

Response to W. David Hall

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Professor Hall's summary of Ernesto Grassi's recovery of rhetoric as philosophy is admirable especially in light of the denseness of Grassi's thought as found in his text, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition*. Hall's goal in providing his summary is to introduce religious studies to a thinker who has had little influence in the field. This goal is situated within the increased interest in the humanist tradition especially as it has been demonstrated by Professor Klemm and Professor Schweiker in *Religion and the Human Future: An Essay on Theological Humanism*. The difficulty in recovering Grassi for religious studies, as Hall demonstrates, is the completely secular nature of Grassi's thought. This is why Hall borrows Klemm's and Schweiker's theism and combines it with Grassi's philosophy to signal a new avenue for religious studies.

Hall maps out promising paths for Grassi's thought in religious studies. First, Grassi's distinction between being and Beings allows Hall to make an analogous distinction between life and integrity of life. Second, there is an appeal to Grassi's notion of *ingenium*, which Hall focuses on the human element of the term, which gives rise to imagination, fantasy, and memory. At issue, for Grassi, is a return to the humanist tradition in order to overcome the overly rational Cartesian speculation that Grassi identifies as the outcome of scholasticism.

What follows is not a critique of Professor Hall's summary, nor is it a critique of Grassi's philosophical agenda to recover the humanist tradition. Instead, I wish to touch upon what Hall recognizes as the obstacle in trying to retrieve Grassi – the secular nature of his works. I am reacting to the swiftness of specific theologians to discard the history of Christian thought and adopt a non-theological critique of culture. There are theological sources that can help in the critique of culture. It is my desire to allude to a recovery of one of these sources, which is assisted by Grassi's recovery of the humanist tradition.

Grassi is concerned with maintaining the unity of *res* and *verba*, "content" and "form", which is the unity that Vico seeks to also maintain. Grassi also recognizes that Vico followed the *res* and *verba* as he came across it in the Latin tradition. Grassi's critique of Descartes is that he split the union of "content" and "form" and simply maintained the "rational element." Grassi sees Descartes as the epitome of the scholastic movement. Unfortunately, this designation distorts one's evaluation of scholastics in the sixteenth century whom are assumed to be uninterested in the union of *res* and *verba*. While humanists of the sixteenth were adamantly critical of rational speculation employed by scholastics, contemporary scholars fail to consider that scholasticism underwent a transformation, which is especially evident in Spain. The location of this renewal may be problematic due to the Black Legend, but this takes us too far from our path. Of course, Grassi does end his *Heidegger and the Question of Renaissance Humanism* with an appeal to St. John of the Cross, an inauspicious shift for someone not interested in religion, but this may have more to do with his goal of breaking down Heidegger's insistence on the rational (Fierz, 117). Scholasticism as found among the Dominicans of the sixteenth took on a different form and method beginning with Cajetan and culminating with Francisco Vitoria and the School of Salamanca. By using Grassi's

summary of Quintilian's union of *res* and *verba*, I will gesture to how the Neo-Scholastics of the school of Salamanca were aware of and incorporated rhetoric as a philosophy into their theological enterprise and concern for human rights.

Grassi wants to maintain that the Italian humanists, as grammarians, maintain the union of *res* and *verb*, which Quintilian accomplished in the connection between object and verb which is found in grammar. For Grassi, grammar becomes an important task not only because he is a professor of literature but also because he thinks that it can lead to a philosophical course separate from Heidegger. However, Grassi's discussion of grammar follows his discussion of Quintilian's unity of *res* and *verba*, which gives the impression that this unity is only found in grammar, an inverted conclusion from Quintilian.

Quintilian had previously discussed the relationship of object and verb (Inst. Orat. 1.4, 18 and 1.5, 2), but then follows this with a discussion of the legal, the political and the eulogistic types of speech (Inst. Orat. 3.4,1-8), of which the legal and political are found in law courts. Rather than three types of speeches Quintilian will speak in terms of causes – judicial causes and extrajudicial causes – with the eulogistic being in the latter (Inst. Orat. 3.4,6). Furthermore, these speeches are discussed not in terms of the type *per se*, but according to the audiences who seek to be gratified, to be counseled, or seek to form a judgment (Inst. Orat. 3.4,6). Grassi, however, rather than draw attention to these, bypasses the judicial and moves to the extrajudicial causes which have gratification as their goal.

The dilemma with Grassi is not that he places emphasis on the poetic, but rather his emphasis is at the expense of the disunity of the orator, which Quintilian maintains can be both rhetorician and philosopher (Inst. Orat. Preface.13). The true orator is one who is concerned with and able to combine morals, science, and eloquence. This combination is what is found in many of the writings coming out of the Universidad de Salamanca such as the preeminent theologian Francisco Vitoria, sometimes referred to as the father of International Law, theologian Domingo de Soto, and the highly honored and regarded jurists Diego de Covarrubia y Leyva, known as the “Spanish Bartolus”. Following Quintilian, they understood that the legal speech provides more than an actual case but allows the emergence of the *quaestionis*, which Grassi also recognized. What Grassi failed to concede is that the *quaestio* is a foundational element of scholasticism. Nobody would question the abhorrence between the scholastics and humanists who often distanced themselves from one another. However, the situation was different among the Dominicans who often incorporated humanistic affinities. Grassi notes, “The legal “matter” hence does not consist of a mute “existing” state of affairs, but of the entire *questionableness* of the respective case.” The judicial speech maintains the union of *res* and *verba*, which is of great importance to Grassi. Rather than jumping to the time of Vico one finds rhetoric as philosophy in the sixteenth century, specifically at the *Universidad de Salamanca* in the likes of Francisco Vitoria and his followers.

Hall does an admirable job in introducing us to Ernesto Grassi, and for this I am grateful. An obstacle in Grassi, however, is his bypassing the juridical element of rhetoric and moving too quickly to the poetic. Then again, this is understandable for someone trained in literature.