosophy—not that it casts it aside, but it renders it subservient… Therefore, moving on from this summary, we may determine that theology takes its beginning from the word from that highest being, with whom philosophy in Boethius finishes its consolation. In this way, if philosophy has laid the foundation, theology will proceed according to a proper and abbreviated order, constructing the scaffolding of its deduction upward. If there was anything else that philosophy had to say, I am pretty sure you would remember that.[75]

The snark of that last line notwithstanding, Volucer presents here a relatively straightforward model of theological method.

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[74] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 185; prologue. "Deus autem patientiae et consolationis consoletur nos in omni tribulatione nostra, et det sermonem rectum in ore duorum."

[75] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 188; book I, prose 2. "Noli mirari, Monice, si theologia philosophiae praeficitur; quoniam sicut naturam gratia, sicut ancillam domina, et discipulam magistra, sicut tempus aeternitas, sicut ratiocinationem intelligentia, sicut visibilia ea quae non videntur, sic theologia philosophiam exsuperat, quam non abjicit, sed in obsequium sumit. Est autem lex divinitatis et ordo ut suprema inferiorum jungantur ad superiorum infima, more concatenationis, veluti Plato loquebatur, quae in corporalibus argentea in spiritualibus aurea vocabatur. Et plane hanc in scala Jacob graduum figurationem accipimus. Propterea sub compendio procedentes, inducemus theologiam inchoantem verbum ab illo supremo, quo philosophia consolationem suam apud Boetium terminavit. Ita enim recto breviatoque ordine procedet theologia sursum machinam suae deductionis erigens, si philosophiae sibi fundamenta substraverit. Quale vero sit illud quod postremum philosophia posuerit, puto meministi. Magna vobis est, inquit, si dissimulare non vultis, necessitas indicta probitatis, cum ante oculos agitis judicis cuncta cernentis."

While one may be tempted to impute this view to Gerson,[76] the text itself gives good reasons to not accept Volucer's words too credulously here. Volucer's image here casts himself, as teacher, as the theology to Monicus' philosophy. However, the reader also knows that Monicus is, in fact, the professional religious of the two, and, further, Monicus tells us that he "earnestly set himself to studying" Boethius' *Consolatio* when he was young.[77] From one vantage point, then, Monicus would be the exemplar of Volucer's model of philosophical foundations giving way to a religious life. Yet, Volucer is clearly not holding up Monicus as a model here. It appears they have two competing accounts of the Christian life. While Monicus' is that of the cloister, Volucer's is that of the classroom. Thus, Volucer is not advocating for a Christian spirituality that subordinates the intellect to affect—a misreading made plausible by Gerson's (attenuated) support of such a viewpoint in other writings—but rather a theological project that builds upon the foundations of philosophy.[78]

Put otherwise, Volucer is a scholastic, one whose belief in the certainty offered by theological demonstration gives him the audacity to challenge, and even outperform, Boethius at his own game. Yet, at the outset, Volucer's image of Christian theology being built upon the

[76] This is one point on which I depart from Burrows, who largely takes Gerson to be unproblematically picking up where Boethius left off (and using Volucer as a mouthpiece for his own views). *Jean Gerson and De consolatione theologiae*, 29.

[77] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 188; book I, prose 2. "Memini, Volucer; et quali principio exordiens, quali praeterea medio progrediens, hucusque processerit, retineo, nimirum qui studio libri illius ab adolescentia vehementer incubuerim." Note that Monicus' use of the verb *incubare* evokes the Christic image of the mother hen brooding over her chicks, suggesting an alternative model of relationship between theology and philosophy.

[78] Throughout the *De consolatione*, Volucer and Monicus serve as types of the active and contemplative lives, respectively, and weighing the relative virtues and proper arrangement of the two certainly preoccupied Gerson, perhaps especially after Constance. However, in this passage Boethius cannot easily be cast as an example of the contemplative life giving way to Volucer's more fully engaged, in-the-world active life. This disjuncture further illustrates Gerson's keen sense of irony, both situational and romantic.

rock of philosophy should give the reader pause. As cited above, Volucer's own appeal to the word from on high as the basis of theology unambiguously echoes common Christian language for scripture and the second person of the Trinity, yet this then becomes identified with the loftiest conclusions of philosophy. This triumphalist vision, in which theology rises like a Gothic cathedral from the academic study of the trivium, patently contrasts with the actual narrative of the *De consolatione*. The *De consolatione* opens by recounting the horrors afoot in France, and Theology does not offer a word until the very ending of the text. Volucer protests too much.

Additionally, in his response to Boethian philosophy, Volucer has given the analogy that theology surpasses philosophy just as eternity does time. As a retort to Monicus' extensive study of Boethius, this part in the litany stands out. After all, the relation of eternity and time, specifically as they relate to God's providential knowledge of future contingents, forms the backbone of the conclusive Book V of Boethius' *Consolatio*.[79] If one follows Gerson's signposting here and turns back to Boethius, Volucer's account of theology and philosophy only grows more suspect.

In Prose III, Boethius (the character) expresses his difficulty with the doctrine of Providence, which Philosophy had called upon as a basis for consolation in the preceding sections.[80] He argues that once one asserts timeless divine foreknowledge and human freedom in time, logic dictates that one either quash human freedom or the timelessness of foreknowledge.[81] The following meter, crucially, asserts that the one seeking knowledge of such difficult questions

[79] Subsequent references will refer to: Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, ed. Wilhelm Weinberger, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, (Vienna: Academia Litterarum Caesarae Vindobonensis, 1934).

[80] Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, V p. 3, 1. "en, inquam, difficiliore rursus ambiguitate confundor."

[81] Sentences 10-13 provide a précis for his argument: Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, V p. 3, 10-13.

lacks full knowledge, even while approaching it.[82] Next, Philosophy, in Prose IV, pushes back on the binary terms of Boethius' dilemma (and, by extension, of Volucer), characterizing them as a holdover of Ciceronian thought.[83] Her answer instead appeals to the limits of understanding, human reliance on varying and finite ways of knowing, and—another stark counterpoint to Volucer's statement—our inability to straightforwardly reason from lower to higher things.[84] In later passages, she highlights the disjuncture between human and divine knowledge and argues—in another bald rebuke to Volucer—that the temporal human subject is incapable of grasping eternity.[85] By signaling Philosophy's argumentation in a different consolation (a formal technique not unlike the narrative device of the absent protagonist), Gerson prompts us to read Volucer's definition of theology as simplistic, epistemically fraught, and downright puffed up in

[82] Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, V m. 3, 26-31. "…nam neque nouit/ nec penitus tamen omnia nescit,/ sed quam retinens meminit summam/ consulit alte uisa retractans,/ ut seruatis queat oblitas/ addere partes."

[83] Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, V p. 4, 1. "tum illa: uetus, inquit, haec est de prouidentia querela M.que Tullio, cum diuinationem distribuit, uehementer agitata tibique ipsi res diu prorsus multumque quaesita, sed haudquaquam ab ullo uestrum hactenus satis diligenter ac firmiter expedita."

[84] Philosophy notes: "…omne enim quod cognoscitur non secundum sui uim sed secundum cognoscentium potius comprehenditur facultatem" (25), "ipsum quoque hominem aliter sensus, aliter imagination, aliter ratio, aliter intellegentia contuetur" (27), "…nam superior comprehendi uis amplectitur inferiorem, inferior uero ad superiorem nullo modo consurgit" (31). Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae,* V p. 4.

[85] E.g., "cuius caliginis causa est, quod humanae ratiocinationis motus ad diuinae praescientae simplicitatem non potest admoueri, quae si ullo modo cogitari queat nihil prorsus relinquetur ambigui," (V p. 4, 2); "quare in illius summae intellegentiae cacumen, si possumus, erigamur; illic enim ratio videbit *quod in se non potest intueri*" (V p. 5, 12); "quoniam igitur, uti paulo ante monstratum est, omne quod scitur non ex sua sed ex comprehendentium natura congoscitur, *intueamur nunca quantum fas est* quis sit diuinae substantiae status, ut quaenam etiam Scientia eius sit possimus agnoscere" (V p. 6, 1); "aeternitas igitur est interminabilis uitae tota simul et perfecta possessio, quod ex collatione temporalium clarius liquet… in hodierna quoque uita non amplius uiuitis quam in illo mobile transitorioque momento," (V p. 6, 4-5). Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*. Emphases mine.

its self-description. The *De consolatione* suggests that the reader proceed with caution if expecting ratiocinative hope from theology.

A not dissimilar reading of the *De consolatione* has recently been offered by Christophe Grellard, who sees Gerson's familiarity with Ciceronian, Skeptic thought within the text.[86] In particular, Grellard notes, Gerson revives a classical distinction between supernatural and natural certainty, to which pair he adds a third level of "moral certainty."[87] In many cases, supernatural and natural certainty are foreclosed and only moral certainty remains, driving one to pursue the good. Arguing along these lines elsewhere, Gerson appeals to an Augustinian argument: the ancient philosophers advancing Skeptic theses actually criticize the availability of natural certainty not to despair of knowledge generally but rather to point to the importance of divine revelation for knowledge at all.[88] For Gerson, the trenchant force of Skeptic arguments against philosophical argumentation implies a turn to the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Thus, taken alongside Gerson's sustained reading of Boethius in the *De consolatione*, we may conclude that Theology's consolation, whatever its content may be, will take the form of a turn

[86] Grellard, "Y a-t-il une tradition sceptique au Moyen Âge?." I am grateful to the author for sharing an early version of this text with me.

[87] Grellard, "Y a-t-il une tradition sceptique au Moyen Âge?," 202. He calls attention to: Gerson, *De consolatione*," 231; book IV, prose 2: "Itaque certitudo una est supernaturalis, altera naturalis, tertia moralis vel civilis. Certitudo supernaturalis ita se habet quod non stat aliquem sic assentire et falli: et haec iterum certitudo dividitur: quia quaedam est evidentia clarae et intuitivae, in patria beatorum, altera evidenter revelatae, in illustratione prophetarum; tertia solius adhaerentiae in speculo et in aenigmate, quae non evidentia rationis innitur, sed auctoritati divinae; qualem certitudinem fides habet et praestat in cordibus fidelium. Est enim quaelibert hujusmodi certitudine tanta quod per nullam potentiam etiam divinam et absolutam, fallax esse potest alioquin Deus negaret semetipsum." Grellard suggests that Jean Buridan devised this triple schema of certainty (p. 202 n. 49).

[88] Grellard, "Y a-t-il une tradition sceptique au Moyen Âge?," 204. See: Jean Gerson, *De vita spirituali animae, lectiones sex*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: vol 3, l'œuvre magistrale,* ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962), 136–37.

toward the heart's affective orientation (e.g., moral certainty, the theological virtues) in response to the acutely felt limitations of reason.

5.4 Affected Selves: The *De consolatione* and Alain

If knowledge and reason are indeed affected by external forces and internal weaknesses, where then is consolation to be found? Recalling the distinctly *poetic* theological project of the Navarrists, we can anticipate that affective language will be part of any answer. Giving further attention to the formal features of the text clarifies Gerson's aim in this regard. As the *De consolatione* advances, Gerson gradually introduces narratively complicated instances of verse within the prosimetrum. At the outset, the meters all are circumscribed as words spoken by the text's characters within the narrative. The first meter is explicitly introduced by the prologue's narrator as Volucer's opening words of the dialogue.[89] In like fashion, Volucer frequently ends a prose section, in his own words, by declaring his intent to cant in meter.[90] But consider this moment, where Volucer cites the Vulgate text of the Johannine *Apocalypse*: "It is a new name written upon a white stone, which no one knows except the one who has received it."[91] Earlier context in the *De consolatione* specifies that this new name upon the stone is that of the hidden sweetness of the Lord. It seems then that this stone signifies a special knowledge born of mystical experience. After this line, the prose gives way to octosyllabic verse.

[89] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 185–86; prologue. "Quorum Volucer sic incipit: [Incipit Book I, Meter 1]."

[90] E.g., Gerson, *De consolatione*, 187-88; book I, prose 1. "…in cujus [laetitiae et gaudii] praeconium ita libet metro pangere: [Incipit Book I, Meter 2]." Gerson, *De consolatione*, 214-15; book II, prose 4. "Unde libet collocutioni praesentis diei terminum dare sub hoc metro: [Incipit Book II, Meter 4]."

[91] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 192; book I, prose 2. "Est quippe nomen novum in calculo candido scriptum, quod nemo scit, nisi qui accipit." Cf. Apoc. 2:17.

Following upon the formal norms established heretofore, the reader presumes that it is still Volucer who is canting this verse. However, this raises a number of questions. If, as in most of the *De consolatione*'s prose to meter transitions, this verse stands as a gloss upon what came before, we would expect that the poetry here is in fact the "new name" etched on the white stone. The content of the meter, an ode to the delights of inner enjoyment of the Deity, reinforces this reading. Yet, by proclaiming what is described as an individual secret, Volucer muddies any distinction between a private mystical experience and others' fortification thereby, if not participation therein. Both Monicus, hearing the verse directly within the narrative, and the reader, mentally (if not aurally and orally) hearing and speaking the verse along with Volucer, share in the hidden knowledge of the name on the white stone. Its purported secrecy belies how it draws together a plurality of persons toward a shared knowledge of divine sweetness.

This slippage of person, particularly around metrical passages, recurs at points throughout the *De consolatione*. Volucer increasingly introduces meters with the first-person plural.[92] His songs come to incorporate both Monicus and the audience. Similarly, in the final book, we come across Monicus himself introducing a meter and, apparently, reciting it.[93] The poem, fittingly, is about cultivating sensitivity to the theological virtues amid a lifetime's accumulation of worries, anxieties, and disappointments. Here we see Monicus expressing feelings consonant with Volucer's melancholic temperament, a mirror-image of Volucer's early verses about mystical experience and the contemplative life. The *De consolatione*'s generic suturing of poetry and prose, and slippages therebetween, is thus refracted onto slippages

[92] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 207; book II, prose 2. "…quodammodo aggregatos inspicimus. [Incipit Book II, Meter 2]." Gerson, *De consolatione*, 219; book III, prose 2. "Praeconium itaque suum canamus placet. [Incipit Book III, Meter 2]." Gerson, *De consolatione*, 237; book IV, prose 3. "…itaque lugere, plangereque compellimur. [Incipit Book IV, Meter 3]."

[93] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 234; book IV, prose 2.

between characters—both within the text and with the audience. As the characters intermingle and blur in such ways, Gerson illustrates how individuals are profoundly affected by and with others. No one is an island. Even the Pilgrim, distant and unheard from, instigates Monicus and Volucer's pursuit of consolation.

It is no coincidence that the vehicle of these connections is consistently *poetry*, either in the specific invocations to join in song or the meta-poetic movement between meter and prose in the prosimetrum. In the previous chapter, we charted how the Navarrists understood true theology to be poetic. They, critical of the ratiocinative and demonstrative efficacy of language on both terminist and rhetorical grounds, turn to poetic language given its affective potency, its ability to shape emotions and the inner self through participation in the song. In the *De consolatione*, Gerson draws out a further consequence of the Navarrists' poetico-theological method: if poetry serves to bind one's affect to its own song in a dynamic, reciprocal shaping of self and text, it then may also entangle one's own affect with those of others similarly participating in the song. The remainder of this chapter comprises an unpacking of Gerson's insight within the *De consolatione*.

Gerson's description of persons as interconnected, joined both on account of their individual shortcomings and toward a common end, evidences a thoughtful reception of Alain de Lille's two major literary works: the prosimetric *De planctu naturae* and the epic-poetic *Anticlaudianus*.[94] Indeed, these texts both foreground entwined, often entangled, relationships among their casts of characters.

[94] All citations to follow, of the Latin original and English translation, of both works come from: Alan of Lille, *Literary Works: Alan of Lille*, ed. and trans. Winthrop Wetherbee, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013). The precise relationship between these texts, sc. to what extent *Anticlaudianus* was written as a companion piece to *De planctu naturae*, remains an open question among scholars. I am partial to Willemien

For instance, in *De planctu naturae*, Alain describes a nuanced interrelationship between the poet-narrator and Nature. In Book VI when they finally meet face to face, the poet is deeply affected by the glorious appearance of Nature, who descends atop a chariot down to an earth that bursts into bloom at her approach. He falls comatose, writing, "I fell on my face, stricken by stupor, abandoned consciousness and sank into total disorientation. My sensory powers suspended, I was neither living nor dead, but reduced to a neutral state between the two."[95] Nature revives the poet with a kiss, but she proceeds to chastise his forgetting that it was she, in the first place, who arranged his material and spiritual attributes into a unified whole. Further, she grimly warns she also has the power to annul this happy union.[96] However, Nature's assemblages are not marked by a static perfection, but rather volatile dynamism—"a dissonant consonance, a dissenting consensus"—that is mirrored in the energetic play of the created order writ large.[97] This tension is most apparent in the conflict between reason and sensuality within

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Otten's reading of the *Anticlaudianus* as a reversal of the *De planctu naturae* rather than as a triumphant capstone to it, per G. R. Evans' reading wherein Alain's *novus homo* progresses linearly from the events of *De planctu naturae*. James Simpson's convincing classification of the *De planctu naturae* as ethical and the *Anticlaudianus* as political, in my opinion, further strengthens the case to see these texts as reciprocally, dynamically intertwined. See, respectively: Otten, *From Paradise to Paradigm*, 42–43, 278–80; G. R. Evans, *Alan of Lille: The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 156–57; James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio amantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17, 98. Finally, as we shall see below, Gerson's reliance on a semiotics of displacement and a hermeneutics of contingency means his own reading of Alain ultimately hews closest to that of Otten.

[95] Alan of Lille, "De planctu naturae," in *Literary Works: Alan of Lille*, ed. Winthrop Wetherbee, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), VI.1, 66–67. "…in faciem decidens, mentem stupore vulneratus exivi, totusque in exstasis alienatione sepultus, sensuumque incarceratis virtutibus, nec vivens nec mortuus inter utrumque neuter laborabam."

[96] Alan of Lille, "De planctu naturae," VI.3–5, 68–71.

[97] Alan of Lille, "De planctu naturae," VI.6, 70–71. "…consonantia dissonans, consensus dissentiens."

the human person, but Nature suggests these forces are not isolable to the human person. Indeed, the poet's own affective intensity is interpellated by the workings of Nature, such as shifting elements, humors, or astral configurations. One's imbalances, imperfections, and disorder are not merely reflected in those of another, but are instead mutually affected.

Having been overwhelmed, revived, and lectured by Nature, in turn, the poet tries to give an account of himself. He, in the long-established idiom of wonder in the face of a higher being, says that a shadow such as he would of course fall in awe before the majesty of one such as Nature. Yet, he glosses this state as a "false [*adulterina*] death of alienation of mind."[98] This falsity bears two valences at once: being counterfeit or fake, insofar as his "death" was not fatal, but also that of unfaithfulness, insofar as the poet has violated the norms of a proper relationship to Nature. (Indeed, when the poet later confronts the reality of Nature's cloak rent by humans' sexual assault, he describes it as a "divorce."[99]) Immediately thereafter, the poet goes on to describe the interrelationships between his own personal characteristics in the language of kinship:

> For the dark shadows of ignorance, the enfeebled dullness of uncomprehending wonder, the constant shock of stupefaction are joined to human frailty by a kind of sibling bond, and it is owing to this close companionship with them that frail human nature modeling its behavior on theirs [*informans*] as if conforming to a law of conduct, is apt to be

[98] Alan of Lille, "De planctu naturae," VI.20, 82–83. "sed potius eius apparentia… adulterina extasis morte fueram soporatus."

[99] Alan of Lille, "De planctu naturae," VIII.23, 102–03. "Miror, cur quaedam tuae tunicae portiones, quae texturae matrimonio deberent esse confines, in ea parte suae coniunctionis patiantur divortia in qua hominis imaginem picturae repraesentant insompnia?" I use the umbrella term "sexual assault" here, rather than rape, not for the sake of euphemism, but because the text itself prevaricates on whether or not the attackers are able to do more than simply tear Nature's tunic. See VIII.24: "…in me violentas manus violenter iniciunt et mea sibi particulatim vestimenta diripiunt, et quam reverentiae deberent honore vestire, me vestibus orphanatam quantum in ipsis est cogunt meretricaliter lupanare. Hoc ergo integumentum hac scissura depingitur quod solius hominis iniurioisis insultibus mea pudoris ornamenta discidii contumelias patiuntur."

> clouded by ignorance, stricken by dullness, and smitten with amazement when confronted with some new thing.[100]

Alain's poet identifies a sibling bond between his ignorance, the weakness of his mind, and his frailty, the weakness of his body. Even more dramatically, this relationship involves the shaping of habits (*mores informare*).[101] These bonds within the human are both constitutive and dynamic.

Fittingly, the poet then bursts into a hymn of praise to Nature that centers on how she acts as the same sort of connective tissue on a macrocosmic scale. She is the "linkage and firm bond of the universe," "imposes stability on all things in binding agreement and [unites] heavenly to earthly in the closeness of peace," and "[links] day to night in alternation."[102] These affective chains run across the created order just as the run across human subjects.[103]

While nature *per se* does not figure in Gerson's *De consolatione*, these connections between people and their contexts certainly do. As seen at the outset of the poem, the dialogists feel the anguish afflicting the kingdom of France and Christendom more broadly. Division on these scales affects the individual. In a gripping passage, Monicus relates one's inner suffering—or even desire for self-harm—to social strife. He claims Augustine "begged for death from God" amid the strife befalling his city.[104] Mattathias, of the Maccabean revolt, similarly construes his

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[100] Alan of Lille, "De planctu naturae," VI.20, 84–85. "…cum humanae fragilitati ignorantiae tenebrosa caligo, admirationis impotens hebetudo, frequensque stuporis concussio quodam germanitatis foedere socientur, ut ex horum sociali contubernio humanae naturae fragilitas, quasi a disciplina convictus suos mores informans, in novorum primitiis, in magnorum stupendis et ignorantia tenebrari et stupore percuti et admiratione soleat vulnerari."

[101] On the significance of *informatio* in Alain, see: Simpson, *Sciences and the Self*, 1–10.

[102] Alan of Lille, "De planctu naturae," VII.2, VII.10–12, VII.21; 84–87. "vinculum mundi stabilisque nexus;" "cuncta concordi stabilita nodo/ nectis, et pacis glutino maritas/ caelica terris;" "Quae diem nocti vicibus cathenans."

[103] To be sure, similar ideas are present in the *Consolatio*. See, e.g.: Boethius, *Consolatio philosophiae*, II m.9.

[104] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 202–03; book II, prose 1. "Nonne legimus Augustinum, ea tempestate qua obsidebatur civitas sua, potius mortem a Domino petiise… ?" I, like Palémon

personal grief with that of both his people and of the city of Jerusalem.[105] Finally, Cato's infamously bloody suicide is described as self-inflicted violence parallel to the civil discord of the time.[106] While society (be it the *civitas* or perhaps too the *ecclesia*) now becomes the macrocosmic counterpoint to the human, rather than nature, Gerson relies upon the same logic.

The connections become closer to Alain's second poetic work. *Anticlaudianus* specifically explores homologous bonds between persons, not just between the human and nature. In Book II, Reason and the assembled virtues have determined to craft a new man.[107] However, the soul must be received from God. Reason has nominated Fronesis[108] to serve as the envoy on this mission to heaven, but she wavers "not willing yet afraid to refuse."[109] Appropriately, Concord steps forward to convince Fronesis; after all, Concord is marked by perfect balance and her "limbs are joined by such harmonious agreement that nowhere can any disproportion be seen."[110]

Glorieux in compiling the edition, have not been able to identify a clear textual reference in Augustine for this statement.

[105] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 203; book II, prose 1. "Hinc et Mathathias princeps clarissimus dum videret mala quae fiebant in populo Juda et Jerusalem, Vae mihi, ait, ut quid natus sum videre contritionem populi mei et contritionem civitatis sanctae, et sedere illic cum datur in manibus inimicorum." Cf. 1 Maacabees 2:7.

[106] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 203; book II, prose 1. "Nota est historia de Catone qui mortem cruentam inferre sibi maluit, quam in dissidio civili vivere ipsumque videre tantae tempestatis auctorem."

[107] While Alain does frequently use the gender-neutral *homo* to describe this new human, he also uses *vir* sufficiently to mark the character as a man in particular.

[108] Alain refers to this single character as both *Prudentia* and *Fronesis*. Following scholarly convention, I will consistently refer to her as Fronesis in my description and translation.

[109] Alan of Lille, "Anticlaudianus," II.ln162–63, 270–71. "Cogitur, illa negat meruitque negatio cogi; fluctuat haec, se nolle negat nec velle fatetur."

[110] Alan of Lille, "Anticlaudianus," II.176–77; 272–73. "Sic sibi respondent concordi pace ligata/ membra, quod in nullo discors iunctura videtur."

However, more striking are the scenes depicted on Concord's robe: scenes of intense loyalty and love between people pledged to each other. In language elevated even by the high standards of Alain's poetic finesse, he tells us:

> There the art of painting bestows a second life on those whom chaste love, guileless agreement, pure trust, true devotion join together, so that a pledge of perfect love causes two to become one. For here David and Jonathan are two, and yet one: though they are separate, in mind they are not two but one; they divide their souls, and each shares himself with the other.[111]

The rhythmic mechanics in these lines underscore the images described. Consider line 185, which contains a number of metrical idiosyncrasies:

— ∪ ∪ / — ∪ ∪ / — ∪ ∪ / — || ∪ ∪ / — ∪ ∪ / — X

Nam Da-vid / et Ion- a- / thas i- bi / sunt || du- o / sunt ta-men / un- um

Alain has also deployed the breaks between the poetic feet to divide David and Jonathan's names from one another (and internally fragmented in the case of Jonathan).[112] However, after the caesura, this metrical separation gives way to the concluding foot of "unum." They are, literally, divided within themselves and united together. Finally, Alain has used a rapid-fire sequence of dactyls. The pitter-patter prosody of these feet stands in stark contrast to the quantitatively sparse concluding trochee, "one." Thus, Alain uses the line to evoke an incitement to movement, whereby David and Jonathan are each divided, but spurred to come together as one. Crucially, it is poetry itself—in the quite formal sense here of meter and prosody, on the one hand, and in the affective (con)formation of two intimates, on the other—that effects this binding and loosing

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[111] Alan of Lille, "Anticlaudianus," II.181–87; 272–73. "Illic arte sua vitam pictura secundam/ donat eis quos castus amor, concordia simplex,/ pura fides, vera pietas coniunxit et unum/ esse duos fecit purgati foedus amoris./ Nam David et Ionathas ibi sunt duo, sunt tamen unum:/ cum sint diversi, non sunt duo mente sed unus;/ dimidiant animas, sibi se partitur uterque."

[112] Cf. line 187, where their "souls" are similarly metrically split, following the line's narrative: "dimidi-/ ant ani-/ mas," — ∪∪ / — ∪∪ / — ||.

between David and Jonathan. Similar highly wrought metrical features likewise populate the subsequent lines describing other pairs joined by Concord.[113] She serves to make people simultaneously "other and self" (translation altered).[114]

Concord launches into an ultimately persuasive peroration urging her sisters, vacillating Fronesis in particular, to come together with "a single love… a single purpose, a single yea" in a remarkable couplet containing the verb "to bind" (*ligare*) four times.[115] Further discord among them, Concord warns, will surely only redound to further discord elsewhere between the elements of nature and between virtue and vice. [116] Fronesis is "enflamed by these words" (translation altered), and "her will makes common cause with the will of her sisters."[117] The words of Concord's address, just like the illustrative stitching of her garment and the metrical features of the text, spur on connection between people and draw unity out of discord. The language of binding and of love abounds here. *Anticlaudianus* suggests that affect and poetry

[113] For instance, line 194 begins and ends with "alter," referring in one case to Euryalus and in the other to Nisus. The subsequent line reiterates "alter," but it shares a foot with the beginning of "utrumque," thus metrically effecting a linkage after the maximal division in the line prior: "Alter in Eurialo comparet Nisus et alter/ Eurialus viget in Niso; sic alter utrumque." Alan of Lille, "Anticlaudianus," II.194–95; 272–73.

[114] Alan of Lille, "Anticlaudianus," II.199; 274. "ne patiatur idem Pilades suus alter et idem."

[115] Alan of Lille, "Anticlaudianus," II.259–60; 78–79. "Nos ergo liget unus amor, liget una voluntas,/ unum velle liget, liget unum nolle sorores."

[116] Alan of Lille, "Anticlaudianus," II.264–67, 82–83; 78–79. "Quis nexus, quis verus amor, quod foedus amoris,/ quas pietas, quae pura fides, quae linea recti/ in rebus aliquis saltem vestigia pacis/ servabit, si nostra manet concordia discors?;" "Acrior insultus vitiorum pugnaque maior/ nobis incumbet, si nos diviserit error."

[117] Alan of Lille, "Anticlaudianus," II.310–13; 280–81. "His verbis accensa magis Prudentia mentem/ sistit et in certo figit vestigia mentis./ Tempestas animi moritur fluctusque recedunt, velle suum commune facit cum velle sororum." Alain's metaphor here of a storm and its pulsing waves for being unsure in one's thoughts further reinforces the connections between the self and nature, as we discussed in the case of *De planctu naturae*.

cooperate to bring people together, not just in spite of but by means of their individual limitations, to share in a common spirit.

For Gerson, just like Alain's Concord, love is touching souls. Early in *De consolatione*, in a pointed reply to Volucer who has just suggested that amid the greatest tribulation one can still fully rejoice in the Lord, Monicus asks, "What reason could be given, o Volucer, for an exile from their homeland, their relatives, their neighbors, their comrades, and their friends not to feel anxious at heart and not to be of confounded mind?"[118] The one cut off from relationship would find themself internally impoverished.

This same issue of the solitary life and what it means for one's relationships to others comes up again much later in the text. Book III's second meter is sung by Volucer ostensibly in praise of Monicus' eremitical *vita contemplativa.* It opens:

Monica claustri vita recludens	Monkish life in the cloister, holing up
Semet septis mortua mundo	Itself behind walls, dead to the world,
Cuius regimen ferre recusat	Whose rule it declines to follow
Pompasque suas deserit omnes[119]	And all whose splendors it forsakes.

Rendering Monicus' name in an adjectival form—which emphasizes the pun between his name and "monk" (*monachus*)—Volucer describes a most stark separation between the monastic cloister and the rest of the world. Indeed, the monk is "dead to the world." Volucer goes on to laud Monicus for the vices and evils that he has forsaken, but the poem then pivots to describe

[118] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 186; book I, prose 1. "Qua ratione fieri potest, o Volucer, quod exul a patria, a parentibus, a propinquis, a notis et amicis non angustietur in corde, non in animo conturbetur?"

[119] Jean Gerson, *Monica claustri vita recludens*, in *Jean Gerson. Œuvres complètes: l'œuvre poétique*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, (Tournai: Desclée & Cie, 1962), 132. [Book III, meter 2, ln 1–4.]

how these ills run rampant beyond the monastery, "[wandering] through town squares."[120] Here, near the center of the poem, death is once again invoked:

Quorum nugas, crimina, fraudes	Trifles, crimes, swindles,
Lites, rabidas, vulnera, mortes	Fierce quarrels, wounds, deaths—
Anxia portat calculus arcta	One bears these with strained fear; the burden
Dandus superest cum ratione.[121]	One reasonably would cast off stays put.

The easy yoke of the monastery has a dark reversal in the unescapable burden of life in the world. "Death" is no longer a metaphor in these lines, but a fact of everyday life. After this creative transmutation of a vice list into a lament for life's woes, Volucer's praise of cloistered life—again punctuated with reliance on the language of death—verges toward biting cynicism:

Nonne fenestras claudere mortis	Surely to close your windows on death
Praestat et uti sensibus imis	Is superior to using base senses
Coelica cernere mente pudica	To discern heavenly things with a chaste mind.
Quam non turbat saeva remordens	That the snapping, feral grief of the people
Extera populi cura recepta	Does not upset when it is shut out.
Fera mors sibi fit janua vitae	Cruel death makes itself the door of life.
Sua spes Jesus est vivit in illo.[122]	Its hope is Jesus; it lives in him.

These lines cut deep (as Monicus' uncharacteristically combative response—treated below—demonstrates). The movement from sensuality to higher, spiritual senses, a hallmark of the contemplative life, comes by literally closing off perception of others and their woes. Sounding almost like a Marxist critic of an emotional economy, Volucer charges that the monk's spiritual progress and peaceful existence is predicated upon someone else carrying the affective burden of death. While associating death, and specifically that of Christ, with life has a long history in Christian thought, Volucer inflects it with grim ambiguity: while those in the cloister live by

[120] Gerson, *Monica claustri vita recludens*, 132 [Book III, meter 2, ln 13]. "Qualia mediis urbibus errant."

[121] Gerson, *Monica claustri vita recludens*, 132–33 [Book III, meter 2, ln 18–21].

[122] Gerson, *Monica claustri vita recludens*, 133 [Book III, meter 2, ln 32–38].

shutting out death, those in the streets live by death, by dying. Those perhaps most imitating Christ here are the people beset by the violence of the *saeculum*.

Monicus seems to take the point: "Watch, Volucer, lest while exalting the cloistered life you harm a common weal that might completely die off without leaders."[123] The violent intensity of life, he now concedes, connects civic life (or death, as the case may be) with the cloister. Monicus pivots to argue that, in fact, the monastic life is the one marked by trials more numerous and more threatening, notably struggles against demons and "more-than-human" forces.[124] Then, in a bold inversion of the critique of Volucer's song, Monicus suggests that failing to help a neighbor in need, in this case the cloistered monk, is damnable. Volucer replies that Monicus is speaking out of restless zeal and presumption, rather than the theology that Pilgrim has looked to.[125]

At this point the standoff deescalates, with Volucer and Monicus brought back to a common purpose by the invocation of the Pilgrim and his theology, and the dialogue continues. While the topic has shifted to that of properly checking zeal and governing power, this emphasis on privileging common purpose rather than causing dissension abounds. We find language that echoes Alain's Concord: "but where one is on account of another, then there are not two but one."[126] They circle back to the question of the solitary Christian life, and—now mutually

[123] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 219; book III, prose 3. "Vide, Volucer, ne dum claustralem vitam extollis, sis injuriosus reipublicae quae periret utique sine rectoribus."

[124] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 219; book III, prose 3. "Sed neque caret ista vita suis periculis suisque tentationibus, tanto majoribus quanto collucatio crebrior adversus principes tenebrarum mundi hujus habenda sibi est, et plus quam humana."

[125] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 220; book III, prose 3. "…diuque noster advena secum quaesivit theologiamque consuluit."

[126] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 222; book III, prose 3. "ubi autem unum propter aliud; jam non duo sed unum sunt."

aligned to the Pilgrim's plight—Monicus and Volucer find themselves in agreement.[127] The hermit can benefit his neighbors by praying for them, set apart from some of the tumults of the world but not from his fellow humans. The entire human community is "like a single body, a single battle-line as it were, of which no part—however small!—can be weakened or plucked out without debilitating hurt."[128] In such a body, neither should monks ignore those laboring in cities nor should those out in the world dismiss the monks. Volucer tellingly quotes God's speech to Job: "Do you have an arm like God and can you thunder with a similar voice? Then scatter the lofty in your fury and behold every arrogance [cast to] dust."[129] It is for God to cast down and judge, not fellow Christians.

In the previous chapter, we described Gerson's understanding of affect, where the classical four Stoic emotions are complemented by *compassio*, which is not so much its own emotion but instead the affect that links and relates the others together. Here in *De consolatione*, however, we see how that *compassio* is, in addition to a mechanism of harmonizing one's internal emotions, an avenue for connecting the affective lives between people. Compassion, literally suffering with, binds people toward a common purpose. Gerson's compassion then stands as a renegotiation of Alain's notion of concord. As Gerson writes later in *De consolatione*: "The heart, affected by love of God, comes together in faith and hope to be borne into God."[130] Affect, rightly aligned, draws together the human community ultimately toward God—a

[127] While Volcuer, unsurprisingly, issues the discourse, we find Monicus affirming it: "Suades salubriter." Gerson, *De consolatione,* 225; book III, prose 4.

[128] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 224; book III, prose 4. "…toti hominum communitati, quae est velut unum corpus tamquam acies ordinata, cujus non potest sine laesiva debilitatione quantulacumque pars vel mortificari vel eripi."

[129] Gerson, *De consolatione,* 224–25; book III, prose 4. "Si habes brachium sicut Deus, et si voce simili sonas, disperge superbos in furore tuo et respiciens omnem arrogantiam humilia." Cf. Job 40: 4, 6.

[130] Gerson, *De consolatione*.

dramatic reconfiguration of Alain's twelfth-century trialogic poetics of humanity, nature, and God.

5.5 Leave in Silence

Finally, at the text's climax—or perhaps anticlimax—when long-awaited Theology appears to speak consolation, we find Volucer's voice slipping into another register. Rather suddenly, and with little textual foreshadowing, Volucer declares that the teaching of Theology has been sent from heaven and that they should no longer assume that he is speaking.[131] There is no literal appearance of Theology, no grand entrance, just ventriloquism. Instead, we are, in a moment resonating with the classical trope of the divinely possessed Sibyl, treated to Theology's words from the mouth of Volucer.

By this medium, Theology retells the history of Israel and of the Christian church in the world. Perhaps surprisingly, this history is not framed by any assurance of God's provision, protection, or guidance. In contrast, it is explicitly presented as a series of brutal enactments of divine judgment, terrible in their array and scope. There is no progression. There is no hopeful telos. There is no relenting, though she lets us know she has kept the account short.[132] From Cain's fratricide to the chaos of the Hundred Years' War, violent judgment overhangs humanity. Even Christ's incarnation is the coming of a sword of judgment, accompanied by the massacre of innocents.[133]

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[131] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 240; book IV, prose 4. "Accipe super istis doctrinam theologiae coelitus immissae, quam deinceps non me loqui putato."

[132] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 242; book IV, prose 4. "Non discurram per plurima."

[133] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 242; book IV, prose 4. "Prius in praedicatione Christi, qui non venit pacem mittere in terram sed gladium; cujus ortus utique divinus, tot innocentes per Herodem dedit neci."

There are no calls for specific avenues of spiritual renewal, devotional practices, or religious reforms. Instead, judgement is the sign of mercy. Simply enduring the troubles of life is how one becomes purified by Christ.[134] Theology does not offer any ambitious program.

Finally, she concludes with a definition of the Christian life as one of martyrdom. All these trials of life are effectively steps on the road to martyrdom. Rather bluntly, Theology states that the goal of the Christian life is to tolerate the suffering of this martyrdom, even if one ultimately still fears death.[135] While to some extent Theology's grim sermon tracks with the conclusion of the book of Job, she proffers no end to suffering, no display of divine power, and no individualized message. And, in a parallel subversion of expectations, cutting against her apparent *dea ex machina* role, Theology's voice falls silent and Volucer and Monicus are apparently left to their own devices once again.

At first glance, Gerson has served consolation without ice or water. Theology's dour address enjoins, on its face, a sort of hardscrabble stoicism, a passive acceptance of life's slings and arrows—be they Fortune's or God's. The askesis of martyrdom is separated from any sense of moral progress in this life. Reform, whether in head or members, seems off the table. The themes of deferral, absence, and fragmentation, ubiquitous in the poetics of the *De consolatione*, have been pointedly recapitulated in the anticlimactic disappearing act of Theology.

And yet, the forms of interconnective affect traced heretofore suggest that more positive readings are available. The narrative is instigated by the Pilgrim's pursuit of consolation—a distant, absent figure who also points to the text's author. That consolation, whatever its

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[134] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 243; book IV, prose 4. "…quoniam cum iratus fueris misericordiae recordaberis; tu post tempestatem tranquillum facis; tu rempublicam per varias agitationes purificare scis

[135] Gerson, *De consolatione*, 244; book IV, prose 4. "…tales martyrio coronantur, etiam mortis timidi."

character, is presented as the product of a dialogue between Volucer and Monicus, who draw closer together in spirit through the poetic operations of the text before that poetry links them, however briefly, with Theology herself. As remarked above, by using poetry as the mechanism of binding, the reader too is incorporated into the affective assembly of the *De consolatione*. With these literary features in mind, the text's apparently abrupt ending and proffered consolation of keeping on amid tribulation becomes an invitation to the reader: work out consolation in one's own life not simply through perseverance amid adversity but also through affective connections to others. Just as the Pilgrim's story pauses suddenly in exile and thus prompts Monicus and Volucer to ferret out a form of consolation, so does the leaving off of their narrative in turn prompt the reader to work out their consolation, even if with fear and trembling.

CONCLUSION

Enjoy the Silence

> How nice that we can't understand each other.
> —Anna, *The Silence*

> The doctor does not always produce a cure, or the orator a
> Peroration, nor does the logician always arrive at a conclusion;
> Indeed he often falls only halfway there, panting and exhausted.
> —Alain de Lille, *Anticlaudianus* II.39–41

Between the anticlimactic conclusion to the *De consolatione theologiae* and the absent, unfinished third part of the *Super Cantica Canticorum*, Gerson has left much unsaid. We have seen how Gerson struggles to find the appropriate words, always reiterating, always retrying.

Part I of the dissertation followed in Gerson and the Navarrists' steps along this uncertain path, searching out whether and how language may be up to the tasks we ask of it. Chapter One demonstrated how a terminist sensitivity to language's contingency dovetails with humanist criticisms of scholastic dialectic to ground the Navarrists' turn toward rhetoric as the central disciplinary frame for theology. In Chapter Two, we saw how language's tentativity, exemplified by words' tendency to displace meaning to other referents, was taken as a given even in reading the inspired texts of scripture. In Chapter Three, pushing against the grain of the prior chapters, the Navarrists try to stave off totalizing, paralyzing uncertainty—which they deem endemic to the *Roman de la Rose*—by calling for an orientation toward divine love as foundational to interpretive activity. Reading should be understood as theologizing.

Turning to Part II, Chapter Four showed how for the Navarrists poetry bodies forth a solution to the contingency wrapped up in language. Poetry avoids the false pretense of

dialectical demonstration, speaks to the affective inner life of the audience, and presents a path for becoming stitched into the diachronic song of the Christian faith recorded in scripture. Poetry's mixture of intellect and affect, freedom and meter, gives it greater power for expressing humans' experience of contingency and for structuring their affective responses thereto.

And then, at a certain point along this poetic path, the wayfarer aspires to the capstone knowledge that binds together reason and affect. And yet, in the case of Gerson's *Song* commentary and its promised third portion, the pilgrim dies before putting that knowledge into writing. That language is not available this side of eternity. It leaves off suddenly, as if mid-sentence.

Simply put, we are *in statu viae* until we aren't.

Thus—as noted in the preface—the specter of death has overhung this project. Over the Navarrists' shoulders we have made pilgrimage, but we have seen how their eyes are focused not on any gleaming city atop a hill, but instead on the corpses and bones punctuating the roadside. Chapter Five joined the Navarrists in looking at poetic theology as an iterative *memento mori.* In lamentation poetry that does not deign to offer resolution or in the *De consolatione* that concludes with Theology leaving in silence, we see that for the Navarrists consolation—like certainty—is never truly grasped. It is a daily bread, mostly scavenged from crumbs left along the way by others.

I would submit then that, for the Navarrists, poetry does not express the inexpressible like some sort of mystical apophasis or Romantic sublime. It is not a miraculous form for holding content. Poetic theology does not aim to solve the problem of talking about God or human experience of God's presence, but rather the problem of talking about and interpreting ourselves amid a world shot through with contingency. In this way, at the beginning of the fifteenth

century, the Navarrists construe theology not as a trialogue between humanity, Nature, and God, but instead between the soul, language, and God.[1]

Accordingly, this study pushes back on a number of commonplaces in the study of late-medieval Christian thought. Previous scholarship has given pride of place to the perceived decline of the long fourteenth century and the concomitant emergence of nominalism. While narratives of overripe late-medieval decadence, à la Huizinga, are no longer in fashion, descriptions of the age's thought as inferior to that of the thirteenth century are ubiquitous.[2] Although, in the spirit of charity, I want to acknowledge the profound anxiety animating many such scholars' navel-gazing about "relativism" and "postmodernism" (even if it is not one I share), I nevertheless think such a framework offers minimal explanatory purchase for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Navarrists' criticism of earlier medieval thought is not motivated by either logic-chopping, fundamentalist fideism, or a skeptical atheism *avant la lettre*. Instead, we have seen that the Navarrists' turn toward rhetorical language as the proper domain of theology is borne out of a conviction that the phenomenology of human life amid contingency must be the starting point of theologizing. Deductive syllogisms, totalizing schemata, and the like do raise serious language-philosophical difficulties, but—more importantly—they presume ways of knowing that do not comport with human experience and

[1] I take this idea of an earlier, twelfth-century trialogue from Willemien Otten: *From Paradise to Paradigm*, 3–4.

[2] See Huizinga's *magnum opus*, in which Gerson is a regular character: Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For an example of a negative assessment of the era see: Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 39–40. "With Ockham… the entire ontotheological synthesis began to disintegrate… Obviously, the trust in the essentially rational quality of nature that had supported traditional epistemology, has collapsed. Henceforth ideality belongs exclusively to the mind. By the same token, the transcendent factor ceases to function as an active constituent of the ontotheological synthesis."

affect. Indeed, Gerson and his confrères would see the idealism of something like an ontotheological synthesis as itself sterile and dehumanizing. Universals, haecceity, and ideal forms are small comfort in the face of the practical uncertainty of disorder, warfare, and pandemic. Thus, the Navarrists' poetic theology shows an alternate angle for approaching late-medieval thought, one from which theology is seen from outside of the ivory tower and worked out in conversation with fellow pilgrims and their own tales while on the road together. The practical, pastoral concerns of Gerson do not lead to a facile devotionalism but a rethinking of the modes of doing academic theology altogether.

Perhaps the most novel element of the reading of Navarrist theology I have presented in this dissertation is the importance of horizontal affect, of the interrelationships that become formed between people as they work to discern language and themselves. We may understood the Navarrist move away from the self as ultimately Augustinian, a rejection of the turn inward on the self (and a rejection structurally distinct from the later one of Luther). Little is certain, and, in the end, we are on a road to nowhere. But, it is no small silver lining that it is in fact a "we" on that road. When the pen fell from Gerson's hand near the end of the *Song* commentary, after all, Jean the Celestine was there to pick it up.

For the Navarrists, the soul is a reader, a writer, and a wayfarer. Language, even biblical language, is no straightforward escape hatch from life's contingency into the embrace of either universal forms or propositional certainty. However language does offer a domain uniquely suited for both the iterative work of devotional, affective formation and taking solace in the solidarity of one's comrades *in statu viae*. Even when we no longer can continue on the path, our conversation continues through the dialogue of our fellow travelers.

This then is the Navarrists' mitigated consolation for the wayfarers beset by the contingency of life *in statu viae*: every line of song, every turn of the page is a bit of life. Every falling silent, every setting down of the book is a bit of death.

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