ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Innovation And Continuity In Agricola's De Inuentione Dialectica

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to bring to light the fundamental tenets of a text that has undoubtedly represented a relevant step in the evolution of argumentation studies: Agricola's *De inuentione dialectica*[i]. My analysis is based on the first apparently "critical" edition, which appeared "post multas editiones" in Köln in 1557[ii], which not only offers a version of Agricola's text according to the autograph manuscript of Agricola just recovered by Alardus Aemstelredamus, but also partially reproduces the commentaries of Phrissemius, Aemstelredamus and Hadamarius, compared and unified by Ioannes Nouiomagus.

After the structure of the volume, its theoretical perspective and its educational purposes are outlined, Agricola's approach to the fundamental notion of locus is illustrated. The divergent use of the term *habitudo* by Agricola and by Medieval scholars and the removal from dialectical invention of maxims, which had been the central theoretical construct of the Medieval doctrine of loci, will allow us to consider and evaluate the polemical position of Agricola towards the Medieval tradition. Several innovative aspects of Agricola's contribution are expounded: the elaboration of a new taxonomy of loci, a different, often more precise and useful, characterization of loci, in particular of the locus from definition, and the discovery of the relevant role played by loci not only in argumentation but also in exposition. Eventually we come to show that a reading of this text in the light of contemporary argumentation theory brings to light a surprising topicality and richness of concrete contributions, especially in some dialectical and rhetorical domains, like argument schemes, topical potential, presentational techniques.

2. Three books focusing on loci
In the three books on dialectical invention (Agricola, 1557), the attitude of

Rodolphus Agricola towards tradition is inspired both by continuity and innovation.

In line with the late-ancient and medieval tradition, his main focus is centered on *loci*: the whole first (longest) book of the treatise is devoted to the investigation of the nature of loci, which are defined in general and described in detail, often by adopting punctual semantic analyses. The second book specifies the uses of loci and, eventually, the third mainly focuses on the rhetorical effectiveness of arguments and loci are again considered in this perspective.

In the Prooemium (p. 9) the three tasks ascribed by ancient rhetoric to human discourse (*oratio*) are mentioned: informing and teaching (*ut doceat*[iii]), involving (*ut moveat*), delighting (*ut delectet*). Discourse can inform without involving or delighting, but it can neither involve nor delight without informing. Therefore information proves to be its essential, ever present, function. Depending on the speaker's intention, this informative function may alternatively assume two forms: sometimes we let the hearer know something simply to make him understand it, thus fulfilling a function of *exposition*, sometimes we let somebody know something in order to establish a belief in what is said, thus performing an *argumentation* (p. 10). The author defines exposition as a discourse that only manifests the mind (*mentem* = communicative intention) of the speaker, without activating anything that aims at arousing trust in the hearer. Argumentation is instead defined as a discourse through which somebody tries to build trust in the thing he is speaking about. Now, as what is uncertain cannot as such support itself, we must infer trustworthiness moving from other, better known and more familiar things. These things are arguments or, following Cicero, reasonable devices or inventions (*probabile inventum*) through which some uncertain things are given trustworthiness. Since not everyone is able to promptly identify such devices, in Agricola's opinion, the identification of loci, understood as some seats or places whence arguments can be drawn, represented a particularly useful educational endeavor: as possible beneficiaries, he especially mentions people engaged in political, legal, educational, moral and religious discourse and stresses that the system of loci does not simply educate the mouth, by offering a rhetorical enrichment (*copia dicendi*), but it also ensures wisdom of judgment (*prouidentia*) in consulting and in pondering decisions (p. 12).

Following Cicero (Topica, 6) and Boethius (*De differentiis topicis*, 1173B), he distinguishes, within dialectic, a heuristic and an evaluative component: the latter

one is identified with Aristotelian *Analytics* and *De sophisticis elenchis* (*iudicii pars, cui omnis de modis figurisque syllogismorum praeceptio et cautio omnis captiosarum argumentationum, quas fallacias dixere, subseruit*) and is not the proper subject of Agricola's opus which is wholly devoted to the former component (*Sed nos de priore illa parte quae ad inueniendum pertinet loquemur*) (l. 1, c.18). Therefore separating the topical component from the normative one, and thus overthrowing the logically oriented Medieval tradition started by Boethius, he recovers from Roman rhetoric (in particular from Cicero and Quintilian) an approach ascribing to rhetoric a relevant role in dialectic, where dialectic, reduced to *inuentio,* appears to be mainly justified because it is useful for rhetoric. Therefore the program of Agricola's dialectic, though recovering a unitary perspective comprising rhetoric and dialectic and thus somehow, anticipating the strategic maneuvering perspective adopted by extended Pragma-Dialectics (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002; van Eemeren 2010) could hardly be compared with it, because, being exclusively committed to the *finding* (discovering) of arguments, it postpones the commitment of ensuring argumentation validity.

Here, a clarification is, however, useful. The removal of the evaluative component from the general design of the work did not at all condition Agricola's work in its actual realization, since a strong critical commitment frequently emerges from his pages. Consequently the impression prevails that dialectic and rhetoric are, *in actu exercito,* correctly reconciled.

But let us come back to the interpretation of the system of loci (*ratio locorum*) that represents the main concern of Agricola's work. His awareness of the ontological nature of loci (see pp. 18-19) is absolutely evident: "All things that are said in favor or against the standpoint are bound together and are (so to say) connected by a sort of solidarity of nature"**[iv].**

The endless variety of things and of their distinctive features cannot be embraced by any discourse nor by any mind. "Inherent to all things, there is although a common *habitudo* and all things *tend* to an analogy of nature: like the fact that all things have their own substance, all things originate from some causes and, in turn, cause something; and thus the most intelligent men have drawn from that enormous variety of things these common headings (*capita***[v]**) like substance, cause, result, and the other headings, which we shall consider in the following". A locus is nothing else but a certain aspect characterizing the thing (rei nota),

orienting us in identifying what, in relation to each standpoint, can provide acceptability.

But how should the term *habitudo* be interpreted? This term had played a central role in the Medieval doctrine of loci, where it was understood as the ontological relationship (like cause to effect, definition to defined, means to end etc.) binding the state of affairs exploited as argument to the state of affairs constituting the standpoint (Rigotti, 2008). In other words, every locus was understood as a particular type of *habitudo* in the sense of *"se habere ad"*[vi] (= to be related to). It is rather clear that in Agricola's text this term does not refer to the relational nature of loci, but to the analogous functional configuration which is shared, due to a solidarity of nature, by all things. Such *habitudo* is identified with the net of ontological roles played in different connections by all entities: all things have their own substance, all things originate from some causes and, in turn, cause something, all events take place in a certain time and so on. Curiously, though clearly misunderstanding the medieval notion of *habitudo* and reading it as the nominalization of *se habere*" (to be in a certain way) and not of "*se habere ad*" (to be in a certain relation to), Agricola's conception of loci is substantially compatible with the notion of loci elaborated by the medieval scholars. In fact, in the descriptions offered by Agricola, the headings, the loci are identified with, are relational in nature: the definition vs. the defined, the time and the place vs. the event, the efficient cause vs. the effect and so on. Nonetheless, Agricola focuses on another relational dimension of loci: they are headings (*capita*), to be understood as the semantic nodes building a sort of conceptual network which maps reality.

3. The removal of maxims
There are aspects for which Agricola distances himself more decidedly from the Medieval tradition. In general, a polemical attitude towards all medieval scholars is evident. They are cumulatively referred to as "qui post Boethium scripserunt" (see, in particular, p. 214), The renowned philosopher and theologian John Duns Scotus[vii] only appears in the formula "secta Scoti" (p.58). The medieval terminology is largely abandoned or even misunderstood (see above for *habitudo*). For important respects, his criticisms also involve Boethius from whom the Medieval tradition originates. The classification (*diuisio*) of *loci* is partially modified and, more importantly, the mediating role of maxims (*maximae propositiones*) is ignored. Now, as maxims are the inferential connections

generated by the loci**[viii]** on which the actual arguments build, *loci* are directly bound to actual arguments. In the end of the first book (pp. 205-207) our author tries to justify the absence of maxims in his system of topics. He remembers that "Boethius and those who wrote after him (*quique post eum scripserunt*) added to each locus, to adopt a usual expression, a certain Maxim, i.e. a statement, comprising in a proposition many aspects, to which undoubted trust is paid, like *Of whatever the definition is said, the defined is also said* or Of w*hatever the species is said, the genus is said too*". Now, the author decided to ignore maxims not because, in his opinion, neither Aristotle nor Cicero had considered them**[ix]**, but because he thought they were simply useless for several reasons.

Firstly, they can be construed only in relation to the loci which provide necessary arguments, but they do not fit (*parum conveniunt*) for loci providing probable arguments, which are the majority.

Secondly, there are many such loci in which these maxims cannot be comprised in any defined and sufficiently convenient form (*in nullam certam et satis conuenientem formam concludi hae maximae possint*) (p. 206). In Agricola's opinion, sometimes Boethius appears to be at pain while trying to assign to any locus its own maxim (*dum cuilibet loco maximam suam reddere cupit*) as, while the locus is, as a rule, very widely extended, the maxim often receives a very narrow scope. Several examples are given, approximately rendering Boethius' text (cf. *De differentiis topicis* 1189C) in relation to the loci from efficient cause (*Quorum efficientia naturalia sunt, eorum effecta sunt naturalia* – If the causes are natural, the effects are natural), and in relation to the locus from the matter (ibid. 1189D) (*Cuius materia deest, et id quod ex ea efficitur deest* – If the matter lacks, the thing made of this matter lacks too) and others (pp. 206-207). In my opinion, this criticism rather evidently depends on an imprecise interpretation of Boethius' text: Agricola interprets maxims as rules bijectively corresponding to loci: *cuilibet loco maximam suam reddere cupit*. Even though Boethius' text might suggest this interpretation because, in general, it pairs up one maxim with one *locus differentia*, it also manifests his awareness that maxims outnumber *loci differentiae*: "*Atque ideo pauciores esse deprehenduntur hi loci qui in differentiis positi sunt quam propositiones ipsae quarum sunt differentiae*" (1186B) and in several cases more than one maxim is given in relation to one *locus differentia* (see 1188D – 1189A, where for the locus *a partibus* two maxims are provided). Therefore, between *loci differentiae* and maxims, Boethius, and even more

explicitly the Medieval scholars**[x]**, establish an injective relation: one or more maxims, yet, in general, several maxims correspond to one locus, while only one locus corresponds to each maxim. In other words, each maxim focuses on one of the inferential implications of the locus and therefore does not exhaust the argumentative potential of the locus. This is the reason why, while the locus is more widely extended, the maxim shows to have a much narrower scope.

The third decisive reason is that, in Agricola's opinion, all in all, people who have been thoroughly taught the nature of loci do not need maxims, as they spontaneously show themselves to their mind; and, if it is not the case, these people do not deserve to be taught the loci. In other words, studying maxims is useless because they spontaneously spring from a good awareness of loci.

I feel committed to concisely evaluate the arguments brought by Agricola. The three justifications for the removal of maxims from dialectical invention indeed lack the due cogency: the first one is not at all highlighted nor, all the less, argued for; the second and the third are at least partially incompatible as the second emphasizes the difficulty to assign to the locus its own maxim and the third pretends that maxims spontaneously spring from a good awareness of loci. Moreover the second is based on a premise (the bijective nature of the relation binding maxims to loci) contradicting not only the interpretation of maxims by Boethius and the Medieval scholars, but also the significant evidences brought by them. Eventually, while the first and the second reasons criticize maxims as theoretical constructs, the third one, which is possibly the most important in the general design of the work, questions the educational and not the theoretical relevance of their study.

In fact, the removal of maxims from the system of loci might be explained by the prevailingly non-theoretical, but practical and educational purpose of this work, which is consistent with the focus on *inuentio*, already declared in the title, but it is maybe also bound to the author's lack of interest in and commitment to the study of the inferential configuration of arguments. Besides the inferential configuration of arguments could force him to reconsider the contributions of the Medieval scholars, who, in his eyes, were guilty of an excessive and useless formalism and, above all, of largely ignoring the relevance of rhetoric.

However, the unquestionable presence of a practical, educational concern in the design of the work should not prevent us from seizing those innovative, critical

and theoretical, contributions that are offered in all three books.

4. Innovative aspects

In order to better characterize Agricola's contribution I now focus on some innovative aspects of his doctrine, namely his critical attitude towards tradition, his treatment of loci, and the distinction between argumentation and exposition.

4.1. Critical attitude towards tradition

His autonomous, correctly critical, attitude towards the authorities of tradition (even those authorities whom he in general acknowledges and confirms) is often stressed and, even though the contributions by Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Themistius and Boethius are mentioned and brought out, a number of criticisms are addressed to each of them.

In particular, regarding Aristotle, Agricola's judgment is inspired by esteem and admiration, but he avoids any "*ipse dixit*" devotion: "*Ego Aristotelem summo ingenio, doctrina ... summum quidem hominem, sed hominem tamen fuisse puto*" (p.24) (I believe that Aristotle was a man of the highest intelligence, culture... a man of the highest level, but that he was a man). In other words, Aristotle was one whom something could escape, so that this could be discovered by somebody else (*aliis post se invenienda reliquerit*). Many other more specific criticisms are directed at Aristotle, in particular at the eight books of Topics. First, the scope of the considered matter is too narrow, as only the loci bound to the four predicables are tackled. Moreover, he does not describe the loci nor establish their number and their names and, very often, some matters are counted as loci that are not at all related to argumentation (like various prescriptions and suggestions to the arguer aiming at improving his performance at communicative and interactional level). Eventually, no indications are provided for the use of loci in the construction of arguments, so that the Aristotelian claim of providing an instrument which enables us to find proper arguments in favor and against every standpoint becomes vain (pp. 25-28).

Now the very hard task of implementing Aristotle's program of Topics was not fulfilled by his followers of the Peripatetic school, but by people like Cicero, who construed a list of certain and definite loci that could be universally applied. At the beginning, Cicero limited himself to listing them (in *De oratore* and *Partitiones*), then in *Topica*, the book entirely devoted to the loci, *copiosius omnia exsecutus est* (the whole matter was tackled more in detail). Unfortunately, also

in homage to the jurist Trebatius, to whom the book is devoted, Cicero draws almost all examples from civil law.

Quintilian, whom he follows on many questions, is criticized for the indeed scarce space and care devoted to loci in the fifth book of *Institutio oratoria*, (l. I, c. 3, pp. 28-30), but he is also sharply blamed in relation to an aspect which might appear as a modest detail, but, at a closer look, shows to constitute a fundamental theoretical tenet: "*Ea* [tekmeria] *Quintilianus inter argumenta non putat habenda, quia nihil post se dubii relinquant*" (Quintilian thinks that these (undoubted clues) should not be numbered as arguments because they do not leave behind any doubt). Now Agricola wonders how such an idea, which excludes from argumentation all mathematical reasoning, which is manifestly aimed at unquestionable conclusions, could enter the mind of such an intelligent man. Our author recalls that any argumentative activity aims "*ut quam minimum dubitandi relinquamus locum*" (to leave open to doubt the smallest possible space) (l. I, c. 21, p. 145).

Themistius and Boethius are also mentioned, the former for having proposed a second list of loci, and the latter for first having simply (*Boethius non aliud sane uidetur egisse*) reported Cicero's and Themistius' lists and then having compared them. This judgment is manifestly inadequate and unjust. In my opinion, it is motivated by the relevance ascribed by Boethius to the maxim (in his terminology *locus maxima*) and its differentiation from the *locus differentia maximae* (Stump 1978), Which is properly the locus. About "people who wrote after Boethius" two remarks are made by Agricola, one of which is very questionable and however not particularly relevant (they would have followed Themistius and not Boethius), while the other is profound and almost shocking: "They limited themselves to mentioning loci or to characterizing them with few words, because they considered that a deeper knowledge of loci is to be drawn from a more profound philosophy" (p. 29-30).

Particularly interesting is the conclusion of Agricola's critical overview of the state of the art: eventually, as one who was not ready to swear by the words of anybody, he had decided to each time follow the most convincing author or, in lack of a convincing author, to simply follow reason. However, he does not claim to realize anything better, he is more modestly committed to explaining the matter, maybe with less subtlety, but more clarity.

4.2. The treatment of loci

4.2.1. The taxonomy of loci

The reflections by means of which our author elaborates the classification of loci and specifies the nature of each locus are often innovative and sharp. Moreover, especially in the second book, numerous fine examples are given. The criteria that are used are concisely reported in the scheme construed by the editor on the basis of chapter 4 of the first book. (See Figure 1).

In its whole, Agricola's taxonomy presents a coherent tree structure: at the highest level, internal and external loci are distinguished, the former being situated either in the constituency (*substantia*) of the concerned thing or around it, the latter presenting a gradually decreasing closeness to the thing.

In the thing (within or around its constituency) we find the *definition* and the *predicables* (*genus, species, property*), the whole and its parts and the *coniugates,* like *wise* vs. *wisdom*, where wisdom is constitutive of the wise man not in order to be a man, but to be a wise man. Around the constituency are, in relation to a subject, those states of affairs, both static (*adiacentia*) and dynamic (*actus*), in which the subject is involved, and the subject itself.

Regarding the external loci, a strong differentiation emerges: the *cognata* embrace both *causes* (*efficient and final*) and *outcomes* (*effects* and *destinata*); the *applicita* comprise *place*, *time* and the *connexa*, which are the *correlative states*, i.e. the states of the thing entailing the presence of another thing (like being a married or rich man, which entails the presence of a wife and of a certain wealth respectively); the *accidents* gather rather different non-constitutive aspects and circumstances; eventually the *incompatibles* (*repugnantia*) comprise *opposites* and *divergents*.

If we compare Agricola's taxonomy of loci with the taxonomy proposed by Boethius, which was later largely confirmed and deepened by many Medieval scholars, numerous similarities but also relevant differences emerge, mainly in relation to the frontier dividing internal and external loci. Indeed, even though the most general distinction between internal and external loci is confirmed, and the maximum of closeness to the thing, i. e. to the standpoint, is identified with the loci from definition and from the whole and its parts, numerous loci, like the causes and the *applicita*, which were traditionally numbered among the internal ones, are moved to the other class. The criterion for the belonging to the internal

loci had been identified by Buridan (*Summulae de dialectica*. 6.2.3) with the fact that either the two terms constituting the *habitudo* of the locus denote the same reality (*supponunt pro eodem*) or the reality denoted by one is included in the reality denoted by the other for some mode of "being in" (in my opinion, in the sense that they belong to the same possible world). Thus the comparison of Agricola's taxonomy with the traditional model shows that a strong and relevant justification of the fundamental dichotomy got lost. The classification of the *applicita* among the external loci might also be questioned, first because time and place are strictly constitutive of situations (*adiacentia*) and events (*actus*), which are consistently numbered among the internal loci, and then because the correlatives (*connexa*), like king vs. kingdom or husband vs. wife (where the first term imposes a coexistence condition on the second) prove to equally pertain to the internal loci.

However, despite some inconsistencies and a certain theoretical impoverishment, apparently due to the negligence of the relevant contributions provided by Medieval scholars, Agricola's taxonomy constitutes a real advancement, regarding the identification and justification of the single loci and the innovative categories adopted in the construction of the major classes.

4.2.2. Definitions towards ontologies

Let us now consider some of the fine analyses elaborated by Agricola for loci. His treatment of definition is rigorous and innovative; definition is first distinguished from description (p. 42-43), because its purpose is to say what the thing is and not how it is. Agricola confirms the validity of the classical Aristotelian procedure for defining, which connects the next genus (*genus proximum*) with the specific difference. However, he also remarks that perfectly fitting definitions like *Homo est animal rationale,* where *rationale* really identifies the constitutive trait characterizing humans among all other animals, are not available for non-humans. For all other non-human species, which are called *bruta* in Latin, like donkeys, mules and horses, no specific difference in form of one predicate is available. A conjunction of predicates like *auritus* (long-eared), *solidis pedibus* (single toed) and *foecundus* (fertile), here plays the role of specific difference, as it enables us to differentiate the nature of donkeys from all other animals: single toed are only donkeys, horses and mules, but horses are not long-eared and mules are not fertile. Consequently: "*itaque tandem velut gradibus quibusdam ad id quod definitum est peruenitur*" (eventually, we arrive, by climbing a kind of steps,

at the defined). Not simply connecting genus with specific difference, but conjoining often complex sets of predicates (see *complexus definitionis*, p. 43) is necessary in order to define many entities or states of affairs. This way, definition procedures get very close to the ontologies**[xi]** elaborated in current trends of semantics.

Agricola also stresses the rhetorical usefulness to the arguer of designing such definitions / ontologies, not only in order to know the things, "which, having been made explicit by means of the definition, suggest to the mind – it is strange how it happens – some precise orientations regarding the thoughts that are being planned, but also to enhance the arguer's authority (*parat auctoritatem disserenti*). The author proposes two fair examples, by defining as many social realities: *ius* (law) and *ciuitas* (political community). In both cases the definition is the result of intense considerations through which the distinctive function of each predicate of the definition is justified.
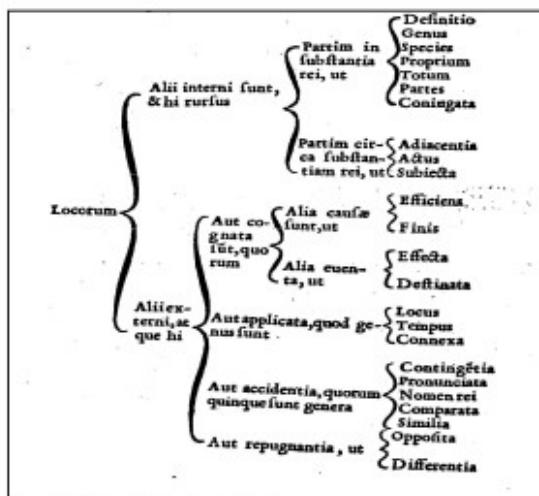

Figure 1. Agricola's typology of loci

More in detail, a conceptual basis constituting the genus is enriched (specified) step by step, by adding all traits that prove to be needed in order to differentiate the concerned domain from all other domains. I simply report the conclusion of the second definition procedure: "*Dicemus itaque ciuitatem esse multitudinem collectam, ad statum rerum suarum tuendum per se sufficientem, quae consensu sit legum uitaeque conniuncta*"(p. 44) (Therefore we shall say that a *ciuitas* is a multitude of people living together, in itself autonomous in the defense of its goods, and that shares the same laws and the same ways of life).

4.2.3. Analysis of the domain of events and actions

In general, Agricola's taxonomy seems to upset the system of Aristotelian categories. The *loci circa substantiam* (around the constituency) embrace the categories of quality and quantity under the unique label of *adiacentia* (covering the static states of affairs) (l. I, c.11), while the categories of action and passion are subsumed under the wider category of events or *dynamic* states of affairs ("*Quod igitur proprie actus est, id oportet ut sit in quadam agitatione... positum*", p. 93), which are named *actus* (l. I, c. 12) and the locus of subject comes to coincide with the substance in which both static and dynamic states of affairs are inherent (l. I, c. 13). Within the locus of events (*actus*), action (*actio*) is specified as a purposeful behavior, (p. 35 and p. 92: "*finem aliquem respicit*"). Interestingly, the author makes a distinction between the purpose and the effect of an action and gives a fine example to highlight it (p. 36): shoes are the effect of shoemaker's action, while protection of feet is its purpose.

4.3. Argumentation vs. Exposition

In the 16th chapter of the second book, Agricola brings to light that *loci*, as headings of the semantic network shaping the map of reality, do not exhaust their role in the construction of arguments (see also Mack 1993), but are not less relevant in *expositio*, i.e. in the presentation of reality. The role played in exposition is particularly important for two main reasons: it stresses the ontological nature of loci, as it is properly understood by Agricola, and specifies the differences, without neglecting the connections, between explanation and argumentation.

Loci are not exclusively argumentative categories. They are the nodes of the ontological structure of reality and are used in its representation for describing it, explaining it and arguing for it and from it.

Moreover, Agricola, considering, in particular, causal exposition or explanation, discovers that the same state of affairs can be referred to both in explanatory and in argumentative terms. A renowned passage of Virgil's Aeneid (p. 331) is mentioned (*Urbs antiqua fuit, Tyrii tenuere coloni, Karthago* ... Aeneid I Book, vv.12-80), in which the poet recollects the causes why Juno hated Aeneas. In a different communicative situation, in which Juno's hate against Aeneas might be doubted (thus becoming a standpoint), the discourse would be transformed into an argumentation and the causal relations used by Virgil in order to explain

Juno's hostile feeling would be used as arguments to prove the truth of this feeling. Another interesting example refers to the eclipse of the moon (p. 332). Let us consider the interposition of the earth between the sun and the moon. One can explain the eclipse of the moon as the effect of such an interposition, but the evidence of this particular position of the earth could, in another communicative interaction, also be interpreted as an argument allowing to predict an eclipse of the moon.

5. Conclusive remarks

Both, innovation and continuity characterize Agricola's contribution to the study of argumentation. While breaking with the Medieval tradition and adopting in relation to it a decidedly polemical attitude, he established a critical continuity with Antiquity. Numerous innovative aspects emerge in his doctrine: his autonomous, correctly critical, attitude towards the authorities of tradition, his original classification and definition of loci, the often sharp and fertile insights through which the nature of each locus is highlighted, the richness of examples, the discovery of the relevant role played by loci in exposition.

Indeed, despite a certain theoretical impoverishment, partly depending, in my opinion, on the negligence of the relevant contributions provided by Medieval scholars, Agricola's taxonomy represents a substantial advancement, both regarding the identification and justification of the single loci and the innovative categories adopted in the construction of the major classes. Moreover, thanks to the discovery of the relevant role played by them not only in argumentation but also in exposition, loci are no longer exclusively argumentative categories. They become, in this new perspective, the nodes of the ontological structure of reality that are available, in the construction of human discourse, for the representation of reality aiming at describing it, explaining it and arguing for it and from it.

Agricola's work on dialectical invention indeed represents an important contribution to the development of rhetoric and argumentation theory.

However, Agricola's work is not only an important chapter of the history of our discipline: for numerous topics it deserves to be considered in the current scientific debate.

This holds in particular for the still controversial problem of arguments schemes that may be regarded as the present day heirs of loci. Evermore, Agricola's

position represents in relation to argument schemes a very audacious challenge: by extending the relevance of loci beyond argumentation to the descriptive and explanatory discourses, he linked loci to the meta-categorial level of rhetorical relations (also called connective predicates) on which discursive congruity mainly depends (Rigotti 2005; Rocci 2005; Rigotti & Rocci 2006) Eventually, he is our legitimate interlocutor also in relation to the concept of Strategic Maneuvering (van Eemeren 2010), in particular for the invention and selection of arguments and for presentation techniques. The rhetorical dimension is certainly predominant in his approach.

However, the critical remark moved to Quintilian also proves his strong commitment to dialectical cogency.

NOTES
[i] Born near to Groningen at Baflo (natione Friso) (February 17, 1444), Agricola was a "Dutch" scholar, humanist, and musician. He is known to us mainly as the author of the book we are now considering. The original Dutch name Roelof Huusmann was translated by himself into Rodolphus Agricola. Educated first in St. Maartens school in Groningen, he then matriculated at the university of Erfurt and then at the university of Louvain, where he graduated as *magister artium* (distinguishing himself for the purity of his Latin and his skill in disputation). He concentrated his studies on Cicero and Quintilian, and during his university years added French and Greek to his ever-growing language repertoire.

After living for a time in Paris, where he worked with Heynlin von Stein, – a classics specialist – he went, in around 1464, in Italy, where he associated with humanist masters and statesmen. In the years 1468- 1475 he studied at the University of Pavia, and later went to Ferrara, where he attended lectures on the Greek language of the famous Theodorus Gaza (c. 1400 – 1475), also called by the epithet *Thessalonicensis*, a Greek humanist and translator of Aristotle, one of the Greek scholars who were the leaders of the revival of Greek culture in the 15th century. Here Agricola wholly devoted himself to the study of classical texts. He won renown for the elegance of his Latin style and his knowledge of philosophy. Also while in Ferrara he was formally employed as the organist to the ducal chapel, which was one of the most opulent musical establishments in Europe. He held that post until 1477, after which, having visited Rome, he definitively turned to his native country in 1481. Once in "Germany" again, he spent time in Dilligen.

It was in Dilligen in 1479 that Agricola finished *De inuentione dialectica*. In 1482, on the invitation of Johann von Dalberg, bishop of Worms, with whom he had become friendly while in Italy at the university of Pavia, he accepted a professorship at the University of Heidelberg and for three years lectured there and at Worms on the Greek literature. In 1485 Agricola accompanied Dalberg, who was sent as an ambassador to Innocent III the new elected Pope in Rome, but was struck gravely ill on the journey back to home. He died in the autumn of the same year "*mente in Deum porrectissima*". In the cultural history of Europe of the late fifteenth century, he is considered as the father of northern European humanism (Vasoli, 1968).

[ii] *Rodolphi Agricolae Phrisii de inuentione dialectica libri omnes integri et recogniti iuxta autographi, nuper D. Alardi Aemstelredami opera in lucem educti fidem, atque doctissimis scholiis illustrati,* Ioannis Phrissem, Alardi Aemstelredami, Reinardi Hadamarii. Quorum scholia exactissimo iudicio contulit ac congessit Ioannes Nouiomagus. Coloniae Anno M. D. LVII. This is the work Agricola is particularly known for. There is a recent edition by Lothar Mundt, *Rudolf Agricola. De inventione dialectica libri tres* (1992).

[iii] The Latin word *doceo* means in general contexts "to let know" or "to inform", and in the educational contexts "to teach".

[iv] Here and in some other passages of the paper Agricola's Latin text is rendered through my own English translation.

[v] The term is used by Cicero (Topica 39) with a different meaning in relation to the argument from genus, which should not necessarily be identified with the ultimate genus (*non erit necesse usque a capite arcessere*), but simply with the immediately relevant genus.

[vi] The following passages of Peter of Spain, Abelard and Buridan clearly highlight the notion of *habitudo*; interestingly, while the first passage only underlines the relational nature of locus, the second also focuses on the inferential strength ensured by locus to maxim and the third moreover ascribes to locus the communicative potential of maxim:

"*Locus a causa efficiente est habitudo ipsius ad suum effectum*" (Petri Hispani *Summulae logicales*, 5.24);

"*Est autem locus-differentia ea res in cuius habitudine ad aliam firmitas consecutionis consistit.*" (Abaelardi *De dialectica*, 263);

"*Locus-differentia maximae est termini ex quibus constituitur maxima et ex quorum habitudine ad invicem maxima habet notitiam et veritatem. Verbi gratia, cum haec propositio 'Quidquid vere affirmatur de genere vere affirmatur de*

specie´ sit locus maxima, isti termini 'species et 'genus´sunt locus-differentia maximae: ex habitudine enim speciei ad suum genus maxima habet veritatem et efficaciam" (Buridani *Summulae de dialectica* 6.2.2).

[vii] John Duns Scotus (1265/66-1308) was one of the most influential philosophers and theologians of the of the 13TH and14^TH centuries. His brilliant thought earned him the nickname "the Subtle Doctor". Topics like the semantics of religious language, the problem of universals, the nature of human freedom were innovatively investigated by him. For a general overview of his work and his life see Gilson Ė.-H. (1952)

[viii] The role played by maxims in the inferential organization of arguments is expounded more in detail in Rigotti & Greco-Morasso (2010).

[ix] While this is the case for Cicero, it is not indeed the case for Aristotle who, though not specifying explicitly the notion of maxim, often represents the topoi in form of maxim-like rules (Braet 2005; Rigotti 2008).

[x] In Abelard's *Dialectica* (264) loci (*maximarum propositionum differentiae)* are said to be fewer *(pauciores)* than maxims, because "*eiusdem differentiae multae maximae propositiones esse possunt*" (the same locus differentia can have many maxims).

[xi] The term ontology refers, especially in Aristotelian philosophical tradition, to the doctrine of being. Thus the traditional philosophical concept of ontology is mainly meant to deal with questions concerning what entities exist or at what conditions they can be said to exist, by what relations they are bound together and how they can be grouped and related within a hierarchy, and subdivided according to similarities and differences. More recently, within computer science and information science, the term ontology has been used for referring to a formal representation of a set of concepts within a domain and the relationships between those concepts, that may be used to define the domain and to reason about its (constitutive) properties. In my opinion, while, in general, loci are situated by Agricola in the domain defined by the first notion of ontology, Agricola's understanding of definition is close to this second notion of ontology.

REFERENCES

Agricola Rodolphus (1557). *Rodolphi Agricolae Phrisii de inuentione dialectica libri omnes integri et recogniti iuxta autographi, nuper D. Alardi Aemstelredami opera in lucem educti fidem, atque doctissimis scholiis illustrati,* Ioannis Phrissem, Alardi Aemstelredami, Reinardi Hadamarii. Quorum scholia exactissimo iudicio contulit ac congessit Ioannes Nouiomagus. Coloniae Anno M. D. LVII.

Boethius, A.M.S. *De differentiis topicis: Patrologia Latina* 1173B – 1216D. (http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/resources/boethius/De_differentiis_topicis.txt)

Braet, A. (2005). The Common Topic in Aristotle's Rhetoric: Precursor of the Argumentation Scheme. *Argumentation, 19*, 65-83.

Bochenski, M. (1947, ed.). *Petri Hispani Summulae Logicales.* Torino: Marietti.

Buridan, J. (2001). *Summulae de Dialectica, an annotated translation with a philosophical introduction by G. Klima*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Colombo, S. (1967, ed.). P. Vergilii Maronis Opera. Torino: SEI.

De Rijk, L.M. (1970, ed.). *Petrus Abaelardus, Dialectica: First Complete Edition of the Parisian* Manuscript. Assen: Van Gorcum.

Eemeren, F.H., van (2010). *Strategic Maneuvering in Argumentative Discourse*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Eemeren, F.H. van, & Houtlosser, P. (2002). Strategic manoeuvring in argumentative discourse: mantaining a delicate balance. In F.H. van Eemeren & P. Houtlosser (Eds.), *Dialectic and Rhetoric: the warp and woof of argumentation analysis* (pp. 131-159), Dortrech: Kluwer Academic.

Gilson, É.-H. (1952). Jean Duns Scot. Introduction à ses positions fondamentales. J. Vrin/Paris.

Mack, P. (1993). *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic*. Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill.

Reinhardt, T. (2003, ed.). *Marcus Tullius Cicero, Topica*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rigotti, E. (2005). Congruity Theory and Argumentation. *Studies in Communication Sciences* (special issue), 75-96.

Rocci, A. (2005). Connective Predicates in Monologic and Dialogic Argumentation. *Studies in Communication Sciences* (special issue), 97-118.

Rigotti, E. (2008). Locus a causa finali. *L'analisi linguistica e letteraria* (special issue 2/2), 559-576.

Rigotti, E., & Greco Morasso, S. (2010). Comparing the Argumentum Model of Topics to other contemporary approaches to argument schemes: the procedural and material components. *Argumentation, 24*, 489–512.

Rigotti E., & Rocci A. (2006). Tema-rema e connettivo: la congruità semantico-pragmatica del testo. In G. Gobber, M.C. Gatti, & S. Cigada (Eds.), *Syndesmoi: connettivi nella realtà dei testi* (pp. 3-44), Milano: Vita e Pensiero.

Ross, W.D. (1958, ed.). *Aristotelis Topica et Sophistici Elenchi.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stump, E. (1978, ed.). *Boethius's "De topicis differentiis"*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell

University Press.

Vasoli, C. (1968). *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo. "Invenzione" e "Metodo" nella cultura del XV e XVI secolo.* Milano: Feltrinelli

Winterbottom, M. (1970, ed.). *M. Fabi Quintiliani Institutionis oratoriae libri duodecim.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.