

Marx's *scholia*: Annotations Involving Classical and Renaissance Texts in *Capital*¹

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Abstract

My essay looks at the annotations in the first English printing of Karl Marx's *Capital*, volume 1 (planned by Marx even as he was finishing the book in German, edited by Friedrich Engels and published in 1886). Much can be learned from tracking Marx's use of literary texts in his footnotes, a practice that best can be understood in the context of his classical rhetorical training such that his annotations both contribute to and, as a kind of counter discourse, reflect the larger dialectical process carried out in his critique of political philosophy. My paper narrows the aperture on Marx's wide reading to focus specifically on the rhetorical value he obviously accorded to Homer, Aristotle, Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon, Virgil, Thomas More, Francis Bacon, and Shakespeare.

Even though Marx is not writing a literary text as such, I argue that he is in fact doing a fair amount of literary criticism—all tucked away in his notes, going so far as to quote long passages from key works in the classical tradition and from the English Renaissance that he then annotates. In this regard he is, quite literally, the first Marxist literary critic. Marx was far more well read and literarily oriented than many readers realize, mainly because less attention tends to be paid to what is “below the line” on the printed page. My project brings the bottom-matter to light and explores just how literary *Capital* actually is. Although this may sound a bit perverse, nonetheless it also is true.

The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.

The epigraph to my remarks comes from the conclusion of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*. In 1956, this sentence was selected to serve as the main epitaph on his Highgate Cemetery monument in north London (figure 1), with the aim of summing up at a glance Marx's revolutionist life-work and literary production (see Yuille 16).² It also provides a fitting way to launch my treatment of the secret life of the annotation, as an accessory and adjunct to critical interpretation. My study concerns the affective rhetorical value accorded to classical and Renaissance works in *Capital*. Before proceeding, though, a few words about Marx's text and its transmission are in order.

1. Practical Considerations

While finishing up the first volume of *Das Kapital* in 1867, Marx already was planning in earnest an English version. Friedrich Engels, with whom Marx had collaborated on various projects since 1844, brought it out in 1886, three years after Marx's death.³ Two decades in the making, this is the version that most closely follows and reconstructs Marx's original grand design, insofar as it incorporates the notes Marx added, whether in the margins of earlier printed editions or written on loose-leaf pages later collected into bundles, especially after 1870, when Engels permanently moved from Manchester to London to organize Marx's writings. In this regard, more so than the other versions and translations of *Capital* (see Anderson 72-74), the English edition bears the traces of what amounts to Marx's commonplace collection of quotations used to set in place and amplify the main nodes of his overarching political argument.⁴ Moreover, as Engels records in the preface to the first English edition, "with the assistance of notes left by the author," he painstakingly transposed Marx's annotations to compose this most up-to-date version (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 4).⁵ Given the involved and ongoing process of editing and translating required for Engels to realize Marx's projected *magnum opus*, what eventually would become

the three volumes of "A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production," I narrow the focus of my case study to just volume 1 which, as Engels pointed out, "is in great measure a whole in itself, and has for twenty years ranked as an independent work." (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 5)⁶ More particularly, scrutiny of Marx's sections on accumulation and hoarding at the end of Part One will serve well to introduce my larger contention about the literariness of *Capital* overall, both because these sections provide a representative sampling of Marx's annotational craft, and also because the theme of hoarding as "progressive accumulation" (ineluctably incumbent on the capitalist) becomes for Marx a defining—indeed a personified—feature of capitalism (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 152). Such an approach, coupled with my ensuing analysis of other parts of *Capital* as well, will also bring to prominence the pressing heuristic relationship between accumulation and annotation.

With this much understood, let us turn now to consider Marx's pronounced affinity for annotation. I am using the standard definition of annotation here, meaning notes added by way of comment or explanation, in earlier times referred to as "*scholia*."⁷ As Marx well knew, this term derives from the Greek word for "comment or interpretation" and denotes a grammatical, critical, or explanatory gloss. Such *scholia* at times line up side by side with and can be used to make direct reference to previous commentaries taken from earlier sources. This scholastic practice, characteristic of both Marx's critical approach and style of exposition, can be accounted for in part by *Wissenschaft*, the dominant ideology of nineteenth-century German universities, which stressed systematic—which is to say "scientific"—research methods (see Nyhart 251). Although an all-encompassing and somewhat abstract term,⁸ nonetheless it can be instructive to consider *Wissenschaft* in its historical context as an offshoot of and distinct holdover from—and to some extent betokening the intellectual afterlife of—Renaissance Humanism, especially as regards the interwoven scholastic traditions of dialectic and rhetoric (see Giustiniani 183-85).

Whereas the term *scientia* in the late middle ages referred to the knowledge gained from books (inclusive of glosses and commentaries),

from the time of Vesalius to Galileo in the early modern period, “science” came to mean knowledge that could be learned from the systematic organization of one’s research grounded in observation (see Sarton 35-43). This latter understanding of “science” is explicitly signaled in the title of Bacon’s *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1620), an ambitious program to renovate human learning through a method surpassing the syllogisms associated with Aristotle’s body of work, the old “organum” or instrument. Significantly, Bacon’s *Novum Organum Scientiarum*, like his series of proposed experiments in *Sylva Sylvarum* (1670) concerned with understanding the nature of things in the material world, is written in outline form with all of the signs of being an expanded and heavily annotated commonplace book (Book One of the *Novum Organum Scientiarum* transparently is headed “Aphorisms Concerning the Interpretation of Nature”). With this epistemological genealogy of “science” in mind, we are in a better position to see in context the rhetorically grounded scientific practice of collocation as it pertains to the composition of *Capital*.

To collocate, as its etymology implies, is to place things side by side. The mere fact of their proximity assures that some sort of relation is initiated. In Marx’s case, bringing classical and Renaissance quotations into his text deliberately sets up certain relations between those imported excerpts and his political critique, thereby providing a basis for his further critical reflection. The commonplace book compositional method historically has been used for compiling and collocating all manner of information; dating back to antiquity, it enjoyed a revival during the Renaissance (see Moss 2) and again during the nineteenth century (see Stokes 201-02). To be sure, commonplace books could have all kinds of different functions—whether social or academic—and could take on a variety of different forms, some going far beyond the more usual practice of transcribing and collocating excerpted quotations. Indeed, one’s approach to the activity of commonplacing, most often undertaken with the aim of speaking or writing more eloquently, can be seen as a reflection of the discipline and goals of the compiler as well as the situational dynamics at the time of writing, such as materials

preferred or simply those able to be obtained. And so, while *Wissenschaft* may appear initially to be “tied to the key rhetorical principle of elocution” (Smith 177), my research into Marx’s footnotes (in which he glosses, quotes, or otherwise engages with the likes of Homer, Thucydides, Sophocles, Xenophon, Aristotle, Plato, Thomas More, Bacon, and Shakespeare) indicates rather that *memoria*, the fourth canon of classical rhetoric, is what Marx has in mind from the start (see figure 2). And, moreover, it is what he keeps in mind throughout the many changes and additions made to *Capital* over the years. Marx’s approach to annotation thus is very much in line with the Renaissance humanist practice of recalling and building on the works of classical writers; it remains a constant of his text and, while not *Wissenschaft* strictly speaking, forms the literary bedrock upon which his revolutionary treatise rests. Marx’s recourse to an earlier, rhetorically grounded and mnemotechnically enriched mode of exposition enabled him to combine and deploy selectively scholastic commentary, traditional hermeneutics, and classical philology in the service of organizing his critique of political economy. A telling example corroborating this claim can be found early in the opening chapter, “Commodities,” in a note on use-value:

In English writers of the 17th century we frequently find “worth” in the sense of value in use, and “value” in the sense of exchange-value. This is quite in accordance with the spirit of a language that likes to use a Teutonic word for the actual thing, and a Romance word for its reflexion. (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 36)⁹

This observation about Marx’s approach to annotation, as a kind of informed and carefully arranged running side-commentary, is consistent with what Anthony Grafton has observed of Marx’s near contemporary, Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), in his curious history of the footnote. By the mid-nineteenth century, especially in the *Geschichtswissenschaft* tradition, the footnote, so often denigrated today by readers as an author’s tacked-on afterthought, in fact is at the very core of the literary life of the author’s mind (see Grafton 64-73). For the classically trained nineteenth-century scholar of ancient texts, which Marx indisputably was, such notational apparatus is the foundation on which the main

discourse is predicated, from which it derives, and upon which it is firmly grounded.

2. Theoretical Considerations

As suggested above, Hegel's idea of science (*Wissenschaft*), which Marx initially embraced along with his academic training as a classicist, "is a linguistic and rhetorically based science that produces a systematic way of speaking about experience" (Bayer 208). Moreover, Thora Ilin Bayer continues,

[i]n the final chapter of the *Phenomenology* on "Absolute Knowing," Hegel claims that the science of experience of consciousness is a memory theater. His science [*Wissenschaft*] is accompanied by an art of memory (*Erinnerung*), and this art produces a Gallery of Images (*Galerie von Bildern*). [...] This is in accord with the Renaissance art of memory as described by Frances Yates in *The Art of Memory* [see Yates 17-62]. The memory is a treasure house of master images from which we can draw forth the dialectical stages of experience. These images are, so to speak, the middle terms of experience from which all *argumenta* or themes of consciousness can be entertained. They are the *topoi* or *loci*—the commonplaces—that hold consciousness together at its base.

The melding of this understanding of finding and unfolding an argument, so much a part of Marx's early classroom training, combined with his insights into Hegel's mnemotechnical description of the science of experience of consciousness, sets classical *memoria* center stage (see again figure 2). Recourse to a storehouse of commonplaces gives the practitioner of the rhetorical art of memory a point of departure—and of return—after the fashion of Aristotle's *topoi* and Cicero's *loci* discussed and put to use in Renaissance memory treatises (see Yates 114-18). Accordingly, this essay makes a case for attending more closely to Marx's rhetorically grounded use of literary works in his notes as mnemotechnical nodes strategically placed in his discourse. His seemingly digressive notes, which we should think of rather as self-conscious "meta-theoretical" reflections on his method of argumentation, constitute a counter-discourse to his formal, prosaic critical analysis. It gave Marx a ready way, scientifically, to implement a method for thinking

through topics anew, while at the same time taking into account how those topics had historically been formulated.

Marx's early intellectual development and academic training was suffused with the classical rhetorical tradition.¹⁰ It bears repeating that both Marx and Engels received "a classical education from the *Gymnasium*, which involved learning Greek and Latin" and that "Marx, in particular, was very familiar with the philosophers and writers of ancient Greece" (Martin 52). This much is made abundantly clear from his dissertation topic, "On the Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature." In this work we can glimpse how his engagement with classical philosophy shaped and directly affected his principal way of approaching ontology in his later writings (both "Being" as such, and—following Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, especially book 7—"beings in the world" as "things in nature").¹¹ Drawing from this reservoir of classical ideas concerning the relation of man and nature, Marx would later acknowledge his debt to, while critically questioning and demystifying, the historicizing schemata presented by Kant, Hegel, and Feuerbach of this fundamental relationship. But before and beyond all of this attention paid to revising and criticizing an encompassing vision of "man's place in history" as an ineluctable process and motive force—attention that is evident in the years after finishing his dissertation, for example, in his 1842 *Anekdotia* and 1843 "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State" (Marx, *Writings* 151)—Marx's own intellectual genealogy can be seen to derive from his study of the materialist philosophy of the ancients. His systematic and "scientific" approach, following Epicurus's lead, treated history as a natural process. Later developments of this theme in *Capital* additionally show a humanistically inflected approach to classical studies with respect to both his materialist research agenda and method of exposition.

As regards his thesis, for which he was awarded a doctoral degree from the University of Jena (15 April 1841), it is sufficient for our present purposes to observe two things. Firstly, Marx was an adept and close reader of Greek and of Latin literature; and, secondly, his treat-

ment of the Greek “philosophy of self-consciousness” argues that Epicurus’s concept of the atom is superior to Democritus’s more empirical view “because it implied independence, freedom, and an ‘energizing principle’ for experience” (Marx, *Writings* 51). At the time of his formulation of the critical emphasis on experience (and in particular “experience of consciousness”) during his graduate studies, Marx built steadily on Hegel’s effort “to overcome,” as Thora Ilin Bayer has shown, “the Enlightenment’s limitation of philosophy to critical reflection and to regain the ancient conception of philosophy as speculation”; further, Hegel proposes that “the individual has the right to demand that Science [*Wissenschaft*] should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint [that of *Wissenschaft*], should show him this standpoint within himself” (Bayer 207).

Precisely because he was so well-versed in the classics, Marx later showed an attentiveness to “‘the quite specific circumstances’ of a present’s self-criticism”; namely, that “this present must be capable of self-criticism, in order to attain the science of itself” (Althusser 272). For example, in an 1837 letter to his father, Marx reports he has “translated in part Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*” (Martin 52); and later, in *Capital*, refers to Aristotle as an example of those philosophers who “thought within the limits of their present, unable to run ahead of their times” (Althusser 272). In the section of *Capital* on “The relative form of value” (I.1.1.3.a), he explains:

Aristotle himself was unable to extract this fact, that, in the form of commodity-values, all labour is expressed as equal human labour and therefore as labour of equal quality, by inspection from the form of value, because Greek society was founded on the labour of slaves, hence had as its natural basis the inequality of men and of their labour-powers. [...] Aristotle’s genius is displayed precisely by his discovery of a relation of equality in the value-expression of commodities. Only the historical limitation inherent in the society in which he lived prevented him from finding out what “in reality” this relation of equality consisted of. (Marx, *Capital* [Fowkes] 151-52)

Citing Aristotle enables Marx to elaborate the “‘real impossibility’ of commensurate exchange” (Kornbluh 29). Aristotle thus figures into the

vast literary storehouse from which Marx took his examples for the development of his own original, revolutionary discourse—but one still very much grounded in an earlier rhetorical method of exposition.

With this much having been observed about the rudiments of Marx's dialectically informed deployment of notational citations and commentary, let us turn now to review and consider the cultural work of the early modern commonplace tactic of collocation with which Marx was so familiar from his early studies, and which is evident in his recovering, assembling, and lining up passages from the classics in his footnotes and extended *scholia*. This approach to the digesting of already written material was discussed by Francis Bacon, that great systemizer of early modern categories of human knowledge, in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605): "For the disposition and collocation of that knowledge which we preserve in writing, it consisteth in a good digest of commonplaces" (Bacon 129). Along these lines, Desiderius Erasmus formalized on a larger scale and in print what other Renaissance humanists already were doing (see Moss 102). The humanist anthologer *par excellence*, Erasmus, assembled over 4,000 proverbs and related commonplaces from classical texts, many taken from already existing epitomes. It is in this regard that we can begin to think of Marx as something of a well-read and deft anthologer as well, but one culling relevant passages and assembling quotations to "supplement the text by a running commentary taken from the history of the science" with special reference to "a critique of political economy" (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 5).¹²

As we proceed from here in our examination of early modern humanist approaches to annotating, digesting, and collocating earlier texts, it needs to be stressed that Marx's "critique of political economy" (as announced in the work's subtitle) is an immanent critique which underlies the historical dynamic of the corresponding "scientific" field, namely the economic structure of civil and mercantile society. It is this which, in large measure, accounts for the ongoing commentary in the footnotes accompanying, indeed supplementing and corroborating, the argument of his main text. Hence my proposed intervention of reading

Marx in terms of the afterlife of European literary and rhetorical traditions and scholastic practices. This entails looking more closely at humanist approaches to handling and making use of the backlog of previously written works freighted with cultural capital; approaches that I contend have a direct bearing—associatively and analogously—on Marx's annotations, many of which he took directly from digests and anthologies available to him at the British Library in London during the 1860s.

3. Modeling Humanist Rhetorical Practices

The sixteenth century saw a boom of translations of Erasmus's textbooks and a surge in collections based on his works, "partly attributed to the gradual introduction of the new standards set by the humanist educational agenda" and coinciding more specifically with "the introduction of Erasmus's proverb collections in the curriculum" (Juhász-Ormsby 47). Perhaps as an expedient allowing him to augment his collection over time, perhaps in part to encourage readers to make their own unique connections to the material presented, he did not arrange the entries topically or alphabetically, the usual mnemotechnical expedient going back to Aristotle and Cicero of organizing a treasury (or *thesaurus*) of collected quotations under headings for easy recovery and perusal. Whereas Erasmus was, in his *Adagia*, principally interested in bringing together all manner of proverbs for further study and use, Marx valued organizational headings in the extreme, leaving a clear textual trace of his step by step critique of political economy in *Capital* by following a systematic—which is to say scientific—plan that is made visible throughout. For example (see figure 3), in a schema reminiscent of Aquinas's scholastic organizational procedure in his great *summa* or the branching topical off-shoots for which Peter Ramus was famous, chapter 3 of *Capital*, "Money, or the Circulation of Commodities," is divided into three sequentially linked topics: (1) The measure of values, (2) the means of circulation, and, most importantly for our present consideration, (3) money; which further is sub-divided into three sections, (a) hoarding, (b) means of payment, and (c) world money. In doing so,

Marx makes palpably clear the topics and their constituent parts to which his collocated quotations appertain. He places his *scholia* culled from select classical texts according to their proper headings, thereby exemplifying the rhetorical value of his accumulated textual capital—a concept later unpacked in *Capital* (I.3.7.2) as surplus value, namely that which is produced as a result of labor superadded to the value of the product by virtue of the process of production itself. Anna Kornbluh has observed in this regard that the “author of *Capital* continuously crafts that surplus of detail which Roland Barthes deemed ‘the reality effect’”; for “*Capital* balances this social expansiveness with psychological interiority. This is a discourse of *both* history and individuality, *both* materiality and consciousness” (Kornbluh 118-19; original emphasis).

Such episodes remind us of the value Renaissance humanists associated with collecting and actively engaging in the maintenance of one's own mnemotechnic treasury. Juan Luis Vives (1493-1540) advised his students to “have always at hand a paper book, wherein thou shalt write such notable things as thou read thyself, or hear of other men worthy to be noted [...] that thou may have in a readiness when time requireth [...] [T]he more often thou commit things to her [memory's] custody, the more better and faithfully will she keep them” (Vives E4^v–E5^r). Consonant with this precept, and by way of justifying its pedagogical utility, Erasmus collected many such sayings and anecdotes from Greek and Latin literature (see Blair 542), “worthy to be noted” so as to provide future readers “a ready and short way to learn virtue, be quickly dispatched, and [...] have in a readiness sure rules by which they may be put in remembrance” (Erasmus, *Apophthegms* B5^r-B6^r). The “sure rules” are those basic principles associated with setting up and maintaining a commonplace book: users of this (or indeed any such compendium or epitome) would create their own individualized headings ready to receive the imported material, thereby making for easier retrieval when needed for future uses. In this respect Marx follows the practical aims underlying the commonplace book method as a recognized “aid to memory,” used for finding one's argument (see Blair 542-

44), essentially replicating the first rhetorical canon of *inventio*, the gathering of fit material (see again figure 2). Moreover, Marx's cited and annotated classical quotations in his footnotes, like a proverbial trail of breadcrumbs, offer future readers a glimpse at what might be called "frozen *inventio*" (Plett 35); which is to say, a synoptic view of the stop-over places on the way to his larger argument set up by virtue of his ingenuity and which, in effect, thereby constituted a kind of artificial memory. Such was the way of the *topoi* method of argumentation, originally developed by Aristotle for dialectical debates and later so fundamental to the academic and rhetorical traditions (see Rubinelli 43-59).

The trade in printed anthologized commentaries, like that in collections of sententious proverbs and historical anecdotes, was a pervasive feature of humanist literary culture. Marx intuitively appreciated such adages and glosses as an *aide-mémoire* for the construction and buttressing of dialectical arguments, thus paralleling Erasmus's recognition that in the proverb, "almost all the philosophy of the Ancients was contained" (Erasmus, *Adages* 83-84). Marx's ingeniously collocated sayings of Aristotle and Plato, as with his references to English Renaissance writers such as More, Bacon, and Shakespeare to be discussed in what follows, indicate the hallmark features of early modern *copia* in its broadest sense, the rhetorical exercising of wit and discernment to augment and develop one's discourse. This thematic concern with and cultivation of *copia* aptly characterizes Marx's tactical application of surplus value of intellectual capital that he had accumulated from his studies early and late, and which he carefully considered how best to deploy so as to make his arguments in *Capital* more compelling and engaging. The implicit metaphorical connection between venerable rhetorical principles and economic theory is indicative of a reflective and self-consciously performative style of exposition (see Kornbluh 120). Reliance on tropes of performativity in literary production, whether during the Renaissance or the nineteenth century, signals a metacritical self-awareness of the writer's place in the work which conveys to the reader a heightened level of experientially driven comprehension of the matter. For Marx, moreover, it calls attention to and thus gestures toward

demystifying the dialectical process operating in *Capital*. Augmenting one's writing and speech using the ornaments of *copia*, which included the excerpting of and alluding to classical texts, was for the Renaissance humanist a stylistic choice and an index to his idiosyncratic wit. For Marx, however, *copia* was not about mere adornment; rather it provided a ready way for him to performatively enact in his prose treatise, and to put to work therein, a self-reflective dialogical method of exposition. Like Erasmus before him, Marx was keenly aware that one must judge and weigh carefully whatever one alleges and borrows from earlier texts and imports into one's own discourse.

To illustrate the critical significance for Marx of this self-conscious attention to the merging of the manner of expression with the matter being expressed, let me briefly set up one particularly telling instance involving the Roman satirist Horace that runs parallel to a comparable passage of admonition in Erasmus's *On Copia*. In what amounts to the introductory section of his handbook, Erasmus self-reflectively models for his Renaissance readers the very practice about which he is instructing them, namely augmenting one's discourse with proverbs and classical quotations: "For as there is nothing more admirable or more splendid than a speech with a rich copia of thoughts and words overflowing in a golden stream, so it is, assuredly, such a thing as may be striven for at no slight risk, because according to the proverb, 'Not every man has the luck to go to Corinth'" (Erasmus, *Copia* 11). An already learned reader, one who has had "the luck to go Corinth" (for not everyone has the same opportunities, education, or access to sourcebooks of the classics), would know that this unidentified adage comes from Horace's *Epistles* (1.17.36); and, if you do not, then perhaps take it as a sign you are out of your depth. This is a work that Marx quotes, incidentally, in a footnote in *Capital* (I.3.10.5), the section on "The Working Day" (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 265).¹³ Moreover, as a point of interest, there are no fewer than six other references to Horace's works in *Capital* (see Marx, *Capital* [Fowkes] 1103). Marx's own Horatian admonition to his readers, comparable in both form and content to that of Erasmus, comes in the "Preface to the First German Edition," with reference to foreclosing the

objection that *Das Kapital* is not relevant to Germans since the examples focus mainly on modes of capitalist production in England. His quip, like Erasmus's, is also a call for self-assessment before preceding any further in his book. It comes in the form of an untranslated Latin tag, thus implicitly presuming a certain level and kind of learning on the part of his readers: "*De te fabula narratur!*" [this tale is told of you] (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 8).¹⁴

The respective book projects of Erasmus and Marx have still another similarity worth noting. Most of the ancient writers Erasmus quotes as illustrations, as with the Horace passage just discussed, were taken from Quintilian's compilation for aspiring orators rather than the original authors (see Erasmus, *Copia* 11). Marx, too, quoted classical authors from available anthologies and, also like Erasmus, knew quite well what he was looking for in those sourcebooks, as will be discussed later with special reference to his use of standard compendia and epitomes of the day when citing English Renaissance texts. By virtue of his training and critical acumen Marx had, proverbially speaking, "the luck to go to Corinth." He knew his classics well, especially the sayings of the philosophers and poetic anecdotes. His accumulated backlog of sources and quotations—whether drawn from his own books or those of his friends, anthologies that were ready at hand, his own notebooks or more likely loose-leaf sheets bundled together, or indeed from memory alone—enabled him to annotate his text in a way that creates a secondary or parallel discourse supplementing and advancing his argument about political economy. Comparable to Erasmus's approach to textual accumulation in the *Adagia*, which he subsequently used to augment his more trenchant discourses such as his *Discussion on Free Will* (1524), Marx shows his academically trained readers that he can bury them in quotations, thereby acknowledging he knows how the game is played and, moreover, shows he can play it as a master.¹⁵ As Engels attests, Marx had an ample supply of notebooks and bundles of papers full of excerpted and transcribed passages from the works of others that ended up in *Capital*. The unfolding of his argument, especially in the last section of Part One, "Money" (I.3.3), is supported by and reflects

his notational apparatus, which creates a kind of double, echoic discourse carried on above-the-line, in his text, and below-the-line, in his notes.¹⁶ Accordingly, a close reading of “Money” that traces the movement of Marx’s *scholia* in action will substantiate this claim and, at the same time, establish a pattern for analyzing additional passages in *Capital* so as to make more clear the larger implications of my investigation.

4. Practical Applications

Even a cursory glance at the typographical disposition of these four printed pages (please see figures 4 and 5), makes clear that something is afoot as regards what is happening below-the-line relative to what is being argued above-the line. In the main text we read:

But money itself is a commodity, an external object, capable of becoming the private property of any individual. Thus social power becomes the private power of private persons. The ancients therefore denounced money as subversive of the economic and moral order of things. (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 132)

And then, immediately in a footnote, Marx quotes six lines of verse from Sophocles’s *Antigone* in Greek (see figure 4). The text resumes somewhat poetically, still in an annotational, supplementary mode of discourse: “Modern society, which soon after its birth, pulled Plutus [the Greek god of wealth] by the hair of his head from the bowels of the earth”—using then a footnote, in Greek, paraphrasing the line from Athenaeus’s *Deipnosophistae* (from 6.233, although unidentified as such)—and picking up mid-line in his text to conclude that “Modern society [...] greets gold as the Holy Grail, as the glittering incarnation of the very principle of its own life” (132-33). References such as these, far from being afterthoughts about how to amplify and add luster to his own discourse are, I contend, the result of collocated excerpts that set up the trajectory of Marx’s prose argument about, in this instance, the deleterious effect on society of private “hoarding,” as the topical heading of this sub-section declares. Such quotations are the kernels of thought giving rise to his arguments above-the-line carried out, as it

were, by proxy below-the-line. This approach resonates sympathetically with Kornbluh's view that the "ultimate argument [of *Capital*] is textual: as a whole some of the text's most pressing insights find their most intense formulation performatively [...] through the connotative, associative, artful ways the language *works*" (Kornbluh 120; original emphasis).

Leading into these below-the-line collocated quotations from Sophocles and Athenaeus is an excerpt from *Timon of Athens* (4.3) in which Shakespeare sums up a series of age-old commonplaces about the corrupting, and transformational, power of gold. The speaker is Timon, once the wealthiest and most generous Athenian who now, owing to his sudden reversal of fortune, shuns human contact and retreats to the wilderness. In a masterstroke of dramatic irony, whilst digging for roots to slake his hunger, Timon finds a buried hoard of gold. Shakespeare's extended metaphor of gold being the root of societal evils and the message that one cannot eat gold are not lost on Marx. Here is the passage that he excerpted and transcribed from *Timon*:

Gold, yellow, glittering, precious gold!
 Thus much of this, will make black, white; foul, fair;
 Wrong, right; base, noble; old, young; coward, valiant.
 ... What this, you gods? Why, this
 Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,
 Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads:
 This yellow slave
 Will knit and break religions, bless the accurs'd,
 Make the hoar¹⁷ leprosy adored; place thieves.
 And give them title, knee and approbation
 With senators on the bench: this is it
 That makes the wappen'd widow wed again:
 ... Come, damned earth,
 Thou common whore of mankind. (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 132n2)

This passage is a rhetorical *tour de force* characteristic of Shakespeare's most arresting dramatic monologues, full of antithetical parallels that enhance the persuasive power of the overarching satirical *de casibus* argument of the play about the fall from high to low, a philanthropist turned misanthrope. Its stark statement of this perennial theme clearly

caught the attention of Marx, who quotes it at length, although carefully omitting short phrases from the original that refer to Timon's more personal reflections (see Shakespeare 1114). His streamlining of the passage serves more forcefully—and with less *copia*—to drive home the more universal point concerning gold's timeless capacity to taint and invert the terms of domestic, social, and civic interactions. This is precisely the sort of passage one would copy out in a tablebook of collected commonplaces for future perusal and use. Further, this passage from Shakespeare may well have been deemed by Marx to be so emblematic of his theme that he had it in mind as he composed this section of *Capital* on "Money," writing toward it as it were, for so impassioned seems the ardor and so lyrical the tone of his above-the-line disquisition concerning gold's convertible power. He even intersperses a Latin tag amidst his own prose, reminiscent of humanist writers who nonchalantly dropped such commonplaces into their table talk and writings.

The circulation becomes the social retort [a glass receptacle used in distillation] into which everything is thrown, to come again as gold-crystal. Not even are the bones of saints, and still less are more delicate *res sacrosantae, extra commercium hominum* able to withstand this alchemy. (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 132)

The footnote here, instead of glossing this doctrine originating in Roman law concerning certain things that may not be the object of private rights and therefore insupportable to being traded, rather involves a wry anecdote about "the most Christian king" of France, Henry III, robbing cloisters of their relics and turning them into money (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 132n1).

In his choice of the specific authors he cites, often to set up counterpoints, dialectically, in the main text, we can see Marx's mind at work, moving systematically from one mnemonic repository to another so that, rhetorically speaking, he might mine the meaning out of the groundwork of the classical tradition. In the section on "The Capitalist Character of Manufacture" (I.4.14.5), for example, he alludes to the "absurd fable of Menenius Agrippa, which presents man as a mere fragment of his own body" (Marx, *Capital* [Fowkes] 481), footnoted as the

commonplace analogue of state governance being compared to parts of the body—an anecdote incidentally recorded by Erasmus and, as Marx well knew, dramatized in the opening scene of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* with Menenius Agrippa lecturing the Roman citizens (see Shakespeare 216).¹⁸ Later in Marx's argument, when there are more footnotes per page than actual text (figure 5), he sets at odds the views of classical writers—again, such commonplace eristic exercises were a familiar part of humanist rhetorical training. He explains above-the-line:

the standpoint of use-value, is adopted by Plato, who treats the division of labour as the foundation on which the division of society into estates is based, and also by Xenophon, who with his characteristic bourgeois instinct already comes closer to the divisions of labour within the workshop. Plato's *Republic*, in so far as the division of labour is treated in it as the formative principle of the state, is merely an Athenian idealization of the Egyptian caste system, Egypt having served as the model of an industrial country to others of his contemporaries, e.g. Isocrates. (Marx, *Capital* [Fowkes] 487-89)

Below-the-line, however, is where we find a compelling development of Marx's thinking that undergirds this argument with reference to historical precedent, which is to say classical sources. He quotes, in Greek, Homer's *Odyssey* (16.228) and then Archilochus as cited by Sextus Empiricus; continues with fragments from a speech by Pericles in Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War* (i.141); and then refers to Plato on the "many-sidedness of the needs of individuals and the one-sidedness of their capabilities," in which Marx sets Plato's point in conversation with that of Thucydides. Marx moves on then, in a note, to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (I.8.2) with reference to the "excellence to be attained in the quality of the use-value," noting further that Xenophon "is already aware that the degree of division of labor reached is dependent on the extent of the market" (Marx, *Capital* [Fowkes] 488), having previously woven in a quotation on the same topic from Plato's *Republic* (2.2). From here he delivers a long quotation from Isocrates's *Busiris* by way of glossing the reference mentioned above-the-line; bringing this whole episode to a satisfying conclusion below-the-line with a quotation from Diodorus Siculus (1.74), whose ideas are evoked above-the-

line but whose name and textual trace is submerged in the double-discourse being carried on in the notes. This dialogic notational tactic thus can be seen as enlivening and animating the argument of Marx's more direct and prosaic treatment in the main text, in this case concerning the division of labor. It is as if the whole matter already has been laid out point by point in the excerpts from classical texts, and Marx simply is collocating and setting them up side by side so he can draw from them the pith and moment of the core argument about the production of relative surplus value. People who do not read the footnotes in *Capital* have no way of appreciating the extent to which Marx's remarkably influential text depends on his training in classical rhetoric and his intellectual predisposition toward the Renaissance humanist commonplace book method of composition.

To be sure, of course, there are many sections that use notes in the usual and more familiar way of alleging sources and authorities to corroborate claims, thus lending further credibility to his assertions; namely, notes that simply identify quotations or references by citing periodicals, state papers, royal charters, government statutes, and data tables.¹⁹ Scholastic annotation, as treated in this study, differs markedly from journalistic source-referencing. Marx's *scholia* are an integral part of his larger dialogical critique insofar as the footnotes enable him to speak through and at the same time to comment on the words and works of others. Marx thus leaves a legible trace pointing back to his underlying rhetorical habit of thought involving collocation while, at the same time, unspooling a profound dialectical through-thread in *Capital*.

5. Theoretical Implications

Judging from the backlog of ancient and English Renaissance texts selected and discussed by Marx, I would argue finally that he was engaged in reviving and repurposing the classical idea of *poiesis* (the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before, usually associated with poetry, art, and other forms of cultural "making").²⁰ He does so in order to bring *poiesis* back into contact with

praxis (contrary to the Aristotelian philosophical tradition that linked *praxis* to *theoria*), such that for Marx *theoria* becomes a production of consciousness (see Balibar 41). Furthermore, another of the essentially literary aspects of Marx's self-conscious compositional *praxis* is the fact that he begins with (and indeed his analysis transparently is grounded in) metaphors and parables taken from Plato's dialogues regarding the fundamental constitution of consciousness as a mechanism for illusion, thereby reaffirming its always already fictive status as stories being told about human experience. By the same token, Francis Bacon's suggestive treatment of "Idols of the Mind" (figure 6), whence are shown to spring the fundamental errors in the human sciences as practiced up to that time,²¹ became for Marx a key moment in the history of the genealogy of ideology. Such a moment (in the Hegelian sense of the term) enabled Marx to look from Bacon back to that prior, originary and inaugural moment in the history of ideology in the West; namely, "the two opposing ancient sources of the Platonic forms (*eide*) and the simulacra (*eidola*) of Epicurean philosophy" (Balibar 46).

Marx's debt to Bacon is made more explicit still in his reference above-the-line, in his text, to *Essays, Civil and Moral* (the twenty-ninth essay in the edition Marx was using, "Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates"), about the "profound and admirable" practice, instituted by Henry VII, that farmers should be "maintained by such a proportion of land unto them as may breed a subject to live in convenient plenty, and no servile condition, and to keep the plough in the hands of the owners and not mere hirelings" (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 720). And then, below-the-line, Marx fills a quarter of the page with a note reflecting on Bacon's treatment of this provident king's agricultural measures in *The Reign of Henry VII* (1622). This annotation gives further insight into Marx's method insofar as this long passage is a direct, verbatim, copying out of a passage from White Kennett's often reprinted *A Complete History of England* (1719).²² In writing *Capital*, Part 8, chapter 28, Marx returns to his notes taken from this book containing Bacon's account of Henry VII's reign for the basis of his own original, critical, and scathing treatment of ensuing English monarchs' "bloody

legislation against the expropriated, from the end of the 15th century, forcing down of wages by acts of Parliament," whereby, he goes on to exclaim, the "fathers of the present working-class were chastised for their enforced transformation into vagabonds and paupers. Legislation treated them as 'voluntary' criminals, and assumed that it depended on their own good will to go on working under the old conditions that no longer existed" (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 734).

Just prior to his allusion to Bacon's *Essays*, Marx quotes Thomas More's socio-political satire, *Utopia* (1516), the much-anthologized passage that begins: "in England your shepe that were wont to be meke and tame, and so small eaters, now as I heare saye be become so great devourers and wylde that they eate up, and swallow downe, the very men themselves" (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 720n1). It is clear that the text being quoted here comes from Ralph Robinson's sixteenth century English version (if not the book itself, then an anthology preserving period spelling and printing conventions). Thomas More figures significantly later as well in *Capital* (I.8.28), where three quarters of a page is devoted, below-the-line, to quotations and running analysis of *Utopia* (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 736). This is touched off by a discussion concerning statutes under Queen Elizabeth I (in 1572, and another in 1597), which Marx reproduces at length, a portion of which reads:

Unlicensed beggars above 14 years of age are to be severely flogged and branded on the left ear unless some one will take them into service for two years; in case of a repetition of the offense, if they are over 18, they are to be executed, unless some one will take them into service for two years; but for the third offense they are to be executed without mercy, as felons. (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 735-36)

Much of his information in this long note follows closely sixteenth century sources such as Raphael Holinshed's celebrated *Chronicles of England* (1577, revised 1587), a text from which Shakespeare took many plots for his history plays; and, although not mentioned directly, Marx also copied out from it sections of William Harrison's *Description of England*, presumably unaware that this work, by editorial design, was published as part of Holinshed's *Chronicles*.

Still, Marx's affinity for generating *scholia* (specifically, his well-documented habit of taking notes on his reading and then mining his notebooks and bundles of loose papers for arguments he might tailor to his own purposes, further augmented by references to and words from classical and Renaissance authors), helps account for the ending of the first chapter of *Capital*, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret thereof" (I.1.1.4). It closes with a remarkable reference to Shakespeare, whose plays, as Marjorie Garber has observed, were so well known to Marx "that he alluded to them regularly in his writings" (Garber xxiii). Marx evokes the dim-witted but dutifully vigilant night watchman, Dogberry, central to the denouement of *Much Ado About Nothing*, to "elucidate his argument about the chimerical nature of exchange value and the way in which economists naturalize it" (Harris 13). The full passage reads as if Marx knew from when he began writing *Capital* in earnest that this is where he wanted the first chapter to end; as if he had the quotation in mind all along, perhaps preserved on a scrap of paper in a notebook, so that it might serve, quite literally, as the chapter's last word:

So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange value either in a pearl or in a diamond. [...] [T]he use-value of objects is realized without exchange, by means of a direct relation between the objects and man, while, on the other hand, their value is realized only by exchange, that is, by means of a social process. Who fails here to call the mind our good friend, Dogberry, who informs his neighbor Seacoal, that, "To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by Nature."
(Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 83)

The endearing familiarity with which Marx casts this reference, calling to mind "our good friend, Dogberry," speaks volumes about his ingrained rhetorical method of making use of collocated quotations and proverbs in the composition of *Capital*. Though at times lyrically evocative and full of allusive references, Marx clearly is not writing a literary text. And yet he is in fact doing a fair amount of literary criticism, which he both inserts into his text and also, more usually, neatly arranges, stores, and otherwise stows away in his notes. In this regard he is, quite literally, the first Marxist literary critic. Indeed, Marx was a

voracious reader and his use of quotations and allusions can be traced to many works, not just concerning philosophy and history, but also including the sayings of fictional characters (like Shakespeare's Dogberry),²³ showing him to be "one of the great mediators between the classical aesthetics of the eighteenth century and the realist aesthetics of the nineteenth" (Prawer 224).

Marx was far more well read in the classics and more literarily oriented than has been generally assumed (see Kornbluh 115), perhaps because so many readers tend not to pay much attention to what is placed below-the-line, at the bottom of the page; perhaps because some modern editors, to conform to their publishers' demands, do not preserve Marx's notes on the same page as the text to which they refer. Hence my appeal for giving serious and sustained attention to Marx's mnemotechnically imbued annotations; and, in the process, to appreciate just how traditionally rhetorical—indeed how literary—*Capital* actually is. Although this may sound a bit perverse, nonetheless it also is true: Marx is not just a part of a long scholarly tradition concerned with the mnemotechnic and analytic use of footnotes but also, it turns out, one of its greatest representatives.²⁴

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NOTES

¹A preliminary version of this essay was presented at the 15th *Connotations* Symposium at Eberhard Karls University Tübingen, 31 July 2019; I am grateful for the helpful suggestions offered by members of the symposium, especially Matthias Bauer, Ingo Berensmeyer, Tom Charlton, Paula Lefering, Burkhard Niederhoff, Dan Poston, and Angelika Zirker. I also am indebted to my colleagues at Sewanee who read and commented on the expanded version: Harold Goldberg, Maha Jafri, and James Ross Macdonald.

²Fleeing the continent in 1849, Marx found refuge in London where he resided until his death in 1883, supported in the main by Friedrich Engels; from 1860-67 he worked assiduously on *Capital* in the British Library (Yuille 4-8).

³Just to provide further temporal and geographical bearings as regards their literary partnership, *The Communist Manifesto* was published in London, 21 February

1848, for the Communist League, a band of mostly German-born socialists with a revolutionary agenda.

⁴I am cognizant that the interpretative perspective of Marx's work advanced in this essay could be much more fulsomely supported with reference not just to the English translation of *Capital* but also the various German editions; and, moreover, as Engels points out concerning "the conditions of social production and exchange," the social critique of money, accumulation, and hoarding already is evident in the Paris Manuscripts of 1844 (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 4), as well as in, of course, the Urtext of 1858. While recourse to other translations indeed would serve to further illustrate my thesis, in the interest of space and also mindful of the discussion and debate aspect of this journal, I confine myself here to the English translation of the third German version edited by Engels, who had ready access to Marx's extant notes during the time when they both were in London and publishing collaboratively.

⁵Engels comments further in the "Preface to the English Edition" (dated November 5, 1886) about Marx's "method of quoting," disclosing that, in some instances, "[t]hese quotations, therefore, supplement the text by a running commentary taken from the history of the science" (5).

⁶English quotations from *Capital*, in the first instance, follow Friedrich Engels's edition (translated from the third German edition by Samuel Moore and Marx's son-in-law, Edward Aveling), owing to the conscientious and faithful if sometimes quaint renderings of Marx's original. And, owing to the at times over-wrought syntax of Marx's discursive narrative and his periodic meta-theoretical digressions, in the second instance, when clarity of a sentence or an annotation is at issue, quotations follow Ben Fowkes's more recent English edition (published in association with the *New Left Review*). Although not as complete, properly speaking, as the first French version (cf. Anderson 72-74; and Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 4), Fowkes's edition has the added benefit of providing accurate notes on original source material and on the specific editions available to Marx when he was researching and writing *Capital*. Fowkes also includes a valuable 26-page "Index of Authorities Quoted." For the convenience of readers using other versions of *Capital*, citations of specific passages under scrutiny also are given as appropriate with reference to volume, part, chapter, section, and subsection.

⁷The history of textual "scholia," especially with reference to commentaries transmitted in the margins of medieval manuscripts, is well documented, ranging from the usual practices of the Greek tradition (see Reynolds and Wilson 10-11) to those in Roman antiquity (see Zetzel 335-36).

⁸*Wissenschaft* has a much broader meaning than the English word "science" (with reference to the objective "scientific method"), embracing the totality of knowledge in general and involving those academic disciplines—or studies—that deal with a systematically derivable body of facts or truths (see Nyhart 250-55, 268).

⁹Engels, likewise attuned to the subtleties of English word derivations, adds a note of his own as an addendum to Marx's note at the conclusion of the section "The two-fold character of the labour embodied in commodities" (I.1.1.2): "The

English language has the advantage of possessing different words for the two aspects of labour here considered. The labour which creates Use-Value, and counts qualitatively is *Work* [from the Anglo-Saxon], as distinguished from Labour; that which creates Value and counts quantitatively, is *Labour* [from the Latin] as distinguished from *Work*" (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 47).

¹⁰Marx's relationship to the classical heritage has been the subject of many exemplary studies; with respect to this present argument about Marx's formulative academic engagement with works of antiquity, see especially Sannwald; Stanley; and Padgug.

¹¹My contention here concerns simply what Marx gleaned from Aristotle's "more mature ontological project of the *Metaphysics*" (Kosman 28).

¹²See above, n4. It is in this same section of the "Preface to the English Edition" that Engels clarifies Marx's role as an anthologist: "in many instances, passages from economic writers are quoted in order to indicate when, where, and by whom a certain position was for the first time clearly enunciated" (5).

¹³Although originally left unattributed and in Latin in Marx's text, Fowkes positively identifies and translates the reference (see Marx, *Capital* [Fowkes] 376).

¹⁴The full line from *Satires* (1.1.69) reads: "mutato nomine de te fabula narratur" [change but the name, and the story is told of yourself] (Horace 8-11).

¹⁵I would acknowledge here Burkhard Niederhoff for suggesting that, although Marx did not pursue a professional post at the university, he likely was keen to display his qualifications for such a position to those who might be more inclined to entertain his arguments if they saw he was couching them along the lines of the accepted (if, at times, apparently pedantic) academic discourse of the day. This certainly fits with his Latin-only admonition (see above, n14).

¹⁶It is worth noting that this terminology used to describe the disposition of footnotes relative to the main text in book production (where a line conventionally is printed between text and notes) is the same as that used in classical economic investment analysis; namely "above-the-line" refers to costs above the gross profit, while "below-the-line" refers to costs below gross profit including expenses incurred in the manufacturing of the product and getting it to market.

¹⁷In Shakespeare's day "hoar" meant white and also moldy (see *Hamlet* 4.7.167 and *Romeo and Juliet* 2.4.133-34). Moreover the pun on "whore" and "hoard" cannot be overlooked here, as both terms directly pertain to the situation being depicted in this pivotal scene of *Timon*.

¹⁸The fable is alluded to in Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (1511), taken from Livy's *History of Rome* (2.32.9-12) by way of Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory*.

¹⁹This is affirmed by Engels in his discussion of Marx's notational apparatus: "In the majority of the cases, the quotations serve, in the usual way, as documentary evidence in support of assertions made in the text" (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 5); see also above, n5 and n12.

²⁰On the distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* in ancient Greek thought, where *poiesis* originally was understood as “an acting that puts-to-work,” see Agamben 68-74.

²¹The “Idols of the Mind” are explicitly described in that part of Bacon’s *Novum Organum Scientiarum*, often printed separately, entitled *The Great Instauration* (aphorisms 38-53), and implicitly throughout his scientific utopian travel-log novel, *New Atlantis* (1626).

²²This work generally is catalogued as being by White Kennett, who wrote the third and final volume and made corrections and emendations to the earlier two volumes which consisted of materials collected by John Hughes (first printed 1706). Cf. the editorial note identifying the version of this work then in the British Library (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 720). Marx also quotes with some frequency the tenth edition of Thomas Macaulay’s *History of England* (1854), though not without critical commentary in a footnote: “I quote Macaulay, because as systematic falsifier of history he minimizes as much as possible facts of this kind” (Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 717).

²³Marx reflects critically that Robinson Crusoe (the eponymous hero of Daniel Defoe’s 1719 novel) has become a favorite theme of political economists for all the wrong reasons (see Marx, *Capital* [Engels] 76); the first edition ludically credits the book’s protagonist as the author, which led some readers to think he was a real person and the narrative a true account.

²⁴I am indebted here especially to the anonymous readers who helped me clarify and state more precisely my overarching thesis about Marx’s annotations.

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APPENDIX



Figure 1
Marx's Grave, Highgate Cemetery, London
(photo credit William E. Engel)

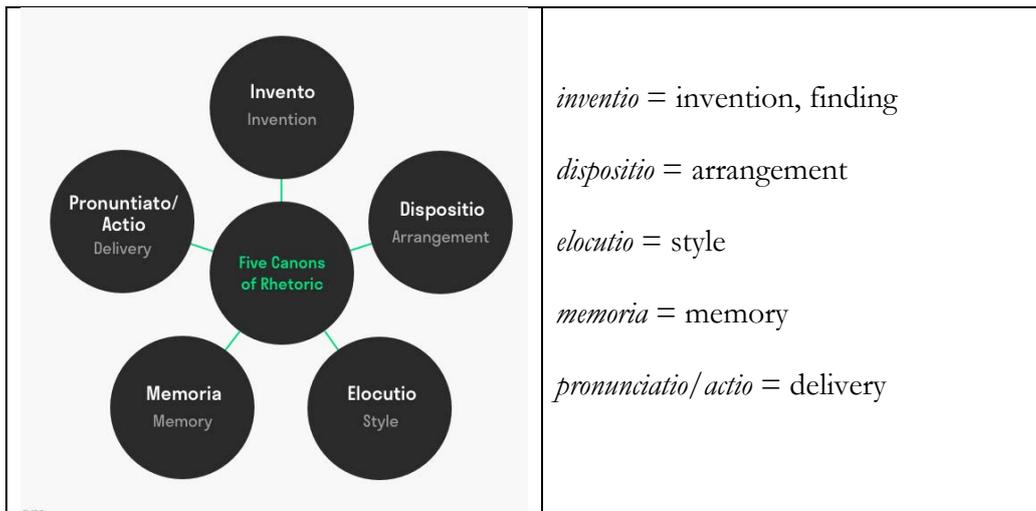


Figure 2
Five canons of classical rhetoric
(© William E. Engel)

Thomas Aquinas & Peter Ramus

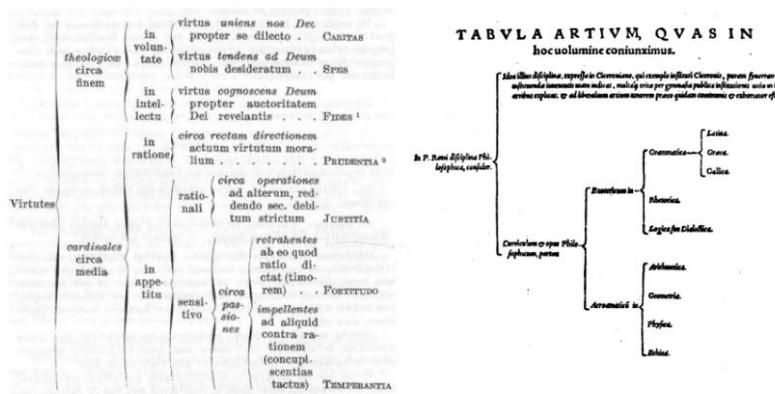


Figure 3
Exemplary Scholastic Organizational Schemata
(© William E. Engel, private collection)

Bacon's idols of the mind [*idola mentis*] obstructing
the way to proper "scientific" reasoning

Idols of the Tribe (*Idola tribus*): perceiving more order and regularity in systems than truly exists; following preconceived ideas

Idols of the Cave (*Idola specus*): personal weaknesses in reasoning due to particular personalities, likes and dislikes

Idols of the Marketplace (*Idola fori*): confusion in the use of language; taking some words in science to have a different meaning from common usage

Idols of the Theatre (*Idola theatri*): following academic dogma and related systems of ideas, and not asking questions about the world

Figure 6
Bacon's "Idols of the Mind"
(© William E. Engel)