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“May every lover of truth find it through reading.” Manners of Authenticating the Message in Sixteenth-Century Accounts of Polish Religious Disputations

Abstract

In the 16th and 17th centuries, religious disputations became one of the means of conducting religious agitation. Texts providing an account of the course of such events confirm the application of the formal rules of school-type *disputatio* in public disputes using vernacular language. This undoubtedly resulted in the expansion of the audience at such spectacles beyond scholars conversant in Latin and influenced the change of the objectives of such debates, from a collective search for the truth to the defence of one's own doctrine using all available methods, that is, dialectics and rhetoric.

Unlike mediaeval scholastic disputations, public disputes no longer engaged an arbiter to settle them. The victory was decided by the very course of the dialectic confrontation. The lack of an authoritative arbiter encouraged each of the parties involved to assure the public that they had won and therefore that their religious statements were true. After such a confrontation, ostensibly impartial and true accounts of the course of the dispute were published in print. This paper presents an analysis of eight prints providing detailed descriptions of six religious debates conducted in Polish between 1581–1599. These texts reaffirm the conviction (inherited from the Middle Ages) that the truth may be learnt through *disputatio*. They explicitly express the belief in the readers' ability to individually assess the correctness of the arguments formulated and the counterarguments, and consequently to understand who is right. At the same time, noticeable techniques employed to authenticate the

accounts as impartial and true despiteously undermine the objectivity of the accounts that profess to be true. The discursive means employed to direct the reader in his reception of the conveyed message include a declaration of an ethical urge to proclaim the truth about the course of the debate and its winners, and concealment of the true authorship of the text with the aim of avoiding a charge of partiality, assuring that the account follows the pattern of the so-called *autentyki* (or originals), that is notes written down during the dispute.

Keywords: Polish religious disputations, accounts of disputations, early modern period, authenticating accounts, rhetorical strategies, dialectics

1. Public religious debates

Public religious disputations were, undoubtedly, one of the methods of conducting religious agitation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the mid-16th century and throughout the 17th century. Although some of them were widely discussed and inspired the continuation of the polemic, either in the form of another dispute or a written exchange of opinions, it appears that they have not yet been comprehensively studied and described.¹

¹ Of the scanty literature, we should mention a paper by Stanisław Tworek, "Dysputa lewartowska w 1592 roku," *Rocznik Lubelski* 3 (1960), pp. 51–62, and Janusz Tazbir, who dedicated a study to the dispute between Jakub Niemojewski and Franciscus Toletus (that took place in Warsaw in the year 1572), as well as a dispute planned between Jakub Niemojewski and the Jesuits from Poznań, which eventually did not take place: "Polemika Jakuba Niemojewskiego z Jezuitami poznańskimi," in: *Munera Poznaniensia. Księga pamiątkowa Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu dla uczczenia 600-lecia założenia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, ed. by G. Labuda, Poznań 1965, pp. 236–260; K. Drzymała, *Ks. Marcin Śmiglecki T.J.*, Kraków 1981, pp. 23–24 and 34–40. In addition, J. Kamieniecki, "Zasady prowadzenia dyskursu religijnego zawarte w staropolskich tekstach polemicznych," in: *Wyraz i zdanie w językach słowiańskich. Opis, konfrontacja, przekład. 7*, Wrocław 2009, pp. 93–100; M. Ryszka-Kurczab, "Kilka uwag o Dysputacji Księdza Hieronima Powodowskiego z ministrem zboru nowoariańskiego śmigiełskiego Janem

Due to the insufficient amount of detailed studies of public religious disputations, it is difficult to pass categorial judgements on the method itself or the methods of conducting a disputation in Poland or Lithuania. We may, at best, formulate a general statement, consistent with research on the Renaissance disputes conducted in Western Europe,² that they testify to the early-modern transformation of scholastic disputation, developed and refined at medieval universities. This transformation – triggered by the incorporation of new elements of humanist teaching into the existing disputation practice on the one hand, and the need for reformation propaganda on the other – pushed *disputatio* out of university halls and into city squares and churches and make it a weapon in the religious fight.

Krotowicjusem z 1581 roku,” in: *Rzeczy minionych pamięć. Studia dedykowane Prof. Tadeuszowi Ulewiczowi w 90. rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by A. Borowski, J. Niedźwiedz, Kraków 2007, pp. 449–462. General references to public religious disputations may be found in: W. Stec, *Literacki kształt polskich polemik antyjezuickich z lat 1578–1625*, Białystok 1988; J. Tazbir, “Rola żywego słowa w polskiej propagandzie wyznaniowej,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 87/2 (1980), pp. 291–309; S. Kot, “Dysputacje arian polskich,” *Reformacja w Polsce* 7 (1935), pp. 341–370; S. Kot, “Dysputacyj braci polskich katalog z rękopisu Andrzeja Lubienieckiego młodszego,” *Reformacja w Polsce* 9–10 (1939), pp. 456–464; B. Natoński, *Humanizm jezuicki i teologia pozytywno-kontrowersyjna od XVI do XVIII wieku. Nauczanie i piśmiennictwo*, Kraków 2003 (the first edition published in 1975 in the series: *Dzieje teologii katolickiej w Polsce*, vol. 2, part 1, ed. by M. Rechowicz, Lublin 1975).

² See in particular O. Weijers, “Renaissance Disputation,” in: eadem, *In Search of the Truth. A History of Disputation Techniques from Antiquity to Early Modern Times*, Turnhout 2013, pp. 177–207; eadem, “The Development of Disputation between the Middle Ages and Renaissance,” in: *Continuities and Disruptions between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by C. Burnett, J. Meirinhos, J. Hamesse, Louvain-la-Neuve 2008, pp. 139–150; D. L. Felipe, *The Post-medieval Ars Disputandi*, Austin 1991; J. Rodda, *Public Religious Disputation in England, 1558–1626*, Farnham 2014; I. Angelelli, “The Techniques of Disputation in the History of Logic,” *Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1970), pp. 800–815; U. Paintner, “Aus der Universität auf den Markt. Die disputatio als formprägende Gattung Konfessioneller Polemik im 16. Jahrhundert am Beispiel antijesuitischer Publizistik,” in: *Disputatio 1200–1800. Form, Funktion und Wirkung eines Leitmediums Universitärer Wissenskultur*, hg. von M. Gindhart, U. Kundert, Berlin–New York 2010, pp. 129–154.

The need to conduct religious propaganda forced the replacement of Latin (categorically reserved for university disputations until the 18th century³) with a vernacular language. This without a doubt enabled the vast expansion of audiences beyond the circle of scholars conversant in Latin and dialectics, but it also had a huge impact on the very method and the functions that the disputation began to perform in the religious contentions of the Reformation.

One of the fundamental characteristics of the medieval disputation was that it aimed at the collective search for truth.⁴ After a *disputatio* had finished, it was required in all cases that the master who had organised it and led it (*praeses*) provided in a relatively short time⁵ a written *determinatio* (*determinatio magistri*), that is, a text in which he indicated the correct answer to the question raised in the *quaestio* part, and that he justified his position and refuted arguments brought against it. However, the formula of public religious debates that took place outside schools and were organised in the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, including Poland, no longer engaged an arbiter to settle the contention. In a famous Leipzig disputation (1519) between Martin Luther and Johannes Eck, Duke George of Saxony, subsequently sent the record of its course to the theological faculties at universities in Paris and Erfurt, hoping that he should thus retain impartiality. Both universities abstained from taking a position.⁶ In a religious dispute, adversaries do not commonly accept any arbiter

³ K. Chang, "From Oral Disputation to Written Text. The Transformation of the Disputation in Early Modern Europe," *History of Universities* 19/2 (2004), pp. 137–138.

⁴ O. Weijers, *In Search of the Truth...*, p. 131 and farther, 138–141; J. Rodda, *Public Religious...*, pp. 10n.; P. Gondek, "Dysputa scholastyczna jako przykład sporu naukowego," *Forum Artis Rhetoricae* 3 (2014), pp. 7–22.

⁵ Individual universities or even faculties had their own detailed regulations concerning this matter, see O. Weijers, *In Search of the Truth...*, pp. 129–131.

⁶ R. H. Fife, *The Revolt of Martin Luther*, New York 1957, pp. 369 i n.; S. H. Hendrix, *Martin Luther. Visionary Reformer*, New Haven 2015, p. 80. Having been forced to do so, it was not until 1521 (two years after the disputation) that the University of Paris took a stance.

that could use its authority to confirm that either party had won. The victory is, therefore, decided by the very course of the disputation. It is a tacit assumption that the winner is the party that wins in the dialectic contest, that is, the one who better performs his role in the disputation, patterned after the school model, using dialectic methods. Therefore, the *respondens*' task is to defend a thesis using effective refutation of counterarguments brought by the opponent, while the *opponens*' aim is for the rival to accept a thesis contrary to the one being defended. The winner should be chosen objectively and the choice should be obvious to all present. Meanwhile, religious disputations lasted for hours and never ended with a unanimous victory of either party. In fact, the disputants became entangled in dialectic nuances, terminological differentiations, and discrepant interpretations of the Holy Scripture, struggling to win the debate at all costs. A minor but essentially fundamental change, that is, the lack of an arbiter appointed to authoritatively determine the winner, encouraged the participants in disputes to single-handedly assure the public that the opponent had lost. Hence, after a disputation was over, one or both parties issued a printed account of its course. Such records presented their own take on the events and aimed at discrediting the opponent, mostly by revealing his lack of solid arguments supporting his own position and thus proving the falseness of his particular statements. At the same time, their authors put a lot of effort into convincing the reader that they are presenting an objective account of the events. Therefore, they used techniques of authenticating the record as impartial and simultaneously directed the reading throughout. We may say then that Renaissance public religious disputations inherited the tradition of scholastic university disputes on the one hand, but on the other they can only seemingly serve the same objective: the search for truth. In actual fact, the aim of a disputation was no longer to overtly test scientific hypotheses or theological substantiations, as it had been before, but to defend one's doctrine at any price and by all available means, that is dialectics and rhetoric.

The analysis presented in this paper includes, most importantly, peritextual elements (dedications, forewords, epilogues) and frag-

ments reporting the circumstances of the organisation of the disputes, as well as the forewords traditionally given by the disputants directly before the contention began, which in print precede the proper accounts of the disputations in accordance with the real chronological course. By no means does this imply, however, that the descriptions of the disputations themselves are impartial and strictly objective. Even texts that precisely reflect the alternate moves of the disputants are not free from the author's comments and dissenting or assenting phrases, which are supposed to shape the reader's opinions on the logical capability of the disputants, as well as the admissibility or inadmissibility of a given dialectic move. However, the description of the dialectic methods used in the debates and the manners of appraising the correctness or inadmissibility of the adversary's moves unquestionably requires a separate and detailed study. Such a description must essentially refer to the contemporary culture of logic and its practical manifestations, and since there are no detailed studies on the 16th-century *ars disputandi* in Poland and Lithuania, it is difficult to present such a complex question in a text of very limited length. At the same time, texts surrounding the descriptions of the disputes allow us to discern the tension relating to the trust declared in the disputation as a device not so much for searching for the truth as for proving it. On the other hand, they reveal the strategies that authenticate the message itself (inevitably prone to partiality) and direct the reading.

2. The characteristics of the sources

This analysis is based on eight prints concerning six public religious disputations that took place in the years 1581–1599. All of them were conducted in Polish. Chronologically, they occurred in the following order:

- 1) A disputation in Śmigiel, 27 December 1581. The participants: Hieronim Powodowski on the Catholic side, Jan Krotowski (Krotowiczus, Krotovius) from the Polish Brethren, then the Minister

of the Arian Church in Śmigiel. This dispute concerned the eternal deity of Christ. The course of the debate is confirmed by a text allegedly published by Sebastian Szamotulski but it is not precluded that it was authored by Powodowski himself, *Dysputacja [...] o niektórych artykułach przedwiecznego Bóstwa Syna Bożego i Trójce Przenaświętszej* (A disputation on some articles on the eternal divinity of the Son of God and the Holy Trinity).⁷

2) A Lewartów disputation, 13–14 January 1592. It involved three parties. On the first day, the disputants were Adrian Radzyński SI and Wojciech of Kalisz (Calissius, the rector of the Unitarian school in Lewartów). Calissius attacked the thesis concerning the eternal deity of Christ. On the second day, Radzyński disputed with the Calvinist Minister Grzegorz Jankowski on transubstantiation, which was a *vexata questio* between Catholics and Calvinists. The anonymously published print is entitled *Krótkie a prawdziwe opisanie dysputacyjnej, która była w Lewartowie* (A Brief but True Account of the Disputation Held in Lewartów).⁸ This account is recorded from Unitarian perspective. It was probably authored by one of the Arian disputants, Wojciech z Kalisza⁹ or Jan Niemojewski.¹⁰ In my analyses, I omit the overtly partial versed description of this dispute, *Pogrom*

⁷ S. Szamotulski [H. Powodowski], *Dysputacja ks. Hieronima Powodowskiego z ministrem zboru nowoariańskiego śmigielskiego Janem Krotowiczuszem, o niektórych artykułach przedwiecznego Bóstwa Syna Bożego i Trójce Przenaświętszej, tamże w zborze śmigielskim odprawowana... dnia 27. grudnia w roku 1581*, [Poznań: Jan Wolrab, 1581] (The Princes Czartoryski Library, ref. 1190 I Cim).

⁸ [Wojciech z Kalisza], *Krótkie a prawdziwe opisanie dysputacyjnej, która była w Lewartowie anno 1592 d. 13 i 14 stycznia, w której ks. Radzyński theses dał a Calissius rektor lewartowski i ks. Franciszek minister kurowski i pan Jan Niemojewski opugnowali*, Kraków: Sebastian Sternacki, [1592] (The Princes Czartoryski Library, ref. 1932 I Cim).

⁹ S. Tworek, *Dysputa lewartowska...*, p. 52.

¹⁰ K. Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, t. 23, Kraków 1910, p.124.

lewartowski (The Lewartów Crushing Defeat), penned most certainly by Adrian Radzyński.¹¹

3) A disputation in Lublin, 22–23 May 1592, which was a continuation of the Lewartów disputation. The theses advanced were the same as four months earlier in Lewartów. The debate was allegedly planned as trilateral again, but the Evangelicals argued that they had not been notified about it and did not send their disputants. The only disputing parties were, therefore, Adrian Radzyński SI (*proponens*) and the Unitarian Piotr Statorius the Younger (*opponens*). We are in possession of two symmetrical accounts of this event: one published by Radzyński, appearing as Jan Przyłępski, *Dysputacja lubelska ks. Adryjana Radzyńskiego [...] o przedwieczności Bóstwa Pana i Boga naszego Jezusa Chrystusa* (The Lublin Disputation between Priest Adryjan Radzyński [...] on the Eternal Divinity of our Lord and God Jesus Christ)¹² and the other one by Piotr Statorius-Stojeński the Younger, *Dysputacyjna Lubelska Piotra Statoriusa [...] o przedwiecznym Bóstwie Syna Bożego* (Piotr Statorius's Lublin Disputation [...] on the Eternal Divinity of the Son of God).¹³

4) Another disputation in Śmigiel, 2 July 1592. This time, Hieronim Powodowski disputed with Krzysztof Ostorode, who in 1592 took over from Krotowiczusz as the leader of the Polish Brethren church in Śmigiel. It concerned the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and baptising newborns. Since the account given by Krzysztof Ostorode

¹¹ Estreicher, followed by S. Tworek, regarded Marcin Łaszcz as the author of *Pogrom lewartowski*. See K. Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, t. 21, Kraków 1906, pp. 105–106.

¹² J. Przyłępski [A. Radzyński], *Dysputacja lubelska ks. Adryjana Radzyńskiego [...] z Statoriuszem ministrem nowokrzeńskim o przedwieczności Bóstwa Pana i Boga naszego Jezusa Chrystusa dnia 22 i 23 maja roku 1592*, Kraków: Jakub Siebeneicher, 1592 (National Library of Poland, ref. SD XVI.Qu.26)

¹³ P. Statorius-Stojeński the Younger, *Dysputacyjna lubelska Piotra Statoriusa sługi słowa Bożego o przedwiecznym Bóstwie Syna Bożego z ks. Adryjanem Radzyńskim Jezuitą*, [Kraków:] Aleksy Rodecki, [1592] (National Library of Poland, ref. SD XVI.Qu.6426).

has not been preserved,¹⁴ we only have the text by a Catholic author, probably Powodowski himself, *Disputacyja wtóra ks. Hieronima Powodowskiego z śmigielskimi różnobożany* (The Second Disputation of Priest Hieronim Powodowski with the Unitarians from Śmigiel.¹⁵

5) A disputation in Novgorod (24–25 January 1594) between Marcin Śmiglecki SI and Jan Licyniusz. The theses in the debate were advanced by Śmiglecki. Again both concerned the eternal deity of Christ. The disputation lasted six hours on the first day and was continued on the next. There is one detailed account of it: *Opisanie dysputacyjnej nowogrodzkiej, którą miał ks. Marcin Śmiglecki [...] z Janem Licyniuszem* (An Account of the Novogrod Disputation between Father Marcin Śmiglecki [...] with Jan Licyniusz).¹⁶

6) A Vilnian disputation (2 June 1599). The Catholic side was represented by Marcin Śmiglecki; the Evangelicals by Daniel Mikołajewski. It concerned papal primacy (*primatus Petri*). There are two preserved accounts, authored by the respective disputants: Marcin Śmiglecki's *Dysputacyja wileńska, którą miał ks. Marcin Śmiglecki Societatis Iesu z ministrami ewangelickimi [...] o jednej widomej głowie Kościoła Bożego* (The Vilnius Disputation between Priest Marcin Śmiglecki Societatis Iesu and the Evangelical Ministers [...] about the one Obvious Head of God's Church)¹⁷ and Daniel

¹⁴ K. Ostorode, *Dysputacyja zboru szmigielskiego, którą miał Cristoph Osterod sługa słowa Bożego na tamtem miejscu z Hieronimem Powodowskim [...] 1592 dnia 2 lipca o tym, że on jedyny Bóg nie jest trzy osoby to jest jako mówią, Ojciec, Syn i Duch Święty, ale tylko sam Ojciec a żaden inny*, [s.l., s.n., s.a.].

¹⁵ [H. Powodowski], *Dysputacyja wtóra Księdza Hieronima Powodowskiego z Śmigielskimi różnobożany. O trzech osobach w jednymże Bóstwie i o krzczeniu małych dzieciak. Odprawowana w Śmiglu 2. dnia lipca roku 1592*, Poznań: Barbara Wolrab i dziedzice Jana Wolraba, 1592 (The Princes Czartoryski Library, ref. 1129 I Cim).

¹⁶ [M. Śmiglecki], *Opisanie dysputacyjnej nowogrodzkiej, którą miał ks. Marcin Śmiglecki [...] z Janem Licyniuszem*, Vilnius: Drukarnia Akademii Societatis Iesu, [after 25, Jan. 1594] (The Princes Czartoryski Library, ref. 952 I Cim).

¹⁷ [M. Śmiglecki], *Dysputacyja wileńska, którą miał ks. Marcin Śmiglecki Societatis Iesu z ministrami ewangelickimi [...] o jednej widomej głowie Kościoła Bożego*,

Mikołajewski's *Dysputacja wileńska, którą miał ks. Marcin Śmiglecki Soc[ietatis] Jesu z ks. Danielem Mikołajewskim [...] de primatu Petri* (The Vilnius Disputation between Priest Marcin Śmiglecki Societatis Jesu and Priest Daniel Mikołajewski [...] de primatu Petri).¹⁸

The common characteristic of all the eight prints is the detailed record of the course of the disputation. Although written from different religious points of view, all of them alternately quote the moves of both disputants. Their objective was to minutely familiarise the reader with the course of the dialectic process of defending and attacking the theses. All the prints include assurances that the reader may individually develop their opinion on the victory or defeat of either party.

All the source texts were written from the perspective of one of the parties involved. They were drafted by witnesses-observers or the disputants themselves, often appearing under fictional names or anonymously. Therefore, even when the texts record the course of a disputation in detail, we are not dealing with an impartial testimony (if such impartial testimony is at all possible). They include frequent evaluative comments, assessments, paraphrases or resumptions of an argument instead of an entire utterance. At the same time, we do observe an abundant variety of measures authenticating one's own account, which is supposed to appear as factual and detached. In two cases, there are accounts penned by both sides, which may be compared with one another.

Kraków: The Lazarus Printing House, 1599 (The Princes Czartoryski Library, ref. Cim. 912 II).

¹⁸ D. Mikołajewski, *Dysputacja wileńska, którą miał ks. Marcin Śmiglecki Soc[ietatis] Jesu z ks. Danielem Mikołajewskim, służą Słowa Bożego de prymatu Petri*, Toruń: Andrzej Kociński, 1599 (The Jagiellonian Library, ref. Cim.Qu.5026).

3. The benefits of print

Despite the well documented critical attitude of many humanists towards the scholastic dispute,¹⁹ in the Renaissance the dispute is still the fundamental method of school teaching, besides *lectio*, that is, a lecture with a commentary on a text.²⁰ Furthermore, in contravention of allegations advanced by some humanists that it was unproductive or factitious, it developed critical thinking. Even at the very beginning of the Reformation, it moves from theological faculties beyond academic circles to a wider audience (Luther's Ninety-five theses posted on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg were in fact theses for a disputation). The structure of *disputatio* was based on the divergence of points of view and its popularity as a school method, and the consequent circumstance that its rules and dialectic devices were commonly known among educated people allowed them to easily engage in this form of contention as part of religious struggles during the Reformation period.

In the second half of the 16th century, the Reformation in Poland enters the period of confessionalisation. Public religious disputes between representatives of two or more confessions are ever more numerous, which is undoubtedly favoured by the Warsaw Confederation (*pax dissidentium*), which from January 1573 guaranteed

¹⁹ See R. Guerlac, “Introduction,” in: J. L. Vives, *Against the Pseudodialecticians. A Humanist Attack on Medieval Logic*, transl., intr., notes by R. Guerlac, Dordrecht 1979, pp. 1–43; N. W. Gilbert, “The Early Italian Humanists and Disputation,” in: *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, ed. by A. Molho, J. A. Tedeschi, Dekalb 1971, pp. 203–226; P. O. Kristeller, *Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning*, New York 1992, p. 10. A study on the scholastic-humanist contention which is still a classic is: E. Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation*, Cambridge 1995. O. Weijers emphasises that we should differentiate between humanists' attacks on dialectics and their attitude towards a disputation as such (a good disputation was regarded as very useful), O. Weijers, *In Search of the Truth...*, pp. 185–189.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 180.

religious freedom to the nobility. While the propagandistic power of the living word prevailed over written texts,²¹ print provided the opportunity for the unprecedented expansion of the audience. In the foreword *Do Czytelnika* (To the Reader), the author of *Dysputacja nowogrodzka* (The Novgorod Disputation), most probably Marcin Śmiglecki himself, wrote that he wished to share the benefits and consolations arising from this disputation to all those who did not have the opportunity to listen to it in person:

For me myself, listening with all the right-believing, to be consoled and ineffably benefit from it, for you, who could not have been present there, to be a participant in this consolation and benefit through reading this.²²

Furthermore, the printed report of the disputation supports the fallible human memory. It is a lasting account of an oral encounter, which is transitory by nature. Substantiating the publishing of the print, Hieronim Powodowski, Krzysztof Ostorode's opponent at the disputation in Śmigiel that took place on 2 July 1592, wrote the following:

since due to haste and insufficient information on the time [of the disputation], many noble people interested in it missed it. And those who listened to it either arrived late or could not remember all of it and afterwards recalled it differently.²³

²¹ W. Stec draws spotlights to the fact that public disputations were a sort of attraction and calls them "ludic facts." W. Stec, *Literacki kształt...*, pp. 114, 119.

²² [M. Śmiglecki], "Do Czytelnika" in: idem, *Opisanie dysputacyjej...* [*Dysputacja nowogrodzka*], [p. 1]. Polish: "Aby jakom ja sam, ze wszystkimi prawowiernymi słuchając, pociechę i pożytek niewymowny z niej odniósł, i ciebie też, którzy tam obecny być nie mógł, czytaniem jej teźże pociechy i pożytku uczesnikiem uczynił."

²³ [H. Powodowski], *Dysputacja wtóra...*, f. A₁ v. Polish: "iż przez kwapienie i niedostatecznie się o czasie porozumienie, niemało ludzi ślacheckich tej rozprawy omieszkali, którzy jej z dawna pragnęli. A ci, którzy słuchali albo nierychło przybywali, albo nie wszytkiego w pamięci zachować mogli i różnie to sobie potym przypominali."

4. “Searching for the truth by way of disputation”

In the works under discussion, we often find the conviction, undoubtedly inherited from the previous period, that a disputation should reveal the truth. The thus defined objectives were usually conceptualised in speeches that were customarily given by the representatives of both sides directly before the disputation. The Minister of the Arian church in Śmigiel Jan Krotowski was supposed to have said that a disputation's aim is to “provide the audience with arguments, so they understand who is right” (Polish: “ku zbudowaniu słuchaczy, aby zrozumieli, przy kim jest prawda”) and demanded that “the other party respect this objective” (Polish: “druga strona ku temuż się miała”).²⁴ Eleven years later, also in Śmigiel, Krzysztof Lubieniecki, an Arian activist and polemist, was supposed to have given solemn thanks to Hieronim Powodowski for the latter's participation in the disputation “with the aim of presenting the salutary truth, which the Polish Brethren know well but in order to denigrate them in people's eyes it is falsely held that they do not know it.” (Polish: “W której acz [chrystyjanie] się dobrze poczuwają, jednak rozmaicie bywają z tąd udawani, ku ohydzeniu ludzkiemu.”)²⁵ Piotr Statorius the Younger, who was the opponent of Adrian Radzyński during a debate in Lublin (22 May 1592), in a similar vein reminded his adversary that “we are not supposed to pursue the victory of one over the other here but to search for the glory and truth of God” (Polish: “tu nie wygranej jeden nad drugim szukać mamy, ale chwały i prawdy Bożej”).²⁶ And directly before the disputation, when he was cumbered by noise, he complained about the Catholics:

²⁴ S. Szamotulski [H. Powodowski], *Dysputacyja ks. Hieronima Powodowskiego...*, f. A₃ v.

²⁵ [H. Powodowski], *Dysputacyja wtóra...*, f. A₇ v.

²⁶ P. Statorius-Stojeński the Younger, *Dysputacyja lubelska...*, p. 12.

When priest Radzyمیński gave his forespeech, there was utter silence and when I wish to say several words, then there is commotion. Shall this continue, I will have to understand that you, Gentlemen, do not look for truth but wish to suppress it.²⁷

On the other hand, in his foreword to *Dysputacja wileńska* (The Vilnian Disputation), Daniel Mikołajewski quotes a fragment from Marcin Śmiglecki's letter addressed to the contemporary *Ciwun* of Vilnius (Lat. *tivunus*, a demesial official) Jan Pac, in which he allegedly wrote: "What can be more precious to us than the presentation of the truth to others, which has been beclouded by heretic opinions and may now be explained by proper disputations" (Polish: "Cóż bowiem nam milszego być może jako ludziom prawdę pokazać, która przez opinie heretyckie zaćmiona, przez dysputacje porządne objaśniona bywa.")²⁸ In the same print, Mikołajewski also cites one of the moderators of the Vilnian disputation, the Great Chancellor of Lithuania Lew Sapieha, who said that "We need to ask the Lord to show us the truth by means of this disputation."²⁹

Less frequently, the texts also contain sceptical opinions about the benefits of disputations. In his dedication addressed to Andrzej Leszczyński, Daniel Mikołajewski mentioned above wrote:

it is hard to say that, *given the tremendous dissent*, there was any benefit from this disputation since afterwards some people said that everybody will go home with the same opinion with which they came, as one thing and the truth were understood differently by different people and at different times.³⁰

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 2. Polish: "Gdy ksiądz Radzyمیński prefacją czynił, było wielkie milczenie, a gdy ja mówić chcę kilka słów, tedy rozruch, co jeśli dalej będzie, muszę to rozumieć, że tu W[asze] M[iłoście] nie szukacie prawdy, ale ją zatłumić chcieć."

²⁸ D. Mikołajewski, *Dysputacja wileńska...*, f. A₄ r.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, C3r; Polish: "Pana Boga prosić trzeba o pokazanie prawdy przez ten śrzodek dysputacyjnej."

³⁰ *Ibidem*, f. A₂ v. Polish: "trudno nawet o pożytku tej dysputacyjnej *in tanta sententiarum discrepantia* dywinować, gdyż tamże po dysputacyjnej mówiły niektóre osoby, że każdy z swą sentencyją do domu odjedzie, jedna bowiem rzecz i prawda

Mikołajewski also quotes Szymon Teofil Turnowski who, took the opportunity to say before the Vilnian disputation that:

we have not intended to and have not come here to clash and dispute with you, Gentlemen of the Roman creed, because we know that disputations are not very constructive. This follows both from the common experience and from the conversations and disputations of our Commander and Hetman Jesus Christ that he had with the Jerusalem clergy, with the Jewish Pharisees, after which they did not convert but finally crucified him. But we came here, to this place, because the respected Patrons of both sides decided that we should dispute here.³¹

Hieronim Powodowski was also sceptical about the possibility of convincing adversaries of the truth by means of disputation. He argued that a conviction “comes first from the very influence of God, and then from good will, which is not restricted by God.”³² A disputation may reassure the humble and pious but obstinate opponents will not be able to acknowledge their defeat: “the conceited and stubborn (and heretics, particularly of this sect, are commonly so), even if completely defeated, are scandalised and obdurate and proclaim their defeat to be a triumph.”³³

nie jednak od wszystkich po wszystkie czasy przyjmowana była.” The italics indicate phrases translated from Latin.

³¹ *Ibidem*, f. C₃ v.—C₄ r. Polish: “namniejśmy o tym nie myśleli i nie dlategośmy tu przyjechali, żebyśmy z Ich M[o]ściami, którzy są rzymskiego nabożeństwa w szranki wstąpić a dysputować mieli, bo wiemy, że mało budują dysputyje, przy pospolitym doświadczeniu potwierdzają nam tego i samego Krystusa Pana Wodza a Hetmana naszego rozmowy one a dysputyje, które miewał z ks[ię]żą jerozolimską, z faryzeuszami starozakonnemi, których się oni jednak nie nawrócili, ale go na ostatek ukrzyżowali. Wszakże iż za przyczyną Ich M[o]ść P[an]ów Patronów z obu stron daną do tego przyszło, aby się tu dysputowało, a tośmy się na ten plac stawili.”

³² [H. Powodowski], *Dysputyja wtóra...*, f. A₆ r; Polish: “idzie z samego pociągnięcia Boskiego, a potom z woli dobrej, której i sam Bóg gwałtu nie czyni.”

³³ *Ibidem*, f. A₆ r.—v, Polish: “nadęci a uporni (jakimi pospolicie heretyki zwłaszcza tej sekty są) by też nabarziej pokonani, tedy się gorszą a zatwardzają i klęskę swą za tryjumpf ogłaszają.”

Undeniably, in the 16th century, a public religious disputation ceases to be a chance for a common examination of proper or erroneous dogmatic and theological theses and becomes first and foremost an element of propaganda. Now, the aim of each of the disputants is above all to defend their own stance. At any cost. The fight for the Polish language conducted by the reformers and the greatly expanding audiences at the disputations is part of this phenomenon.

5. Methods of authenticating a discourse

“Reluctant people listen to autorem de se ipso loquentem”

Printed accounts of the disputations are obviously prone to manipulation. They are usually authored by the disputants, who lose their status of impartiality through their involvement in the contention. The problem of the unreliability of records written by those participating in the dispute was pointed out by the author of *Cenzura dysputacyjnej wileńskiej* (literally: Censure of the Vilnian Disputation), directed against the allegedly deceitful description of this debate by Daniel Mikołajewski. Hieronim Stefanowski SI³⁴ – hiding behind the pseudonym of Marcin Michajłowicz Żagiel – inspected the phrases used by Mikołajewski meticulously. The censure covers, for example, a comment on the title page, according to which the disputation was “published in a whole and accurate version by the author himself etc.” (Polish: “od samego autora całe i szczyrze wydana etc.”).³⁵ Stefanowski argues that “people reluctantly listen to an author who speaks about himself.”³⁶ He also writes: “the parties of an acrimonious con-

³⁴ Zob. K. Estreicher, *Bibliografia polska*, t. 29, Kraków 1933, p. 77.

³⁵ M. M. Żagiel [H. Stefanowski], *Cenzura dysputacyjnej wileńskiej [...] abo obrona słuszna szczyrości i zupełności edycyjnej katolickiej wileńskiej...*, Vilnius: Drukarnia Akademii Societatis Iesu, 1600, f. B, r.

³⁶ *Ibidem*. Polish: “nieradzi ludzie słuchają autorem de se ipso loquentem.”

tion prefer to ask a third party to settle the argument [indicating who is right]. And if the author stands up and says, I am the author, I myself speak the truth, then they point their finger at him, and they do it justly.”³⁷

A description of the disputation drafted by one of the disputants appears to be a continuation of the polemic. And this renders the text suspicious and incredible. The struggle to substantiate one’s own account by anonymous publishing or hiding the authorship behind pseudonyms is a significant part of convincing others of one’s own arguments.

“For people to have the true and sufficient knowledge of the case”

One thing that all these records have in common (regardless of the doctrinal origin of their authors) is their explicitly stated need to present a true account of events. It is a particular *causa scribendi*. All the authors without exception are motivated to write by the necessity to convey true information about the course and result of the disputation. The descriptions of debates that appeared on the publishing market and succeeded previous ones commonly employed the motif of indignation with the mendacious version of their adversaries and the need to denounce the deceit they spread (*refutatio*). Let us take a closer look at an instance of this motive in Daniel Mikołajewski’s *Vilnius Disputation*. In his dedication addressed to Andrzej Leszczyński, Mikołajewski provides two reasons for the publication of his perspective on what took place:

The first reason is the various triumphs and pretence of the opposite side who have that the Jesuits gained the upper hand and defeated us to our shame and the encouragement of their [followers]. The other reason is the adulterate, inadequate [...] account of this disputation published probably

³⁷ *Ibidem*. Polish: “[ci] którzy pospolicie *in contentioso litigio* zwykli się raczej prawdy pytać u trzeciego. A kiedy autor wynidzie i rzecze, jam autor, ja sam prawdę mówię, tedy go sobie palcem ukazują, a słusznie.”

by Father Śmiglecki in Vilnius. The copy of it received from Your Grace and my Dear Master provided me with the opportunity to publish [my version of the disputation] more quickly and to verify and collate it with the minutes, which I possess. [...] However, in order to denigrate these deceitful tales and stories in some way and in order that people have true and sufficient knowledge of this debate, as well as being able to *impartially and justly* judge the arguments having read and compared them, I need to speak up and give the Reader a report of what was said which is probably better than the one published by the other side, with no additions, alterations or omissions of how Father Śmiglecki replied and answered on that day.³⁸

In order to add credibility to his account, Mikołajewski calls all those present during the disputation, including the supporters of the opposite side, to be his witnesses:

In which matter I rely not only on your, my Gracious Master, testimonial, but also on the wise judgement of the Gracious Moderators of both sides, and I even appeal to all the listeners that were present during the disputation to [...] admit that I published this conversation far more accurately than my antagonist.³⁹

³⁸ D. Mikołajewski, *Dysputacja wileńska...*, f. A₂ r.—v. Polish: “Pierwsza jest różne udawania a tryjumfy przeciwnej strony, która się chełpiła z tego, iż panowie jezuitowie górę otrzymali i nas ku zawstyżeniu z niemałym swych zbudowaniem a naszych zgorszeniem, przywiekli. Druga przyczyna jest nieszczyre, niedostateczne [...] wydanie tejże dysputacyjy od samego pewnie ks. Śmigleckiego, tamże w Wilnie wyrobione, której dysputacyjy egzemplarz od W[aszej] M[iłości] mego Mi[ł]ościwego Pana mnie przysłany i do edycyjej prętszej i do rekognicyjej a zniesienia z autentykiem, który u mnie jest, okasyją mi dał. [...] Jednak aby się tym omylnym powieściami i baśniami jakikolwiek wstręt uczynił i aby ludzie o tej dysputacyjy prawdziwą a dostateczną sprawę mieli, a przeczytawszy i dowody z dowodami zniozszy *ex aequitate et veritate* sądzili, ozwać się muszę i Czytelnikowi o tym, com tam mówił albo nie lepszą niż od strony udano, sprawę dać, a to bez wszelakich przydatków, odmian i zamilczywania tego, co na ten czas ks. Śmiglecki replikował i mówił.”

³⁹ *Ibidem*, f. A₂ v. Polish: “W czym się nie tylko na W[aszej] M[iłości] mego M[ił]ościwego Pana świadectwo, ale i na Ich M[o]śc P[anów] Moderatorów obojej strony [roz]sądek się dają, nawet i do wszystkich słuchaczów, którzy *attenti* byli na ten czas apelują za to, że [...] przyznają mi to, że ja daleko szczyrzej wydał tę rozmowę niż antagonistą mój.”

Piotr Statorius begins his *Dysputacyja lubelska* in a similar manner:

I had no wish, my kind reader, to write anything about the disputation or conversation I had with Father Radzywiński but since the Jesuits are celebrating a triumph contrary to any justice and to what I hoped for, having printed our conversation in a version very different from its actual course, I decided, with God's help, to postpone my other duties and publish my response to Father Radzywiński during that disputation and the questions he asked me, as well as the answers he gave me, as precisely as I was able to remember what I said and what he said. What is more, having limited trust in my memory, I consulted those who had written down the disputation and I presented it here in accordance with what they had written.⁴⁰

The authors of the texts that appeared as the first ones usually emphasised that they had no intention whatsoever of publishing a printed record of a disputation but so many people had asked them to do so that in the end they conceded to their requests. The lack of polemic intention was doubtlessly supposed to make the account more reliable because boasting about one's own triumph in a disputation was regarded an act of impropriety and interpreted as braggartism and “seeking vain glory.” Accounts published as the first ones also included descriptions of the adversaries' claims of victory, which were hard to tolerate because they were utterly untrue.

In fact, initially, I did not think about publishing it in print. But so many respected people requested earnestly that they should have a description of

⁴⁰ P. Statorius-Stojeński the Younger, *Dysputacyja lubelska...*, f. A₂ r. Polish: “Nie miałem tej wolej żadnym sposobem czytelniku łaskawy, abym był co o dysputacyjej albo rozmowie, którą miał z ks. Radzywińskim pisać miał, ale iż panowie jezuitowie przeciwko wszelkiej sprawiedliwości nad nadzieję moję z tej dysputacyjej tryjmfują, w druk podawszy tę naszą rozmowę daleko inaczej niż się toczyła, umyśliłem za pomocą pańską, ine prace na stronę odłożywszy, wydać to między ludzi, com na ten czas przeciwko ks. Radzywińskiemu dysputował i to, co on mnie zadawał albo odpowiadał, ilem pamiętać mógł mowy mojej i mowy jego, a nad to pamięci swej nie dufając, radziłem się tych, którzy tę dysputacyją byli spisali i tak jako od nich była wypisana, tum ją wyłożył.”

the disputation (and it was difficult to satisfy these requests otherwise) that they motivated me to pursue this. After which my adversaries shamelessly bragged about their victory, which they secretly ascribed to themselves as is their custom.⁴¹

Hieronim Powodowski, the alleged author of *Dysputacja śmigiełska*, hiding behind the pseudonym of Sebastian Szamotulski, also justifies the publishing of this text referring to the vaunts of the ministers and other people's requests:

Many people demanded to have this conversation in writing, to which the Canon did not want to consent. Partly because the disputation had been organised *in the heat of the moment* and without consideration on both sides, and partly because he saw that there were so many clashes on religion between people that they could not get out of them. Now, having learnt that the Minister had pretended before his elder supervisors and other respectable persons that he had won the disputation, the Canon did not want me to keep this text to myself any longer, so that people could see not vain pride but the truth.⁴²

Furthermore, in *Dysputacja wtóra śmigiełska* (The Second Śmigiel Disputation), the same Hieronim Powodowski underlines

⁴¹ [M. Śmigiełcki], "Do Czytelnika" in: idem, *Opisanie dysputacyjnej... [Dysputacja nowogrodzka]*, [p. 1]: "Aczci wprawdzie z razu nie się o tym nie myśliło, aby była drukiem na świat wynieść miała. Lecz barzo wiele ludzi zacnych prośby usilne, aby jej opisanie mieć mogli (którym żądaniu trudno było inaczej dość uczynić) do tego mię naprzód wzbudziły. Do czego potym przystąpiły niewstydlive pochwałki adwersarzów, którzy w oczy i na placu nic nie wygrawszy, przedsię między swymi po kąciech sobie obyczajem swoim wygraną przypisują."

⁴² S. Szamotulski [H. Powodowski], *Dysputacja ks. Hieronima Powodowskiego...*, f. A₃ r.—v. Polish: "Tej rozmowej wiele się ludzi zrazu na piśmie mieć domagało, czego im jednak ks. Kanonik pozwolić nie chciał, częścią iż z obu stron *ex tempore* [pod wpływem chwili], bez rozmysłu była uczyniona, a częścią widząc, iż okrom tego swarów o wiarę między ludźmi tak jest wiele, że z nich wybrnąć nie mogą. Teraz wzięwszy pewną sprawę ks. Kanonik, iż Minister udawał jako za zwycięstwo tę to dysputacyjną przed starszymi lustratorami swymi i innymi znacznymi osobami, nie chciał tego spisku w rękę moich dłużej trzymać, aby ludzie obaczyli nie próżną chlębę, ale prawdę, przy kim zostawa."

the benefits afforded by a “proper” (that is a reliable and truthful) edition of the debate because the lack of a credible account only results in a deepening of the discord:

The minutes of this conversation that I received were significantly mutilated, inconsistent and in some places extremely different from the intentions of both sides. And since people passed them to one another, it was better both for those people and the participants [in the disputation] to provide them with a reliable edition than to thus facilitate the dissensions.⁴³

In accordance with the minutes

Another strategy for authenticating an account, often simultaneous with the declarations of proclaiming truth, is to assure the reader that the text is based on a reliable source, that is, a manuscript report. These were minutes written down during a disputation by moderators appointed by each of the parties. This term also described notes made during the debate by the disputants. Marcin Śmiglecki bases the credibility of his account on consistency with such originals:

Here, Reader, you have the evidence used by the Ministers and the answers of Father Śmiglecki, copied from several exact minutes written down during the disputation, immediately collected and made accessible for all to read, so that you see that there is and can be no evidence against the Catholic truth, which has endured for fifteen hundred years and will last until the end of the world. Because what the Lord promised must come into existence. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.⁴⁴

⁴³ [H. Powodowski], *Dysputacja wtóra...*, f. A₂ r. Polish: “Przyszły do rąk moich terminatury tej rozmowy barzo okęszone, niezgodne i od intencji obojej strony czasem barzo dalekie, których iż sobie ludzie podawali, lepiej było i tym ludziom i samym stronom, jakim pewnym wydaniem dogodzić niż roztyrków w tym przyczyniać.”

⁴⁴ [M. Śmiglecki], *Dysputacja wileńska...*, f. A₃ r. Polish: “Dowody które Ministrowie przywodzili i odpowiedzi na nie ks. Smigleckiego masz tu Czytelniku, z kilku dostatecznych autentyków na ten czas spisanych, pilnie zebrane i do czytania wszystkim wobec podane, abyś obaczył, jako żadne dowody przeciw prawdzie

In the *Zamknięcie (Conclusion)* of his *Dysputacyja wileńska* Śmiglecki encourages the reader to verify the account independently. He informs the reader that two original minutes are available for those who are willing in the Vilnian collegium: “Should you wish to compare this text with the minutes, you may always consult two sets of minutes that are kept in the Collegium in Vilnius.”⁴⁵ The practice of making oneself familiar with written documents that bear witness to the course of the debate reminds one of the scholastic tradition of providing a *determinatio* by the master.⁴⁶

Śmiglecki’s arbiter is, at the same time, the only one that refers so precisely to the minutes. In fact, access to them was difficult and sometimes probably even impossible. Some prints mention that it was troublesome for the disputants themselves to obtain such minutes. For example, Hieronim Powodowski remembered objections he encountered when he wanted to see the minutes:

Having such important reasons as well as others, which I omit here, to publish the course of this conversation, and being unable to access the minutes, I looked for them among the Protestant community through the Pastor in Śmigiel, so that they could send me their defences that they advanced against mine, as my memory—occupied with my own thoughts—was not able to retain all of them. But when they refused, I could not have waited any longer as I was to embark on a journey related to state affairs, which is known to the public, so I publish this discourse, having written it down as well as possible from my own memory and from the minutes I received bit by bit.⁴⁷

katolickiej nie służą i służyć nie mogą, która już to półtora tysiąca lat mocnie trwa i trwać będzie do końca świata. Bo się iść musi, co Pan obiecał. Bramy piekielne nie przemogą jej.”

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, f. E₃ v. Polish: “Jeśli byś to pisanie z autentykiem znieść chciał, możesz zawsze dosiąć dwóch autentyków, które na to są w Collegium w Wilnie.”

⁴⁶ See footnote 5.

⁴⁷ [H. Powodowski], *Dysputacyja wtóra...*, f. A₂ v.—A₃ r. Polish: “Mając tedy tak ważne i insze, które opuszczam, przyczyny wydać postępek tej rozmowej, a nie mogąc terminatur dostatecznych dostać, szukałem tego u tych tam samych zborowników przez ks. Plebana tamże smigielskiego, aby mi byli posłali obrony swe, któ-

It seems, however, that even the possibility of verifying the account against the minutes—expressed as an encouragement to ‘check me if you wish’—alone had a major psychological impact and worked as an enthymematic argument: I am not afraid of being verified because I speak the truth. Minutes were undoubtedly considered a reliable and not manipulated record. Regarding the occasional and transient nature of a dispute, as well as the deceptiveness of human memory, minutes vouched for the truthfulness of an account. If Daniel Mikołajewski stated that he had had no intention whatsoever of printing his account, he nevertheless assured the readers that no sooner had the Vilnian disputation ended than he returned home and immediately copied everything from the minutes.⁴⁸

The author of *Dysputacyja nowogrodzka*, most surely Marcin Śmiglecki, declared that comparing his own version with the one of the adversaries helped him with his “accurate, candid and almost word for word” description of the Novgorod disputation. Such a procedure was supposed to prevent later allegations by the opponents that the account had been corrupted:

<Father Śmiglecki himself strove to make the description of this disputation accurate and reliable. So that nobody could justly criticise him or undermine his credibility. Which is why, according to the conditions agreed by both sides prior to the disputation, as soon as it ended he demanded that the notes of both sides be compared, which the adversaries eagerly promised to do but did not pursue. And later Lycyniusz himself was made, although with difficulties, to jointly read his script and compare it with ours. To which he reluctantly responded that we do not have any balanced and sufficient script, and whoever was writing [during the disputation], they took their notes with them. However, afterwards he showed and lent me

rekolwiek jedno przeciw moim przywodzili, gdyż pamięć moja konceptami swymi zabawiona, wszystkiego zachować nie mogła. Ale gdy się z tego wymówili, a ja dłużej czekaciam nie mógł, mając przed sobą drogę w sprawach R.P. ludziom nie tajną, tedy tę rosprawę wydawam i spisuję jako nalepiej i z pamięci własnej i z terminatur, którychem po kęsu dostawał.”

⁴⁸ D. Mikołajewski, *Dysputacyja wileńska...*, f. A₂ r.

the notes he wrote down from memory for his own sake. Having read that script, notwithstanding the deficiencies it has with regard to our side (as he barely touched upon things that dissettled him the most and did not mention other things), I have drawn from it enough evidence supporting his claims, so that he has no reason to complain about us.⁴⁹

“As you will be able to easily deduce from this disputation”

Another discernible strategy that contributed to the illusion of objectivity and truthfulness of an account is the explicitly stated trust in the reader’s ability to independently judge who is right. “So the reason I publish this disputation is so that every lover of truth could find it through reading”⁵⁰—writes Śmiglecki.

Similar assertions may be found both in the Catholic and the schismatic accounts of the Lublin disputation. Adrian Radzyński wrote:

The disputation was conducted among respected senatorial and knightly people [...], both Catholics and Evangelicals, all of whom testified that the

⁴⁹ [M. Śmiglecki], “Do Czytelnika” in: idem, *Opisanie dysputacyjnej... [Dysputacja nowogrodzka]* [pp. 2–3]. Polish: “Staraj się bowiem sam ks. Śmiglecki pilnie o to, żeby opisanie tej dysputacyjnej i wierne, i ważne było. Aby mu słusznie żaden dać w czym przygany albo wiary ująć nie mógł. Dlaczego zaraz po dysputacyjnej upomniał się, aby wedle kondycyji obu stron spisanie zniesione było, co adwersarze jako ochotnie obiecali, tak i ochotnie nie spełnili. Potym zasię Lycyniusza samego, acz z trudnością, aby swój skrypt z naszym pospołu czytał, przywiedziono. Na co z przodku ociągając się odpowiedział, że pry żadnego statecznego i dostatecznego skryptu nie mamy, a każdy który pisał, swoje z sobą pisania wzięli. W który skrypt wejrzawszy, acz barzo z strony naszej niedostateczny (bo czym mu nabarziej dogrzezano, to ledwie dotknąwszy przemiął, a drugich rzeczy nie wspominał) z niego dostatecznie się wyjęło, co by rzeczy jego pomocne być mogło, aby nie miał w czym się na nas uskarżać.”

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, ff. A₄ r.—v.: “Przyczyna tedy była z niemalej części wydania tej dysputacyjnej ta, aby każdy miłośnik prawdy onej szukając, z czytania jej dojść mógł.”

Anabaptists [i.e. Polish Brethren] had been defeated, as you will be able to easily deduce from this disputation.⁵¹

Piotr Statorius:

I then ask you, first of all, whoever you are, to leave *your bias* aside and pay careful attention to my questions and Father Radziwiński's answers, or my answers to his questions. And you will thereby be able to easily tell that he could not have defended any of his answers but introduced ever more new things only to cloud the reason of the audience, so that they do not realise that he is not able to answer.⁵²

Thus the role of an arbiter is imposed on the reader. He becomes an ally of the author, who has objectives consistent with his own: one wants to proclaim the truth and the other to learn it. All authors constantly state their trust in the reader's competence, at the same time continually directing him by “suggesting” the signals of victory and defeat in a disputation. Marcin Śmiglecki was the most involved in educating the reader as to what the signs of his adversaries' loss were. In *Dysputacja nowogrodzka*, he included a detailed description of two crafty “ruses and deceitful expedients” that the schismatics had used to deceive a simple listener:

Firstly, this trick of theirs is the most prominent one: never to respond to an argument directly but, having made no comment on it, to speak for a long time and quote the Scripture to demonstrate something else, which is not

⁵¹ J. Przylepski [A. Radziwiński], *Dysputacja lubelska...*, f. A₂ v.: “Toczyła się ta dysputacja w kole znacznych i senatorskich i rycerskich ludzi [...] tak katolików, jako i ewangelików, którzy wszyscy, że przegraną nowokrzczeńcy mieli, jaśnie zeznawali, jako i sam z tej dysputacyjnej obaczyć snadnie będziesz mógł.”

⁵² P. Statorius-Stojeński the Younger, *Dysputacja lubelska...*, f. A₂ r. Polish: “Naprzód cię tedy proszę, ktokolwiek jesteś, abyś *praeiudicatam opinionem* na stronę odłożywszy pilnie uważał, jako moje zadawania, tak ks. Radziwińskiego odpowiedzi, abo moje odpowiedzi a jego zadawania. Gdzie snadnie obaczyć będziesz mógł, iż się przy żadnej odpowiedzi swej ostać nie mógł, ale co raz inszą rzecz wnosił nową, aby tylko ludziom rozsądek zaćmił i aby się nie zdał, że nie mógł odpowiadać.”

in contention or even mentioned in the advanced argument. And what happens when you show him [a certain place in] the Scripture, which clearly ascribes deity to Christ? How does he respond to that? This cannot be. There is one God. Christ is a human. So you see what preposterous things he says. Because none of us has ever argued that there is more than one God or that Christ was not a human.⁵³

Another substantial trick. When you show them a clear paragraph in the Scripture to which they cannot respond, they jump to another place in the Scripture where they find words that concern other matters and so need to be understood differently. But according to them, everything must mean the same. As in the following example: in several instances, the Scripture calls man all creation [*omnis creatura*], and in order not to attribute the creation of all things to Christ in Paul's [letter to the Colossians], they explain Paul's words about man—the *firstborn over all creation, for in him all things were created*—assuming that all creation means people, in contradiction with the clear words of the Scripture, which right next to that fragment adds *things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible*. And this is how they explain the Scripture with the Scripture itself.⁵⁴

⁵³ [M. Śmiglecki], "Do Czytelnika", in: idem, *Opisanie dysputacyjnej...* [*Dysputacja nowogrodzka*], p. [3]. Polish: "Naprzód ta ich sztuka jest naprzędniejsza: nigdy na argument directe nie odpowiedzieć, ale dawszy mu pokój, długim mówieniem i pisma przywożeniem co inszego pokazywać, o czym sporu ani wzmianki nie masz w położonym argumencie. Jako kiedy mu pokazesz pismo, które jaśnie Chrystusowi Bóstwo przypisuje. Cóż on na to? Nie może to być. Jeden jest Bóg. Chrystus jest człowiek. Widzisz jako nie do rzeczy mówi. Bo kto kiedy z naszych twierdził to, aby Bóg jeden nie był albo Chrystus nie był człowiekiem."

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. [4–5]. Polish: "Druga sztuka niepośledniejsza. Kiedy im jasne pismo pokazesz, na które odpowiedzieć nie mogą, to skoczą do drugiego pisma, w których się takie słowa najdują, gdzie iż o czym inszym one słowa są rzeczzone, inaczej się też rozumieć muszą. A u nich wszystko musi się jednako rozumieć. Jako na przykład, kilka razy pismo zowie człowieka *omnis creatura*, skąd oni, żeby Chrystusowi z Pawłem nie przyznali stworzenia wszechrzeczy, tak miejsce Pawła św. *primogenitus omnis creaturae, quoniam in ipso condita sunt universa* o człowieku wykładają, przez wszystko stworzenie ludzie rozumiejąc, na przeciw jasnemu pismu, które zaraz przydaje *et in coelis et in terra, visibilia et invisibilia*. A to jest u nich pismo przez pismo wykladać."

In the later published *Dysputacja wileńska*, he lists the most significant signs of the lack of strong arguments in the disputation: “not going any further,” “repeating the same things all over again,” straying away from the subject matter by “turning to another argument” and “going back to a previously used argument”:

Because the truth should be told here: what in these arguments indicates that the Jesuits lost and the Ministers won? [...] If a person who is disarmed and left naked on the battlefield wins, then this is how Mr Mikołajewski won. As whenever he advanced an argument and received a reply to it, he either did not pursue this argument repeating one thing all over again, or jumped to another question, straying from his original argument and the answer. You will see this, Reader, when you take a closer look at each separate argument. The person who responds in a disputation wins if their answer undermines the argument of the adversary such that the latter cannot pursue and support it any longer. And which of the Minister’s arguments was not refuted with the first distinction?⁵⁵

And he then asks ironically:

It is a sign of victory when one rejects a thing once accepted and returns to his previous arguments, which the Minister did frequently, while the Jesuit was not ashamed of any of his answers and did not revoke any of them.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ [M. Śmiglecki], *Dysputacja wileńska...*, f. A₃ v. Polish: “Bo musi tu prawdę rzec: co jest w tych argumentach, skądby sie znaczyło, że Jezuitowie przegrali, Ministrowie wygrali? [...] Jesli ten wygrywa, któremu broń z rąk wybiwszy, postawią go na placu goło, wygrał tak Pan Mikołajewski. Bo ledwie z argumentem na plac wyjechał, za pierwszą odpowiedzią albo nie postępował dalej, nie raz jednoż a jedno powtarzając, albo gdzie indzie skoczył, argumentu i odpowiedzi odbieżawszy. Doznasz tego Czytelniku gdzie sie każdemu z osobna argumentowi przypatrzysz. Ten, który odpowiada w dysputacyjej, na ten czas wygrywa, kiedy odpowiedzią swoją tak zwątlí moc argumentu adwersarza, iż prowadzić go dalej i popierać nie może. Któryż argument Minister przywiódł, iżby nie był pierwszą dystynkcyją zwątlony?”

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, f. A₃ v.—A₄ r. Polish: “Nuż i to jes[t]li znak zwycięstwa, rzecz pozwoloną znowu rewokować i nazad wracać, co Ministrowi nieraz się trafiło, a Jezuita żadnej sie odpowiedzi nie zawstydził ani sie nazad cofnął.”

Sometimes, the authors employed still other signs or “evidence” of their opponents’ defeat. Adrian Radzymiński wrote that “the day after the disputation [his adversaries] dispersed as if defeated.”⁵⁷ Śmiglecki, in turn, additionally persuades the reader that God himself indicated who is right and should be pronounced the winner of the Vilnian disputation:

*But if we accept the testimonial of a man, that of God is superior to it, the Lord showed in a meaningful and sudden way who is right: One of those victors that I know well, who recently came to the court, claimed obstinately before a high official of the King and other people that his people had won. As the others did not believe him and quarrelled with him, he swore that he should die before the matins if he is wrong, adding some blasphemies against the Mass, the Sacrament and Holy Mary. His health failed and not only did he not live to see the next day (Lord have mercy on him as he was known to me and to many others) but he died the very evening. Thus the Lord punishes blasphemies immediately. But I prefer that you, Reader independently judge who won having read [this]; just put aside your affections and *bias*, and read. What I have quoted here, preventing audacious brains [from uttering impudent statements] and calumnies, I had to quote.⁵⁸*

Such “evidence” of Śmiglecki roused the indignation of Marcin Gertich:

⁵⁷ J. Przylepski [A. Radzymiński], *Dysputacja lubelska...*, f. A₂ r.

⁵⁸ [M. Śmiglecki], *Dysputacja wileńska...*, f. A₄ r.—v. Polish: “Lecz si testimonium hominum accipimus, testimonium Dei maius est, pokazał Pan Bóg znacznym i nagłym przypadkiem, czyja prawda. Jeden bowiem z tych tryjumfantów dobrze znajomy, który tu był niedawno od dworu przyjechał, gdy u znacznej osoby urzędnika Jego Król[ewskiej] M[ości] upornie przed drugimi twierdził, iż swoi wygrali a drudzy wiary mu nie dodawając spór z nim wiedli, zaklął się aby jutrznie nie doczekał, jeśli jest inaczej, przydawszy niektóre bluźnierstwa przeciwko Mszej Ś[więtej], Sakramentowi i P[annie] Maryje, ustawać nagle począł, i nie tylko jutra (żał sie Boże, bo mi był i wielom drugim znajomy), ale wieczora nie doczekał. Tak podczaś Pan Bóg złe zaklanianie zrazu nie borgując, płaci. Ale już wolę Czytelniku, że sam z czytania wygraną uznasz, byś jedno odłożywszy na stronę afekty i *praeiudicatum opinionem*, czytał. Ja com tu przytoczył, zabiegając nazbyt bezpiecznym rozsądkom i kalumniom, przytoczyciem musiał.”

There is one more thing I need to discuss. In the preface to their script, they mention a person who, according to them, was said to have suddenly died on the way having claimed that Evangelicals had won and they swore by God that it had not been otherwise. But why did they not name this person? And we know which of our people left Vilnius in sickness and died on their way but I do not know if they can prove that this was the reason for this death because those who were present when he was dying, although not of our creed, give a different account of this event. But it is not a new thing that those who are not right overcompensate the truth with miracles.⁵⁹

Printed accounts of Polish religious disputations are admittedly a valuable source of knowledge about old-Polish dialectic culture and the forms of conducting doctrinal polemic in the Reformation period, and they still require detailed study. These texts confirm that educated people were commonly familiar with the formal rules of the school-type *disputatio* and that particularly the members of the new Christian communities strove to apply these rules in the religious disputations conducted in Polish. Prints reporting such disputations reaffirm the convictions—inherited from the Middle Ages—that truth may be learnt through *disputatio* and explicitly express the belief in the readers' ability to individually assess the correctness of the arguments formulated and counterarguments, and consequently to understand who is right. At the same time, discursive devices employed to direct the reader (the declaration of ethical compulsion to reveal the truth, assertions that one patterns one's own account after the minutes, concealing the true authorship of a text) unsparingly

⁵⁹ M. Gertich Gracjan, *Protestacyja przeciwko niesłusznej chlubie tych, co za przyczyną Dysputacyji ks. Marcina Smigleckiego [...] przed zwycięstwem tryumfują*, Vilnius: [s.n.], 1599, f. A₄ r. Polish: “Tego jeszcze dotknąć muszę. Wzmiankę czynią w prefacyjey skryptu swego, kogoś, co według ich powieści, w drodze nagle umrzeć miał, ewangelikom to przyznawszy, że wygrali i zakławszy się, jeśliby inaczej było. Ale czemu wždy tej osoby nie mianowali. Wiemy my też, kto z naszych pod ten czas chory z Wilna wyjechał i w drodze umarł, ale żeby za taką przyczyną, jaką oni kładą, nie wiem, czym tego dowiedzą, ponieważ ci którzy przy śmierci jego byli, choć różnego od nas nabożeństwa, jednak inakże o tym świadectwo dają. Ale i to nie nowina tym, którym prawdy nie stawa, cudami nadrabiać.”

undermine both the impartiality of such accounts and the thesis regarding the self-sufficiency of dialectics as an instrument with which to reveal the truthfulness or falsity of theological substantiations.

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