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Title*

Treatise

Synonyms (if there are any)

Abstract* (around 250 words)

The Renaissance treatise, lat. *tractatus*, is defined by its format as an explanatory text presenting description, arguments and evidence to formulate a valid opinion about an object of knowledge. The variety of topics ranges through all the early scholastic disciplines. The following characterization of treatises is based on a thorough study of Latin European treatises in print that have "tractatus" in their title and have been catalogued by the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC). USTC's chronological range is from the beginning of print in the 1450s to the end of the 16th century.

Authors used the notion of tractatus in philosophy, broadly defined, with roughly the following several aspects of reasoning: encyclopedic showcases; interpretations and re-organisations of ancient and medieval texts; mathematical, astrological and cosmographical descriptions; and logical thinking. Whereas these forms evince different aspects of reasoning and modes

of discussion, the term tractatus may be introduced at the same time merely as an organisational element, and refer to the late antique indication of separate essays on the same subject within the same volume.

The notion of philosophical treatise we are familiar with through the work by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1922), the tractatus logicus was not the sole form that Renaissance philosophical treatises assumed. On the contrary, we acknowledge a wealth of forms and formats, and different ways of argumentation and collecting of evidence, all connected under the header "philosophy" and "tractatus". We can reasonably conclude that the authors in the 16th century were highly experimental, trying out new forms for reasoning and explaining.

Heritage and rupture with the tradition

The Renaissance treatise, lat. *tractatus*, is defined by its format as an explanatory text presenting description, arguments and evidence to formulate a valid opinion about an object of knowledge, lat. res. The variety of topics ranges through all the early scholastic disciplines and comprehends encyclopedia works such as an illustrated compendium about the identification of herbs, the *Tractatus de Herbis* (1440), today in the British Library as well as juridical discussions such as those about the jurisdiction of matrimony in the *Tractatus de Matrimonio Regis Anglia* (1530), or categorically organised displays of architectural forms (*Tractatus de Architectura,* c1250).

To stay as narrowly as possible within the contemporary notion of *tractatus*, and at the same time to try to embrace all of Europe, the following characterization of treatises is based on a thorough study of all—not only philosophical—Latin European treatises in print that have "tractatus" in their title and have been catalogued by the Universal Short Title Catalogue, abbreviated USTC. USTC's chronological range is from the beginning of print in the 1450s to the end of the 16th century. There are currently 3860 treatises catalogued that match the said criteria. The database is a work in progress, notwithstanding the fact that it is the most comprehensive of all databases on Renaissance writing that are available on the Internet for the use of quantitative and qualitative study. As soon as the 17th century is available in its entirety, this article will be updated accordingly.

Philosophy in the context of the Renaissance meant different topics. To get a grip on the notion and format of tractatus and find specifics for philosophical treatises, I will use the term philosophy as broadly conceived as possible. I work with a notion that derives from Gregor Reisch's Freiburg published *Margarita Philosophica* (1503), of an enhanced curriculum of the seven artes liberales plus ethics and physics. I hereby leave aside the often-contradictory disciplinary borders and developments of todays' philosophy. To explain my cases, I will use samples that I consider most highly representative for certain aspects of topics and formats connected with the Latin notion of treatise.

Leaving aside all concern with different editions of the same work, there are clear preferences of the notion in certain countries: Of the overall 3860

"tractatus", 1479 were printed in the Italian States, 995 in France, 946 in the Holy Roman Empire, 138 in Spain, 129 in the Low Countries, 96 in the Swiss Confederation, 28 in England, 26 in Poland, 17 without country, and 9 in Portugal. Measured in percentage of the Latin print production of the countries or regions in question, the Italian States lead with 3.85%, followed by Spain (2.85%) and France (2.52%). Portugal (1.86%) and the Holy Roman Empire (1.74%) follow next, and the last group consists of England (1.12%), Poland (0.99%), the Low Countries (0.95%) and the Swiss (0.92%). The figures show that the Latin term is not used as frequently in the German, English, Dutch and Polish speaking countries as in the world of Roman languages (with three-language Switzerland as an exception). A closer look leads to the question, of whether there was a purely linguistic decision to use other forms that come closer to the vernacular, or if we have here a development that has to do with rising Protestantism, which had an effect especially on the development of juridical and religious texts.

Here I opt for the second possibility, because over fifty percent of all titles using the term *tractatus* are found in the fields of jurisprudence (1370) and religion (837). It is probable that new developments in Protestant jurisprudence and religion would prefer to erase an allusion to the medieval scholastic tractatus by using other title key words, rather than taking the notion forward. This would explain why the term is used less in territories such as the Holy Roman Empire or parts of the Netherlands and the British Isles. It does not explain possible forms of relapse in the 17th century, as mentioned at the end of this article. I don't dwell on this here, because we have defined jurisprudence and religion as

part of those disciplines that are outside Gregor Reisch's definition of philosophy. With medicine (296) excluded as well, what remains (1357) are the developing needs of the broadening artes plus ethics and physics. The ever more specialised disciplines pushed the format of tractatus with them in different directions. Growing out of medieval jurisprudence in both canon and civil law, and re-merged with classical literature, the format of the tractatus developed within the preferred ways and methods of reasoning that the disciplines adopted over the centuries with the help of the learned community commonly known as republic of letters.

Innovative and original aspects

Throughout the whole time from 1450 to 1600, authors used the notion of tractatus in philosophy, broadly defined, with roughly the following several aspects of reasoning: encyclopedic showcases; interpretations and re-organisations of ancient and medieval texts; mathematical, astrological and cosmographical descriptions; and logical thinking. Whereas these forms evince different aspects of reasoning and modes of discussion, the term tractatus may be introduced at the same time merely as an organisational element, and refer to the late antique indication of separate essays on the same subject within the same volume, such as in the legendary Hermes Trismegistus' treatise on alchemy, *Septem tractatus seu capitula Hermetis Trismegisti, aurei*, here in an edition from Strasbourg, 1566. A few samples shall demonstrate the lay-out of tractatus (plural) in Renaissance Europe.

Attributed to the Frankfurt/Main town physician Johannes Wonnecke of Kaub (Johannes of Cuba), an early printed encyclopedia of natural history is the *Ortus Sanitatis* (c1507). A version of this book, containing only the part on herbs, came out first in Latin in 1484, and later in 1485 in German. (Hirsch 1876) The last edition was published in 1538. The 1507 Latin edition separates the book into different tractatus: one each on herbs, animals, birds, fish, stones and, in a way that clearly shows it is a medical reference book, urines. Each tractatus has encyclopedic entries in alphabetical order, here called chapters, capitula, most of them with identifying pictures in woodcut technique. Each chapter contains the physical description and medical use of exactly one species: Many small chapters combined to make one treatise, and six treatises make one book. The treatise on herbs is the most comprehensive of all, with more than 200 leaves, more than 500 illustrations, and accordingly 530 capitula. Its large number of leaves accounts for more than half of the whole book. An alphabetical index for each of the book parts placed at the end of the book tells the reader about the medical use of the different species. It helps the practitioner to find the right plants, animals or stones for medical recipes. The development of encyclopedic printed reference books on natural history starts with such works that used in its Latin version organizational terms such as the established *tractatus*.

In 1535 and later, Heinrich Glarean published a new and annotated edition of Donat's Latin grammar together with his own eight treatises, tractatus or epitomes, summaries, on Donat's topics: on generic nouns, their declension, comparative forms, irregularities, the conjugation, grammatical rules, on

syllables, and figures of speech such as tautologies or aenigmas. (Donatus 1535 and later; Donatus 1540 and later. See also an earlier version: Donatus 1527.) Glarean's eight treatises explain with many examples, how to understand and apply Donat's rules. He thus extended Donat' s eight subjects radically. While the aim for Donatus' grammar had been to make it short for children to memorize the declensions and conjugations of noun and verb, Glarean had a quite different pedagogical concept: With more than 100 folios in total, his treatises were not to be memorized, they were explanatory statements to consult. Thus the book emerged from the level of dictation manual for teachers of small children to become a reference book for independent scholars of every age. With his eight tractatus, Glarean had made the ancient text accessible for self-study and as a repetitorium.

A highlight among the late medieval commentaries on late antique commentaries and Aristotle's logical work, the questions about universals and predicaments (Quaestiones de Universalia...) that the Oxonian Franciscan John Duns Scotus had written before 1295 were used in the second half of the 16th century as university texts. The Paduan professor Gaspare Torri (1531-1595), with his Franciscan Greyfriar convent name Costanzo Boccadifuoco (also: Costanzo Sarnano) (see Moroni 1840), explained them to his students, and published his lectures in 1576 in Venice. (Boccadifuoco 1576) In this collected volume, he refers to Duns Scotus' chapters as a sequence of "quaestiones", to highlight the scholastic format of late medieval syllogistic argumentation. He added one "tractatus" that he wrote himself to the volume: In it, Boccadifuoco introduced his adolescent students, as he called them, to the construction modes of the

syllogistic quaestio, and thus gave them a manual not only to understand Duns Scotus' way of constructing logic deductions, but also a means to formulate their own. (Boccadifuoco 1576, 503-525) Seven years later, in 1583, Boccadifuoco finally published the amended original text of Duns Scotus itself, prefaced by a short biography of the doctor subtilis, as Duns Scotus was called. (Boccadifuoco 1583. More information on the reception of Duns Scotus with recent bibliography in: Dreyer, Mehl, Vollet, eds. 2013)

Impact and legacy

With his work Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus (Wittgenstein 1922), the Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein set a milestone in a new 20th century direction of philosophical argumentation designed to understand and criticize the use of language in relation to the perception of the world. In Bertrand Russell's words, "Mr Wittgenstein is concerned with the conditions for a logically perfect language....that the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it only fulfills this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate." (Russell 1922)

Wittgenstein's predecessors who used the title "tractatus logicus" were philosophers of the Holy Roman Empire who published in the 17th century. The tractatus logicus was a highly formalised genre used by universities in the Holy Roman Empire. Two of the many instances of this genre are singled out here, both exercises in syllogistic argumentation. The first two books with the title

"tractatus logicus" in the combined databases VD16 and VD17 were published in Giessen near Frankfurt/Main by the Lutheran philosophy professor at the university of Giessen Christoph Scheibler. (Scheibler 1619a and 1619b) The databases VD16 and VD17 include publications from German-speaking lands of the 16th and 17th centuries and are curated by the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in München. Scheibler brought out a treatise on propositions and axioms, and another one on syllogisms. He explained first the structure of truth-bearing sentences and presuppositions, and second, the methods of logical thinking, referring back to Aristotle and the medieval tradition of quaestio. (Roncaglia 2003) The second example of tractatus logicus is a published exam for the philosophical doctorate in logic at the university of Wittenberg. (Caselius, Boehm 1633) The answering student was Christoph Boehm, while the philosophy professor Martin Caselius presided over the exam. Published dissertations were quite common in the Holy Roman Empire from the 17th century on. (For further information on published dissertations in early modern universities, see Marti 2011.) There is no tractatus logicus in the UStC database stemming from the 16th century, but there are 1008 Latin entries dealing with "dialectica" in this time, mostly without the formal "tractatus". "Dialectica", as Sister Mary Anthony Brown put it, (Brown 1966, 26) was that part of logic, which taught how to formulate an argument. With the tractatus logicus, the 17th century saw a revival of medieval scholastic forms emphasizing the syllogistic quaestio. (For further information on connections between the revival of medieval scholastic and the revival of metaphysics, see the articles in Posy and Ferejohn 1993; Hartbecke 2006; Smith 2010.)

The notion of philosophical treatise we are familiar with, the tractatus logicus, was not the sole form that Renaissance philosophical treatises assumed. On the contrary: Dipping into the 15th and 16th century, we saw a wealth of forms and formats, and different ways of argumentation and collecting of evidence, all connected under the header "philosophy" and "tractatus". Even though it is clear that most of the tractatus (plural) referred in one way or another to writings from antiquity and the middle ages, we can reasonably conclude that the authors in the 16th century were highly experimental, trying out new forms for reasoning and explaining.

Cross-References (if there are any; please include a list of other entries in this encyclopedia that may be of further interest to your readers.)

Entries concerning Textbook; Commentary; Scheibler;

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