# Was Lorenzo Valla an Ordinary Language Philosopher?

Youyang Xu[1]

[1] Ph.D. candidate, School of Humanities, Tongji University, Shanghai, China

Correspondence: Youyang Xu, School of Humanities, Tongji University, Shanghai, 200092, China.

## Abstract

The humanist Lorenzo Valla's use of consuetudo against philosophical usage in his book *Repastinatio Dialectice et Philosophie* has led Waswo to argue that Valla was a Renaissance 'ordinary language philosopher'. Monfasani and Mack vehemently reject this assertion, claiming that the standards of usage invoked by Valla are not 'ordinary language' in the modern sense, but classical Latin, the standards set by the cultural elite. Monfasani argues that 'consuetudo' is not an absolute criterion for Valla's humanist philosophy, and that Valla's *Repastinatio Dialectice et Philosophie* should be reassessed in terms of etymology and grammatical analysis. But 'consuetudo' does not exclude etymology and grammatical analysis. So instead of taking a negative attitude towards Valla's relationship with the philosophy of ordinary language, it is better to keep an open mind towards the *Repastinatio Dialectice et Philosophie* in the first place. This paper is such an attempt to start from the 'consuetudo' invoked by Valla, to examine Valla's philosophical attitude from etymological and grammatical analyses in the light of the Latin translations of οὐσία and τὸ ὄν , to rethink the relationship between Valla and the philosophy of ordinary language, and to reassess in relation to the philosophy of ordinary language.

**Keywords:** ordinary language, consuetudo, being, res, grammar

Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) was a very original Italian Renaissance humanist, known for his falsification On the Donation of Constantine（De falso credita et ementita Constantini Donatione declamatio）and De Elegantiis, and dubbed by Francesco Cancellieri as the 'King of Latin' (Kraye,2001). But Valla's philosophical ideas are equally important. Apart from the discussion of moral topics in the Dialogue on Free Will and On Pleasure, the most important is his criticism of the old Organon in the Repastinatio Dialectice et Philosophie(Zippel,1982, hereinafter referred to as Repastinatio), and the proposal of his own New Dialectic based on Aristotle's logic. It unites Valla's most central philosophical ideas. Valla considered dialectic subordinate to one of the five parts of rhetoric, and thus he thought it possible to reassess the Latin transformation of Aristotelian logical thought by scriptural philosophy in terms of the idioms (consuetudo) that rhetoric adheres to. This paper, focusing on the first volume of the Repastinatio, examines Valla's comparison of the Latin translations of the transcendental category τὸ ὄν and the category οὐσία, and his use of this to bridge the barriers between ordinary and philosophical usage. This approach by Valla has led some scholars to link it to the modern philosophy of ordinary language, especially the later Wittgenstein.

## 1. Origine of the Question

The Pandora's box on this subject was opened by Paul Kristeller (1964), who argued that Valla, 'Against the 'barbaric' terminology of the scholastic philosophers, he appeals to the grammar and usage of classical Latin, which he prefers even to that of ancient Greek. One is reminded of present-day attempts to base philosophy and especially logic on ordinary language, with the only difference that this ordinary language for Valla is not contemporary English but classical Latin, which is at least several steps closer to ancient Greek, the true fountainhead of all philosophical discourse in the Western world.' The 'attempts' in this context refer to the ordinary language philosophy.

Kristeller opens the question, and Gerl (1974) provides a philosophical basis for it, namely, to regard Valla's Repastinatio as a new dialectic - a 'philosophy of rhetoric'. Waswo (1979), on the other hand, gives this question a clear formulation, making the study of Valla's philosophical thought dominated by an exploration of the relationship between the Repastinatio and the ordinary language philosophy. Both Monfasani (1989) and Mark (1993) reject this connection, giving the strongest argument that even if Valla understood 'consuetudo' as an emphasis on everyday language, he understood it in the classical Latin sense, not in the modern sense of English or any other language.

Waswo's strongest evidence for this is Valla's frequent invocation of 'consuetudo' in his book The Repastinatio. This word, which can usually be translated as 'every day or customary usage', is often used by Valla as a criterion for criticizing philosophical usage, and is therefore identified by Waswo as being in line with the idea of the ordinary language philosophy, and in particular with the idea of the later Wittgenstein: language did not represent reality but rather constituted it. It is from this that Monfasani's strongest rebuttal begins, arguing that Valla's so-called 'consuetudo' is a rhetorical or linguistic usage, not at all 'everyday language' in the modern context, i.e., vernacular. For although Valla quotes extensively from Porphyry's and Boethius's translations of Aristotle's philosophy, it is the authoritative classical Latin writers, such as Quintilian, Cicero, Augustine, St Paul, Horace, Priscian and other rhetoricians, philosophers, patristic writers, poets, and grammarians, who are the standard for his usage. Valla quotes the authoritative language used by the cultural elite, it cannot be colloquialisms, besides Valla criticizes the vernacular of the Romans. At this point, the conclusion that Valla is not an ordinary language philosopher cries out. Monfasani's point is correct, one might even say, too correct: since Valla's 'consuetudo' denotes the classical everyday language used by the cultural elite, whereas ordinary language philosophers use modern everyday language, Valla is by no means an ordinary language philosopher, although both criticize philosophical usage.

But this response is too simplistic; on the one hand, as Lodi Nauta implies, the philosophy of everyday language deals not with what Monfasani considers to be a special language (colloquialisms), while at the same time Valla's understanding of language goes beyond Classical Latin, and Nauta argues for an in-depth comparison of the two, while on the other hand, Fubini(1999) on the other hand, expresses this concern more explicitly, arguing that both Monfasani and Mark misunderstand the philosophical significance of the Repastinatio and stop at a rhetorical or grammatical reading. It is impossible to understand the depth of Valla's reasons for introducing rhetorical usages to criticize logical ones if one ignores the relationship between rhetoric (in the broad sense) and dialectics (logic) as an important clue to understanding the Repastinatio. Monfasani precisely ignores the most important philosophical dimension involved in this question. He may have forgotten that Kristeller also recognized that Classical Latin was different from modern ordinary language, but the important point is that Classical Latin was closer to Ancient Greek, and therefore carried more philosophical implications than everyday language. Valla argues in the preface to the second volume of the Repastinatio:

"Actually, the content of dialectic used to be quite quick and easy, a distinction that can be made by comparing it with rhetoric. For what else is dialectic but a kind of an affirmation and refutation? Those are parts of invention, and invention is one of the five parts of rhetoric. 'But using the syllogism belongs to dialectic.' Does the orator not use the same device, then? In fact, the orator uses not just that device but also the enthymeme and epicheireme, and put induction on the list as well. But notice the difference. The dialectician uses the syllogism 'bare' (so to speak), while the orator's is clothed, armed and decked out with gold, purple and jewels, so that a wealth of rules—many and great—must be acquired by him if he wants to be viewed as an orator." (Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 2, p.3)

Apart from Valla's irritatingly self-confident attitude towards rhetoric, the central idea reflected in this passage is that dialectic becomes a subordinate part of rhetoric. Note, however, that Valla's attitude toward dialectic is not one of denial, but rather one of recognition of its place as the 'invention' part of rhetoric, as a way of discovering arguments. The complaint of Monfasani and Mark is not that the philosophical implications of Classical Latin are not recognized, but that whenever a comparison is made between philosophical usage and 'consuetudo' (represented by rhetoric), the latter always seems to win. For example, "Valla often contrasts the philosophical use of language (lex veritatis) with ordinary usage. Almost always ordinary usage is to be preferred." "The usage of medieval logicians does not count. Consuetudo shades into auctoritas. His criterion is the usage of the best authors, by which he means mainly Quintilian, but also the poets, the orators, and some Christian authors."(Mack, 1993, p. 102-103) Valla doesn't seem to care at all about the internal development of philosophy (especially scholasticism). It's an external perspective that feels alienating, and it seems that philosophical usage is always relegated to second-class status. I think this is what most needs to be explained, as it is quite a reasonable request for someone who is quite sympathetic to philosophical work, and for this reason it is necessary to examine the examples in the Repastinatio, as an actual analysis will clearly show that 'consuetudo', or classical ordinary usage and philosophical usage are not so much distinct from each other as they are interpenetrating.

## 2. Consuetudo vs Philosophical Usage --Two Translation Names of οὐσία as an Example

The Repastinatio consists of three volumes revaluing the old logic in the order of category-proposition-syllogism of the Organon, respectively. The first volume examining the transcendentals-theory of scholasticism and an analysis of Aristotle's ten categories. οὐσία is the the first category. Boethius translates οὐσία as substantia. Its root is sub-sto, which means 'to stand under', 'to support', and by extension 'substance'. Valla, however, at first objected to this rendering, since before Boethius 'substantia' corresponded at first to the Greek word ὑπόστασι, and the construction of the two was identical, both signifying 'to stand underneath':

"In one of his letters, Seneca denies that to on and hê ousia can be expressed in Latin. Preferring not to translate ousia word for word, Boethius used 'substance,' which is hupostasis in Greek. As a result, when 'substance' is applied not to its Greek equivalent but to a different term, some inevitably use the Greek term 'hypostasis' in place of the Latin term. Clearly, it was not because Boethius shunned the word 'essence' as crude that he did this, for he frequently uses this word, though in a different sense, and this was the reason why many recent Latin writers have gone wrong. On this point, I must first register a few objections to establish a broader context for later discussion of the question that I have broached."(Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1,p.65)

Quintilian translates οὐσία as essentia, which Valla considers to be the correct translation. Valla has shown that there is no difference between essentia and esse (the Latin prototype of the verb, equivalent to the English 'be'), and Boethius argues that "necesse est non esse--idest, nullam essentiam habere" (Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1, p.66), i.e., 'is not' equals 'have no essence.'So Valla surmises that one reason why Boethius does not use essentia to translate οὐσία is that the root essentia comes from esse. perhaps it has something to do with the fact that the Latin rendering of τὸ ὄν also comes from esse in order to distinguish between the two. And when the 'correct' and 'ordinary' translations clash, Valla ultimately chooses the ordinary one, even though both can be confusing：

"What shall we do, then? If we prefer 'substance,' we seem to stray farther from the correct Greek and also to banish 'essence' as a word that is empty and useless (and good riddance). But if we prefer 'essence,' we shall depart from usage already accepted (to which some concession must be made). And whichever way we choose, we shall still stumble upon the confusions of language that I have pointed out." (Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1, p.81-83)

Valla attempts to analyse the reason why Boethius translates οὐσία with substantia rather than essentia. It is possible that as Luke says of the prodigal son, he 'wasted all his substance(ousia)'. Some jurists have used this Latin word *substantia* for 'property, resources, or inheritance,' and the ancient Greeks always used *οὐσία* instead of *ὑπόστασ* for 'wealth,' just as *πλοῦσίος* signifies 'rich man' because it is equivalent to *πολλῆς οὐσίᾱς* (having much wealth). It may also be because certain authoritative writers equate essentia with substantia, such as Priscian; and the ancient Greeks confounded οὐσία with ὑπόστασ. And although Quintilian thought that essentia was a better translation of οὐσία than substantia, he himself, including Cicero and Priscian, rarely used essentia and often expressed essentia in terms of substantia. And Augustine also stated that when talking about God, the use of *essentia* is correct and *substantia* is wrong. Valla is suggesting that Boethius' translation refers to *consuetudo*, and it is very interesting to note that although Valla insists that *essentia* is the correct translation, he detests the 'emptiness and uselessness' of *essentia*. This may suggest that correct translation is not the same as correct usage, but that the validity of the *consuetudo* is the guarantee of correct usage.

And the above proves precisely that Boethius's translation of οὐσία was influenced by the common naming, and that both philosophers and rhetoricians were unanimous in their preference for translating *οὐσία* by *substantia*. But this is where Valla sees the philosophical problem at its root, embracing consuetudo where it should be distanced from it. It is because of the inescapable association of οὐσία with the richness of its common Latin name, *substantia*, that Valla goes on to criticize Porphyry's tree (see Figure 1 below). The latter's perception of the substantia is virtually limited to the visible; on the contrary the invisible soul has no place even, and more importantly so does God as Creator and the angels who are also creatures. Moreover, even in the established classification charts of visible objects, many genera do not have their own names:

"But the bodiless did not get a substantive of its own in their scheme, though by my reckoning it will be spirit or soul. Body is just bodily substance, however, and spirit or soul is bodiless substance. When body, which is a species of substance, is classified into differences or species, it becomes a genus of those species—likewise spirit or soul, which I do not find classified." (Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1, p.83-85)

Figure 1. Porphyry's tree

Valla regards man's body and soul as visible and invisible entities respectively and employs a vivid analogy comparing the spirit and the flesh to white and black sheep. Man with both spirit and flesh is a black and white sheep, and he should be placed neither among the black sheep nor among the white sheep, but should be separated from the black and white sheep, so that Porphyry's placing man under the substance of the visible is no different from placing the black and white sheep under the black or white sheep. Therefore, Valla continues Porphyry's work by making a distinction between the bodiless (as shown in Figure 2 below). Man should not be placed under the visible only, nor should animals, since they all consist of visible and invisible substance.
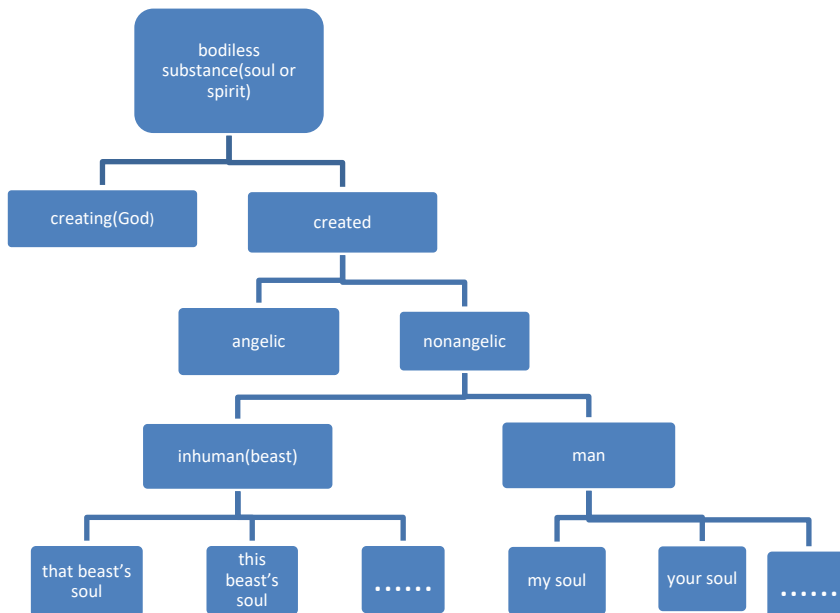
Figure 2. Valla's tree

In a word, the translation poses far more problems than mere accuracy; οὐσία, as a philosophical term, once Latinized with reference to idiomatic usage, cannot be used subsequently without bringing in the usual translations, also recognized by theology and rhetoric first. If the discussion of the translation of οὐσία falls within the scope of translating philosophical terms, then Valla's discussion of τὸ ὄv is undoubtedly somewhat more implausible, since it is based on an analysis of grammar.

## 3. Being vs Thing:the Debate between Res and Ens

*Ens* is the Latin translation of τὸ ὄv, *being* is its English translation. Valla paraphrases Aristotle on τὸ ὄv, arguing that 'by its nature, 'being' is a participle of every gender, but when it changes into a noun it is neuter only. In Greek, however, it is variable, with three words for three genders — ὤv,οὖσα, ὄv —and when the neuter word changes to a noun, it takes the article to, which is not used with the participle, and this is what Aristotle talks about. '(Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1, p.21) Valla is trying to emphasize the grammatical differences between Ancient Greek and Latin, where the expression τὸ ὄv did not conform to the grammar of the time, so that once the phrase was used exceptions needed to be made to its usage and meaning. τὸ ὄv was originally two words, but Latinized into one word ens without the aid of an additional article, but Ancient Greek could not omit the article τὸ (ὄv is the neuter participle of εἰμί) Why there is such a difference, Valla gives the grammatical explanation that because Ancient Greek did not have gerunds, the article was needed to reflect the noun.

Valla next concentrates on the grammatical function of Latinizing **τὸ ὄv** as **ens**. Since **ens** serves as a participle, for the usage of participles in general:

"But its signification will be clear from its participle. Every participle has the effect of a relative pronoun with a verb, so that a person 'walking,' 'running' or 'reading,' for example, is someone 'who walks,' 'who runs,' 'who reads,' just like a person 'being rich'— someone 'who is rich,' in other words." (Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1, p.21)

From a grammatical point of view, anyone who understands the basic grammar of English will agree with the analysis of Valla's analysis of the participle, and the earlier Latin grammar as well, i.e., that the participle is equivalent to the relational pronoun plus the corresponding verb, and that the participle naturally implies the res (something) that underlies it, which will become clearer as Valla's analysis below is developed. Just as 'being' denotes 'that thing which is', so *ens*, as a participle, actually points to *res*, i.e., *ea res quae est*.

In the *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle's words also verify Valla's view that τὸ ὄv is an incomplete constituent that requires the aid of a noun. Valla's participial substitution scheme (ens = ea res quae est) is perhaps closer to Aristotle's meaning. Although τὸ ὄv is Latinised into a single word, ens, Valla's scheme invariably renders τὸ ὄv with the article τὸ re-substituted, i.e., 'this or that thing which is' (haec/ista/illa res quae est). Copenhaver and Nauta think that the text to which Valla alludes is presumably from the *De Interpretatione*:

"When uttered just by itself a verb is a name and signifies something— the speaker arrests his thought and the hearer pauses— but it does not yet signify whether it is or not. For not even 'to be' or 'not to be' is a sign of the actual thing (nor if you say simply '**that which is**'); for by itself it is nothing, but it additionally signifies some combination, which cannot be thought of without the components."(Aristotle, 1963, p.45)

If Valla's analysis of **res** and **ens** were to stop at a grammatical analysis, then we might agree that grammatically '**res/thing**' is the true container of the power of 'ens/being' and that "While 'being' is the one among them that makes the strongest show of securing the kingdom, the hidden defect that it suffers from is the greatest."(Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1,p.19) "For 'being' is a word hobbled, as it were, unable to walk because its burden is too heavy."(Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1,p.23) But if Valla's ambition goes beyond this and seeks to extend this status dispute into the philosophical dimension, it is well worth questioning the justification for such an extension.

The context of the ens and res debate is Valla's discussion of the medieval theory of transcenentals. The transcendental categories are almost equivalent to **universals**, of which there are six: being, thing, something, one, true, good (ens, res, aliquid, unum, verum, bonum). Ens/Being has the philosophical supremacy, but Valla argues that res is the supremacy among the six, and his whole justification for this is the grammatical reduction formula mentioned above. That is, he thinks that when we say 'ens/being' we actually presuppose and mean 'some thing that exists'. But the reduction from 'ens/being' to 'res/thing' does not therefore remove the status of 'ens/being', because 'ens/being' has a rich philosophical meaning. Can such a rich philosophical meaning of 'ens/being' be canceled by the reduction of grammatical analysis?

Valla, indeed, cannot ignore this point, pointing out that medieval logicians suggested that a complete sentence consisted of three parts, the subject, the copula, and the predicate, with the copula referring to the 'esse', or 'be'. Therefore, logicians believe that verbs can be broken down into 'is' plus a participle of the original verb, as in 'Plato reads' and 'Plato is reading' and 'The sun shines' and 'The sun is shining'. That is to say, as long as the expression of any statement involves a verb without copula, then it can be transformed into a participle expression with 'is', so 'is' is like

the mother of verbs. Thus, Valla synthesizes ens ('being'), which is the highest of the 'transcendental categories', with esse（'be'）, which is the source of the verb in grammar. If one follows the participle substitution scheme for ens that Valla had previously made (ens =ea res quae est), then the primacy of esse/be over all other verbs and the supreme philosophical concept of ens (derived from esse) are consistent, with **'esse/ be'** grammatically preceding **'ens/being'**. However, grammatical considerations are not sufficient to fully demonstrate the more philosophical implications.

The problem, however, is that Valla points out that the logician's scheme of 'esse/be' as the 'mother of verbs' is not universal, since there are some verbs that cannot be replaced by 'be' with the corresponding participle, at least the Latin expression 'luna illuminatur' (the moon shines) cannot use this scheme. Moreover, Valla suggests that this would lead to an 'infinite loop' in the grammar, since if the 'be' in 'Plato was a philosopher' is decomposed, an infinite number of 'be' would be produced. But his motivation is to assess whether the logician's scheme is fully valid, and if it produces examples of invalidity, then it means that the scheme needs to be corrected. If some verbs cannot be rewritten as 'is' plus participle constructions, then this means that the scope of the participle is greater than that of the verb, i.e., Valla's previously proposed participle reduction scheme that is consistent with Latin grammar may be more sensible - rewriting the participle as a self-contained antecedent of a relational clauses (ens =ea res quae est).When we make a statement with a participle, we must be stating the behaviour of some res/thing, even if the 'res/thing' is hidden.

Up to this point, on the surface, it appears that there are two competing schemes for dealing with words, one being the logician's scheme of verb decomposition, which claims that all verbs can be decomposed into 'esse/be' plus a corresponding participle (except for 'esse/be', which cannot be decomposed). Valla's solution, based on the observation that some verbs do not satisfy decomposition, is to reduce the participle to a relational clause. But this is not an either/or, and Valla's examination of the grammar does not mean that the logician's solution is abandoned. But he gives a rather meaningful conclusion:

"Since this is so, it is false that we must always speak with the verb 'to be,' especially since a verb cannot always follow the rule given by those people to analyze it into its participle and the verb 'to be,' as in ..." (Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 2, p.13)

But if one gives up always speaking with 'esse/be', does not the validity of 'esse/be' as the 'mother of verbs' also disappear? Valla gives his own explanation:

"And yet we might say that it signifies a sort of life, as when we say 'God is,' 'I am' and 'the stone is.' It is not just that 'God is,' meaning that he lives, and the same for a man, but also that the stone, by the very fact that it is, has a sort of life. And just as quicksilver is the matter and source of all metals and that into which they are dissolved, so the verb 'to be' is the source of the other verbs. And just as this metal (if it really is to be called a 'metal'), as distinct from other metals is said to 'live,' so the verb 'to be,' set apart from the others, should be said somehow to signify life."(Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1,p.239)

For the expression of various propositions of existence allows 'esse/be', as the prototype of the verb, to be understood in an analogical sense as meaning life. On the one hand, we can understand 'be' as a life, or as if it were a life, in the sense of the propositions 'a stone exists', 'a man exists', 'God exists';On the other hand, its use as a verbal archetype is reflected in its use of all other verbs, for just as other metals melt and become 'quicksilver,' other verbs melt and become 'esse/be,' reflecting its power. This is the reason why logicians believe that verbs other than 'esse/be' can be decomposed, but Valla's point is that abandoning the use of 'esse/be' to speak is not in conflict with recognising the status of 'esse/be' as the prototype of the verb.The status of 'esse/be' does not have to be revealed exclusively by grammatical means, that is, it does not have to be 'esse/be' in order for us to speak, even though 'esse/be' is implicit in any use of the verb. But even admitting this -- that 'be' can mean 'exists', but never more than 'exists'-- however, this semantic interaction still creates some problems, namely that 'esse/be', which is the prototype of the verb, seems to have taken on a life of its own and has been substantiated. This is a point of concern for Valla, and it is likely that the reason why the logicians' scheme of verb disambiguation expresses 'be' is that they believe that 'exist' is the full meaning of 'esse/be, as the mother of verbs'.

Valla's analysis of 'being as being' (τὸ ὄν ᾗ ὄν; ens prout ens) also supports his concern. The logician considers the second ὄν to be a noun, but in the way it seems semantically repetitive. Since τὸ is the article of the indicative noun, it has already been shown that the first ὄν is a noun, so it would be redundant to emphasise that the second ὄν is a noun. Valla guesses that this understanding is the result of confusion between the Ancient Greek philosophical meaning of ens and the grammatical meaning indicated by its root 'esse/be'. Rather than 'ens/being exists,' it is better to say 'esse/be exists,' and this materialisation of 'esse/be,' Valla surmises, is due to the fact that 'stones exist' and 'men exist and so it is deduced that 'being exists' (ens est). If one follows Valla's substitution scheme of participles to relative clauses, then 'being exists' becomes 'that thing which is exists' (ens est = ea res quae est est), and this tautology makes no sense.

Moreover, the key point of the above analysis is that Valla believes that it is the implied res/thing that should come to the fore, and that res/thing is in fact a more important grammatical component than ens/being. This is also the reason

why he repeatedly emphasises the grammatical meaning of 'ens/being', because if 'ens/being' is a participle, it can be equated with a relational clause with its own antecedent, and 'being' becomes 'that thing which is'. Moreover, grammatically speaking, the meaning of 'to exist' derives its vitality from 'esse/be', which is the mother of the verb, because 'to exist' is nothing more than to be one meaning of 'esse/be'. So, if logicians think from a grammatical point of view that it is possible to decompose the verb into constituents containing 'is', thus revealing what they consider to be the complete structure of the sentence. Then Valla's solution, also from a grammatical point of view, proposes a more inclusive reduction of the participle and points out that it is not only 'esse/be' that is hidden as the prototype of the verb, but also 'ens/thing', which is hidden even deeper.

'Ens/Being' is a transcendental category, as is 'res/thing'. The latter is a word rich in meaning and deep in linguistic structure, and therefore often forgotten. Because it is so common, it is often omitted. For example:

"For when I say 'look at this marble,' 'that timber of yours,' 'that meadow,' or 'the sea,' it is just as if I were saying 'look at the beautiful marble,' 'the ample timber,' 'the delightful meadow,' and 'the troubled sea.' But when I say 'look at this' or 'that of yours' or 'that' or 'the,' what is meant is surely 'this thing,' 'that thing of yours,' 'that thing, and 'the thing.' The same with other terms: for 'something' (as I said above) is 'some thing'; 'another' is 'another thing'; 'the same' is 'the same thing'; and 'nothing' is 'no thing.' Thus, if 'being' is analyzed as 'that which is,' and 'that' is analyzed as 'that thing,' 'being' will then be analyzed as 'that thing which is.' Hence it is obvious that the whole meaning of 'being' is not innate but, I would say, begged and borrowed. I add this too, that a garment got by begging does not befit this word, just as the peacock's tail in Horace did not befit the poor little crow. For 'being' is a word hobbled, as it were, unable to walk because its burden is too heavy." (Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 1, p.23)

This is why Valla does not consider it reasonable for 'ens/being' to be the highest of the six transcendental categories, since it really derives its power from 'res/thing', which is also a transcendental category. The priority of the philosophical status of ens/being over res/thing loses its validity when reduced to grammatical analysis by Valla, because ens/being is derived from esse/be, which is actually the validity of the 'mother of the verb'. But the ultimate effect of the verb is actually derived from the noun, i.e., it points to res/thing, so it is really a contest between visible and invisible grammatical effects. This harks back to the analysis of the two Latin translations of οὐσία above, where substantia and essentia actually represent a contest between the visible and the invisible, and it is precisely because Boethius was strongly influenced by cultural factors from religion, rhetoric, and jurisprudence, that he chose substantia, which represents the visible force of the custom, and which is the reason for the subsequent criticism of Porphyry's tree by Valla. Because it only emphasizes the classification of visible entities and ignores the invisible ones. Similarly, ens/being seems to be more abstract than res/thing, but because of the supremacy of the former, the relatively concrete latter in turn becomes invisible, which is Valla's real intention: he wishes to re-examine the Latinisation of ancient Greek philosophy from an external perspective.

Up to this point, the grammatical analysis of τὸ ὄν and the philosophical implications that it may entail do not seem to be as somewhat resistive as they were at first, and this seems to corroborate what Valla mentions "there are many problems like this, in every part of philosophy, that philosophers concern themselves with, where words are generally their worry, so that sometimes philosophers may be seen to have come down to my level and the art of grammar—operating right in the middle of grammar, in fact, and seeming to prop up their constructions with words, as if they were pillars."(Cophenhaver & Nauta, 2012, volume 2,p.361-363)

## 4. Conclusion

Boethius translated οὐσία with two potential names, substantia and essentia; grammatically the correct translation of οὐσία is essentia, but Boethius nevertheless chose substantia, which was influenced by the force of the cultural custom of consuetudo. The Latin translation of τὸ ὄν is ens, the English being; at the same time ens/being was chosen as the philosophical concept of transcendental category of the highest status, even though the **res/thing**, which more commonly represents consuetudo from the point of view of grammatical function, underlies **ens/being**.So it follows that the relationship between the Latinisation of ancient Greek philosophical concepts and consuetudo is ambiguous. If consuetudo is to be understood as classical Latin ordinary language as opposed to the later scholasticism's academic Latin from the point of view of popularity or not, then Valla's insistence on analyzing philosophical usage and classical Latin usage in terms of consuetudo can be regarded as an early 'ordinary language philosopher'. Of course, this paper's exploration is only a small step forward from its predecessors, and I think it is important to take into account Valla's status as a humanist in the early Italian Renaissance, and the fact that his education and teaching experience centred around the discipline of humanism, which encompassed both grammar and rhetoric, with grammar being a compulsory subject for the study of rhetoric. I believe that it is only after further examination of Valla's views on logic and its relationship to rhetoric in the *Repastinatio* that Valla's relationship to modern philosophy of language can be re-examined.

**Competing interests**

Not applicable

**Informed consent**

Obtained.

**Ethics approval**

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

**Provenance and peer review**

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

**Open access**

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