

Film Review: Matinee (1993)

What doomscrollers can learn from a movie set during the Cuban Missile Crisis



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Theatrical Release Poster

“*Matinee* is a 1993 American comedy film directed by Joe Dante. It is about a William Castle-type independent filmmaker, with the American home front during the Cuban Missile Crisis as a backdrop. The film stars John Goodman, Cathy Moriarty, Simon Fenton, Omri Katz, Lisa Jakub, Robert Picardo, Kellie Martin, and Jesse White (in his final theatrical film role). It was written by Jerico Stone[2] and Charles S. Haas, the latter portraying Mr. Elroy, a schoolteacher. Despite critical acclaim, the film was a box office failure.”

In 1993, I was not yet 9 years old. For the first 4-5 years of my life, the adults in my household spoke mostly Italian. My siblings and I were the far better English speakers, then and even now. This is not a major detail that is super relevant to the review of this movie, but this is a historical review of a film of my impression of the viewing at the time. It is not a comparison of a re-watch, nor is it necessary. However, if I were to rewatch the movie, it is likely some of my earlier memories and my recollection would change. Thus, this historical review comes first. If you would like to read the movie review, skip all the way to the bottom of this post.

All of the proper English and reading comprehension I learned was from school. My dad has a joke about my mom, saying that it takes her 2 hours to watch the CBS show 60 minutes. When it comes to movie plots, I am the same way. While my ability to follow a storyline has improved over the years significantly, it is still not perfect, nor does it need to me. If I recall correctly, WGN Channel 9 in the Chicago TV market would broadcast Sunday movies with notoriously long commercial breaks, where I would spend my afternoons at my late grandmother in Cicero, who was also my first nanny. Other movies I watched on WGN include *The Last Emperor*, and countless others I can't remember. You could say I grew up with TV (Cable subscription was not a thing in any of my family's households including my grandma's- we were not “poor,” since we were living in a the U.S- far longer industrialized than my parents post-war Italy, which experienced industrialization for just 25 years prior to their immigration to the States. So they were just frugal and resourceful-Free movie with ads? Find something to do during the commercial breaks, or just get up and walk around- because Heavens forbid you might miss something before you return to your seat).

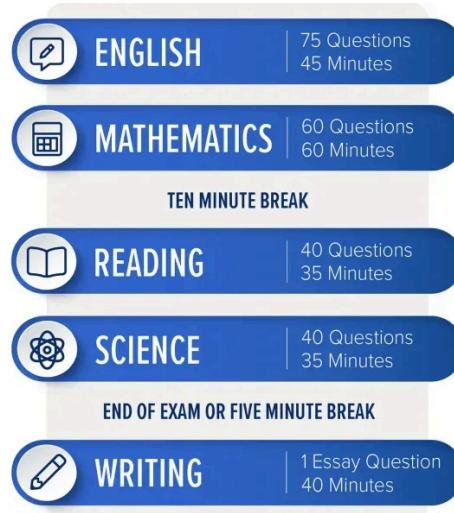
Now, I did have a an excellent education. I didn't have my parents teach me how to do math and reading every day- that was for the public schools. Their ability to help in that regard was extremely limited, but they were able to help in almost every other way, like driving me to school when necessary, and arriving on time, always. I should state that the most difficult time I had in elementary school was in the 4th grade (which was around this time *Matinee* was released), when I was tasked to read a chapter of Peter Pan as a homework assignment, and provide a summary to the class. Each student had to get up in front of the class, and describe the entire plot. It wasn't that I couldn't read the letters and words of the story, but I could not, what would later be called “reading comprehension.” My ACT and GRE scores would later reflect this, but there has been a steady improvement. So while there were many gifted students who were native English speakers, they also had their parents teach them English at home, and clued them in on interpretation and meanings (whether there is secondary or tertiary meaning- context, if you will.) English has some of the most irregular use of words among the languages, which is easy for me to discern in middle age, but not so much with only the help of an older brother and sister who also were not taught English by their parents.

So the day I had to present a book report of Peter Pan- I don't rememeber if it was the whole book, or a section of the book, I had to make something up. Much to my embarassment, I was given a look as if I didn't do my homework, or I didn't read it. But I did look through the book at the time, and even if I tried, I couldn't put together a coherent story, let alone remember

anything that happened. It is likely I could have remembered more, but I wasn't exactly slacking playing games and watching movies. I was just not prepared or aware that Reading courses progressively involved more interpretation and analysis than I was prepared to handle. With that being said, by the time I reached 17 years of age, my ACT scores were 29 for Math, and 27 for English. Science was a little lower than 25 if I recall and my Reading was much lower than 25 the average was a 25- yes, that implies the Reading was around 21 if you can estimate the average.

Now, you might be wondering, wait, aren't Science and Math more closely correlated as with English and Reading? Not the way the ACT was structured, and for good reason.

"The A C T test consists of four multiple-choice sections— **English, mathematics, reading, and science**—with an optional writing section. Some colleges and universities require or accept A C T writing scores, so you may consider taking the writing section."



The English section grades grammar and correct usage of terms and phrases, rather than comprehension in the Reading section- reading several sentences, making inferences, and interpolating or extrapolating information, sometimes making no assumption at all was what the Reading comprehension measured. The Science section was very similar, except that it uses charts and graphs (visual data points, often times), to pose questions, and measures the scientific comprehension of the exam taker. So in these ways, the Science and the Reading section are much more similar than the English and the Math section.

The Math section does require a previous understanding of mathematical formulas and principles, but did not require as much hypotheticals or reading between the lines- all of the information can be inferred based on a more structured equation- usually solving for x or y. In that sense, the Math section is much more closely related to English, because it involves identifying the multiple choice answer that most closely or accurately solves the missing variable (e.g. identifying the right use of a semi colon, or selecting the correct mathematical expression to represent an equation).

At 18, I had already taken 3 accelerated English courses- my H.S. had a college track course program that placed the top 30 or so students (out of 700 or so) in a more accelerated course which involved more rigorous reading comprehension. Still, I struggled, getting Bs on some English courses in my sophomore year, and missed placement into an Algebra course in the 8th grade, which required me to take Algebra instead of Advanced Algebra my freshman year- still understanding Calculus by my senior year but feeling FOMO with the concepts along the way.

Anyways, by the time I entered college, I was undeclared and took only a year of English courses to realize that my comprehension was not going to improve anytime soon, and while I did read for leisure, I could only indirectly build my knowledge of critical English theory from real world inferences, because abstract concepts of interpretation appeared too vague- for example, an Intro to Poetry course involved a brevity of language, requiring the reader to make more judgements and assumptions about the symbolism of the poet, almost as if speaking in code to repel certain types of readers, much in the same way philosophers are known to. I could make things up, but I didn't have much source material to base my interpretation on. Perhaps reading more poems would?

So viewing my college education as valuable, but not seeing English as a practical major, I switched to Biology- I figured, I could learn college-level analysis (and the other things while working on the strengths of rote memorization, which the early Biology courses emphasized more (the mid and advanced/graduate level courses required essays, and for good reason). This isn't to say that I only preferred rote memorization, but that it was useful for learning other advanced concepts in Biology, which require it for advanced models of the cell, with so much cellular machinery. Thus memorization allows one to have a "bird's eye" view (in my mind's eye) of all the processes in the cell at any given moment, which are needed for understanding the speed of DNA replication, RNA translation, protein folding, and cellular division, for example.

Originally I wanted to study Evolution, Ecology and Conservation Biology (a broad major at the time before the University merged it into an even broader umbrella- Integrative Biology (IB). Other Biology majors the university previously offered were more specialties, such as Entomology, Microbiology, and Physiology. The molecular majors got merged into Molecular and Cellular Biology (MCB), and this included an umbrella of former specialties such as Cell Biology, Genetics, and informally Microbiology. So prokaryotic biology got lumped together with eukaryotic biology, which may not appear much to a macrobiologist who studies trees, plants, fishes, streams, the atmosphere and the nitrogen cycle, but revealed the complexity of choosing a major just when the university was encouraging more interdisciplinary study (without knowing much about each specialty first). So my sophomore year, the Fall semester was the first official semester that I was a MCB Major (I had taken a Biological Anthropology course the year before, which probably influenced me, although I had not yet known how). The two classes were hosted in the Lincoln Hall auditorium, a large lecture hall used for various lectures and presentations for all majors, including History and Poli-Sci (the building was used by both schools).

I wanted to complete both introductory courses in the fall semester, which was not disallowed, but the schedule of both courses required me to sit in the auditorium for two consecutive hours, with just a 10 minute break between the two. I sat in the front of the hall most of the time, and the IB course was after the MCB course- they were Monday, Wednesday, Friday morning or mid-day lecture times (10a and 11a or 11a and 12p if I recall correctly). One time the IB instructor noticed I was a student of both courses before class and I confirmed that.

So the reason I wanted to complete both in the same semester was because I was still undecided which direction I wanted to pursue in Biology- did I want to study cells or ecosystems? Being highly aware of this, it wasn't an easy decision to make. While there was a lot of appeal in the potential for biotech to be a lucrative field, it wasn't my intention ever to go into biotech to become the next Craig Venter. I was still learning Reading comprehension! Biology was a way to make use of my strengths and excellent memorization skills. But how can I know what I want to know later without knowing how to read properly? It might sound obvious to some by the ripe age of 18, but my analytical brain was not yet the critically scrutinizing muscle that it is today.

By my junior year, I was enrolling in the most challenging Microbiology courses. When a student said a course was hard, I enrolled in it if I knew I could learn or pass the material, not get an A. While I was aware I needed a high GPA for grad school (which I was already planning on by that time, I knew there was something I could learn from instructors that teach people to think, and think *critically*. Not *how to think*. Those are the exact words Uri Berliner used in his NPR [critique](#) before he resigned this week. According to [Politico](#):

"Steve Oney, whose history of NPR, On Air, comes out next year, says in an interview that the network has never been good at managing its own press.

"They think they're small time when in fact they're big time,' he says, and it shows whenever the network finds itself in the news. Oney goes on to cite the departures of [Bob Edwards](#) two decades ago, when he left NPR after his demotion from anchor, and [Juan Williams](#) in 2010, who was let go on charges of veering from analysis into opinion, as prime examples of that flat-footedness. He also compares the current dustup to one in the 1970s, when consultants were brought in from Antioch College to assist the network in shaping its coverage in a direction consistent with today's social justice proponents. The staff successfully rebelled in a Berliner-like manner, he says."

While NPR had a national coverage compared to privately funded, alternative city newspapers like NYC's The Village Voice or Chicago's Reader, articles in [recent](#) days have reminded this generation that the 70s were a time of much more open-mindedness.

The U.S. is not facing an economic or social justice crisis *per se*. It is facing an anti-intellectual crisis from multiple directions, and it is not new. A crisis where technocrats and educational policy administrators wish to dispense ideology from a Pez dispenser like Soma tablets in *Brave New World*. Here, have some more soma. Take some more soma. This is not a critique of suggesting there needs to be less academia, or fewer need for a degree. Quite the opposite-learning to think critically allows independent agency where previously no decision-making is available (e.g. a far off remote province that has little in common with cosmopolitan posturing):

"While I would entirely agree with McLaren that "the be`te noir of the progressives" is positivism, I cannot understand why McLaren attributes this to those "vulgar cultural relativists who believe that there is no real truth when it comes to values, and that one culture's values are no better than another culture's values and there is no basis for judging the values of one culture over another." (PI: 235) My surprise abounds because McLaren would be the first to denounce the many social scientists that now populate Educational Studies who have made it almost mandatory that empirical studies and the quest for certainty and number must rule the roost in how a progressive agenda of the School is conducted. Among these progressive educationalists many claim critical pedagogy as their field, and would almost always find a line or two of McLaren's own to cite."

From:

The travails of criticality: Understanding Peter McLaren's revolutionary vocation. An article review of Peter McLaren, Pedagogy of Insurrection (New York: Peter Lang, 2015) John Baldacchino, [Policy Futures in Education](#) 2017, Vol. 15(5) 574–589

In the 2022 movie [White Noise](#), directed by Noah Baumbach, there is a brilliant scene where Professor Jack Gladney and Professor Murray Siskind are in a university rotunda, with students seated around the walls, with Murray in a rhetorical monologues, that while technically a lecture, appears more a soliloquy than a Socratic dialogue. They are even donning the graduation gowns (an absurdist element packed throughout the early part of the movie to heighten the humor). Gladney's speech, which follows Siskind's, captures the student's attention in a way that can only described as charismatic and voluntary awe (see below clip at the 2:05 mark for a 2 second

preview). Siskind, played by Don Cheadle, stands by the rotunda's exit feeling outdone. This scene artfully and cleverly amplifies the far more subtle theatrics of ideology that was (and still is) being so intensely debated today both in academia and in news media regarding the educational policy and scrutiny that led to Harvard, Stanford and University of Pennsylvania's presidents to resign.



While the far right focuses too much on the careless lack of quotations or citations in academic publishing, which can be considered plagiarism in extreme cases, the vast majority of citation-lacking excerpts are errors made from hasty works of scholarship. The issue that those in the center have more with is that “critical” pedagogy is wielded as a litmus test for organizing a faction of performative victimization and not used as method for actual instruction and dialectical learning.



A Pez dispenser dispensing its ideology. “Won’t you accept my ideology?”

Historically academics in pre-Renaissance Europe were monastic and had no books to sell or punditry to market.

Consider me Valla...not validated...Lorenzo Valla

"Lorenzo Valla (Italian: [lo'rentso 'valla]; also Latinized as Laurentius; c. 1407 – 1 August 1457) was an Italian [Renaissance](#) humanist,[1] rhetorician, educator and scholar. He is best known for his historical-critical textual analysis that [proved](#) that the *Donation of Constantine* was a forgery, therefore attacking and undermining the presumption of temporal power claimed by the papacy. [1] Lorenzo is sometimes seen as a precursor of the Reformation.[2][3]"

it resumed in the 14th and 15th centuries. But the Preachers' clashes with the civil authorities in defence of rights or decisions of the Church, such as the conflict with Louis of Bavaria (1325–1346), ended in true persecutions. In these conflicts, the Preachers overcame their temptation to rivalry with the *Franciscans and other mendicants to form a common front, and these "concordas" led in the 14th and 15th cc. to lasting pacts interspersed with periodic meetings.

In the 14th c., the multiplication of common properties by dispensation and the development of "private life" among numerous religious led to attempts at reform. They culminated with *Raymond of Capua (1380–1399) in the form of reformed convents, then reformed congregations of Lombardy, Holland, Teutonia, Spain, etc. In the 15th c., certain provinces such as Spain or Scotland would be reformed in their entirety. Despite some efforts to recover full mendicancy, especially in Italy, the order finally accepted, with the approval of *Sixtus IV (1478), certain conventional common properties, provincial and general, but largely succeeded in getting rid of private life. But the duality of reformed congregations and non-reformed provinces, which alone enjoyed constitutional rights, broke the legislative unity of the order. This was restored, however, when Bandello († 1506) and Cajetan († 1518) erected the congregations into provinces and reduced the non-reformed to vicariates. And the split of the order between two obediences, caused by the *Great Schism, which long paralysed reform, eventually disappeared. In the 15th c., the role of preaching reached a sort of apogee in Western Christian society and soon in the New World, while in the order, from England to Italy, from the Rhineland to Spain, there developed currents of interiority and return to the sources that would be expressed in the 16th c. in the Catholic and Protestant Reformations and their crises, profoundly modifying the order's situation in the world.

L. Moulin, "Une cathédrale du droit constitutionnel: l'organisation dominicaine", *Le Monde vivant des religieux*, Paris, 1964, 114–132. – W. A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order (to 1500)*, New York, 1966 and 1973 (2 vol.). – A. Cortabarria, "L'étude des langues au Moyen Âge chez les Dominicains. Espagne, Orient, Raymond Martin", *MIDEO*, 10, 1970, 189–248. – M.-H. Vicaire, "Les origines de la pauvreté mendiante des Prêcheurs", *Dominique et ses Prêcheurs*, Fribourg, 1977, 222–279. – M.-H. Vicaire, A. Duval, "Frères prêcheurs", *DHGE*, 18, 1977, 1369–1426. – M.-H. Vicaire, "Sacerdoce et prédication aux origines de l'ordre des Prêcheurs", *RSPTh*, 64, 1980, 241–254. – M.-H. Vicaire, *Histoire de saint Dominique*, 2 vol., Paris, 1982 (Eng. tr. *Saint Dominic and his times*, London, 1964). – W. A. Hinnebusch, *The Dominicans: A Short History*, Dublin, 1985. – F. J. Felten, "La mendicité pour les Prêcheurs du XIV^e siècle", *CFan*, 26, 1991, 307–333.

Marie-Humbert Vicaire †

DONATION OF CONSTANTINE. In the course of the conflict of the years 498–505, which set Pope Symmachus against the *antipope Lawrence, some *apocrypha (called "Symmachian") were composed in favour of the pontiff.

Among them was a *Constitutum Silvestri*, an embellished account of the pontificate of Silvester I (314–335). *Constantine took a prominent place, in an account where legend counted for more than history. Following this, a *Constitutum Constantini*, commonly called "Donation of Constantine", was composed around 750. The text appears in the False *Decretals, composed before 852–857. Its author is unknown and its place of composition uncertain. Perhaps it had an original element composed at *Saint-Denis with Roman complements in the years 766–796.

The text relates the legend of Constantine, suffering from *leprosy and miraculously cured, who asks the pope to explain a *dream. After penance, the emperor is baptized and so purified. There follow passages of a politico-legal nature: recognition of Roman primacy by Constantine, donation of the Lateran palace to the pope, Constantine's concession to Silvester of the imperial insignia and symbols of power, donation of the West to the pope, Constantine withdrawing to the East. These explain the text's success, the polemics and arguments it aroused. To start with, prudence prevailed. A diploma of *Otto III in 1001 denied its authenticity and attributed the *forgery to the papacy. *Leo IX used it in a letter of 1053 on the occasion of his conflict with Byzantium. The 8th-c. **Dictatus papae* allude to it. The Gregorian *canonical collections cite it, and so, following them, do the collections of *Ivo of Chartres. Gratian's **Decretum* in its first form makes no mention of it, but it was subsequently inserted. The first *Decretists were prudent, but the "Donation" became an argument of papal policy from the 13th century. It was used in both camps in a contrary sense during the Bonifacian quarrel and in the 14th century. To invoke it was not without danger for the papacy, since what the Roman emperor could take back. Moreover its authenticity was not unanimously accepted. Contested from 1001, it had its opponents in the entourage of *Frederick Barbarossa in 1152 and among the Bolognese glossators (Accursius). *Dante, *Marsilius of Padua and John of Paris (*Jean Quidort) followed them. The learned *Nicholas of Cusa judged it apocryphal. The *humanist Lorenzo Valla, engaged in the conflict between *Alfonso of Naples and *Eugenius IV, demonstrated its falsity in 1440 (*De falso credita et emendata Constantini donatione declamatio*). In the late 15th and early 16th cc., some voices contested Valla's demonstration without refuting it, but acerbically criticizing him.

The Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine, C. B. Coleman (ed.), Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1993. – *Das Constitutum Constantini*, H. Fuhrmann (ed.), *MGH.F*, 10, 1968, 55–106.

Die frühmittelalterliche Papsttum und die konstantinische Schenkung, Spoleto, 1972, *SSAM*, 1973, 257–329. – *Verbreitung der pseudoisidorianischen Fälschungen*, 2, Stuttgart, 1979, 354–407. – D. Menozzi, "La Critica all'autenticità della Donazione di Costantino in un manoscritto della fine del XIV^e secolo", *CrSt*, 1, 1980, 133–154. – G. Antonazzi, *Lorenzo Valla e la polemica sulla donazione di Costantino*, 1984. – O. Guyotjeannin, "Donation of Constantine", *DHP*, Paris, 1994, 581–583. – D. Maffei, "The Forged Donation of Constantine in Medieval and early Modern Legal Thought", *Fundamina*, 3, 1997, 1–23.

Jean Gaudemet

DONATIONS. For the total, gratuitous and irrevocable transfer of goods as defined by Roman law, the medieval West substituted another form of liberality: the gift for the salvation of a soul (*pro anima*), whose beneficiaries were ecclesiastical institutions. Based on the redemptive value of almsgiving, justified by Scripture (Sir 3, 30; Lk 11, 41; Mt 19, 21) and the Church *Fathers (for Augustine, *alms given by the living could even purify the *dead), the practice of the gift *pro anima* became current from the 7th century. In exchange for goods ceded (mainly lands, during the early Middle Ages), churchmen pledged themselves to pray for the salvation of the donor and sometimes to receive his *burial. Thus a spiritual counter-gift corresponded to the material gift. Very soon, the spiritual benefits resulting from the gift could be extended to the relatives and "ancestors" of the donor, or even to all the faithful.

"To invoke it was not without danger for the papacy, since what the Roman emperor had given another emperor could take back."

Research as Negative Campaigning

"In politics, [opposition research](#) (also called *oppo research*) is the practice of collecting information on a political opponent or other adversary that can be used to discredit or otherwise weaken them. The information can include biographical, legal, criminal, medical, educational, or financial history or

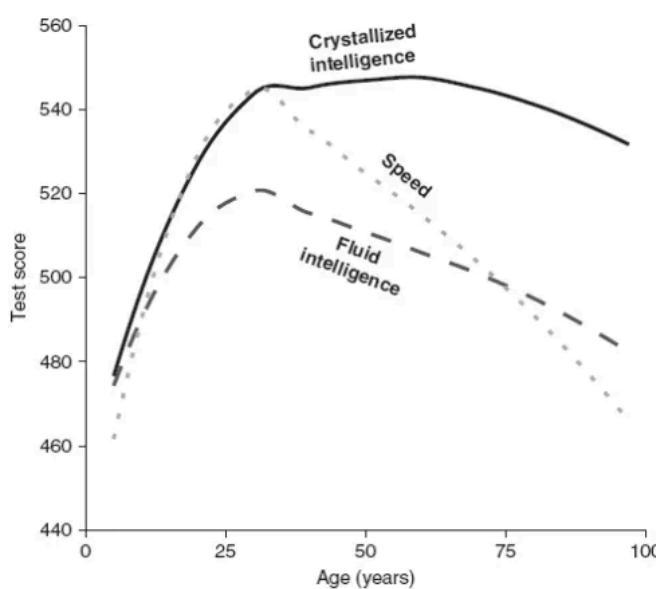
activities, as well as prior media coverage, or the voting record of a politician. Opposition research can also entail using "trackers" to follow an individual and record their activities or political speeches.^[1]

The research is usually conducted in the time period between announcement of intent to run and the actual election; however political parties maintain long-term databases that can cover several decades.

The practice is both a tactical maneuver and a cost-saving measure.^[2] The term is frequently used to refer not just to the collection of information but also how it is utilized, as a component of [negative campaigning](#)”

It's one thing to want to be a politician and use every negative detail of an opponent to campaign for a party platform. It's an entirely different thing to call oneself a scholar in the search for truth, when in fact one is a thinly veiled activist. Academic scholarship can (*and should!*) concern itself with the study of politics in the realm of *political science* departments. A shadow language that infiltrates practically every other academic department, from social sciences, to humanities, to engineering under the pretext of diversity, equity and inclusion is not a dialectical language- it is a Pez dispenser. In other words, it is another form of rote memorization of politically correct semantics. “Talk like us and we'll reward you in kind.”

But you might be wondering. Didn't I benefit from rote memorization? Yes, but my 300 and 400-level Biology courses required essays, and at 18, I was not yet able to write coherent analysis of experimental methods- multiple choice exams were common, and were practical. At 20, I could do so, because I was enrolled in graduate level courses that taught analysis in an accessible way, even to those with relatively poor English comprehension. So rote memorization is useful for amassing concepts, like collecting puzzle pieces, and less so after actually reaches the age where they are to write complex sentences that demonstrate deeply analytical capability. By that time, one can use analytical capabilities (e.g. quickly analyzing that some puzzle pieces are more likely to be located in one section of the puzzle) So a person who read a lot of books in high school, but might not have cared much for math, would have already developed a far more analytical capability than myself in an introductory English literature course. Did I want to write embarrassingly simple expository for my English term papers at 18 at 19 for school credit? I wasn't trying to be a poet laureate.



Found this chart from from “The Case for [Opsimaths](#)” Substack article, but actually from: *Intelligence: All that matters*, S.J. Ritchie, (John Murray Learning, 2015).

Crystallized intelligence is like rote memory, whereas fluid intelligence can be considered or paired with analytical and cognitive methods; both are important.

[Lorenzo Valla](#)'s essay on the Donation of Constantine, *De falso credita et ementita Constantini Donatione declamatio*, served King Alfonso V's [interests](#):

"Meanwhile he had moved to Pavia in 1431, stimulated by his friend Panormita (Antonio Beccadelli, 1394–1471)—with whom he was soon to quarrel—and had begun to teach rhetoric. He had to flee Pavia, however, in 1433 after having aroused the anger of the jurists. In a letter to a humanist jurist friend of his, Catone Sacco (1394–1463), Valla had attacked the language of one of the lawyers' main authorities, Bartolus of Sassoferato (1313–1357). After some travelling, in 1435 Valla found employment at the court of Alfonso of Aragon (1396–1458), who was trying to capture Naples."

From [Britannica](#):

*"He lived at Milan and Genoa before settling down, in 1435, as royal secretary and historian at the court of [Alfonso](#) of Aragon, king of Naples. He remained 13 years in Alfonso's service, and it was during this time that Valla, then in his 30s, wrote most of his important books. His *Declamatio* (Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the [Donation of Constantine](#)), written in 1440, attacked the crude Latin of its anonymous author and from that observation argued that the document could not possibly have dated from the time of Constantine. As King Alfonso was at war with Pope [Eugenius IV](#) at this time, it was politically convenient to attack the foundation of papal claims to temporal power in Italy. The book was first printed in 1517 in Germany, the same year that [Martin Luther](#) circulated his Ninety-five Theses, criticizing papal policies."*

Valla did not find much favor with Rome until the death of Pope Eugenius IV, who was replaced by Nicholas V (1447-1455):

*"Invited to Rome by [Pope Nicholas V](#) in 1447, Valla worked there on his *Repastinatio*.^[9] He became a papal scribe and, in 1455, a [papal secretary](#).^[7]"*

By 1453, when Valla had already gained a reputation as a keen philologist after the Donation of Constantine essay, he moved on to the Greek classics, which was more within the purview of Braccolini's antiquarian collections and studies:

Antiquarianism in the Papal Court

Christian antiquarianism began with literature. By the middle of the fifteenth century, popes such as Nicholas V (1447–55), Callistus III (1455–58), and Pius II (1458–64) were engaged in the pursuit of rare ancient texts. Nicholas V commissioned translations of Greek writings, was an ardent reader of patristic works, and created an ideal setting which for their study that included the founding of the Vatican Library. In that setting Lorenzo Valla redacted his *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* (*Repastination/Re-ploughing of Dialectic and Philosophy*, 1448 and 1453),³ often combining philological analysis of Greek-originated terms and the comparison of them with their Latin equivalents—a thorough antiquarian “re-ploughing/re-examining” endeavor in literature. In his writings he proposed a new philosophical structure—plain, common language as the medium to grasp the meaning of the world.⁴ At the same time, Nicolaus Cusanus pursued philosophical explanations of theological ideas (such as “*theos*,” “*mens*,” “*sapientia*,” and “*visus*”) in his *De visione Dei* (1453).

In the realms of architecture and engineering, Pope Nicholas V's projects, although never fully realized, were, according to his biographer Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459), either comparable to the ancient Seven Wonders of the world or equivalent to the lesser Wonders: a comprehensive antiquarian ambition.⁵ The pope's vision was supported by the knowledge of ancient buildings offered by his courtiers, such as Flavio Biondo (1392–1463) and Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72), who not only amassed profound knowledge of ancient structures through literature but also unearthed, examined, and recorded existing ancient ruins. The pope's vision also included the extensive repair of decaying edifices and aqueducts, using newly rediscovered ancient building practices and

³ *Laurentii Valle Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie*, 2 vols., ed. Gianni Zippel (Padua: 1982). Note that there are slightly different titles for different redactions of this work.

⁴ Paul Richard Blum, “Lorenzo Valla,” in *Philosophers of the Renaissance*, ed. Blum Paul Richard Blum, trans. Brian McNeil (Washington, D.C.: 1999), pp. 33–42, particularly 38.

⁵ While working under Nicholas V, Lorenzo Valla translated Herodotus' *Histories* (fifth century BC), which included detailed accounts of some of the Wonders, such as the pyramids of Egypt and the city of Babylon. (The so-called Seven Wonders of the world was established in the third century BC.) See Christine Smith and Joseph F. O'Connor, *Building the Kingdom: Giannozzo Manetti on the Material and Spiritual Edifice* (Tempe: 2006), pp. 270–71 (n. 34); and Gérard Brett, “The Seven Wonders of the World in the Renaissance,” *Art Quarterly* 12 (1949), 339–58.

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“Dispute with Valla

In his quarrel against [Lorenzo Valla](#)—an expert at philological analysis of ancient texts with a hot temperament fitted to protracted disputation—Poggio found his match.^[9] Poggio started in February 1452 with a full-dress critique of the *Elegantiae*, Valla's major work on Latin language and style, where he supported a critical use of Latin *eruditio* going beyond pure admiration and respectful *imitatio* of the classics.

At stake was the new approach of the *humanae litterae* (profane classical Greek and Latin literature) in relation to the *divinae litterae* (biblical exegesis of the Judeo-Christian "sacred scriptures"). Valla argued that biblical texts could be subjected to the same philological criticism as the great classics of antiquity. Poggio held that humanism and theology were separate fields of inquiry, and labeled Valla's *mordacitas* (radical criticism) as *dementia*.^[10]

Poggio's series of five *Orationes in Laurentium Vallam* (re-labeled *Invectivae* by Valla) were countered, line by line, by Valla's *Antidota in Pogium* (1452–53). It is remarkable that eventually the belligerents acknowledged their talents, gained their mutual respect, and prompted by [Filelfo](#), reconciled, and became good friends. [William Shepherd](#), author of Poggio's most extensive biography, finely comments on Valla's advantage in the literary dispute: the power of irony and satire (making a sharp imprint on memory) versus the ploddingly heavy dissertation (that is quickly forgotten). These sportive polemics among the early Italian humanists were famous, and spawned a literary fashion in Europe which reverberated later, for instance, in [Scaliger](#)'s contentions with [Scioppius](#) and [Milton](#)'s with [Salmasius](#).^[11]

[Erasmus](#), in 1505, discovered Lorenzo Valla's *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum* (*New Testament Notes*), which encouraged him to pursue the textual criticism of the Holy Scriptures, free of all academic entanglements that might cramp or hinder his scholarly independence—contributing to Erasmus's stature of leading Dutch Renaissance humanist.^[12] In his introduction, Erasmus declared his support of Valla's thesis against the *invidia* of envious scholars such as Poggio, whom he unfairly described as "a petty clerk so uneducated that even if he were not indecent he would still not be worth reading, and so indecent that he would deserve to be rejected by good men however learned he was." (Quoted in Salvatore I. Camporeale in his essay on the Poggio-Lorenzo dispute).

Erasmus's position, despite his immense contributions to scholarship, is not unlike the kind of criticism Universities are [lobbing](#) at [outsiders](#) today.

Braccioloni, for all his faults, had the insight to "rediscovering and recovering many [classical Latin](#) manuscripts, mostly decaying and forgotten in German, Swiss, and French [monastic](#) libraries."

Forensic detection of forgery in the *Donation of Constantine*, or any antiquated manuscript, takes time. While Valla may have been more adept at deciphering Latin errors and providing a unique approach to factoring in the changes in the vernacular since the 4th century, Poggio's retrieval of additional texts allowed future scholars to uncover potentially more forgeries from Latin and Greek, which provided inestimable value. Thus, even 600 years ago, Valla, who is known as the founder of textual criticism, could also be said to have precipitated the advent of oppositional research, because even the Papal-authorized analysis of sacrosanct would create secrecy and [delayed publication](#) (e.g. *De professione religiosorum*, or "On Monastic Vows," was not published until 1869) of discovered errors when the authority saw it fit to further their claim to a title, whether it is the King of Aragon or pope. Much like kings historically had court [jesters](#) to tell the truth, popes employed professional heretics to uncover valuable insights in archival history, which could further legitimize their claim at best, and archive or hide their forgeries at worst (and could be used later on if they were subsequently deposed from power).

"The Florentine humanist [Poggio Bracciolini](#) had criticized the "Elegances," and Valla replied in his *Antidot in Pogium* ("Antidotes to Poggio"). Both scholars are seen at their worst here, hurling at one another accusations of ignorance, of [barbarism](#), of [plagiarism](#), and even worse."

To draw comparisons between the 21st century and 15th century scholarship vying for Papal or regional control, one can examine the modern oppositional research conducted in 2016 by [Fusion GPS](#):

“Two research operations and confusion between them

The [opposition research](#) conducted by [Fusion GPS](#) on Donald Trump was in two distinct operations, each with a different client. First were the Republicans, funded by *The Washington Free Beacon*. Then came the Democrats, funded by the [DNC](#) and the [Clinton campaign](#).

- The **Republican operation**, from October 2015 to May 2016, focused on Trump's domestic business and entertainment activities; was performed by Fusion GPS; and used [Wayne Barrett](#)'s files and public sources. Immediately after the publication of the dossier, the media sometimes falsely assumed that the dossier started as a product of this research, so the *Free Beacon* released this statement: "none of the work product that the Free Beacon received appears in the Steele dossier".[\[35\]](#)[\[36\]](#)
- The **Democratic operation**, from April 2016 to December 2016, was focused on Trump's Russian connections; was subcontracted to Steele/Orbis; and used Steele's own source network and public sources. Only this second operation produced the dossier.[\[37\]](#)[\[38\]](#)

From April to early May 2016, *The Washington Free Beacon* and the DNC/Clinton Campaign were independently both clients of Fusion GPS. This overlap contributed to the media's confusion.”

It could be said that Valla was like a Christopher Steele type: an ex-MI6 working for both The King of Aragon and the Pope. Was he a double agent? I don't need speculate- it is far more likely he was content to find a practical use for his incisive analyses towards engaging scholarship.

Hired by Alfonso V in 1435, Valla had been searching for work since 1431, when he had to flee Pavia. One of his [first](#) job applications was

“1431, he was ordained as a priest; the same year Valla tried in vain to secure a position as [apostolic secretary](#)[\[5\]](#) to China.[\[8\]](#) He was unsuccessful, despite his network of contacts.[\[7\]](#)”

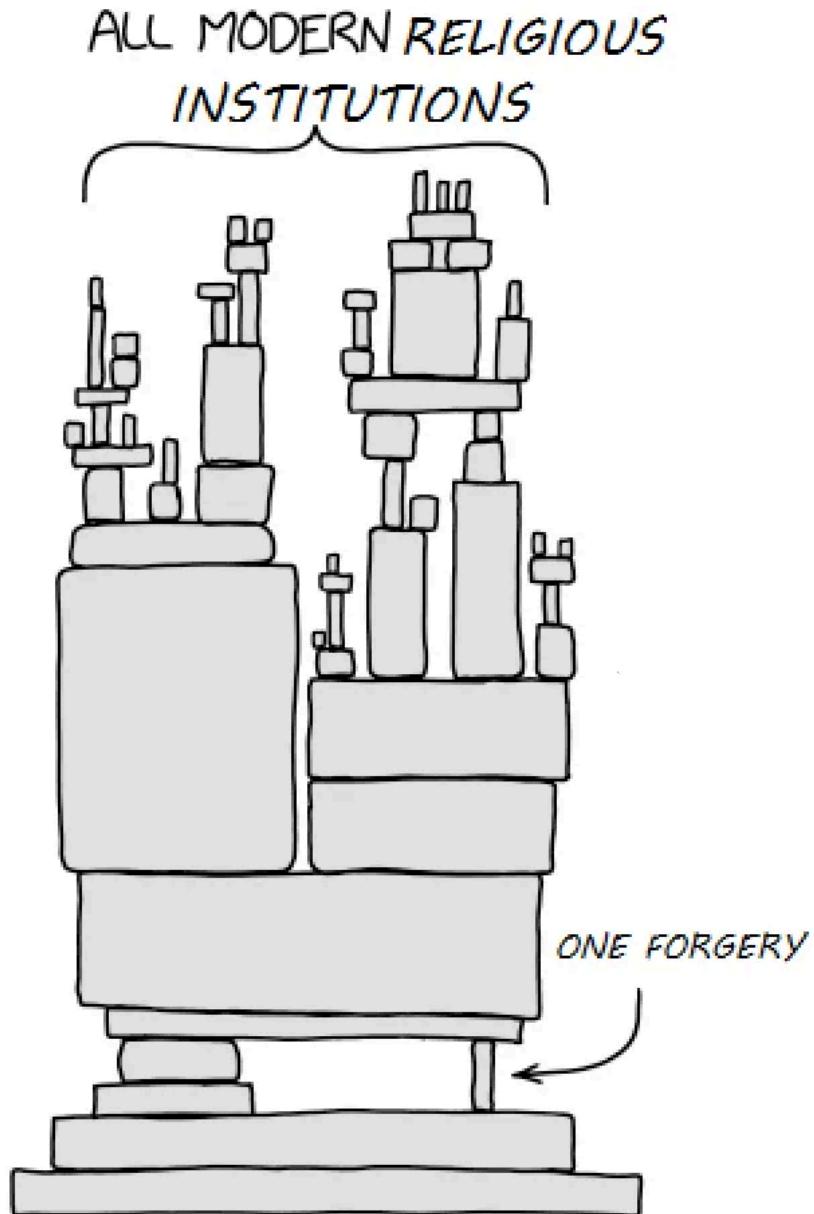
In academia, the 20th and 21st century saw [forensic scholars](#) such as Norman Finkelstein accomplish similar feats of philology, first in his dissertation on Joan Peter's “*From Time Immemorial*” (1984), and later with *The Case for Israel* (2003).

From [Stanford](#)'s Philosophy online literature:

“Valla grasped the important insight—which was not unknown to medieval philosophers and theologians—that the meaning of a text can be understood only when it is seen as the product of its original historical and cultural context. Yet his attempt to reform or transform the scholastic study of language and argumentation—and, indeed, their entire mode of doing philosophy—is likely to be met with skepticism or even hostility by the historian of medieval philosophy who is dedicated to the argumentative rigor and conceptual analysis which are the hallmarks of scholastic thought. Nevertheless, while it may be true that Valla's individual arguments are sometimes weak, superficial, and unfair, his critique as a whole does have an important philosophical and historical significance.” (emphasis added)

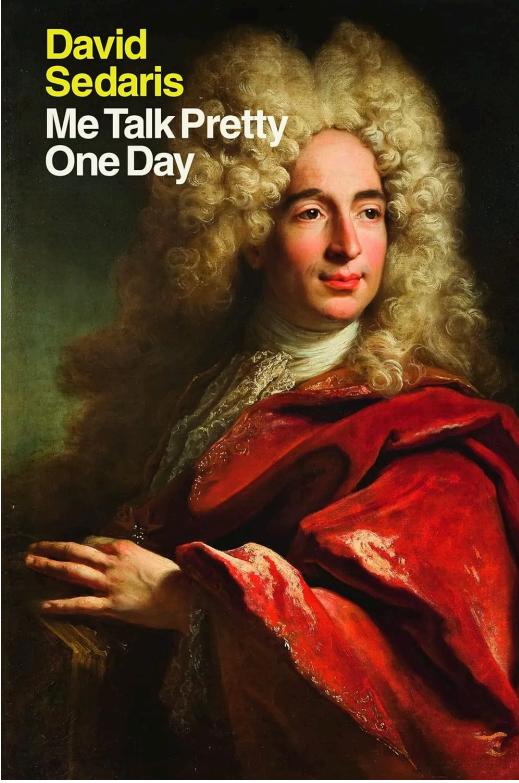
Today, the contemporary practice of scholarship by many universities practicing textual criticism for the sake of a political ideology rather than for the pursuit of inconvenient truths is not only bad scholarship, but harmful to a healthy society.

Now, what may pass for petty clerk and what passes for critical scholarship today might be hard to define or even appear reversed, if only because of mutually unintelligible and irreconcilable lexicons. Activist educators refuse to use or converse with the oldspeak lexicons of classical academics/intellectuals, whereas classical academics use comparative analysis to find historical precedence and instances of revisionism (e.g. [The Great Awakening](#), the Protestant Reformation, The East-West [Schism](#), and even Christianity itself).



Society, when it is unwilling to examine its historical underpinnings

While [parvenu](#) educators seeking to distinguish themselves by purging their vocabulary of offensive ethnocentric literature, [satirists](#), rather than write a polemic against Anglophilic, can highlight the pretentious limits to eloquence:

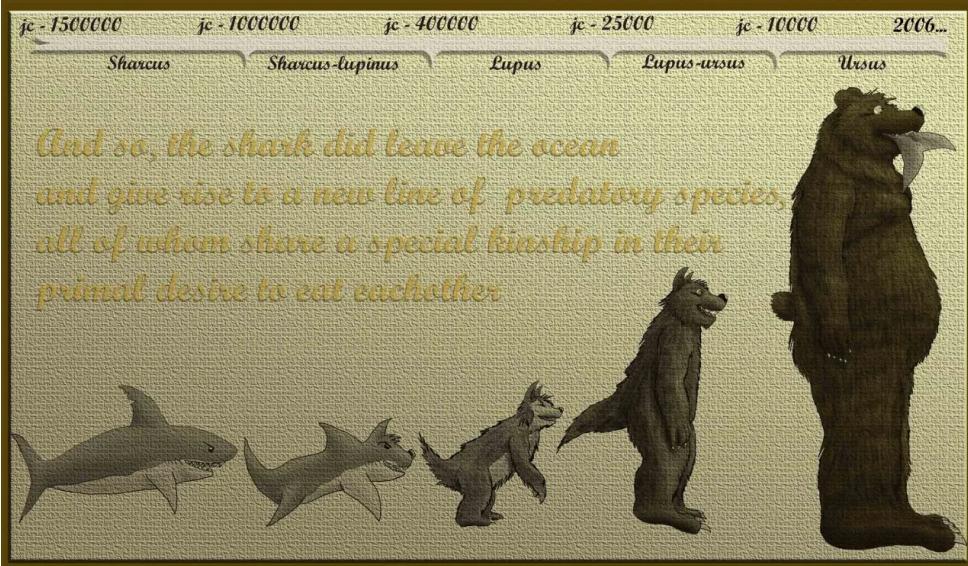


Sedaris failing at learning French

Today, academia is comprised of highly informed political scientists or operatives who ostensibly believe in a Freirean dialogic (ostensibly neo-[Platonic](#), but prefer a [command](#)-and-control approach to diversity training. Standardized training is often required in many settings, because on paper, it is the most fair in equitable distribution of policy. However, certain groups sometimes are more sensitive to different behavior and verbiage, which doesn't indicate exclusionary practices, unless schools follow through on passing legislation to pre-emptively ban [litter boxes](#) for non-emergency use.

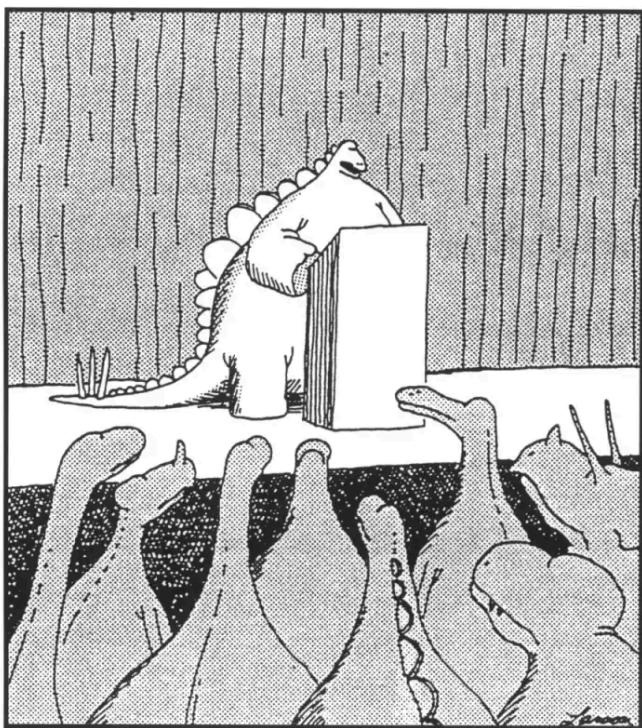


This was not my idea



Still not my idea, but funnier

But first:



"The picture's pretty bleak, gentlemen. ...
The world's climates are changing, the mammals
are taking over, and we all have a brain
about the size of a walnut."

This is not a joke suggesting larger brains are necessarily smarter. *Paris japonica* is a plant species with 50x the number of DNA base pairs of the human genome.

"On the Donation of Constantine"

"Between 1439 and 1440 Valla wrote the essay, *De falso credita et ementita Constantini Donatione declamatio*, which analyzed the document usually known as the [Donation of Constantine](#). The *Donation* suggests that [Constantine I](#) gave the whole of the [Western Roman Empire](#) to the [Roman Catholic Church](#). This was supposedly an act of gratitude for having been miraculously cured of [leprosy](#) by [Pope Sylvester I](#).

From 1435 to 1445, Valla was employed in the court of [Alfonso V of Aragon](#), who became involved in a territorial conflict with the [Papal States](#), then under [Pope Eugene IV](#).^[11] This relationship possibly motivated his work; in any case, he was put on trial before the [Catholic Inquisition](#) in 1444, but was protected from imprisonment by the intervention of Alfonso V.^[1]

Valla demonstrated that the internal evidence in the *Donation* told against a 4th-century origin: its vernacular style could be dated to the 8th century. Valla argued this thesis in three ways:

1. By stating that the Emperor Constantine could not have legally given Pope Sylvester the powers that the *Donation* claimed.
2. From the absence of contemporary evidence, Valla reasoned that it was implausible that a major change in the administration of the Western Roman Empire had taken place.
3. Valla doubted that Emperor Constantine had given Pope Sylvester anything at all, suggesting a mistake involving an earlier Pope."

impediment is a public one, i.e. if it can be proved in the external *forum, then, the renewal must be public; if secret, it may be private. But if the marriage is null because of a persisting removable diriment impediment, the marriage may be validated by a simple dispensation followed by renewal of consent. In certain cases, esp. where a renewal of consent is difficult to obtain, a marriage can be validated by a *sanatio in radice (q.v.). The validation of marriage is treated in *CIC* (1983), cans. 1156–65.

validity. A term used in W. *Sacramental theology denoting the fact that a Sacrament is genuine if certain formal conditions have been fulfilled. It is distinguished from fruitfulness (or efficacy) and regularity. Thus a Sacrament, even if celebrated irregularly (e.g. outside the unity of the Church), and even if unfruitful in that the participants will not receive grace through the Sacrament, may still be a real Sacrament, conferring membership of the Church (in the case of *Baptism), Holy *Orders (in the case of Ordination), or the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The formal conditions are that the minister of the Sacrament be himself validly ordained (if necessary), that the essential part of the Church's liturgy be used (see FORM), and that there be a proper intention (q.v.) on the part of the minister (i.e. to do what the Church intends in celebrating the Sacrament). The concept of validity was developed in the W. in connection with the problem of the Church's attitude to Sacraments conferred in heresy or schism. It is first found in the Roman insistence in controversy with St *Cyprian, Bp. of Carthage, that Baptism is validly conferred by heretics and therefore may not be repeated; it achieved its classic formulation by St *Augustine in his controversy with *Donatism. Augustine developed the concept of validity as a way of opposing the Donatist notion that the Sacraments were the possession of the perfect Church, insisting against them that the true minister of the Sacrament is Christ and thus the unworthiness of the minister (or the Church) does not affect the validity of the Sacrament. By thus enabling him to recognize Donatist Baptism and Ordination, it made easier the reconciling of repentant Donatists. At the Reformation most Protestants abandoned the concept of validity, regarding Sacraments as established by a true preaching of pure doctrine; it is affirmed in the *Thirty-Nine Articles of the C of E (art. 26). More recently the notion has been criticized (e.g. by C. H. *Turner and A. M. *Ramsey) as driving a wedge between the doctrine of the Church and the doctrine of the ministry, or as being a merely legalistic concept inadequate to deal with the problems of a divided Church.

The concept is discussed in most works on Sacramental theology, e.g. B. Leeming, SJ, *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (1956; 2nd edn., 1960), pp. 215–73. *Doctrine in the Church of England (1938), pp. 130–6. C. H. Turner, 'Apostolic Succession', in H. B. *Swete (ed.), *Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry* (1918), pp. 93–214; A. M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (1936; 2nd edn., 1956), pp. 152–4, 218 f., and 223; K. E. *Kirk, 'The Apostolic Ministry', pt. 5: 'The Meaning of Validity', in id. (ed.), *The Apostolic Ministry* (1946), pp. 33–46. G. G. Willis, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (1950), pp. 144–68 and 176–86. J. A. Gurrieri, 'Sacramental Validity: The Origins and Use of a Vocabulary', *The Jurist*, 41 (1981), pp. 21–58; id., 'Sacraments Shaping Faith: The Problem of Sacramental Validity Today', in G. Austin (ed.), *Fountain of*

Life: In Memory of Niels K. Rasmussen, O.P. (Washington, DC [1991]), pp. 165–81. See also works cited under ANGLICAN ORDINATIONS.

Valla, Lorenzo (c.1406–57), Italian humanist. He became an excellent classical scholar, through studies in Rome. In 1431 he accepted a chair of eloquence at Pavia, but had to leave the city in 1433 owing to quarrels with the jurists of the university. In 1435 he obtained a position in Naples at the court of Alfonso of Aragon, who was his protector for the next ten years. The King's controversy with the Pope over the legitimacy of his kingdom perhaps lay behind Valla's famous attack on the authenticity of the 'Donation of Constantine'. In 1447 Valla went to Rome, where he became 'scriptor' and later Apostolic Secretary, and in 1450 professor of eloquence at the university.

Valla's earliest work of importance, *De Voluptate*, is a dialogue between representatives of the *Stoic, *Epicurean, and Christian views, in which he defends the pleasures of the senses as the greatest good, though not perfectly attainable in this life. The first version was written in 1431; like many of his works, it was revised later. His *Dialecticae Disputationes contra Aristoteles* (the first version dates from 1439) ridicules the dialectic method of Scholasticism. The work by which he has long been best known is *De Falso Creditu et Ementita Constantini Donatione Declamatio* (1440) in which, using methods of modern historical criticism, he demonstrated the spuriousness of the 'Donation of Constantine'; it contained a bitter attack on the temporal power of the Papacy and led to his being summoned for trial before a tribunal of the *Inquisition in 1444. He was saved from imprisonment by Alfonso. His *De Elegantiis Linguae Latine* (the first version dates from 1441) long remained a standard work on humanist Latin. He also undertook a critical comparison between the *Vulgate and the Greek NT in *Collatio Novi Testamenti* (first version completed in 1442). In his *De Libero Arbitrio* (completed by 1444), he denies the possibility of understanding the harmony of God's omnipotence with human free will. His other works include *De Professione Religiosorum*, a sustained attack on the ideals of the religious life (not printed until 1869), an account of the reign of Ferdinand of Aragon (written in 1446), and a defence of his historical writings, *Antidotum in Facium* (1447). His audacious views had a deep influence on Renaissance scholars. His work on the text of the NT was valued by *Erasmus (who published his *Collatio* in 1505), and his writings were held in high esteem by the Reformers, esp. M. *Luther.

Works, pub. Basle, 1540; anastatic repr., 2 vols., Turin, 1962. Modern cdns. of his *De Constantini Donatione*, with Eng. tr. by C. B. Coleman (New Haven, Conn., 1922), by W. Schwahn (Tüeb., 1928) and W. Setz (MGH, Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 10; 1976); of *De Libero Arbitrio* by M. Antossi (Opuscoli Filosofici, Testi e Documenti Inediti o Rari Pubblicati da Giovanni Gentile, 6; Florence, 1934); and of *De Voluptate*, with later corrections, as *De Vero Falsoque Bono*, by M. de Panizza Lorch (Bari, 1970 [with notes in Eng.]); previously unpubl. recension of *Collatio Novi Testamenti* ed. A. Perosa (Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Studi e Testi, 1; Florence, 1970), and *Defensio Questionum in Philosophia* (hitherto unpubl.) ed. G. Zippel, 'L'Autodifesa di Lorenzo Valla per il processo dell'inquisizione napoletana (1444)', *Italia Medievale e Umanistica*, 13 (1970), pp. 59–94. More recent edns. of *Antidotum Primum: La Prima Apologia contro Poggio Bracciolini*, ed. A. Wesseling

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A closeup

From [HUP](#): "ISBN 9780674030893

Publication date: 09/30/2008

Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) was the leading theorist of the Renaissance humanist movement and the author of major works on Latin style, scholastic logic, and other topics. In *On the Donation of Constantine* he uses new philological methods to attack the authenticity of the most important document justifying the papacy's claims to temporal rule, in a brilliant analysis that is often seen as marking the beginning of modern textual criticism. Widely translated throughout Europe during the Reformation, the work was placed on the Church's Index of Prohibited Books. This volume provides a new translation with introduction and notes by G. W. Bowersock, commissioned for the I Tatti Renaissance Library, along with a translation of the *Donation of Constantine* document itself.

Author

- G. W. Bowersock is Professor Emeritus of Ancient History at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton."

[Additionally,](#)

"In placing himself in opposition to what he regarded as the Aristotelian paradigm, Valla often interprets certain doctrines—the syllogism, hypothetical syllogism, modal propositions, and the

square of contraries—in ways they were not designed for. In such cases, we can see Valla starting, as it were, from the inside of the Aristotelian paradigm, from some basic assumptions and ideas of his opponents, in order to refute them by using a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* or submitting them to his own criteria, which are external to the paradigm. This moving inside and outside of the Aristotelian paradigm can explain (and perhaps excuse) Valla’s inconsistency, for it is an inconsistency which is closely tied to his tactics and his agenda. He does not want to be consistent if this means merely obeying the rules of the scholastics, which in his view amounted to rigorously defining one’s terms and pressing these into the straightjacket of a syllogistic argument, no matter what common sense and linguistic custom teach us. Behind this inconsistency, therefore, lies a consistent program of replacing philosophical speculation and theorizing with an approach based on common linguistic practice and common sense. But arguably it has also philosophical relevance; for throughout the history of philosophy a warning can be heard against abstraction, speculation, and formalization. One need not endorse this cautionary note in order to see that philosophy thrives on the creative tension between, on the one hand, a tendency to abstract, speculate, and formalize, and, on the other, a concern that the object of philosophical analysis should not be lost from sight, that philosophy should not become a game of its own—an abstract and theoretical affair that leaves the world it purports to analyze and explain far behind, using a language that can be understood only by its own practitioners.”

Early Life

“Valla did not have an easy life. Equipped with a sharp and polemical mind, an even sharper pen and a sense of self-importance verging on the pathological, he made many enemies throughout his life. Born in Rome in (most likely) 1406 to a family with ties to the papal curia, Valla as a young man was already in close contact with some major humanists working as papal secretaries such as Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444) and Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459). Another was his uncle Melchior Scrivani, whom Valla had hoped to succeed after his death; but opposition from Poggio and Antonio Loschi (1365/8–1441) must have led the pope to refuse to employ him. Valla had criticized an elegy by Loschi, and had also boldly favored Quintilian over Cicero in a treatise which has long considered to be lost; but a lengthy anonymous prefatory letter has recently been found and ascribed, convincingly, to the young Valla (Pagliaroli 2008; it turns out not to be a comparison between Cicero’s theory of rhetoric and Quintilian’s handbook, as scholars have always assumed, but a comparison between a declamation of Ps-Quintilian, *Gladiator*—the declamations were considered to be the work of Quintilian in Valla’s time—and one of Cicero’s orations, *Pro Ligario*.) Valla’s Roman experience of humanist conversations found an outlet in his dialogue *De voluptate* (*On Pleasure*), in which the Christian concepts of charity and beatitude are identified with hedonist pleasure, while the “Stoic” concept of virtue is rejected (see below). Valla would later revise the dialogue and change the names of the interlocutors, but his Epicurean-Christian position remained the same.”

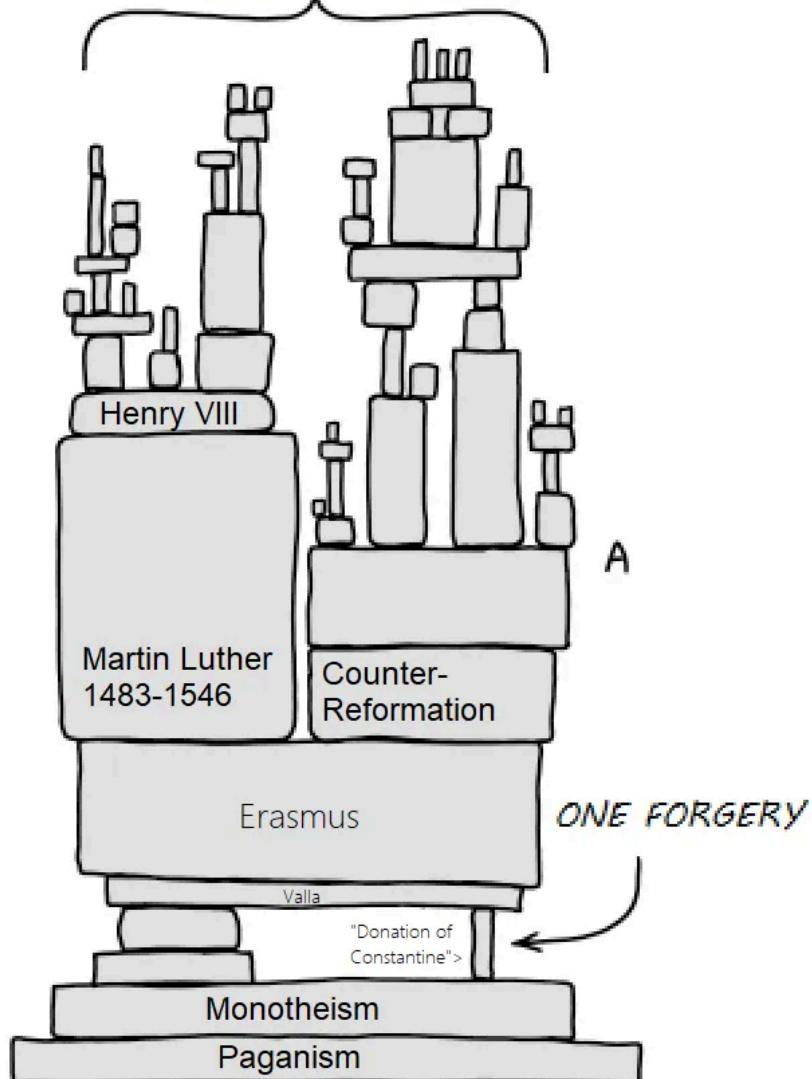
The 20th Century Version of the Deleted Tweet- A Personal Anecdote

I conclude this analysis with a thought probe. What if The Donation of Constantine was forged because Pope Sylvester was given land from Constantine by a verbal agreement, but no written records were made or survived? Just because no records exist of Constantine’s formal and written donation, doesn’t mean it didn’t happen. Returning to the beginning of this article, I have another elementary school story. When I was in the 3rd or 4th grade, our class was given a creative writing assignment, and we were told our essays would be graded by the 6th graders in a classroom down the hall. My writing was not great, but I could write sentences and punctuation without fragments or run ons. My storytelling was as variegated as it is today. When the teacher collected the essays and brought them to the upperclassmen’s classroom, we waited and they were returned, maybe 30 minutes or an hour later- the same day. When I received my graded paper, I could see in the margins, “You suck at writing” in faint pencil marks, due to it being

erased. I was very upset when I saw this, and instead of simply showing this to my teacher, in my foolishness and haste, decided to trace over the pencil marks first to ensure my teacher could see it, not realizing I made it harder for them to determine the handwriting of the original comment. This is like the deleted tweet before the internet, and it was the early 90s, when elementary school children didn't have cell phones. As I brought the essay with traced pencil marks in the margins, re-stating that I, now in fact, suck at writing, the teacher took offense to the idea, but decided to take the paper to the 6th grade classroom to ask if anyone would confess that they wrote it. No one came forward. The teacher returned to my class and made me walk to the entrance of the 6th grade classroom to apologize to the entire class for accusing one of the students for writing that. Technically they didn't write what *I traced* over, but one (or multiple) knew they had once wrote it. Perhaps it was a partial accomplishment that the person who wrote that remark had to face me, even though I never found out who wrote it.

An analogy can be made to The Donation of Constantine; while there is now ample evidence that it was a forgery, doesn't mean that there the book on revisionist philology and scholarship and dialectic should be closed. An incomplete list of European religions:

ALL MODERN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS



Reminder not to take everything too seriously (Historically non-European religions were omitted to focus one on example of institutionalization, not to exclude or make too many generalizations)

Onto the film review? Almost there

Now that I have written an additional anecdote on my reading and writing skills in the 3rd grade, I will first discuss my GRE scores in 2006 and 2009, when I first was admitted and then re-applied to grad school, unsuccessfully. After 3 years of undergraduate Biology coursework, my English reading comprehension did not improve very much. My first GRE score was around a 1210, with an above average/high math score, and a low reading score. Verbal Reasoning, Quantitative Reasoning and Analytical Writing are tested- I don't remember what the writing score was. If I recall correctly, my Quantitative Reasoning was around a 680, and the Verbal Reasoning was around a 530. In 2009, having been out of school for 3 years, and having read several books in my spare time, I studied more intently on the Verbal Reasoning and Writing section (I was slightly thrown off by my signature not initially being accepted due to my Driver's license poorly captured digital signature before the test, requiring me to run across the street in

Chicago 20 minutes before the exam started to get a new license and electronic signature). But either way, I had not studied enough for the Quantitative section, and I knew I had gotten a 680 before, so I was taking a risk by ignoring it. My score this time was nearly the exact opposite- a 680 in the Verbal Reasoning, and a 520 or so in the Quantitative Reasoning- and I applied to one graduate school in 2009, unlike 2006 (which was a bad idea), so my chances were not great, plus I probably applied to the wrong school.

To say I would be capable of getting a 1360 had I studied for many months and cared about all sections of the tests, doesn't really matter that much, although I could still apply to graduate school. The question is though, what academic topics are worth studying to me, in this era? If my Substack articles are any indication, it's historical analysis human civilization across centuries, and how industrialization has led to unprecedented changes in human migration and lifestyle, for better or worse. So it's a pretty broad expanse of research. I have tried subspecialties before, and they aren't for me, at least at this time. It is my hope that society can value historical analysis and philology in both academic and economic output over fast sophistry.

Now on to the feature presentation- Matinee

Matinee (1993) - Official Trailer



As a 10 year old, I didn't follow every plot line watching a movie. The visual medium implies there is much more to observe and interpret than even a linear and chronological sequence in the literary medium. While I was aware of the concept of the Cuban Missile Crisis even as a 10 year old, I was even more fascinated by the film's setting, which had an extremely clever use of special effects, which were like a play within a play. **Spoiler alert:**

"Assisted by Gene, Woolsey projects trompe-l'œil footage of an atomic bomb [mushroom cloud](#) that appears to blast a hole through the screen and the theater's outside wall, quickly evacuating the now panicked audience to safety."

It should be a reminder that one doesn't need AI or high tech CG to create a very creative and entertaining movie. The movie was set in Key West, which in this scene, plausibly causes not the 4th wall to break, but the *rear* wall of the theater to collapse, revealing the view beyond the shore- Cuba! Which caused me to speculate- where did that fireball happen exactly? In Florida, or across the Caribbean? Is Cuba so far that it doesn't appear on the horizon from Florida? It was [von Neumann](#) who calculated that the nuclear weapons be detonated high above the ground level, so even if a Caribbean island could not be seen from Florida, the sky above it might. Was I

thinking or aware of all of these details at age 10? No, but that it was set near Cuba? Yes. A very brief clip can be seen in the trailer above.

The movie theater serves as a useful metaphor as a refuge from the fatigue caused by online debates by prominent [AI safetyists](#) and critics who compare [e/acc](#) AGI to nuclear proliferation risks (true as it may be). The average person, either is not highly trained in academic eristics to amass a popular following, and may prefer to stay out of political discussions. But for many others who do not like the doomer, alarmist and e/acc urgency of the Twittersphere, the movie theatre offers an escape from reality. This was both a form of neglect and a form of sanity for the masses. As a 10 year old, I didn't need to know the specifics of the Cuban Missile Crisis to know that sitting in a theater can be a form of entertainment. But I was not really capable of learning the relevant economic beliefs of the nations involved in the Crisis, nor was it part of the story. As a 10 year old, it didn't matter. As a middle aged netizen, however, I feel like much of academia, save for the classicist humanities departments and traditional sciences, have been carved out by a political parade. The actors on the "screen"- the esteemed talking heads, expert guests on the news panels, arguing because an algorithm determines which guests are best for maximizing advertising revenue, sound like the children in the audience. Many older Americans with degrees who don't have children probably haven't even noticed for years, and not everyone agrees with the far left nor far right. But I estimate that academia will implode/deflate before it gets better and returns to traditional scholarship. This isn't to say it won't be able to study and integrate the many changes to society, but it will be less of a gatekeeper than a facilitator of learning and critical thinking. Because teaching students *to think*, not *how* or *what to think*, nor *for or against whom*, is the most valuable and portable skill a student can learn from an educational institution. Not a political dispensary. If I wanted that, I would go to a vending machine.

Today's academic students are tomorrow's politicians and media CEOs. If the schools aren't instilling a notion of practical scholarship, no one should be surprised when the ideological leaders of social policy (whether in academic administration, media, or business) fail so spectacularly at corralling their fellow travelers in their [stables](#).

Comments



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