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Giovambattista Noghera (1719–84): A Jesuit Looking Back at a Great Rhetorical Tradition

Author: Hanne Roer

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Giovambattista Noghera (1719–84): A Jesuit Looking Back at a Great Rhetorical Tradition

HANNE ROER

Noghera: A Forgotten Apologist and Jesuit Humanist

Although Giovambattista Noghera, S.J. was a professor of rhetoric and a prolific writer—his works were published in a posthumous collection of eighteen volumes—his name is not found in any modern book on the history of rhetoric.[1] In several writings, he defended Christian rhetoric from the critique launched by Cartesian and rationalist philosophers, as well as the Society itself during a period when it was facing expulsion from Spain, Portugal, and France.[2] Having joined the Society at an early age, he became part of a vigorous Jesuit culture in Milan in the mid-eighteenth century while teaching at the Collegio dei Nobili. Because of his knowledge of Greek and Latin, he was appointed professor of sacred rhetoric in Vienna, returning to his hometown, Berbenno in Valtellina, after the suppression, where he spent his last years writing apologetic treatises. He may have been the last Jesuit of the old Society to write a book on sacred eloquence. In his lifetime, he was highly admired for his erudition as well as his writings on theology in Italy and abroad, as is clear from works on Christian eloquence, such as Christoph Christian Sturm's *Journal für Prediger* (Journal for preachers [1772]). He was also praised by the French abbot (and former Jesuit) François-Xavier de Feller in 1818.[3] Yet

[1] Giovambattista Noghera, *Opere dell'abate Giambatista Noghera* (Bassano, 1790). There is a short entry on Noghera followed by a list of nine works, mostly on theology and eloquence, including the first year of their edition and the original publishers, in Carlos Sommervogel, Augustin de Backer, and Aloys de Backer, eds., *Bibliothèque des écrivains de la Compagnie de Jésus, ou notices bibliographiques* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1869–76), 2:1570–71.

[2] Voltaire, one of the most notable critics of the Jesuits' political strategies, attacked their management of the missions in South America; see, for example, Girolamo Imbruglia, *The Jesuit Missions of Paraguay and a Cultural History of Utopia (1568–1789)* (Boston: Brill, 2017). Imbruglia notes that Noghera (*Riflessioni su la filosofia de bello spirito* [Bassano: A spese di Remondini, 1767], 121) supported the utopian idea that Jesuit Paraguay was superior to Plato's republic (195), indicating that Noghera's fight for rhetoric was part of a larger defense of Jesuit power.

[3] Christoph Christian Sturm, *Journal für Prediger* 3, no. 1 (Halle: Carl Christian Kümmel 1772), in which his work on Christian eloquence occurs on a list of seven "Italienische Bücher von der geistlichen Beredsamkeit" (Italian books on religious eloquence). François-Xavier de Feller, *Dictionnaire historique, ou histoire abrégée des hommes qui se sont fait un nom par le génie, le talens, les vertus, les erreurs, depuis de commencement du monde jusqu'a nos jours* (Paris: Méquignon-Havard, 1818): "Jean-Baptiste Noghera, savant jésuite, naquit à Berbeno, dans la Valteline, le 9 mai 1719. Il fit ses premières études à Còme, et vint les continuer à Monsa, sous la

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Noghera seems to have fallen from favor shortly thereafter, as seen in Maurizio Monti's *Storia di Como* (History of Como [1832]). While appreciating Noghera's unpolemical style in his small theological treatises, Monti was critical of his philological skills. In addition to finding mistakes in Noghera's translation of Demosthenes, he considered his major work on eloquence a collection of trivia professed in a pompous style. Monti's conclusion is that a learned person should rejoice in no longer having to read such works.[4] Though these two writers have

direction des Jésuites, dans il embrassa l'institut le 14 octobre 1735, agé seulement de 16 ans. Ses progrès furent grands et rapides sous ces abiles maîtres, qu'il égala bientôt. Il avait fait une étude particulière de l'éloquence. On le choisit pour en donner des lecons à Milan, aux jeunes jésuites, et plusieurs de ceux qu'il eut pour disciples se firent par la suit une reputation dans les lettres. L'éclat de son mérite et sa renommée se répandirent au loin. On l'appela à Vienne, où on lui confia une chaire d'éloquence sacrée. Malheuresement il était destiné à voir la suppression d'une société à laquelle il n'était pas moins attaché par inclination que devoir. Déjà elle était menacée, et oblige de se défendre. Noghera fut un de ceux que les superieurs chargèrent de cette importante mission. Il s'en acquitta, sinon avec succès, du moins avec courage et talent. Ce qu'il a écrit pour cette cause est appuyé d'une éloquence touchante. Après la bulle de dissolution, de Clément XIV, le P. Noghera se retira à Berbeno, sa patrie, et continua d'y écrire en faveur de la religion et de l'église, en établissant les vrais principes, et de combattant les nouvelles doctrines et la fausse philosophie" (Giovambattista Noghera, a learned Jesuit, was born in Berbenno, in the Valtellina area, May 9, 1719. His first studies took place in Como, and he continued studying under the direction of the Jesuits, in Monsa, where he embraced the Institute on October 14, 1753, only sixteen years old. His progress was grand and rapid under these able masters whom he soon matched. He had in particular studied eloquence. He was chosen to give lessons to young Jesuits in Milan, and several of his disciples eventually earned a reputation in the humanities. The brilliance of his merits and his fame radiated far away. He was summoned to Vienna where he was assigned a chair in sacred eloquence. Unfortunately, he was destined to see the suppression of the Society to which he was attached by inclination no less than duty. It was already menaced and forced to defend itself. Noghera was one of those whom the superiors charged with this important mission. He took it upon himself, if not with success, at least with courage and talent. What he wrote for this cause is reinforced by a touching eloquence. After the papal brief from Clement XIV, Father Noghera retired and withdrew to Berbenno, his hometown, and continued writing in favor of the religion and the church, establishing its true principles and combating new doctrines and false philosophy).

[4] "Altro gesuita il padre Giambatista Noghera da Berbenno, morto di 75 anni nel 1784, fu pur autore di molte operette di controversie teologiche, ora cadute in dimenticanza. Non imita gli altri scrittori di polemica, ma d'indole benevola e soave combatte solo quello che crede errore, nè bada alla persona. Ci diede una nervata e poco esatta versione di Demosthene, e un trattatello di eloquenza sacra antica e moderna, lavoro triviale, in cui non si trovano che pochi dei precetti rettorici i più comuni. Ampoloso è il suo stile, cammina con andamento oratorio ed uniforme, e i pensieri sono stemprati sempre in un mare di parole. Le sue opere raccolte in diciasette volumi si stamparano nel 1790 a Bassano. Dobbiamo consolarci colla presente età che avvaloratasi negli studi, non vuole più leggere sì fatti scritti" (Another Jesuit was Giovambattista Noghera from Berbenno, who died at the age of seventy-five in 1784, and was the author of many small works on theological controversies, now forgotten. He does not imitate the other writers of polemics, but, fighting in a benign and mild temperament, he combats only that which he considers wrong, never persons. He gave us a short and not very exact version of Demosthenes, and a small treatise on sacred eloquence, both ancient and modern, a trivial work in which one finds nothing but the most common precepts. His style is swollen, progressing in an oratorical and uniform manner, and his thoughts are always diluted in a sea of words. His collected works of seventeen volumes were printed in 1790 in Bassano. We must console ourselves in our present era that we have advanced in studies and do not have to read such writings any longer). Maurizio Monti, *Storia di Como*, vol. 2, part 2 (Como: Ostinelli, 1832), 484–85.

their own agendas—the former is clerical, the latter secular—it is clear that Noghera was sinking into oblivion, a fate enforced by the mistrust of rhetoric in the nineteenth century.

However, due to the opposing tendency, the revival of rhetorical studies in recent decades, some modern scholars have since taken an interest in Noghera's life and works, including his major work on rhetoric *Della moderna eloquenza sacra e del moderno stile profano e sacro: Ragionamenti* (On modern sacred eloquence and on the modern style, profane and sacred; 2nd ed. [1753]).[5] Several scholars, notably Marc Fumaroli, Barbara Bauer, Aldo Scaglione, and John W. O'Malley, have studied the rhetoric of the old Society in its own right (i.e., as an educational and theoretical discipline based on Renaissance humanism). O'Malley and Fumaroli, in particular, have rehabilitated works by Jesuit professors of rhetoric from universities such as the Collegio Romano, proving that apart from the prescriptive textbooks, Jesuits also wrote on rhetoric in a more philosophical vein, reflecting on the nature of language and the relationship between emotion and rhetorical figures, to name some important issues.[6] This field, known as *eloquenza divina*, *rhetorica divina* (divine eloquence, divine rhetoric), or similar combinations, was not restricted to the Jesuits, and we find works bearing such titles until the nineteenth century.[7]

The textbook tradition going back to Cipriano Suárez's *De arte rhetorica* (Art of rhetoric [1577]) and providing models for the perfect eloquence envisioned by the *Ratio studiorum* was not strictly distinct from the theoretical treatises (such as Famianos Strada's *Prolusiones et paradigmata eloquentiae* [Introductory

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[5] Giovanna Zanlonghi, historian of theater, mentions Noghera in her chapter on Jesuit theater and culture in eighteenth-century Milan; see "The Jesuit Stage and Theatre in Milan during the Eighteenth Century," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts 1540–1773*, ed. John W. O'Malley et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 530–49. She also dedicates a few pages to his notion of fantasy in her book *Teatri di formazione: Actio, parola e immagine nella scena gesuitica del Sei-Settecento a Milano* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2002). For a detailed paraphrase of the first book, see Hanne Roer, "Sacred Eloquence at the Crossroads: G. Noghera's *Della moderna eloquenza sacra e del moderno stile profane e sacro*," in *Rhetoric in the Twenty-First Century: An Interactive Oxford Symposium*, ed. Nicholas J. Crowe and David A. Frank (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 69–80. For a comparison between Noghera's defense of rhetoric and that of Giambattista Vico, see Roer, "Den fantastiske retorik: Jesuitten Nogheras forsvar for retorikken med et perspektiv til Vico," *Rhetorica Scandinavica* 23 (November 2019): 94–111.

[6] See, for example, Wilfried Barner, *Barockrhetorik*: *Untersuchungen zu ihren geschichtlichen grundlagen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1970) and Marc Fumaroli, *L'age de l'éloquence: Rhétorique et "res literaria" de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique* (Geneva: Droz, 1980). Le Brun points out that many of Fumaroli's authors were French Jesuits. See Jacques Le Brun, "La rhétorique dans l'Europe moderne," *Annales*: *Histoire, sciences sociales* 37, no. 3 (1982): 481–88.

[7] After the Society's suppression in 1773, the production of Jesuit textbooks on rhetoric ceased, and rhetoric slowly became the antidote to modernity; see Catherine L. Hobbs, *Rhetoric on the Margins of Modernity: Vico, Condillac, Monboddo* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 16.

discourses and models of eloquence (1617)], and Carlo Reggio's *Orator Christianus* [Christian orator (1612)]). In Noghera's *Della moderna eloquenza*, these two genres merge: he claims that his work is not just a basic textbook but rather a series of reflections of a more philosophical kind. While he introduces his three books of *ragionamenti* (reasonings) with reflections on the nature of Christian rhetoric, there is no shortage of the traditional rules. When categorizing and discussing these classical precepts of rhetoric, he constantly refers to exemplary preachers, some of whom are Jesuits, as well as the familiar classical and patristic sources. He is addressing his students, teaching them the art of preaching, but he also has lofty ambitions for rhetoric, which he considers to be of utmost importance in a rationalist world.

Noghera's work is important because it attests to the vigor of Jesuit education and rhetoric in Italy in this period. Furthermore, adding Noghera to the record of Jesuit rhetoricians and introducing him into the history of rhetoric is a corrective to the historiography of modern rhetoricians, which presents the history of rhetoric as a drama in three acts: Greco-Roman rhetoric, Renaissance, and twentieth-century rhetoric (e.g., Chaim Perelman). This narrative presupposes an idealistic link between rhetoric and democracy, ignoring Christian rhetoric. Interestingly, Noghera also plots the history of rhetoric as threefold, with three vertices: classical rhetoric, the church fathers, and the seventeenth century—the latter two periods filling in the voids of the modern three-act drama. This indicates that rhetoric is a flexible social discourse in which the values and norms of a social group, or society at large, come to live. Rhetoric is more than empty form or techniques of communication: it has a binding force that may lend cohesion to society, democratic or not. Like most modern rhetoricians, Noghera is a humanist idealist who takes it for granted that the conflictual forces of rhetoric can be domesticated and used to advance good causes.

Noghera's works were forgotten because they were no longer needed following the suppression of the Society and the closure of its many educational institutions, colleges, and seminaries. The nineteenth-century critics, mentioned above, condemned his inflated style and theoretical inconsistencies, and to a modern taste, too, his style may seem conceited. Indeed, although Noghera often warns against theatrical effects, so popular in his time, he seems rather theatrical himself, with dramatic dialogues and questions.[8] The preface to the second edition

[8] In the introduction to Noghera's work, *Riflessioni sulla divozione, e sul divoti: Opera postuma dell'abate Giambattista Noghera* [Reflections on devotion, and the devoted: A posthumous work by Abbott Giambattista Noghera], Cavalier Conte Giambatista Giovio surveys Noghera's life and works (reproduced from his *Dizionario degli Uomini Illustri Comensi*). His unpolemical attitude and untiring pen are praised, but the author lets out a sigh at Noghera's love for the dramatic comparisons of ancients and moderns: "Questa gara de'viventi co' morti è ormai troppo nojosa" (This contest between the living and the dead has become too boring).

of *Della moderna eloquenza*, for example, is a humorous apology for himself, a young man writing on such important matters, in the form of a pastiche of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. He imagines himself meeting his critics from all of Italy, protesting in Dantesque verse against his enterprise. While this may seem slightly comic today, it also shows us a good-humored professor trying to adapt the Jesuits' rhetorical heritage to contemporary culture, in which Dante was becoming an emblem of Italian identity. Noghera is aware that Christian rhetoric was the medium relating theology to society, reinforcing the link between the individual and the church. It was a power discourse that worked as a means of social control while also providing individual Christians with agency and moral dignity.[9] This balance is Noghera's concern throughout his work.

In this article, I focus on Noghera's construction of a Christian rhetorical tradition. He is looking back at the ancient giants as well as the humanists of the sixteenth century and the grand orators of the seventeenth, seeking to relate these to the secular philosophers of his own day. His project is the synthesis of all great oratory and rhetorical prose from Demosthenes to René Descartes, and he establishes his own, personal canon of great Jesuit and non-Jesuit preachers, referring throughout his book to his model Jesuits, the French preacher Louis Bourdaloue (1632–1704) and the Italian Paolo Segneri (1624–94).[10] Bourdaloue and Segneri represent two different paradigms of rhetorical style: a formalistic, argumentative (using chains of syllogisms) versus a more loose, associative style, both useful for the preacher according to the context. Noghera mentions a wealth of preachers and rhetoricians when contrasting the rhetorical styles of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. He inserts Italian and French preachers into his grid of Christian rhetoric, framed by the elitist mode of Bourdaloue versus the popular style of Segneri. Two conflicting exigencies, the need to highlight the Jesuit tradition and to demonstrate a nationalistic mindset, determine the way Noghera constructs his story of Jesuit sacred rhetoric.

Noghera's *Della moderna eloquenza sacra e del moderno stile profane e*

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[9] As pointed out by Nancy Struever, sacred as well as profane rhetoric has always been a civil discipline; see *The History of Rhetoric and the Rhetoric of History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

[10] Segneri entered the order in 1637, studied at the Collegio Romano, and taught humanities in Pistoia for several years until he started preaching in Tuscany and the Papal States. Collections of his sermons were sold in large editions in Italy and in translation outside of Italy. He wrote several works on penitence, instruction, and meditation, the most famous being the *Quaresimale* [Lenten sermons] (Florence, 1679); see Carlos Sommervogel and Augustin de Backer, eds., *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus: Nouvelle édition* (Brussels: Oscar Schepens, 1890–1932), 7:cols. 1050–89. See Rocco Paternostro and Andrea Fedi, *Paolo Segneri: Un classico della tradizione christiana; Atti del convegno internazionale di studi su Paolo Segneri nel 300' anniversario della morte (1694–1994)* (Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum, 1999). Bourdaloue entered the Society at the age of sixteen. He was an extremely popular preacher at the court of Versailles, in Eglise Saint Paul-Saint Louis in Paris, and later in Montpellier and various Catholic institutions. His works were translated into several languages. See Sophie Hasquenoph, *Louis Bourdaloue: Le prédicateur de Louis XIV; 1632–1704* (Paris: Salvator, 2015).

sacro consists of *ragionamenti*, reasonings, partly in an essayistic style marked by numerous rhetorical questions and partly in the traditional format of a textbook. The index reveals that Noghera's disposition is an original tripartition, dealing with audience and context, the topics of sacred rhetoric and style in the broadest sense. In the first book, *Ragionamento primo* (First reasoning; sixty-four chapters), Noghera discusses the character of the audience, as well as imagination and language, which eventually leads him to recommend some exemplary preachers. In *Ragionamento secondo* (Second reasoning; fifty-four chapters), he defines sacred rhetoric and the distinctive features of sacred eloquence, while the third book, *Ragionamento terzo* (Third reasoning; ninety-five chapters), is dedicated to style and the norms of linguistic correctness, leading to a comparison of sacred and profane rhetoric. Across the three books, Noghera constantly returns to the comparison between the past and present, echoing the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, French and Italian. Here follows a paraphrase of the three books, with an emphasis on Noghera's models for imitation.

First Book: Audience, Fantasy, and Emotions

The titles of the individual paragraphs of the first book disclose Noghera's somewhat associative way of reasoning.[11] Having established that sacred oratory is a systematic art, he proceeds to a discussion of the various types of audience: the learned (*dotti*, *letterati*), the pretentious (*saccenti*, *saputi*), and the people, (*il popolo*). Being aware of the audience is important because the Christian orator must target a large audience, the people, keeping in mind that speaking in a certain way may lead to success in one town but not in another and with a particular class of people while proving unsuccessful in another context. However, there are universal principles, as demonstrated in the speeches of Demosthenes, Cicero, and John Chrysostom, that can sway the minds of the listeners.[12] Noghera strongly believes in the power of fantasy, as did his fellow rhetoricians of the eighteenth century, who argued that fantasy was an essential part of human cognition, thus opposing rationalist philosophers.[13] The preacher should use *un dir fantastico*, a fantastic discourse, linking body and soul, the lower and the higher faculties (11). In order

[11] I am referring to the second edition of Noghera's *Della moderna eloquenza sacra e del moderno stile profane e sacro*, which is available online: https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=suchen&ab=Venezia&kl=&l=en (accessed September 3, 2020).

[12] "Questa questa è stata sempre, e sarà in ogni tempo la forma della eloquenza vera, non mica solamente lusinghiera degli orecchi, ma dominatrice degli animi umani" (This has always been and will always to all times be the form of true eloquence, not simply flattering to the ears but master of human minds), 6.

[13] Noghera combines the Aristotelian concept of *phantasia* with that of contemporary philosophers, the Jesuits Claude Buffier (1661–1737) and Lodovico Antonio Muratori (1672–1750).

to get common people's attention, the preacher must work simultaneously on the three mental capacities: intellect, heart, and emotions–through descriptions, tropes, figures, and comparisons based on scripture. He stresses that sacred eloquence must balance between extremes: it must be popular without being confusing or too emotional, simple without being low.[14]

This configuration of sacred rhetoric in antithetical, parallel figures of repetition is the ground on which Noghera builds his manual. He claims that practical instructions and examples for imitation, not theory, will help the students become good preachers. Students should study the ancient poets and rhetors (Cicero's speeches such as *Pro Milone* [For Milo], Demosthenes's *Second Olynthiac*, Horace's *Satires*; later on, he mentions Martial, Lucan, Cassius Longinus, Quintilian, Catullus), scripture, the church fathers, and his favorites, Bourdaloue and Segneri. The former orators are admirably short, whereas the latter two are masters of the art of amplification. Sublime poets such as Dante, Torquato Tasso, and Ludovico Ariosto, and painters such as Raphael and Guido Reni, may inspire, but it should be kept in mind that poetry is for pleasure and diverts the thoughts (14). Rhetoric, on the other hand, is meant to master and move the minds of the listeners, and pleasure is only allowed to the extent that it promotes these two purposes (12).

It is sign of Noghera's awareness of the changing times that he distinguishes between various kinds of authority in discourse. He points out that authority is at the core of sacred rhetoric, in contrast to science, where reason holds the first place (23). The Christian orator appeals to God and scripture, and although he may demonstrate his points in elaborate syllogisms, as did Bourdaloue, truth is not to be debated. The scriptures are sources of authority, but they should not be blindly imitated, Noghera warns. In order to profit from the wealth of grandiose imagery in the scriptures, in particular the Old Testament, the preacher must interpret, applying the medieval model of *allegoresis*. Noghera adds a fifth level to the four traditional steps of interpretation (*letterale* [literal], *tropologico* [tropological], *allegorico* [allegorical], *anagogico* [anagorical] [25]), the level of *accomodaticcio* (accommodating the interpretation/exegesis of a biblical text to a given situation and audience), a term I have not seen elsewhere in texts on rhetoric. This very Jesuit

[14] "Popolare adunque sará un dir fantastico senza confondere, nè svagare la fantasia, pulito senza affettazione, penetrante senza sottogliezze, grandioso senza gonfiamento, nuovo senza stravaganza, semplice senza bassezza; sodezza e verità nei riflessi e nelle ragioni, vivacità e scioltezza nella locuzione, naturalezza e varietà nelle figure, sagacità e discrezion nel costume, delicatezza e vemenza negli affetti; niente languido, niente intralciato, niente oscuro" (A truly popular discourse will be one that is fantastic without confusing or diverting the faculty of fantasy, neat without affectation, penetrating without subtleties, grand without swelling, new without extravagance, simple without baseness; firmness and truth in reflections and reasonings, liveliness and fluency in phrases, naturalness and variety in the figures, sagacity and discretion in customs, delicacy and vehemence in affections; nothing languid, nothing hampered, nothing obscure), 9.

appropriation of the formalist, medieval *allegoresis* is a striking example of Noghera's flexible way of thinking, an example of Jesuit accommodation.[15]

Noghera is not a great fan of the style of the fathers (due to incorrect interpretations of scripture plus all the vices of late Roman rhetoric) and advises his students to avoid simply imitating them. He recommends the Greek fathers, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Basil, and St. Chrysostom's *Sermons for the People*, as well as a handful of the Latin fathers (27) who preserved true eloquence for the future. There are admirable paragraphs in St. Leo, St. Basilio, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Cyprian, Tertullian, Salvian, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, and St. Thomas. The best way of using the original *fontes*, sources, is to cast new light on them, as Bourdaloue did in his interpretation of St. Paul's Letters. It is a respectable art, weaving quotations into a new body of words.[16]

Noghera then turns to the traditional secular models. He does not want to judge whether the ancient orators and philosophers (Aristotle, Seneca, Pliny) were better than the church fathers but instead discusses how quotations from Cicero, for example, lend authority to the Christian orator. Can quotations from modern secular philosophers such as Isaac Newton and Descartes and his followers reinforce the preacher's message?[17] He discusses the arguments in a *pro et contra* debate, which is also a discussion of old versus modern, Noghera's take on *la querelle des anciens et des modernes*.[18] He speaks as he usually does for a compromise between extremes: one must be open to the modern trends without becoming a victim of the latest fashion in preaching. Having compared the old and the new style, Noghera ends up promoting a temperate, middle style, natural rather than the stylistic exaggerations of the last century (*argutezze*, *concettismo*) or the fashionable manners of crying or fainting. While the famous *cinquecento* rhetoric (the rhetoric

[15] For the importance of accommodation in Jesuit rhetoric, see Stephen Schloesser, "Accommodation as a Rhetorical Principle: Twenty Years after John O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* (1993)," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1, no. 3 (2014): 347–72.

[16] "Formar di parti diversi un ben inteso e configurato corpo, è forse opera da ogni fabro?" (To form of different parts a well-informed and well-shaped body—is that perhaps the work of every craftsman?), 32.

[17] Noghera is favorable, even though the Jesuits, in a congress with the Oratorians, had prohibited the teaching of Cartesianism in 1678 and formally condemned it in 1706. See Roger Ariew, "Condemnations of Cartesianism: The Extension and Unity of the Universe," in *Descartes among the Scholastics* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 241–349.

[18] Charles Perrault started this debate in 1688 with his *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes*, 4 vols. (Parallels between the ancients and the Moderns, Paris: Jean Baptiste Coignard, 1688–96) and Bernard Le Bouyer Fontenelle continued it (Poesies pastorales. Aves un Traité sur la Nature de l'Ecloque & et une *Digression sur les anciens et des modernes en France* /Pastoral Poetry. With a Treatise on the Nature of the Ecloque, and a Digression about the Ancients and the Moderns in France. Paris: Chez Michel Brunet, 1688) along with several writers outside of France. See Barbara Warnick, "The Old Rhetoric vs. the New Rhetoric: The Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns," *Communication Monographs* 49 (December 1982): 263–76.

of Italian sixteenth-century humanists) was boring, seventeenth-century Christian oratory was extreme and often exaggerated. Noghera considers it essentially human to go from one extreme to the other, which he finds reflected in the history of rhetoric. Noghera's history of rhetorical ideas resembles that of Ernst Robert Curtius, who in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948) presented the history of literature and rhetoric as oscillations between extremes, from mannerism to classicism and back.

The preacher should talk to people's hearts in a universal, general style, in the manner of Jesus himself. Noghera advocates the use of simple syllogisms and warns against the French tradition of listing numerous syllogisms and refutations and subdividing these into new syllogisms (which he calls *la macchina*, the machine). He appreciates this anatomical style, but in a shorter version, combined with a vivid, flowing style, as represented by Segneri. The preacher should address the inner moral struggles of the Christian in order to shake his listeners. He may talk about his own road to conversion, quoting from St. Augustine's *Confessions*, which still provides the best model (74–75). Vehement outbursts in the manner of the prophets, Demosthenes, and Cicero may also come in useful (variety keeps the audience awake), though Virgil is the master of appealing to the emotions (e.g., 117, often quoted).[19]

The last part of *Ragionamento primo* is dedicated to Bourdaloue and Segneri and those following them on Noghera's list of exemplary preachers. Bourdaloue takes the first place as the sublime sacred orator (*una forma di eloquenza pia e sacra, e seria, e virile*), though he had the advantage of speaking in Paris in front of an educated audience while Segneri preached to the people at the city square in various Italian towns, as so many Jesuits had done, partly because they were prescribed to do so by the *Spiritual Exercises*. Noghera discusses in great detail Segneri's deficiencies and merits: he suffers from the artificialness typical of the seventeenth century, but apart from that, he is a true modern (p. 129). He lists his favorite Italian preachers: Francesco Panigarola, Cornelio Musso, Father Casini, Gabriele da Barletta, Simplicio Gorla, Agostino Dolera ("men without faults, some more, some less magnificent" [*uomini senza fallo, chi più, chi meno, grandissimi*], p. 131). Noghera also has a list of great French speakers: Father Eugène Fromentier, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Esprit Fléchier, Claude de la Colombière, Jean-Baptiste Massillon, Hubert, Timoléon Cheminais de Montaigu, Girout, Charles de la Rue,

[19] The sermon should lead to a "spiritual unction" of the listener, the models for imitation being St. Bernard's sermons to Mary, St. Thomas à Kempis, and de la Colombière (116). Salvian of Marseille is also quoted (111) and Roberto Bellarmino mentioned several times. St. Paul is the perfect exemplar always to be kept in mind: "Dimostrare stima, rispetto, e amore, questa è il modo di procacciare benevolenza. Il Dottor delle genti, e predicatore divino, Paolo Apostolo voglio, che in questa parte sia nostro ammaestratore" (To display esteem, respect and love, this is the way to get benevolence. The apostle of the gentiles, and divine preacher, I mean Paul the Apostle, who should be our master in this area), 120ff.

Francois de Paule Bretoneau, and Du-Bois, apart from Bourdaloue (133).[20] After having debated the differences between French and Italian preaching, Noghera envisions a future in which the art of preaching is revived in Italy.

Second Book: The Specific Content of Sacred Eloquence

Christian rhetoric is defined by its subject, the Christian mysteries and the saints, and hence it is primarily panegyric and epideictic, *orazioni panegiriche*. The first chapters of the *Ragionamento secondo* deal with the importance of the saints for the teaching of Christian morals, while the last ones are dedicated to God and the Trinity, the specific content of a Catholic sermon. Sacred, panegyric eloquence has two main purposes: it should praise the saints and show how people can prosper by imitating their humble lives (p. 144). Noghera dedicates several paragraphs to the praise of the saints, obviously an important task for the ecclesiastical preacher, and he is very practical when giving advice. Thus he discusses whether one is allowed to make up details about a saint's life when the relevant *vita* is too short; though the answer is no, he urges the preacher to use his imagination, elaborating and amplifying the few available facts.

Then he turns to the Holy Virgin, God, and the Trinity: the preacher must explain the theological dogmas in a plain and easily understandable way, avoiding mystical language. He must learn to adapt style to content, using pathos when talking about the crucifixion of Christ and a calm, middle style when explaining the moral commandments. Again, Noghera is critical of crying and fainting, quoting Longinus's assertion that the least emotional orators are the best at provoking passions, and he recommends the golden middle without extreme outbursts of emotions or sarcasm. The preacher should also dramatize dogmatic expositions by inserting rhetorical questions and direct speech. An example to follow would be Gregory of Caesarea's sermon on the baptism of Jesus, from which he quotes an allegorical invocation of the River Jordan (218) as well as a sermon on the birth of Christ by St. Gregory of Nyssa (219).

In general, Noghera does not prioritize Jesuit orators, but in this case, he recommends consulting Jesuit theologians for advice on the praise of the saints: St. Ignazio, St. Francesco Saverio (Xavier), St. Luigi (i.e., Aloysius Gonzaga), and Cardinal Pallavicino.[21] Noghera also gives advice on the choice of Christian genres and their stylistic characteristics. In a digression on funeral speeches, he points out that this genre is partly secular, partly sacred, because it consists of praise of the

[20] Du-Bois might refer to Guillaume Dubois (1656–1723), but considering his impious life, this is unlikely. I have not succeeded identifying Girout and Hubert, also mentioned above.
[21] Francesco Sforza Pallavicino, *Storia del Concilio di Trento*, vols. 1–2 (Rome: Nella stamperia d'Angelo Bernabò dal Verme erede del Manelfi, 1656–57).

dead person's merits in this life and reflections on life after death. He lists quite a few exemplary preachers, rhetoricians, and poets: Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccacio, Jacopo Passavanti, Francesco Salviato, Pietro Bembo, Giovanni della Casa, Baldassare Castiglione, Pier Crescenzi, Benedetto Varchi, and Sperone Speroni. He admires Francois de Salignac de Fénelon's poems and the famous funeral speech by Bossuet for Condè (e.g., 191). He also quotes extensively from Cicero and the church fathers, especially Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and Gregory the Great, and from Bourdaloue. He claims that the mystery of the Trinity is too complicated to be explained in a sermon to ordinary people.[22] Noghera takes a pragmatic stance: Christian eloquence is primarily about inculcating a moral lifestyle rather than lecturing on theological subtleties. The goal of sacred rhetoric is to ignite the souls of the congregation, and that is not going very well (a common complaint in treatises on sacred rhetoric).

Third Book: Rhetorical Style between the Ancients and the Moderns

In the long *Ragionamento terzo*, Noghera discusses style in an associative manner, agreeing with his seventeenth-century predecessors that tropes and figures have an immediate effect on the emotions. He recommends a style suited for the general public, something that is missing in Italy, where preachers often address clergy or noblemen. His *partitio* (VI) has five parts. In the first, he recommends the writers fit for imitation, which is followed in the second part by the specific features (*quiddità*, in Scholastic terms) of the modern style and its related perils. The fourth

[22] "A che fine per tanto logorare il cervello a spiegar ciò, che è inesplicabile, e inviluppare più e più il Mistero con una pretensione chimerica di svilupparlo? Volga Volga l'Oratore a più sano partito i suoi pensieri; e al più accenni corto corto la sustanza del gran Mistero, senza innoltrarsi in quella luce inaccessibile. Negli altri Misteri sarebbe fallo il deviare dalla dichiarazione de' medesimi, in questo sarebbe fallo il pur tentarla" (What is the purpose of wearing out the brain trying to explain what is inexplicable and, more and more, envelop the Mystery with a chimeric pretension of developing its meaning? Let the orator turn his thoughts to the more wholesome side; and he must hint as short as possible to the substance of the great Mystery, without forwarding himself into the inaccessible light. Deviating from explaining the other Mysteries would be an error but it would be an error even trying to do so with this one), 213. Moral instruction communicated in an easily understandable language is crucial: "I Misteri della nostra religione no, non son essi puramente speculative a cattivar l'intelletto in ossequio della Divinità, sono pratici, sono connessi con sodissimi insegnamenti, sono di natura loro efficacissimi alla ritorna del nostro vivere. Per venire alla moralità non è d'uopo di molto studio, ella stessa ti si fa inanzi. Oltre all'esempio dei Santi Padri, in questo punto medesimo il detto Bourdaloue ti può esser guida ed esempio" (The Mysteries of our religion, no, they are not merely speculative in order to captivate the intellect in deference of the divinity, they are practical, they are related to the firmest of teachings, they are by nature most efficient for reforming of our way of living. There is no need of much studying in order to come to morality, which presents itself to you. Apart from the example of the holy fathers, the mentioned Bourdaloue may serve you as guide and exemplar), 220.

part discusses how to choose the correct style for each genre, followed by a fourth part on oratorical style, and, finally, a fifth part on sacred oratorical style.

Noghera's detailed examination of style falls into five parts: (1) ways of thought, (2) words and phrases, (3) figures of speech, (4) length of the periods, and (5) fill-in words (*ripieni*) lending elegance.[23] Emphasizing that style is governed by thought, he stresses that style dresses thought, and the orator must choose the right thoughts rather than spectacular clothing. He is in favor of a clear, easily understandable Italian, with a flowing rhythm that never degenerates into music (248–49). Many of Noghera's reflections concern the lack of standards for Italian orthography and the choice of proper words and syntax in a period without an official language and several regional dialects opting for this position. The newly established Accademia della Crusca in Florence is not a favorite of Noghera's, who considers it a symptom of Tuscan linguistic imperialism, although he acknowledges the need for such an academy (252–55).

Noghera sets up a conceptual frame opposing the ancients and the moderns, French and Italian, the educated and the people. The sacred oratorical style adapted to the people has to be correct and grand in the communication of thoughts and ideas (pp. 311–12). The preacher should avoid imitating Greek or Latin syntax, aiming at a natural style, having the French and the English in mind. Noghera, however, is skeptical of the popular term *naturalezza*, naturalness (LV); as a rhetorician, he notices that this claim to authenticity is simply a new stylistic mode. The orator addressing *il popolo* should polish his style in order to communicate thoughts, doctrines, and concepts in an understandable way (pp. 311–12). Christian oratory has to be simple, dignified, and serious, avoiding stylistic exaggerations (which he compares to an oversized cape). The scriptures, the church fathers, and preachers such as Segneri are the "generous models." He quotes the authors he has mentioned in the first two books, primarily ancient orators and poets.

Noghera's Living Archive: French Jesuits and Northern Italians

Noghera instructs his students that a good sermon can be made out of quotations turned into a harmonious textual body. This description may also apply to his own treatise, in which dozens of models for imitation are recommended. Noghera demonstrates, not without pride, his impressive learning, spanning from Greco-Roman rhetoric and literature to modern philosophy, literature, and sacred oratory. He is promoting Jesuit orators, not Jesuit theory on rhetoric, while also including a

[23] "Costesti pensieri, sieno, come le persone, e le parole sieno vestimenta" (Such thoughts are like persons, and the words are like clothes), 239. Connecting outer form with femininity, as rhetorical tradition has it, he further states that "words are the maids of thought" (*ancelle*, 251).

wealth of preachers from various orders and historical periods. He establishes throughout his work a history of rhetoric with several vertices. The first vertex is classical antiquity with its freedom of speech and masculine, heroic ideals expressed in the congruent style. He quotes orators, rhetoricians, historians, and poets but hardly any philosophers. The absence of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is surprising, both from a modern and from a humanist, *cinquecento* perspective. Noghera, for sure, stands on the shoulders of the humanist, Jesuit tradition, as taught in the three basic classes: grammar, *humaniora* (the humanities, i.e., Greek and Latin literature), and rhetoric. He demonstrates his love of ancient oratory and poetry without the slightest attempt at apologizing for any of them.

That Noghera is a late representative of the Latin humanist tradition is particularly evident in his posthumous book *De natura et causis eloquentiae: Disputationes tres* (On the nature and causes of eloquence: Three disputations). Most of the writers recommended in the latter work are classical authors, but he also includes some vernacular writers from the previous centuries (Dante, Tasso, Ludovico Ariosto, William Shakespeare, John Milton). This reminds us that the actual teaching was made up of lectures and exercises (oral and written), and that poetry, literature in the modern sense, was inseparable from rhetoric in the humanist tradition.[24] Pragmatic considerations overruled theological reservations: Terence and Virgil were perfect for teaching Latin (despite Augustine's warnings).

The students Noghera is addressing formed an elite audience that was granted intellectual freedom. While Jesuit teaching at colleges and universities was regulated by the *Ratio studiorum* and the Index (although the Jesuits were granted special rights), classical literature established a paratopical space allowing for a wide range of discussions. Thus, Noghera points out that ancient oratory depended on democracy and freedom of speech, while stressing that sacred oratory has risen from its ashes.[25] Freedom of speech was becoming a political issue in the middle

[24] In *Vico in the Tradition of Rhetoric* (Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1994), Michael Mooney describes the activities in the Jesuit rhetoric class: "During the final year of this basic training, daily dictations, repetitions, and exercises, filled out with monthly assignments of poems and orations and an annual program of public performances (declamations, lectures, poetry readings, an occasional drama or mock trial), a 'perfect eloquence' in oratory and poetry, one that would serve both utility and beauty of expression (*quae* […] *nec utilitati solum servit, sed etiam ornatui indulget*)" (63). See also Jean Dietz Moss, "The Rhetoric Course at the Collegio Romano in the Latter Half of the Sixteenth Century," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 137–51.

[25] "Se la eloquenza de' Rostri è venuta meno; dalle ceneri di quella, direi quasi, è nata la Eloquenza sacra, che tutta la efficacia per se addimanda, e per la dignità del suo obbietto sopra la profana senza comparazione s'innalza" (The eloquence of the rostrum [the speaker's platform in the Roman forum] may have been abandoned, but I would almost say that out of its ashes sacred eloquence has been born, which claims all of its effectiveness for itself, and due to the dignity of its object raises above profane eloquence), 315. And again: "Il trattar dei pubblici affari della ringhiera, il diliberare delle alleanze, della pace, e della Guerra, il perorar le cause private; acusare, difendere, e tutto è ito in disuso: nè queste più sono le parti dell'Oratore, e appena dello antico modo Atiniense, e Romano

of the eighteenth century, and Noghera uses ancient rhetoric as a foil for introducing this theme. He addresses Jesuit students, but he also hints at political rhetoric (using the popular term *politico*).

The second climax in Noghera's rhetorical canon is made up by the church fathers, especially Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Salvian from Marseille. Augustine laid the foundation for Christian rhetoric, but Noghera does not adhere to the severe Augustinian version of sacred eloquence, banning ancient poetry and stressing the ancillary function of rhetoric to theology. As we have seen, he considers Augustine's *Confessions* the best expression of Christian subjectivity, and this is another example of Noghera's sense of the demands of time, the need for a philosophical concept of subject (absent from the rhetorical tradition). He highlights medieval preachers such as Thomas à Kempis and Bernard's praise of the Virgin, but medieval rhetoric is not prominent.

The third peak is formed by his own canon of writers, the sacred rhetoric of the seventeenth century stretching into the eighteenth. Some of these Italian and French sacred orators are Jesuits, but far from all. Bourdaloue and Segneri were famous Jesuits, the former for his preaching and pious life, the latter for his missionary preaching. Segneri's style (clear, temperate, stylistic variation) and moral teaching (virtues such as humility, charity, piety, explained in a lucid way) are similar to those of Bourdaloue. Both preached in a heartfelt way, often dramatically.[26] Four of the French orators mentioned are Jesuits, while most of the Italians are not.[27] In the two lists of Italian and French preachers in the first book (mentioned above), the following French orators were Jesuits: Timoléon Cheminais de Montaigu (1652–89),[28] the venerable de la Colombière (1641–82),[29] Francois de

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rimane alcun vestigio nelle Stato Veneto, dove gli avvocati, divenuti aringatori, nelle quisistioni private hanno tuttavia libero il campo alla eloquenza" (Treating of public affairs from the banisters, deliberating about allegiances, peace and war, pleading in private cases; accusing, defending, and all that is disused: this does not any longer belong to the domain of the orator, and of the ancient Athenian and Roman ways there are only some traces left in the state of Venice, where the lawyers who have become harangues, in private investigations still have a free playing field of eloquence), 316–17.

[26] Thomas Worcester, "The Classical Sermon," In *Preaching, Sermon, and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Joris van Eijnatten, New History of the Sermon 4 (Leiden: Brill 2008), 131–72.

[27] Sommervogel, *Bibliotheque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, vol. 7.

[28] Timoléon Cheminais de Montaigu (1652–89) taught rhetoric and the humanities at Orleans and was later offered the post of preacher at the court in Paris (https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/-timoleon-cheminais-de-montaigu [accessed October 24, 2020]). He was a famous preacher, compared to Bourdaloue, who produced four volumes of sermons (Paris, 1690–91; 7th ed., Brussels, 1713; translated into several languages as late as 1837) and a popular work, *Sentiments de piété* [Sentiments of piety] (Paris 1691 and Brussels 1713).

[29] Claude de la Colombière was a famous missionary and ascetical writer and the superior at the Jesuit house at Paray-le-Monial (where he became the spiritual director of Blessed Margaret Mary). He was sent to England, where he was arrested and thrown in prison and later exiled. He spent his

Paule Bretonneau (1660–1741),[30] and Charles de la Rue (1643–1725).[31] Noghera also frequently refers to the famous quartet of *les grand orateurs*, the great preachers, of the seventeenth century: Jean-Baptiste Massillon (1663–1742), Esprit Fléchier (1632–1710), and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704); Bourdaloue is the fourth. That Noghera mentions Father Fromentier, an Oratorian from Angers who was punished for teaching Descartes, together with Bernard Lamy (1640–1715), might indicate that the Jesuit ban on Descartes was slowly being lifted.[32]

There are no Jesuits among the Italian models, apart from Segneri. In the first book, the Franciscan Francesco Panigarola (1548–94) is praised; he is still counted among the most eminent Italian preachers.[33] Apart from these still famous Italian preachers, Noghera mentions Cornelio Musso (1511–74), Simplicio Gorla (Clerico Regolare di San Paolo), Gabriele da Barletta, Agostino Dolera, and Father Francesco Maria Casini. All these orators serve as models in an imitative process in which the preacher accommodates tradition to his own particular ends. Italian poets Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch and some modern writers from his time are important too. These models can help teach the students what sacred rhetoric is about: the communication of the word of God, which changes people and brings glory to God (p. 138). Noghera's canon consists of non-Jesuits as well as Jesuits, but they are fitted into his rhetorico-aesthetic system held together by the contrasting pair of master Jesuits, Bourdaloue and Segneri.

Of Noghera's exemplary preachers, only a minority are Jesuits. It is remarkable that the Jesuits mentioned are French, while the Italians, apart from Segneri, had never been members of the order. What unites the latter is the fact that they are from Northern Italy. As a Jesuit, he has a universal approach, incorporating diverse traditions of oratory into a form of preaching accommodated for his own and his students' purposes. He is constrained by the need to show that he is part of the long and noble tradition of Jesuit rhetoric while also supporting the regional traditions. Many of the Italian publications, the volumes of sermons that he

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last two years in Lyon, trying unsuccessfully to recover (https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/claude-de-la-colombiere-venerable [accessed October 24, 2020]).

[30] Francois de Paule Bretonneau was the editor of Bourdaloue's sermons. See Worcester, "Classical Sermon."

[31] Charles de la Rue (1643–1725) was a great Jesuit orator. He taught the humanities and rhetoric and wrote several tragedies and poetry that attracted the attention of Louis XIV (r.1643–1715). His funeral speeches, for instance on Bossuet, are held as masterpieces (https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/charles-de-la-rue [accessed October 24, 2020]). He wrote a commentary to the works of Virgil: *P. Virgilis Maronis Opera: Interpretatione et notis illustravit Carolus Ruaeus, Soc. Jesu, ad usum serenissmi Delphini* [The works of P. Virgil Maro: Illustrated by interpretation and notes by Charles de la Rue, S.J., for the use of the most excellent Dauphin]. Sommervogel, *Bibliotheque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 7:294–19.

[32] Ariew, "Condemnations of Cartesianism."

[33] He was a popular preacher in the streets and squares of many Italian cities before eventually becoming bishop of Asti. He is the author of several works, the most important being *Il predicatore*; his sermons were published too.

mentions, were published in Venice, Milan, or elsewhere in Northern Italy and hence were easily available to his students. In the late eighteenth century, the art of preaching was massively influenced by Enlightenment ideas, and patriotism was replaced by nationalism, as shown by Pasi Ihalainen in his article on the Enlightenment sermon.[34] Noghera's works confirm that there was not an essential opposition between sermon and Enlightenment. For Noghera, the spiritual enlightenment goes hand in hand with moral instruction as well as practical information about current debates (science, rationalist philosophy). In fact, his main purpose in this work is the accommodation of traditional sacred rhetoric to a new situation in which modern philosophers and national poets are dominating the cultural scene. However, his openness and tolerance toward new political situations (as shown by his interest in the common people) and intellectual trends come with a price: the authority of the Word no longer belongs exclusively to the church.

Conclusion

The sacralization of the nation that was taking place in several European countries did not happen to the same extent in Italy, and Noghera's local patriotism is typically Italian. His love for Northern Italy seems only to be surpassed by his anger toward the pretentious Tuscans and their linguistic dominance. However, he does demonstrate nationalistic feelings when comparing France and Italy. He admits that French sacred eloquence had flourished for the last century or so but stresses that France received the radiance of brilliant oratory from Italy's great century, the *cinquecento* (in which sacred oratory was not as important as secular rhetoric). Noghera's analysis of the difference between Italian and French discourse (*dire*) concludes that French oratory is grand, serious, and well composed despite the predilection for syllogistic reasoning. France is still the leading country, and Italy is sleeping (132–33), he laments.

Appealing to the glorious tradition of sacred rhetoric, Noghera wants to encourage his students, the preachers of the future, to lift Italian preaching to new heights. Noghera's treatise on sacred rhetoric was, however, the last in a long Jesuit tradition that did not survive the suppression of the society in 1773. The schools founded by the new society in the nineteenth century responded to contemporary exigencies, including a stricter methodological approach. In this period, rhetoric was generally thought of as ancient lore, conventional wisdom, or worse, empty or manipulative language. Noghera's defense of rhetoric is very similar to that of Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples,

[34] Pasi Ihalainen, "The Enlightenment Sermon: Towards Practical Religion and a Sacred National Community," in Van Eijnatten, *Preaching, Sermon, and Cultural Change*, 219–60.

in stressing the importance of fantasy and imagination in education and defending rhetoric as the best way of turning boys into good citizens. Vico has often been portrayed as a solitary figure, a late Renaissance thinker, but Noghera's works show that he was one of several writers guarding the humanist tradition.