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## Introduction

### Giorgio Valla and the sources of *De expetendis et fugiendis rebus opus*

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The cultural project that Giorgio Valla carries out in his encyclopedia *De expetendis et fugiendis rebus opus*<sup>1</sup> (Venice, 1501), best expresses criteria and methods of an interdisciplinary and experimental vision of knowledge<sup>2</sup>. The goal of gathering philosophical-literary and scientific knowledge into a unitary and coherent design and organizing it around the nature of man (*disciplinae extra nos et in nobis*)<sup>3</sup> is in perfect harmony both with the spirit of mature Humanism and with the intellectual path of the most refined minds of the time. As a matter of fact, the comparison with the research and interpretation activity that Poliziano, Leonicensio and Barbaro conducted on Greek and Latin sources, even in his still limited critical exploration, reveals not a few lines of convergence. One for all is the one that crosses Poliziano's technical and scientific curiosities. On the recommendation of Ianos Laskaris, in fact, Angelo Ambrogini visited Giorgio Valla in Venice and was therefore able to examine his valuable collection of Greek manuscripts<sup>4</sup>. Literary research of the two humanists takes shape and intersects precisely through four fundamental guidelines for the cultural refoundation of the West:

1. The proposal for a new organization of knowledge that harmonizes the disciplines with the cognitive faculties of man.
2. The recovery of the Greek library that the Latin West had lost or known only in a partial or mediated form.

3. Translation as a creative act of a technical lexicon indispensable for collecting and re-proposing the legacy of the ancients<sup>5</sup>.
4. The stylistic refinement of a Latin that could serve as a tool for communicating knowledge which is now recovered.

Poliziano's *Panepistemon* and Valla's *De expetendis* move precisely in these directions. Both humanists also seem to pay particular attention to medicine, of which they share the definition of *naturalis philosophiae alumna* and a new and valuable source for its articulation, namely Theophilus Protospatharius<sup>6</sup>.

This second volume of studies dedicated to the work of Giorgio Valla, therefore, intends to propose a more capillary investigation of Greek sources which, through a dense network of personal and cultural exchange relationships and through the more or less predictable paths of manuscript circulation, allow Valla to set up the extensive exposition on medicine in his encyclopedia.

In her contribution, A.M. Ieraci Bio, who has dedicated extensive and valuable studies to Valla, his sources and his translation strategies, highlights the wide use of treatises by Galen, or attributed to Galen (to give texts of instrumental use an authoritative authorship), in *excerpta* or *in extenso*, by direct or mediated transmission (specifically by Aëtius of Amida and Paul of Aegina), for the construction of the medical contents of *De exp.* The scholar explores the cento technique of the humanist from Piacenza, which often uses texts designed to provide rapid guidance on problems of uncertain interpretation, and thus reconstructs the labyrinthine network of his *Belesenheit*, in its vastness but, at the same time, in the restitution it offers of Galen's authority and role as the first exegete of Hippocrates. The Vallian text of *De exp.* proves to be fundamental not only for understanding the translation strategies (linguistic/lexical) of the humanist, who in his encyclopedia reveals, also through exegetical annotations, a particular attention to technical language; but also for unraveling or making less thorny some issues of manuscript tradition. From this acute recognition emerges all the vastness and originality of Valla's operation in the recovery and dissemination of Galen's writings, whose fortune *De exp.* contributes to renewing.

The paper by F. Giorgianni is dedicated to another important Byzantine source of Vallian encyclopedia. The scholar analyzes the medical section of book XLVIII (III of the treatise relating to the *commoda et incommoda corporis*). The section is introduced by a cento dedicated to uroscopy and composed by drawing on Hippocrates, Paul of Aegina and Theophilus Protospatharius. In particular, the contribution focuses on chaps. 4-7, those that would seem to translate Theophilus' treatise *De urinis*. As a matter of fact, as already emerges from the study by A.M. Ieraci Bio, Theophilus does not seem to be the only source of the text constructed in Latin translation by Valla. The comparison with the Greek antigraph (Mut. gr. 61) of the text, which is contained in *De exp.*, reveals that the compilation on uroscopy also includes the treatise *De urinis*

*carmen* by Nikephorus Blemmydes and the ps.-Galenic *De signis ex urinis*. Vallian version in *De exp.* reveals, even in the case of uroscopic chapters, the ingenuity of a translator who is aware and devoted to the search for linguistic solutions appropriate to the context. F. Giorgianni enriches his contribution with the *specimen* of a Greek-Latin lexicon, a useful aid to a greater understanding of Valla's lexical choices.

Starting from a careful reading of the Modena manuscripts (namely, gr. 61 and gr. 213), the contributions of S. Passavanti and T. Martí-Casado reveal, in the description of Puntoni's catalogue, a generic reference to *excerpta varia ex Theophili, Galeni, Hippocratis et ceterorum medicorum operibus*, for ff. 31r-33r of Mut. gr. 61, and an equally generic title, i.e. *opuscula et excerpta medica varia*, for ff. 224v-242r. In particular, the contribution of S. Passavanti analyzes the content of ff. 31r-33r of Mut. gr. 61 and ff. 239v-242r. of Mut. gr. 213. The aim is to attempt an identification of the texts, which Puntoni indicates not in a precise manner, in order to go back to the manuscripts that transmitted them and to clarify their link with the cento constructed in Vallian *De exp.* Regardless of the results, the analysis, which is not limited to the philological and historical-textual approach, but also takes into account the medical history contents of the passages examined, represents a further valuable effort to unravel the interweaving of sources in *De exp.*

Similarly, the contribution by T. Martí-Casado, which concerns in particular the ff. 224v-239r of the Mut. gr. 213, attempts to identify a link between the medical extracts of the Modena manuscript and the Vallian encyclopedia. The analysis highlights the dependency of sections of text contained in the Mut. gr. 213 ff. 235v-236r on Aëtius of Amida (*Libri medicinales* V 3-4 Olivieri). In addition, the comparison with Olivieri's critical apparatus allows the scholar to propose some reflections on the filiation of the Modena manuscript and its link with the Parisian ms. P. Finally, the paper examines the treatise *De natura hominis* or *On the Constitution of the Universe and the Human Body*<sup>7</sup>, contained in Mut. gr. 213, ff. 236r, 6 – 237r, 167. The manuscript tradition, the identification of textual variants and the comparison with Valla's exposition on bodily humors theory allow us to recognize the anonymous treatise as one of the sources of the humanist, together with the ps.-Hippocratic *Epistula ad Ptolemaeum regem de hominis fabrica* (Ieraci Bio<sup>1</sup>). The Mut. gr. 213, for obvious chronological reasons, cannot be the manuscript examined by Valla, but the humanist is supposed to have consulted a model of it.

The vast availability of sources from which Valla draws is necessarily linked to the cultural and book contribution of the Byzantine *émigrés*<sup>8</sup>. In this regard, L. Orlandi notes in his article that a third of the manuscripts of Andronikos Callistos flow into the Venetian library of Giorgio Valla. The author reconstructs the stages of this acquisition, cross-referencing documents and data of material philology and demonstrating how the library of Andronikos Callistos represented the main source of his *Belesenheit* and his significant activity as a translator and compiler. The contribution ends with an

acute and persuasive reflection on the study of Greek to which the humanist would have dedicated himself in Pavia under the guidance of the Byzantine master.

To sum up, the two volumes dedicated to Giorgio Valla and particularly to his specific activity as a translator of medical texts aimed to explore in all its cultural dimensions the characteristics of an author who well represents medical humanism in its articulated complexity. The in-depth reflection that emerges from this series of contributions has highlighted the virtuous interaction between humanistic culture and Greek medical literature in the reorganization of knowledge, in the creation of a modern scientific lexicon, in the construction of a canon destined to renew the fortune of Hippocratism and Galenism. The experiment of Vallian encyclopedia moves in this direction. The contributions collected here, therefore, addressing the theme from different angles and methodological approaches, respond to the hope of shedding light on the strategies that Giorgio Valla implements to realize his ambitious project. And, last but not least, they help to recognize the threads of the complex web that the material and cultural history of ideas weaves with the history of medicine.

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