Virtus Sermonis *and the Trinity: Marsilius of Inghen and the Semantics of Late Fourteenth-Century Theology*

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> *das mit dem 'Wortlaut', das ginge nicht länger mehr*
> — Theodor Fontane, *Der Stechlin*

The normative use of the Church Fathers and the *theologi approbati*, who were among the most important *auctoritates* next to the Scriptures, demonstrates that late-medieval theologians were faithful to tradition. This predilection for tradition was affirmed by, and institutionalized in, the university, where a fixed list of texts was read and commented upon across generations.[1]

While other disciplines also showed a tendency toward traditionalism, late-medieval theologians relied heavily on the traditional thinking that rested on the basic principle of a science dealing with God. That is, the source of theology should be found in divine revelation and divinely inspired tradition rather than any sort of *human* imagination.[2]

The tenet that religious truth must be derived from revelation and tradition alone did not, however, prevent medieval theology from being subject to a process of radical change, one in which new methods of thinking about the divine and its creation were developed. Such novel methods were motivated by new methodologies in the fields of grammar and logic and, in the fourteenth century, also of mathematics and physics.[3]

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1. The medieval notion of *auctoritas* and the use of a fixed list of texts is discussed in L. M. de Rijk, *La Philosophie au Moyen-Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), pp. 82–105. As to the educational system, see J. Hamesse, ed., *Manuels, Programmes de Cours et Techniques d'Enseignement dans les Universités Mediévales* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut d'Études Médiévales de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 1994).

2. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae,* Pars 1, q. 1, a. 8, *ad* 2: "argumentari ex auctoritate est maxime proprium huius doctrinae (sc. sacrae doctrinae), eo quod principia huius doctrinae per revelationem habentur."

3. Cf. L. Valente, *Phantasia contrarietatis. Contraddizioni scritturali, discorso teologico e arti del linguaggio nel De tropis loquendi di Pietro Cantore (†1197)* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1997), esp. the extensive bibliography; and C. Marmo, ed., *Vestigia, Imagines, Verba. Semiotics and Logic in Medieval Theological Texts (XIIth–XIVth Century)*

These changes forced theologians to reflect on the nature and status of their discipline, especially with regard to the sources to be used and to the methods by which they were to be read and understood.[4] This problem touches on vocabulary and methodology, which cannot reasonably be treated in sufficient detail here. I will thus limit myself to the discussion of the concept of *virtus sermonis*, which played an important role in the debate over scientific methodology, and to focus on the tension between tradition and logical techniques.[5]

The concept of *virtus sermonis* is understood to mean that which is properly intended by a word or words, with two possible interpretations as to where the proper intention comes from: the standard use of logic or the intention of the speaker. In the everyday pattern of speech the two will generally coincide; however, in the case of theology, they often differ. The Scriptures speak about God metaphorically and do not always use words according to their common meaning. Like their sources, theologians often do the same. The proper meaning of a word is thus changed, according to the intention of the author, who adapts his language to render intelligible those things that are difficult to understand.[6]

In the fourteenth century, the use of the concept of *virtus sermonis* or *vis sermonis* increased significantly, due to developments in the field of logic that induced theologians to reflect on the meaning of words and on the truth of propositions. By the mid-fourteenth century, a growing interest in tradition became apparent, which was expressed through the use of both Augustine and Anselm's works and the increased pursuit of an adherence to the *communis opinio theologorum.*[7]

(Turnhout: Brepols, 1997). Interesting observations concerning the fourteenth century can also be found in W. J. Courtenay, *Schools and Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

4. Still very useful on the subject are A. Lang, *Die Entfaltung des apologetischen Problems in der Scholastik des Mittelalters* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962); and Lang, *Die theologische Prinzipienlehre der mittelalterlichen Scholastik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964). See also U. Köpf, *Die Anfänge der theologischen Wissenschaftstheorie im 13. Jahrhundert* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, 49) (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974); and G. R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

5. On the notion of *virtus sermonis,* see W. J. Courtenay, *Force of Words and Figures of Speech: The Crisis over* virtus sermonis *in the Fourteenth Century, Franciscan Studies* 44 (1984): 107–28; and Z. Kaluza, "Les sciences et leurs langages. Note sur le statut du 29 décembre 1340 et le prétendu statut perdu contre Ockham," in *Filosofia e teologia nel trecento. Studi in ricordo di Eugenio Randi,* ed. L. Bianchi (Louvain-la-Neuve: Federation Internationale des Instituts d'Etudes Medievales, 1994), pp. 197–258.

6. Evans, *Language and Logic,* pp. 51–65.

7. On the growing influence of Augustine, see H. A. Oberman, *Werden und Wertung der Reformation* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1979), 82–140. See also L. Grane, A. Schindler, M. Wriedt, eds., *Auctoritas patrum. Zur Rezeption der Kirchenväter im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1993); and L. Grane, A. Schindler, M. Wriedt, eds., *Auctoritas patrum II. Neue Beiträge zur Rezeption der Kirchenväter im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1998).

These two movements were not independent of each other. The study of logic and the reading of traditional authors made the difference between the two evident. Traditional texts appeared not always to have been written according to the rules of logic. In fact, there seemed to be a gap between the languages of logic and tradition. However, without doubting the truth of logic, most theologians sided with the *communis opinio theologorum*. The rules of logic remained generally accepted, but, in theology, they had to give way to tradition whenever the two came into opposition.[8]

Marsilius of Inghen, to whom this article is devoted, provides a striking case in point. He was well-versed in logic and contributed significantly to its development, using his logical skills also in his theological writings. At the same time, he was sensitive to tradition. He worked in a period when originality and individuality were disappearing from theology, giving way to school adherence and traditionalism. As theological practice became more and more important, theoretical skills were no longer used for discovering new things; rather, they were deployed for clarifying and justifying traditional knowledge. The latter point is evident from the sources Marsilius refers to in his commentary on the *Sentences*, his most important theological writing. Next to Adam Wodeham, Robert Holcot, and Gregory of Rimini, Marsilius quoted extensively from Alexander of Hales, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventure, authors who gained authority as *doctores famosi* in the second half of the fourteenth century. On several occasions, he also stated that he would not go against tradition. He thought that other theologians had pushed the matter too far in their application of logic to theology. On Marsilius's view, though such theologians might have held positions ruled true according to logic, their positions ran counter to tradition; therefore, such positions should not have been put forward without further explanation, since they might offend those outside the university.[9]

This fear of disturbing ordinary believers returns us to the concept of *virtus sermonis*. Marsilius used the term *virtus sermonis* to mean the intention of a word as it is applied in logic but which may, at times, differ from its application in theology, where it may cause confusion and embarrassment.[10]

8. Cf. M. H. Shank, *Unless You Believe, You Shall Not Understand: Logic, University, and Society in Late Medieval Vienna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). An interesting case is Robert Holcot, who held at some point of his career the opinion that the rules of Aristotelian logic were not applicable in the supernatural order. On this, see H. G. Gelber, *Exploring the Boundaries of Reason: Three Questions on the Nature of God by Robert Holcot OP* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983), pp. 26–28.

9. On the different aspects of Marsilius's thinking, see M. J. F. M. Hoenen and P. Bakker, eds., *Philosophie und Theologie des ausgehenden Mittelalters. Marsilius von Inghen und das Denken seiner Zeit* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000).

10. As will appear from the discussion below, for Marsilius, the virtue of speech was determined by the personal supposition of the terms of the proposition, not by the intention of the author. See also E. P. Bos, ed., *Marsilius of Inghen: Treatises on the Properties of Terms. A First Critical Edition of the Suppositiones, Ampliationes, Appellationes, Restrictiones and Alienationes* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), pp. 78, 205.

The same understanding of the concept can be found in contemporary writings, such as in Peter of Ailly's *Tractatus ex parte universitatis* and John Gerson's *Octo regulae*. Both treatises were directed against heretical opinions, which, by *virtue of speech,* were true, but which might lead to heresy. As such, they needed to be condemned.[11]

Marsilius's concern was not the condemnation of opinions. His commentary on the *Sentences* had a different character. It shows how in the late medieval period, at the newly founded University of Heidelberg, a lecturer on the *Sentences* trained in logic tried to cope with the conflict between logic and tradition.

Two examples from his commentary, both concerning the Trinity, are worthy of close examination. In the history of theology, discussion of the Trinity often proved problematic; it claimed the unity of the divine essence to be identical with the three divine persons, which seemed to contradict sound reasoning. Because of its difficult nature, the topic represented a significant challenge to logic. The development of supposition theory and the discussion over the nature of the syllogism in the medieval period resulted partly from this challenge.[12]

Marsilius deals extensively with logical problems that arise in questions concerning the Trinity, using the notion of *virtus sermonis* repeatedly. First, I will analyze a passage that shows which logical tools Marsilius employed, and how they were linked to the concept of *virtus sermonis.* This will provide the foundation for the discussion of another part of his work, where he engaged in a problem that had already been elaborated by Robert Holcot and Adam Wodeham, namely the dilemma of whether the

11. Peter of Ailly, *Tractatus ex parte universitatis studii Parisiensis pro causa Fidei contra quemdam fratrem Johannem de Montesono,* in Ch. du Plessis d'Argentré, *Collectio judiciorum de novis erroribus,* vol. 1/2 (Paris, 1728), fol. 75a–129a, esp. fol. 128b; and Jean Gerson, *Octo regulae super stylo theologico,* in *Oeuvres complètes,* ed. P. Glorieux, vol. 10 (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1973), pp. 256–60, 259 (written at Constance before May 15, 1416): "Et ideo si una assertio habeat unum sensum erroneum, scandalosum aut piarum aurium offensivum, potest rationabiliter condemnari, non obstante quod de virtute sermonis grammaticalis aut ex vi vocis logicalis, ipsa habere posset aliquem sensum verum." For a discussion of the views of Peter of Ailly and Jean Gerson, see Z. Kaluza, "Le chancelier Gerson et Jérôme de Prague," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 59 (1984): 81–126; and Kaluza, "Les sciences et leurs langages," pp. 223–54.

12. Cf. H. G. Gelber, "Logic and the Trinity: A Clash of Values in Scholastic Thought, 1300–1335" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1974); A. Maierù, "A propos de la doctrine de la supposition en théologie trinitaire au XIVe siècle," in *Mediaeval Semantics and Metaphysics,* ed. E. P. Bos (Nijmegen: Ingenium Publishers, 1985), pp. 221–38; S. Ebbesen. "The Semantics of the Trinity According to Stephen Langton and Andrew Sunesen," in *Gilbert de Poitiers et ses contemporains. Aux origines de la Logica Modernorum,* ed. J. Jolivet and A. de Libera (Napels: Bibliopolis, 1987), 401–435; A. Maierù, "Logica e teologia trinitaria nel commento alle Sentenze attribuito a Petrus Thomae," in *Lectionum varietates. Hommage à Paul Vignaux (1904–1987),* ed. J. Jolivet, Z. Kaluza, and A. de Libera (Paris: Vrin, 1991), pp. 177–98 and his essays quoted at 186f.

distinction between the divine persons is finite, infinite, or neither of the two. In both cases, I will demonstrate that, using the logical analysis of the virtue of speech, Marsilius came to conclusions opposed to those of the ordinary language.

Before discussing these passages, however, it is important to explain Marsilius's trinitarian doctrine, since it is the theological definition of the Trinity that lies at the bottom of his logical expositions.[13]

Marsilius shared the traditional notion that the three divine persons are the same as the divine essence really (*realiter*) and according to their being (*entitative*), since the essence of all three persons is identical and only one. This means that each person is really in the other person: the Father is really in the Son and the Holy Ghost, the Son is really in the Father and the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is really in the Father and the Son.[14] The unity of the divine essence notwithstanding, the three persons are also distinct. It is the Father who begets, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Ghost which proceeds, according to the definition of the Fourth Lateran Council. Each person has its own property, which is not shared by the others. Therefore, there is a real distinction among the three divine persons. In short, the three persons are really identical according to their essence, but they are really distinct according to their properties.[15] This leaves one with the distinction between the property and the essence of a person. Although this distinction was not dogmatically defined, many theologians thought of the property and the essence as being formally distinct. That is, they are really the same thing but share different predicates. Therefore, they are neither completely identical nor completely distinct, but something in between, a distinction that was considered to be *formal*.[16]

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13. For a discussion of his trinitarian doctrine, see W. Möhler, *Die Trinitätslehre des Marsilius von Inghen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theologie des Spätmittelalters* (Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1949).

14. *Marsilius of Inghen, Quaestiones Super quattuor libros Sententiarum* (Strasbourg, 1501/Frankfurt: Minerva, 1966), Lib. 1, q. 22, a. 2, concl. 2, fol. 91va: "Per viam circuminsessionis quaelibet divina persona est realiter et entitative in qualibet divina persona." Marsilius derived his notion of 'circuminsessio' or 'circumincessio' (perichoresis) mainly from John Damascene. See John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa,* ed. E. M. Buytaert (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1955), cap. 8, 45 (Burgundionis versio).

15. Marsilius, *Quaestiones,* q. 6, a. 1, concl. 1-2, fol. 37rb. Cf. *Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen,* ed. H. Denzinger and P. Hünermann, 37th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), n. 804, 360 (Concilium Lateranense IV). The relevant passage from the Lateran Council was included in the *Decretales Gregorii.* See E. Friedberg, ed., *Corpus Iuris Canonici,* Pars 2 (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1881), 6f. (Decretales Gregorii PP. IX, Lib. I, tit. 1, cap. 2).

16. Marsilius, *Quaestiones,* q. 22, ad rationes contra quaesitum 1 and 2, fol. 92va–b. Marsilius is quoting here from Thomas of Strasbourg's Sentences commentary (Lib. 1, dist. 19, q. 1, ed. [Venice, 1564], fol. 77rb). See also Marsilius, *Quaestiones,* dist. 6, a. 2, concl. 4, fol. 39ra, where he defines the formal distiction as follows: "suppono quod in proposito dico distingui formaliter illas res quarum una est res absoluta vel relata et alia non est illa." A similar definition appears at q. 36, a. 2, concl. 2, fol. 144vb.

It goes without saying that against the background of this doctrine one and the same proposition, let us say p_1 'The Father and the Son are identical', is either true or false according to the meaning of 'Father' and 'Son'. If these terms refer to the essence, p_1 is true, because Father and Son share the same divine essence. However, if they refer to the personal properties, then p_1 is false. For that which begets cannot be identical to that which is begotten. It is this ambiguity, rooted in the doctrinal complexity of the Trinity, that required a logical analysis of the propositions involved.

The first passage I will discuss will deepen one's understanding of how Marsilius used *virtus sermonis* and how it was opposed to ordinary speech. At stake was the identity between the divine persons and their properties, such as that between Father (*pater*) and Paternity (*paternitas*). Paternity is the property of the Father that makes the Father to be the Father. The person and the property are in no way really distinct. Father and Paternity are the same thing (*res*). Marsilius was of the opinion—one shared by many of his contemporaries—that the properties of the divine persons are the same as the persons themselves.[17]

Yet there is a problem as far as predication is concerned. For there are predicates that can be asserted of the one but not of the other, at least not according to ordinary and traditional speech. The predicate 'begets the Son' is affirmed of the Father but not of Paternity. The proposition p_2: 'The Father begets the Son' is in agreement with conventional usage. The proposition p_3: 'Paternity begets the Son' is not. It is never expressed in traditional speech.[18] This seems to indicate—as an anonymous opponent cited by Marsilius claimed—that there really *is* a distinction between the Father and Paternity, and that the two therefore are not one and the same.[19]

At this point, Marsilius begins his analysis. He disagrees with his opponent, arguing that the Father and Paternity really are identical in all respects.[20] The distinction between the predicates is not caused by real differences to which the terms *Father* and *Paternity* refer; rather, it is found in the different ways these two terms signify. Father is a concrete term, whereas Paternity is an abstract one. Abstract terms signify as a form, and because actions like begetting are not affirmed of the form but only of the individual as

17. Marsilius, *Quaestiones*, q. 36, a. 1, concl. 5, fol. 144ra–b: "proprietas relativa est etiam ipsa persona."

18. Marsilius, *Quaestiones*, q. 36, ad quartam rationem principalem, fol. 146rb: "non est proprie locutio 'paternitas generat'. Cf also Marsilius, *Questiones*, fol. 146vb: "videtur Magister Thomas <de Argentina> concedere quod Pater essentia distinguatur a Filio inquantum consideratur ut paternitas, quae satis est inusitata et quam beatus Augustinus et doctores sancti non concesserunt."

19. Marsilius, *Quaestiones*, q. 36, ad quartam rationem principalem, fol. 143ra (quarto).

20. Marsilius, *Quaestiones*, q. 36, ad quartam rationem principalem, fol. 146rb (ad quartum).

a whole (to act the form must exist in the individual), the predicate "begets the Son" is not affirmed of the subject Paternity.[21]

In this case, the truth value of propositions like p_2 and p_3 was ascertained by considering the signification or *modus significandi* of the subject term, *not* by determining the identity or non-identity of that which subject and predicate stand for (as would have been done in agreement with the virtue of speech). According to Marsilius, this way of analyzing is dependent on ordinary speech, the *usus loquendi consuetus vulgo*, which attributes actions only to individuals and which has always been followed by the doctors of the church as the most appropriate way. This is the reason why, traditionally, it has been denied that Paternity begets the Son.[22]

Against this traditional view Marsilius put forward another interpretation of the problem, which came to the opposite conclusion and claimed that the proposition p_3, 'Paternity begets the Son', was as true as the proposition p_2, 'The Father begets the Son'. In this case, the question was not answered according to ordinary language (*usus loquendi*), but in agreement with the virtue of speech (*de vi sermonis*). It was not the signification of the terms that needed to be considered, but the supposition. In both propositions, the *suppositum* of the subject and predicate is one and the same thing. The terms *Father* and *Paternity* stand for the same reality. Therefore, they can have the same predicates. If the Father begets the Son, then so does Paternity, since the Father is all that which Paternity is. Consequently, proposition p_3, 'Paternity begets the Son', is equally true as proposition p_2, 'The Father begets the Son', according to the virtue of speech.[23]

As is evident, Marsilius understood the virtue of speech to be determined by the personal supposition of the terms of the proposition and not

21. Marsilius, *Quaestiones*, q. 36, ad quartam rationem principalem, fol. 146rb (ad quartum): "quamvis aliqui termini pro eodem supponant, tamen stat quod propter diversum modum significandi diversas habeant et suscipiant praedicationes. Modo, quia quamvis paternitas sit suppositum, tamen quia est nomen abstractum significans per modum formae, cui actiones in divinis non attribuimus, sed suppositis, ideo non est proprie locutio, 'Paternitas generat'." Concerning the notion of *modus significandi* or *modus significationis* in Marsilius, see Marsilius of Inghen, *Treatises on the Properties of Terms,* pp. 52, 64, 80, 194f.

22. Marsilius, *Questiones*, q. 36, ad quartam rationem principalem, fol. 146rb (ad quartum): "doctores fortassis nolunt quod ea (sc. vi sermonis) utamur, sed potius attribuamus actiones suppositis, quia indignum est de illa maiestate de qua nil digni eloqui potest uti sermonibus minus aptis, quamvis veris de vi sermonis. Sed eandem veritatem quantum possumus aptioribus verbis exprimere debemus. Eodem modo, quod quia filiatio est Filius, verum est quod filiatio sit incarnata de vi sermonis, sed non est consueta, sed et impropria, quia in huiusmodi locutionibus agere vel habitudo activa vel passiva additur relationi et exprimitur sub nomine formae, ut dictum est et ideo quamvis verae sint propter identitatem proprietatis ad suppositum non utendum est ipsis, quia ineptae sunt."

23. Ibid., fol. 146rb (ad quartum): "res quae est paternitas generat, quia Pater generat, et Pater est ibi omne quod est paternitas." and ibid.: "de vi sermonis meo iudicio sit vera <'Paternitas generat'>."

by any other supposition or by the intention of the author. His interpretation agrees with the opinion put forward in the *Quaestiones Elenchorum* of John Buridan and with the view criticized in the famous 1340 Statute of the Parisian Arts Faculty (the so-called Nominalist-Statute).[24] The Statute of 1340 repudiated the notion that the virtue of speech was based on the personal supposition of the terms. Rather, it argued that it should be considered as originating in the intention of the author and the subject matter discussed.[25]

Marsilius did not agree with the definition of the virtue of speech put forward by the authors of the statute. Yet he sided with their moral concerns. The statute expressed the view that the use of logic could be offensive to tradition and obliterate its proper understanding.[26] In the example discussed, Marsilius showed the same concern. He contrasted the virtue of speech with ordinary language, as we have seen, but eventually he sided not with the truth of the virtue of speech but with that of ordinary language. His final move was not determined by any imperfections of logic, but, as he pointed out, by respect for the divine and the human shortcomings discussing the divine, which would make it better and wiser to join traditional speech and not to use language which was uncommon and inappropriate, even though true by the rules of logic (*quamvis vera de vi sermonis*).[27]

24. Cf. Johannes Buridanus, *Questiones Elencorum,* ed. R. van der Lecq and H. A. G. Braakhuis (Nijmegen: Ingenium Publishers, 1994), pp. xix–xxx.

25. H. Denifle and É. Châtelain, eds., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis,* vol. 2 (Paris: Delalain, 1891), n. 1042, pp. 505–7: "quod nulli magistri, baccalarii, vel scolares in artium facultate legentes Parisius audeant aliquam propositionem famosam illius actoris cujus librum legunt, dicere simpliciter esse falsam, vel esse falsam de virtute sermonis, si crediderint quod actor ponendo illam habuerit verum intellectum; sed vel concedant eam, vel sensum verum dividant a sensu falso, quia pari ratione propositiones Biblie absoluto sermone essent negande, quod est periculosum. Et quia sermo non habet virtutem, nisi ex impositione et usu communi actorum vel aliorum, ideo talis est virtus sermonis, qualiter eo actores communiter utuntur et qualem exigit materia, cum sermones sint recipiendi penes materiam subjectam. Item, quod nullus dicat simpliciter vel de virtute sermonis omnem propositionem esse falsam, que esset falsa secundum suppositionem personalem terminorum, eo quod iste error ducit ad priorem errorem, actores enim sepe utuntur aliis suppositionibus."

26. See fn. 25. For a discussion of this aspect, see Kaluza, "Les sciences et leurs langages," pp. 223–58.

27. See fn. 22. On other occasions in his commentary on the *Sentences*, Marsilius accepts the definition of virtue of speech based on the *suppositio personalis* only with reservations, although he considers it as logically sound and in agreement with the rules of the disputation. See, e.g., Marsilius, *Questiones*, q. 24, a. 2, fol. 100va: "Et ita crederem in consimilibus esse dicendum, quae magis sunt curiosa quam fructuosa, nisi in disputatione occurrerent, ubi vim sermonis oporteret recitare." and Marsilius, *Questiones*, fol. 101va: "Verum secundum hunc modum loquendi (sc. secundum virtutem sermonis) conceditur quod Pater vel Spiritus Sanctus sit tantum Deus, quia uterque eorum est non alterius naturae quam divinae, cum non assumpserit aliam. Hoc de secundo articulo, quia iuxta hoc studiosus scholaris poterit se de talibus quaestionibus plus scrupulosis quam fructuosis aliqualiter expedire."

The Statute of 1340 was issued by the Arts Faculty. The theological counterpart of the moral considerations of the statute was expressed by the University of Paris in the already mentioned *Tractatus ex parte universitatis* two generations later. Written as part of the trial of Johannes de Montesono, this treatise defended the view that offensive opinions were rightly to be condemned, even if they had a true reading according to the virtue of speech.[28]

The masters of the Theological Faculty of Paris acquired a growing reputation as the most important guardians of Christian orthodoxy, a reputation that was confirmed and skillfully used in the political arena by Peter of Ailly and John Gerson.[29] The doctrinal developments in the late medieval period cannot properly be understood without acknowledging the prestige of Paris, which played a decisive role in the condemnations at the Council of Constance, where Gerson placed the opposition between ordinary language and logical truth on the agenda, condemning the logical force of words (*vis vocis logicalis*) whenever it conflicted with common understanding (*communis modus intelligendi*).[30]

Marsilius's position was in accordance with this judgment regarding the logical force of words, although he did not condemn it, but only disapproved of it.[31] The second example that I will discuss demonstrates this same attitude. Here, Marsilius was concerned with determining the distinction between the persons against the background of the divine unity. In his opinion, two positions were possible. Considering that the distinction between the divine persons is really the same as the divine persons themselves and that the divine persons are really the same as the divine essence which is infinite, the distinction must be maximal and as infinite as both the divine essence and the divine persons. On the other hand, the divine

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28. Peter of Ailly, *Tractatus ex parte universitatis,* fol. 128b.

29. This understanding of the theological faculty is apparent from Dean of the Faculty Rudolphus Glachardus's 1387 speech. Cf. H. Denifle and É. Châtelain, eds., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis,* vol. 3 (Paris: Delalain, 1894), n. 1557, pp. 487–89. On Gerson's politics, see G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, *Jean Gerson, Apostle of Unity: His Church Politics and Ecclesiology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999).

30. Cf. Jean Gerson, *Sermon prosperum iter,* in *Oeuvres complètes,* ed. P. Glorieux, vol. 5 (Paris: Desclée et Cie, 1963), pp. 471–80, esp. 476 (written at Constance 1415): "Tertia directio (sc. salutaris in via catholicae veritatis). Concilium generale potest damnare propositiones multas cum suis auctoribus licet habere glossas aliquas vel expositiones vel sensus logicales veros possint. Hoc practicatum est in hoc concilio de multis articulis Wiclef et Joannis Hus. . . ." and Gerson, *Octo Regulae super stylo theologico,* 258f.

31. However, Marsilius was aware of the heretical potential when using the virtue of speech in theology. See Marsilius, *Quaestiones,* Lib. 1, q. 24, a. 2, fol 101rb: "Quamvis ergo de vi strictae locutionis talis (sc. 'Filius est tantum deus') sit vera, quia tamen ea usi sunt haeretici, ut li 'tantum' excluderet humanitatem et sic faciat sensum falsum quem generare posset in simplicibus, ideo tutius est eam non concedere, ne erroris occasio simus. Ideoque etiam doctores nostri eam non admittunt, ne intelligatur male."

unity is perfect, and it is impossible to think of a greater unity than that of God. This means that the distinction between the divine persons must be minimal and not maximal and infinite.[32]

Marsilius described each position by a set of separate statements (*conclusiones*) in order to show the opposition between the two.[33] He also made clear where exactly the difference between the two came from. The first position concentrated on the virtue of speech and therefore considered only the thing for which the term 'distinction' stands, whereas the second was instead concerned with the formal ratio of the distinction itself.[34]

The position that was not concerned with the virtue of speech was described as the *alius modus dicendi*.[35] Unfortunately, Marsilius does not give us any information on who defended such an 'other way of speaking', but judging from the first example we have discussed, it seems natural to assume that he meant once more the traditional way of dealing with the problem. That this assumption is indeed correct is evident from a passage by Robert Holcot, which deals with the same problem. Holcot discussed this issue in the first book of his commentary on the *Sentences*, from the same perspective though much more briefly than Marsilius, maintaining that there were two possible positions in answering the question.[36] According to his view, it can be argued that the distinction between the persons is infinite, because the distinction between them is the same thing as the divine essence, which is infinite. Yet, according to the doctors of the Church, the truth of proposition p_4, 'The distinction between the persons is infinite', does not allow

32. Marsilius, *Quaestiones,* q. 37, fol. 147vb–148ra (secundo principaliter) and a. 1, fol. 148ra–149ra.

33. Marsilius, *Quaestiones,* q. 37, fol. 147vb–148ra (secundo principaliter) and a. 1, fol. 148ra–149ra.

34. Marsilius, *Quaestiones,* fol. 148va–vb: "Haec omnia (sc. conclusiones praecedentes) de vi significationis terminorum sunt vera, eo quod distinctio personae est persona et ideo est tanta quanta est persona. . . . Sed ad modum loquendi alium est dubitatio utrum distinctio Patris a Filio inquantum est distinctio, scilicet secundum formalem rationem distinctionis, sit finita vel infinita. . . . Et manifestum est quod secundum talem modum loquendi haec consequentia non valet: 'infinita distinctio est Patris a Filio, ergo Pater infinite distinguitur a Filio'."

35. See fn. 34.

36. Robert Holcot, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum quaestiones,* (1518; Frankfurt: Minerva, 1967), Lib. 1, q. 5, fol. e8va (argumentum secundum) and fol. f1va–b (ad secundum). Marsilius was familiar with Holcot's Sentences commentary, which he quoted in his own commentary and of which he had a copy in his personal library. See G. Töpke, *Die Matrikel der Universität Heidelberg von 1386 bis 1662,* vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1884), pp. 678–85, esp. 679: "Item (414.) Holkot super sentencias." As to Marsilius's library, see D. Walz, "Marsilius von Inghen als Schreiber und Büchersammler," in *Marsilius von Inghen, Werk und Wirkung. Akten des Zweiten Internationalen Marsilius-von-Inghen-Kongresses,* ed. S. Wielgus (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1993), pp. 31–71.

one to conclude that the persons are infinitely distinct, since the distinction between them must be infinitely smaller than any possible distinction between creatures.[37]

In his treatment, Holcot described the same two positions, but without offering a deep analysis of their differences and without using the concept of virtue of speech. Still, his discussion is important for our understanding of Marsilius. Holcot attributed the view that the distinction between the persons is minimal to the common tradition of the doctors of the Church: "*solet dici a doctoribus quod distinctio personalis est minima.*"[38] He thereby offers us important information on the view that Marsilius labelled as the '*alius modus dicendi*': the 'other way of speaking' and the alternative to the virtue of speech was tradition.

The same evidence can also be drawn from a number of remarks by Adam Wodeham, who analyzed this problem in his *Ordinatio Oxoniensis* more elaborately than Holcot. His treatment of the issue comes close to Marsilius's own. He also offered a list of separate statements, some of which reappeared in Marsilius. From this and other passages it is clear that Marsilius had the *Ordinatio* of Wodeham or rather its *Abbreviatio* by Henry of Oyta at his desk when composing his commentary.[39]

Wodeham distinguished between common language (*vulgatus modus loquendi* or *usualis locutio*) and virtue of speech (*vis vocis*). According to common language, it is impossible to think of any distinction smaller than that between the divine persons as they coincide in the unity of divine nature. The distinction is therefore minimal. But this approach did not satisfy Wodeham, who found that the distinction between the divine persons was identical with the persons themselves and was therefore infinite, as the persons themselves.

37. Holcot, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum quaestiones,* fol. f1vb: "posset dici quod Pater distinguitur a Filio distinctione infinita, quia seipso, qui est infinitus. Similiter, ista distinctio est essentia divina, et per consequens infinita. . . . Solet dici a doctoribus quod distinctio personalis est minima, nec est comparabilis alicui distinctioni inter creaturas vel inter res distinctas essentialiter. Et ideo in infinitum minus distinguuntur Pater et Filius quam Sortes et Plato."

38. See fn. 37.

39. Compare Adam Wodeham, *Ordinatio Oxoniensis (Abbreviatio Henrici de Oyta)* (Paris, 1512), Lib. 1, dist. 33, q. 8, fol. q6rb–vb (ad primum principale) and Marsilius, Quaestiones, Lib. 1, q. 37, a. 1, fol. 148rb–149ra. For the use of Wodeham by Marsilius, see Möhler, *Die Trinitätslehre des Marsilius von Inghen,* p. 128; and Hoenen, *Marsilius of Inghen,* pp. 57–60, 232f. For a listing of the questions discussed in the different versions of Adam Wodeham's commentary on the *Sentences* and in the *Abbreviatio* by Henry of Oyta, see W. J. Courtenay, *Adam Wodeham, An Introduction to his Life and Writings* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), pp. 183–234. According to M. Santos, "Die 'auctoritates theologicae' im Sentenzenkommentar des Marsilius von Inghen," in *Philosophie und Theologie des ausgehenden Mittelalters. Marsilius von Inghen und das Denken seiner Zeit,* ed. M. J. F. M. Hoenen and P. J. J. M. Bakker (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), pp. 197–210, esp. 209, Marsilius used, most probably, Henry of Oyta's *Abbreviatio.*

It is not minimal, but maximal, because a greater distinction cannot be conceived.[40]

This second approach, which arrived at conclusions contrary to those of the first, was based on the virtue of speech. Wodeham distinctly preferred it.[41] On this point, he was much clearer than Holcot. But besides this different evaluation by the two authors, their presentation and their manner of dealing with the issue were similar: both mentioned two different approaches, one of which was according to the customary way of speaking, the other not. The customary approach was exactly the same as the *alius modus dicendi* that Marsilius opposed to the virtue of speech. This confirms the evidence found in Holcot regarding the background of the *alius modus dicendi*—this was indeed the approach of tradition.

I will now return to the exposition of Marsilius. Although he discusses both approaches, that of tradition and that of the virtue of speech, he does not openly say which of the two he prefers. Although his silence stands in contrast to the first example, where he clearly sided with tradition, one can conclude from the way in which his argument is arranged that the same preference must be at play here. For he begins his treatment with an analysis of the problem according to the virtue of speech, then changes the perspective and concludes with the traditional argument. For Marsilius, tradition must have the last word.[42]

This raises the question of why Marsilius discussed the virtue of speech approach at all, if he was going to choose tradition anyway. There are several possible answers. The first has to do with his background. Marsilius was a professional logician, and thus naturally interested in logical problems.[43] The second concerns the design of his commentary on the *Sentences*. It contains many quotations from other works, some of which are followed closely in the structure of the questions, the result being that many problems

40. Adam Wodeham, *Ordinatio Oxoniensis*, fol. q6va: "Secundo sequitur quod haec distinctio (sc. inter personas) sit infinita, quia quaelibet persona divina est infinita. . . . Quinto sequitur quod ad vim vocis omnia sequentia de hoc puncto falsa sunt, cum dicitur quod ista distinctio est in infinitum minor omni distinctione essentiali creaturae a creatura vel Dei a creatura vel econtra. Haec (sc. praecedentia) sunt dicta ad vim vocis. Sed ad usualem intellectum dicendum est longe aliter. . . . Ideo ad usualem locutionem dici potest quod nulla potest excogitari minor distinctio quam sit ista."

41. Wodeham, *Ordinatio Oxoniensis*, fol. q6rb–va.

42. That there is a possible conflict between tradition and virtue of speech was also noted in Ockham, *Tractatus de quantitate,* ed. C. A. Grassi (St. Bonaventure, NY: St. Bonaventure University, 1986), q. 3, 69: "Nec est inconveniens exponere dicta Sanctorum, cum multa dicta etiam Sacrae Scripturae indigent expositione, quia multa non sunt vera secundum proprietatem sermonis, quamvis secundum sensum, quem debemus habere, sint verissima." Like Marsilius, Ockham distinguished between *virtus sermonis* and *intentio auctoris*. See also Ockham, *Tractatus de quantitate*, q. 1, 30f., 35, 45.

43. Some of Marsilius's logical writings are edited by E. P. Bos in *Marsilius of Inghen: Treatises on the Properties of Terms. A First Critical Edition.*

discussed in these sources are adopted into the discussion. This is certainly the case in the second example mentioned above, where Marsilius was partly inspired by Adam Wodeham. One can also assume that Marsilius included other materials in his commentary, such as university disputations, a phenomenon known from many other fourteenth-century commentaries on the *Sentences*.[44] Interestingly, on one occasion in his discussion of the Trinity, Marsilius remarked that in disputations, the virtue of speech must be followed.[45] This may explain why in the second example Marsilius discussed the virtue of speech approach in detail. He had possibly treated it in a disputation *secundum vim sermonis* and subsequently adopted this treatment into his commentary. Finally, there is a third answer, which puts the first two into the broader perspective of Marsilius's thought. Repeatedly in his commentary on the *Sentences*, Marsilius exhibited some reserve concerning the uncontrolled use of logic in theology, especially when it led to embarrassing conclusions such as God being the cause of evil. Generally, he also had the same attitude toward philosophy whenever it was not guided by divine revelation. In his treatment of creation, he explained that philosophy and theology were diametrically opposed over this question. Both had their own principles and methodology and therefore reached contradictory conclusions regarding creation. Importantly, Marsilius showed exactly *how and why* they generated opposing results.[46] He analyzed their different *modi procedendi*, as we have seen in the case of two examples discussed above. Marsilius not only opposed the two different approaches, that is, that of tradition and that of the virtue of speech, but he also examined the logical and semantic nature of their differences. On this point, he went significantly further than either Robert Holcot or Adam Wodeham.

In the late medieval period, one witnesses a strong tendency toward traditionalism, in the wake of which, the use of logic in theology as developed in the first half of the fourteenth century became the target of criticism. There was a growing sense that theology and logic pursued different aims by means of different methods and that theology as the '*scientia pietatis*'

44. For examples, see K. Michalski, *Histoire de la Philosophie* (Cracow: Instytut Teologiczny Ksiezy Misjonarzy, 1999), pp. 59–95 ("Die vielfachen Redaktionen einiger Kommentare zu Petrus Lombardus," which is still very interesting, but unfortunately printed with many typographical errors) and 158 (Hartmannus, *Sentences commentary,* Cracow, BJ 1276, fol. 17r: 'Ista quaestio collecta est de diversis disputationibus, quibus in diversis locis interfui'). See also A. D. Trapp, "Augustinian Theology of the 14th Century. Notes on Editions, Marginalia, Opinions and Book-Lore," *Augustiniana* 6 (1956): 146–274; and V. Marcolino, "Einleitung," in Gregory of Rimini, *Lectura super primum et secundum Sententiarum,* ed. A. D. Trapp and V. Marcolino, vol. 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981), pp. xi–ciii, esp. xvf.

45. Cf. Marsilius, *Quaestiones,* Lib. 1, q. 24, a. 2, fol. 100va: "in disputatione . . . , ubi vim sermonis oporteret recitare." For the complete text, see fn. 27 above.

46. I discussed this point in "Marsilius von Inghen in der Geistesgeschichte des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts," in *Philosophie und Theologie des ausgehenden Mittelalters,* pp. 21–45.

should follow tradition as approved by the doctors of the Church and not human logic, since the latter could lead to superstition and errors.[47] In this development, the notion of virtue of speech was of central importance. It was linked to the concept of language—which could be true according to the rules of human logic and at the same time contradict tradition or the *communis opinio theologorum* and therefore needed to be condemned. As such it was used by Peter of Ailly and John Gerson in their description of the nature of theology.[48]

The two examples I have discussed demonstrate that Marsilius was in line with Peter of Ailly and John Gerson. Marsilius studied theology at Paris and was still sensitive to the Parisian intellectual atmosphere when he prepared his lectures on the *Sentences* as rector at Heidelberg.[49] Yet he did not simply follow the Parisian trend. He contributed to it by analyzing the difference between tradition and the virtue of speech from his perspective as a theologian trained in logic, thus giving modern readers a better insight into the complex background of the debate.

Marsilius emphasized the distinction between divinely inspired theology and human philosophy. Here again he shared the views of Peter of Ailly and Gerson who claimed, in accordance with the Statute of 1340 that every science has its own methodology (*modus procedendi* or *stylus*), dependent on the subject matter (*materia subiecta*).[50] The distinction between theology and philosophy became an issue in the debates between nominalists and realists in the *Wegestreit* of the fifteenth century.[51] Gerson justified the condemnation

47. Cf. Z. Kaluza, "Bulletin d'histoire des doctrines médiévales. Les XIVe et XVe siècles," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 79 (1995): 111–59, esp. 150f.

48. Cf. W. Hübener, "Der theologisch-philosophische Konservatismus des Jean Gerson," in *Antiqui and Moderni. Traditionsbewußtsein und Fortschrittsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter,* ed. A. Zimmermann (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), pp. 171–200, esp. 171–75. See also G. Krieger, "Theologica perscrutatio labi debet ad inflammationem affectus. Der Zusamenhang von mystischer Theologie und Philosophie bei Johannes Gerson," in *Scientia und ars im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter,* ed. I. Craemer-Ruegenberg and A. Speer, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 605–19.

49. This is especially clear in the *principia* to his *Sentences* commentary. On this, see my "Neuplatonismus am Ende des 14. Jahrhunderts. Die Prinzipien zum Sentenzenkommentar des Marsilius von Inghen," in *Marsilius von Inghen, Werk und Wirkung. Akten des Zweiten Internationalen Marsilius-von-Inghen-Kongresses,* ed. S. Wielgus (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1993), pp. 165–94.

50. On the background of the notions of *materia subiecta* and *stylus theologicus,* see Kaluza, "Le Chancelier Gerson," pp. 90, 108–15 (app. 1); and Kaluza, "Les sciences et leurs langages," pp. 238–44.

51. The Realists at Cologne defended the unity of philosophy and theology against the concerns of the Prince Electors. In a letter to the University of 1425, the latter showed a preference for the *stylus humilior* and the *modus loquendi* of Buridan and Marsilius as a protection of Faith. See F. Ehrle, *Der Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia des Pisaner Papstes Alexanders V. Ein Beitrag zur Scheidung der Schulen in der Scholastik des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts und zur Geschichte des Wegestreites* (Münster

of the realists John Wyclif and John Hus by claiming that they had ignored the separation of the sciences and wrongly had used philosophical methodology in theology. That there indeed existed a link between Marsilius and Gerson on this point was noticed by the Masters of Heidelberg in their famous 1499 defense of nominalism. A fictitious speech attributed to Marsilius refers to both the views of Gerson and to his criticism of Wyclif and Hus.[52] The separation of the sciences as an issue in the *Wegestreit* deserves more study. Here again, the works of Marsilius may yield new evidence.

Marsilius of Inghen had an audience and a style of reasoning that differed from Gerson's. He stayed within the scope of Scholasticism, being mainly concerned with the theoretical part of the issues discussed. His treatment of the virtue of speech thus reveals how in *Scholastic* theology of the late medieval period, the use of logic became dominated by the pressure of tradition and the need to keep theory within the limits of the *communis opinio theologorum.*

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in Westf.: Aschendorff, 1925), pp. 281–85, esp. 282, 284. On the debates between Realists and Nominalists at Cologne, see G.-R. Tewes, *Die Bursen der Kölner Artisten-Fakultät bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Köln: Böhlau, 1993).

52. This fictitious speech is printed in *Ad illustrissimum Bavarie ducem Philippum Comitem Rheni Palatini et ad nobilissimos filios epistola* (Mainz: Peter Friedberg, 1499). The volume also contains an extract from Gerson's *De modis significandi* with its sharp criticism of realism. A new edition is in preparation: *Marsilius von Inghen. Zentenar-Festschrift (1499) zur sechshundertjährigen Wiederkehr des Todestages des ersten Rektors der Universität Heidelberg am 20. August 1396,* ed. R. Düchting and D. Walz (Heidelberg, forthcoming).