

## Rethinking Ernesti Today\*

### Challenges and Perspectives

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#### Abstract

The paper outlines the theoretical and methodological foundations for the creation of a new Ernesti, conceived as a critically revised and digitally enhanced edition of the technical lexica of Greek and Latin rhetoric first published in 1795 and in 1797. After discussing the limitations of the original, this work examines subsequent lexicographical tools, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. As a case study, it analyses the lemma syncrisis, demonstrating how an integrated and comparative approach to the Greek and Latin traditions can reveal more complex conceptual networks. Lastly, the paper defines the requirements for a semantically enriched edition based on TEI XML encoding and ontologies capable of handling classificatory heterogeneity and supporting advanced queries. Such a resource would enable high-granularity synchronic and diachronic research, allowing scholars to trace with precision the reception and evolution of rhetorical terms across authors, works, genres, and periods.

**Keywords:** Ernesti; Rhetoric; syncrisis; TEI XML; Ontologies

*Il contributo illustra i fondamenti teorici e metodologici per la realizzazione di un nuovo Ernesti, inteso come riedizione critica e digitalmente implementata dei lessici tecnici della retorica greca e latina pubblicati nel 1795 e nel 1797. Dopo aver discusso i limiti dell'opera originaria, vengono esaminati strumenti lessicografici successivi, evidenziandone punti di forza e criticità. Come caso studio, si analizza il lemma syncrisis, al fine di mostrare come un approccio integrato e comparativo alle tradizioni greca e latina permetta di ricostruire reti concettuali di maggiore complessità. Infine, si delineano i requisiti per una versione semanticamente arricchita, basata su codifica XML/TEI e su*

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ontologie in grado di gestire l'eterogeneità delle classificazioni e di supportare ricerche avanzate. Uno strumento di questo tipo consentirebbe indagini sincroniche e diacroniche ad alta granularità, rendendo possibile tracciare con precisione la fortuna e l'evoluzione dei termini retorici attraverso autori, opere, generi e periodi.

Parole chiave: Ernesti; Retorica; Syncrisis; XML/TEI; Ontologie

## 1. The Rationale for a New Ernesti

Johann Christian Gottlieb Ernesti published two volumes in 1795 [6] and 1797 [7], respectively, dedicated to the technical terminology of Greek and Latin rhetoric. More than two centuries after the appearance of the two volumes, this work remains an indispensable point of reference for scholars. A clearer sense of its structure can be gained by examining an entry (Fig. 1) [6]: 27.

**Ἀντίθεσις**, fig. qua in singulis verbis, vel sententiis contraria iungimus, et sibi e regione ponimus. De hoc genere, quod et *ἀντίθετον* vocatur, vid. Alexand. *περὶ σχημ.* p. 586. Deinde *ἀντιθέσεις* etiam dicuntur *argumenta adversaria* ap. Hermog. *id.* I. p. 48. vel etiam *occupationes* argumentorum adversarii *ibid.* II. p. 194. Haec *ἀντιθέσις* tractatur ab Hermogene, ut peculiare *εἰσῶσις* genus, eiusque partes constituuntur hae: *ἀντίτασις*, *μετάτασις*, *ἀντέγκλημα*, *συγγνώμη*, quoniam in his omnibus formis aliquid opponitur, quo se reus contra adversarium defendit. vid. Schol. ad Hermog. in Tom. 2, Rh. Ald. p. 271. sqq. et Suidas in h. v. De iisdem disputat *Αἰσίν.* Art. Rhet. p. 695. ubi distinguit *ἀντιθέσεις ὀπέχοντες* et *ἐντέχοντες*: illae nituntur factis aut scripto, hae oriuntur ex arte et ingenio oratoris. vid. ad voc. *ἀντικειμένη*.

Fig. 1 - Ernesti's article on ἀντίθεσις

Following the lemma, a discursive definition is provided, often accompanied by references to authors and works. However, even reading a short article already reveals the main reasons justifying a new edition of Ernesti. Chief among these is the method of quotation: the author reduces them to the minimum necessary or merely provides a general reference to the sources. In both cases, it is often necessary to retrieve and consult the original text in order to fully grasp the meaning of the lexicographical entry. For instance, the reference to the Alexander Numenius' *Περὶ σχημάτων* suggests that the first definition – *i.e. fig. qua in singulis verbis, vel sententiis contraria iungimus, et sibi e regione ponimus* – is to be found there. However, this is only partially accurate. A closer analysis of the text reveals a much broader discussion. As noted by Nastasi [13]: XX-XXIII, not only are three types of *antithesis* identified (1. use of words with opposite meanings; 2. use of the same words placed in opposition through negation; 3. opposition of facts), but there are also clear parallels with Ps. Herodian. *schem.* 46.

A second aspect that warrants reconsideration is the corpus of texts employed, which should be re-evaluated from several perspectives. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, numerous critical editions – significantly more reliable – have been produced and have become authoritative within the scholarly community.<sup>1</sup> This development entails not only access to more accurate textual witnesses, and in some cases even *editiones principes*,<sup>2</sup> but also a substantial and valuable advancement in scholarly knowledge concerning both the authors and their works.<sup>3</sup>

A third problematic aspect of Ernesti's work lies in the separation of definitions according to language. It is often difficult to draw a clear boundary between Greek and Latin rhetorical lexica, as terminological borrowings are frequent and deeply entangled. In fact, many Greek terms are fully integrated into Latin texts – sometimes preserved in Greek script, sometimes transliterated – thus becoming, in effect, part of the Latin lexicon. To illustrate this, consider the example in Fig. 2 taken from the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* (henceforth *ThLL*):<sup>4</sup>

**antithesis**, -is f., ἀντιθέσις. CHAR. gramm. I 279, 16 antithesis est litterae pro littera inmutatio ut impete ... pro impetu. *item* DIOM. gramm. I 442, 28 Ps. PROB. IV 264, 13 DONAT. IV 397, 1 POMP. V 298, 31. 390, 16. 397, 5. 404, 4 SACERD. VI 452, 11 ISID. orig. I, 34, 6 GLOSS. III 488, 60. 508, 12. Ps. RYFFINIAN. rhet. I 51, 9 ἀντιθέσις est, cum verbum verbo pari potestate per contrarium redditur. *cf.* 47, 16. GLOSS. IV 18, 1 contra positum. TERT. adv. Marc. 1, 19 antitheses Marcionis, id est contrariae oppositiones. 2, 28 ipse adversus Marcionem antitheses aemulas faciam. 4, 1 Marcionis opus ex contrarietatum oppositionibus Antitheses cognominatum. MART. CAP. 9, 980 *periodorum* dissimilitudinem sane differentiae tres ... per oppositionem id est per antithesin, cum aut primos disemos ponimus insequentibus longe potioribus aut tetrasemos disemis insequentibus applicamus. IVL. VICT. rhet. p. 380 *qualitas iuridicalis* scinditur in duas partes, in antilepsin, quae est absoluta, et in antithesin, quae est relativa. *plura in § 8.*

Fig. 2 - *ThLL s. v. antithesis* (VOLLMER 1901) II, 187, 57-72

1 A new *recensio* of the Greek rhetorical texts has recently been completed by the author of the article, in the context of the compilation of the *Index Rhetorum Graecorum* (IRG; <https://www.classicalrhetoricforum.org/IRGG.html>). For the scientific criteria, see [4].

2 By way of example only, I cite below a selection of the *editiones principes* published in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Ps. Alex. *schem.* [13]: 168-290, *Schol. Paris.* [13]: 295-300, Anon. X *barb. et soloec.* [15]: 271-275, Anon. XI *barb. et soloec.* [15] 277-281, Anon. XII *barb. et soloec.* [15]: 281-29, Anon. IV *trop.* [16]: 395-407, Choerob. auct. *trop.* [16]: 544-555, and Trypho III *trop.* [16]: 361-375.

3 As a purely illustrative case, I refer to Anon. I *schem.*, a work whose nature has only recently been clarified. According to the reconstruction proposed by Caruso [2], it is a treatise composed of four parts: the first three, dating to the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries, are derived from Hermog. *inv.* and *id.*, while the fourth is a later addition. The compilation of the corpus as a whole is to be dated to the late 9<sup>th</sup> century.

4 The *ThLL*, while remaining the most significant Latin lexicographical project ever undertaken, was not conceived as a specialised tool for the study of rhetoric. As a result, it is not uncommon for occurrences in the *Gliederung* (main part) to be organised into *definitiones* and *exempla cetera*, without a specifically tailored framework.

As can be observed, the earliest attestation of the Greek word in Latin characters comes from the grammarian Sacerdos<sup>5</sup> and continues primarily within the subsequent grammatical tradition, extending up to the chronological limit of the *ThLL*, namely Isidore of Seville.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, treating the definitions in isolation risks obscuring the dynamic interplay and mutual influence between the two traditions – an interplay that is essential to understanding the transmission of rhetorical knowledge.<sup>7</sup> This becomes particularly evident when considering two works: the *Schemata*, attributed to Rutilius Lupus and the *De figuris* by Aquila Romanus. Both are Latin treatises that show clear dependence on earlier Greek sources: the former draws heavily on Gorgias of Athens, while the latter is derived from the rhetorical doctrines of Alexander Numenius. Though these examples are merely illustrative, they vividly exemplify the permeability of both linguistic and conceptual boundaries within rhetorical theory. Consequently, there is a clear need for a lexicographical approach that treats the two languages as engaged in dialogue, rather than isolated systems.

Having examined the main critical issues in Ernesti's work, attention must now turn to another lexicographical work worth of consideration<sup>8</sup>. Specifically, the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik (HWR)*, a monumental project conceived by Ueding and Jens. The work is structured according to seven main categories: *Rhetorische Grundbegriffe*, *Rhetorische Disziplinen*, *Epochen und Kulturen in rhetorikhistorischer Perspektive*, *Bildungs-, Schul- und Unterrichtswesen*, *Moderne Rhetoriktheorie und ihre Terminologie*, *Moderne wissenschaftliche Disziplinen mit rhetorischem Bezug sowie deren Terminologie*, and *Kulturphänomene mit rhetorischem Bezug*. The original list of approximately 5,500 lemmata was subsequently reduced to 1,400, distributed across three main article types: *Definitionsartikel*, *Sachartikel*, and *Forschungsartikel* [21] :14-15. With regard to the selection of quotations, Ueding [21]: 13 notes:

Bei aller Anstrengung zu einer quellengemäßen Exzerptionstechnik und zum Überblick über die Gesamtheit des rhetorischen Wortschatzes im oben ausgeführten Sinne verbietet sich aber eine vollständige Belegsammlung schon aus pragmatischen Gründen, und das Projekt wird immer auf die Aufmerksamkeit, das Fachwissen und das Interesse der Autoren und Leser angewiesen sein, um Lücken zu vermeiden oder die Inhomogenitäten der historischen Dokumentation nicht zu groß werden zu lassen.

The editor emphasises that a complete collection of occurrences is to be excluded for the extremely broad chronological span covered by the dictionary. However, if each contributor has indeed reviewed and weighed all known occurrences in order to determine which were most

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5 Sacerdos appears to be chronologically misplaced in the *ThLL* article, without any clear reason.

6 The occurrence of Ps. Iul. Ruf. *schem. lex.* (= Ps. Rufinian. *rhet.* in Fig. 2) is explicitly recorded, whereas Iul. Ruf. *rhet.* 37 p. 47, 16-17 is mentioned only for comparison ('cf. p. 47, l. 16'), even though in the former case the figure is treated as a figure of speech and in the latter as a figure of thought.

7 The need to take interlinguistic relations into account is already emphasised by Raschieri [14]: 299-300.

8 Dean Anderson's glossary [24], limited in both its chronological scope and thematic range, has not been examined in light of the arguments summarised in Schenkeveld [25]. By contrast, as regards terminology falling primarily within the category of the *progymnasmata*, the work that remains fundamental is Berardi's [26].

relevant, one may legitimately ask whether it would not have been appropriate, in such cases, to at least include a reference – following the model of the *ThLL*. Notably, when not all attestations are cited, this is indicated in the *ThLL* by an asterisk placed before the lemma, alerting the reader. Furthermore, at the end of a citation or of a subentry within the *Gliederung*, the abbreviation *al.* is used to signal the existence of additional occurrences with the same meaning. Two further conventions are used to manage passages that are closely related to one another and must therefore be linked – either because they are similar or because one is derived from the other. In the first case, the related occurrence is placed in parentheses and preceded by *sim.*; in the second, it is preceded by *inde*. In this way, attestations from significant authors are still recorded, even if only by a brief reference to the relevant passage.

To better understand some of the practical issues raised by the selection criteria of *HWR*, let us now consider the entry in Fig. 3 [23]: I, col. 722.

**Antithese** (griech. ἀντιθέσις, *antítheton*; lat. *contrapositum*, *contrarium*; dt. *Gegenüberstellung*; engl. *antithesis*; frz. *antithèse*; ital. *antitesi*)  
 A. Def. – B. I. Antike. – II. Gnosis, Christentum, Mittelalter. – III. Renaissance, Humanismus, Reformation. – IV. Manierismus, Barock. – V. Aufklärung, 18. Jh. – VI. 19./20. Jh.  
 A. Die A. ist zunächst eine Kategorie der Stiltheorie (*elocutio*). Ihr lateinischer Name lautet *contrapositum* bzw. *contrarium* [1], gelegentlich erscheinen im Wechsel die Ausdrücke *contentio* [2] und *compositum ex contrariis*. [3] Sie wird teils als Wortfigur, teils als Sinnfigur aufgefaßt und von ARISTOTELES mit dem Begriff der Periode (*περίοδος*) in Verbindung gebracht. [4] Wenn ein anderer griechischer Terminus für die A. σύγκρισις *sýnkrisis*) [5] lautet, so zeigt das ihre Ambivalenz an. Es geht um eine

Fig. 3 - *HWR*'s article on antithese

As mentioned, it is not uncommon for the survey of primary sources to be partial. In some cases, however, texts are cited only indirectly, through the mediation of secondary bibliography – an editorial choice that is not entirely justifiable.<sup>9</sup> This becomes evident, for example, in the section where it is stated that *antithesis* may also appear under the designation of *sýnkrisis*. The highlighted footnote in Fig. 3 refers to [11]: 294, where the equivalence between the two terms is noted on the basis of a passage from Iul. Ruf. *rhēt.* 37, p. 47, 16-17: *σύγκρισις sive ἀντιθέσις, comparatio rerum atque personarum inter se contrariarum*. The parallel is especially relevant because it is not an isolated case, as the same terminological equivalence is also attested in Anon. III *schem.* 186, 5, where *sýnkrisis* is presented as a figure of speech and, shortly thereafter, is shown to overlap with *antithesis* and *antimetabole*. This observation is highly significant, given that the *HWR* contains no dedicated entry for *sýnkrisis*. As the *ThLL* does not yet contain an article on this lemma, the other available reference for *σύγκρισις* is the one offered by Ernesti (Fig. 4 [2]):

<sup>9</sup> Regarding this aspect, Vickers [22] hypothesised the editors had addressed the issue of the impossibility of citing all references by resorting to Martin [11], provided, of course, that the latter could be considered a comprehensive and authoritative manual for the classical period.

Σύγκρισις, fig. qua res aut personae inter se contrariae comparantur. Iul. Rufin. §. 37. Eandem ἀντίθεσιν vocat. vid. voc. συγκριτικός.

Fig. 4 - Ernesti's article on *syncrisis*

In this case as well, the term is attested solely in the volume dedicated to Greek terminology, where only the passage from Rufinianus is cited.<sup>10</sup> However, as it will be demonstrated in the following section, this term actually appears with a substantial number of additional attestations in the Greek corpus.

## 2. *Syncrisis*

The term selected as a case study is *syncrisis*, due to its infrequent occurrence in lexicographic works and to the fact that the author of the present contribution was responsible for drafting this entry in the *ThLL*. Examining this case will offer a clearer foundation for understanding how the structure of the *ThLL* might be adapted to meet the scholarly requirements of a technical lexicon with a rhetorical focus, and for envisioning the hermeneutical possibilities arising from its digitisation. Below, I present a draft entry for a new Ernesti article:<sup>11</sup>

\* *syncrisis*, σύγκρισις, □□ *scribitur sinc- in codd. DON. CONSENT., sinchr- vel sincrisis vel sincussis vel suncrysis in codd. DON., -usis in cod. DIOM., synchr- in ed. IVL. RVF. □□ PS. PHILOX. 110, 42. comparatio -is (sim. PS. CYR. 440, 42. Hermen. Monac. 173, 2). □□ [confunditur c. syneregis vel syneresis in codd. SCHEM. DIAN.]*

- 5 1 *progymnasma* (cf. Berardi 2017, 263-273): THEON. progymn. 10 p. 78, 23 -ίς ἐστι λόγος τὸ βέλτιον ἢ τὸ χεῖρον παριστάς [(sim. NICOL. progymn. 60, 5). *inde* Exc. rhet. 74, 23-24 (cf. Schindel 1996; 1999)]. APHTHON. progymn. 10, 1 -ίς ἐστι λόγος ἀντεξεταστικός ἐκ παραθέσεως συνάγων τῶ παραβαλλομένῳ τὸ μείζον. PRISC. rhet. 44, 9-11 (*qui vertit probab. e* PS. HERMOGEN. progymn. 8, 1, cf. Patillon 2008, 198). *al.* □□ 2 *metaplasms q. d. synaliphe*: DON. mai. 662, 10 synaliphe a quibusdam -is nominatur (sim. DIOM. GL I 442, 18. CONSENT. barb. 7, 17). □□ 3 *figura*: □□ *a sententiae*: ANON. III schem. 186, 27 -ίς γίνεται, ὅταν ταῖς αὐταῖς λέξεσι χρώμεθα παραβάλλοντες πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον, ἢ πρᾶγμα πρὸς πρᾶγμα ... τούτῳ τῶ σχήματι ἔοικε καὶ ἡ ἀντίθεσις καὶ ἡ ἀντιβολή ...
- 15 ἀντιτίθησι γὰρ ἑκάτερα, καὶ τὰ ἐν πρώτοις κόλοις ἄλλως τεθέντα ὑπεναντίως ἐν τοῖς δευτέροις ἐτέθη (cf. ll. 18-19). PS. ZON. schem. 169, 28 -ίς ἐστίν, ὅταν πλεονάκις ταῖς αὐταῖς χρώμενοι λέξεσιν ἕτερα σημαίνωμεν. □□ *b elocutionis*: IVL. RVF. rhet. 37 p. 47, 16 -ίς sive ἀντιθεσις, comparatio rerum atque personarum

10 Further occurrences, referring however to the adjective συγκριτικός, are listed under the corresponding entry.

11 The example is provided for illustrative purposes only, to explain a possible structure, without any claim to exhaustiveness.

inter se contrariarum. SCHEM. DIAN. l. 92 -is est, quae collatio dicitur, cum  
 20 comparatione iustiore causam nostram quam adversarii demonstramus ([synregis,  
 sineresis *var. ll.*]. *inde* CASSIOD. in psalm. 19, 8 l. 123 [*sim.* 34, 7 l. 130. 108, 2 l. 26]).  
 CASSIOD. in psalm. 25, 11 l. 161 schema -is est, cum causam suam quis ab adversariis  
 suis nititur efficere meliorem (*sim.* 70, 14 l. 266. 118, 150 l. 2764).

*Exempla allata*: ENN. scaen. 225-227. CIC. Mur. 22. Verr. II 1, 70: IVL. RVF.  
 25 rhet. 37 p. 47, 18-21. 22-24. 24-26; CIC. S. Rosc. 7: SCHEM. DIAN. ll. 93-95. VERG.  
 Aen. 9, 1: DON. mai. 662, 9. DIOM. GL I 442, 17; GREG. NAZ. orat. 14 p. 860, 29-  
 30: ANON. III schem. 186, 29-30; *cf.* GREG. NAZ. orat. 42 p. 477, 36-38: ANON.  
 III schem. 187, 6-7. PS. ZON. schem. 169, 30-31; PSALM. 19, 8 l. 123. 25, 11 l. 161.  
 34, 7 l. 130. 34, 7 l. 130. 70, 14 l. 266. 108, 2 l. 26. 118, 150 l. 2764: CASSIOD. ad  
 30 locc.

*ThLL* entries may comprise up to four constituent sections, which could be reproduced in the  
 new Ernesti and, if necessary, adapted: *Lemma-Ansatz* (headword entry), *Kopf* (preliminary  
 section), *Gliederung* (main part), and *Anhänge* (supplementary sections).

The *Lemma-Ansatz* aims to present each lemma in a lexicographically standard form, optionally  
 followed by information regarding inflection, gender, and, as in the case of rhetorical terms,  
 which are often borrowed from Greek, the corresponding Greek equivalent is also provided. As  
 specified in § 1, the asterisks preceding the lemma indicates that not all occurrences are included  
 in the article.

The *Kopf* section presents a substantial body of valuable information, encompassing a broad  
 range of topics. Those that are of particular interest for a rhetorical lexicon are the *scribitur* (or  
*de scriptura*) which records spellings that deviate from the lemma's normative form; the *notae*  
*Tironianae*, for which the *ThLL* refers to the page and entry number in the authoritative edition  
 [19]. However, in a new Ernesti, this section should be more appropriately titled *notae* to include  
 more generically all those signs used to indicate rhetorical phenomena. A well-known example  
 is found in Cassiod. *in psalm. not. ll. 1-4*:

Diversas notas more maiorum certis locis aestimavimus affigendas. Has cum explanationibus suis  
 subter adiunximus, ut quidquid lector voluerit inquirere per similitudines earum sine aliqua  
 difficultate debeat invenire.

The text continues with a catalogue of thirteen symbols, visually modeled on the critical marks  
 used by the Alexandrian grammarians (e.g., SCHE for *schemata* or RT for rhetoric). Additionally,  
 as noted by Gitner [9], further examples of marginal signs to be traced back to rhetoric can be  
 found in the *Notae simplices* and in the *Notae troporum* [20].

Two further indispensable sections are *de notione et differentia*, which preserves ancient  
 explanations of meaning, and the section devoted to textual criticism, which notes recurrent  
 confusions with words of similar sound, spelling, or meaning.

In the main part, occurrences are generally structured according to oppositional categories (e.g., *proprie*  
 vs. *translate*, or *animantes* vs. *res*). Then, the principles governing the classification of occurrences across  
 different hierarchical levels are determined by the specific characteristics of the material under  
 examination. At each level, quotations are arranged chronologically, as organising linguistic phenomena  
 according to their earliest attested occurrence often provides critical insight into their genetic

relationships. In the example under discussion, the material falls under the broad category of rhetorical phenomena which can be classified into major groups such as *progymnasmata*, figures, and tropes. In this case, the main criterion for structuring the *Gliederung* is the identification of the appropriate macro-category, which serves to organise the material into coherent sections. Where the material allows, further subdivisions into subcategories can be made. For instance, *syncrisis* is classified as a figure (number 3), and more specifically, it can be divided into two subtypes: ‘3a sententiae’ and ‘3b elocutionis’. Furthermore, parenthetical annotations may include supplementary information, such as analogous usages, derivations, co-occurring forms, or fundamental bibliographic references. Finally, in lieu of the traditional appendix – typically reserved in the *ThLL* for syntactic or miscellaneous information not accommodated within the main entry – the proposed structure includes a dedicated section for literary examples, which are used by rhetoricians to illustrate the phenomenon, arranged in chronological order. Each example is followed by a colon and a precise indication of its location in the corresponding text. When more than one example is recalled by a single rhetorician and not shared by others, they are separated by a full stop before the colon introducing the reference. In this case, the chronological order of the subsection is subordinated to the order of the individual works mentioned by that rhetorician.

### 3. The Digital Turn: Theoretical and Hermeneutical Perspectives

As Fuertes-Olivera [8] has noted, while the ongoing digital revolution has significantly reshaped both the design and structure of specialised online dictionaries, only a limited number of these resources can be accurately described as digital *stricto sensu*. This observation is particularly relevant in the case of Greek and Latin lexica, where there is often little to no added value compared to their printed counterparts. Any comprehensive assessment must begin with the *Thesaurus linguae Graecae* (*ThlG*) for Greek, as well as the Lewis and Short (*LSJ*) and the De Gruyter online version of the *ThLL* for Latin. Before proceeding, it is important to highlight a fundamental issue: the question of open accessibility. Neither of the two *Thesauri* – the *ThlG* and De Gruyter’s *ThLL* – is freely accessible, which significantly limits the ability of research projects to establish interoperability with these scholarly works.

Taking into account the diverse nature of these lexicographic products – both in terms of the languages they cover and their intended scholarly aims – it is noteworthy that the XML/TEI encoding of the entries remains relatively uniform. This primarily focuses on representing the formatting conventions, structural components, and the markup of cited authors and works.

A semantic encoding, however, would result in an essential foundation for three core outcomes: the effective visualisation of data, interoperability, and the implementation of advanced search functionalities. In the case of a new *Ernesti*, the model envisaged could be composed of a base text accompanied by four additional layers: formatting, structure, quotations, and a linguistic one. This multilayered approach is formally analogous to the model designed for the new digital *ThLL*,<sup>12</sup> which served as the initial reference framework for the theoretical development of this

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<sup>12</sup> A five-year agreement was signed in July 2024 between Sapienza Università di Roma (PIs: Michela Rosellini and Elena Spangenberg Yanes) and the BADW. For a better understanding of the reasons behind this digital project, see [3].

paper.<sup>13</sup> From a technical perspective, the encoding is based on XML/TEI, which remains the internationally recognised standard for long-term preservation and reuse of data. The first two layers of annotation are dedicated to the encoding of typographic features and the structural organisation of entries. Subsequent layers provide additional markup for quotations and rhetorical phenomena, laying the groundwork for a semantically rich digital resource. On these two latter layers, I will now present some theoretical reflections.

Quotations clearly constitute one of the core components of a new *Ernesti*. In principle, the inclusion of marked-up author names and cited works should enable users to filter searches by specific authors or texts. Moreover, if chronological metadata (in a machine-readable format) and information regarding literary genre were incorporated into the author entries, it would be possible to further refine queries by period and/or by genre. This could be achieved by compiling an index structured as follows:<sup>14</sup>

```
{
  "Theon_progym": {
    "from": "50",
    "to": "150",
    "author": "Theon",
    "work": "progymn.",
    "genus": "rhetorica"
  }
}
```

With regard to genre categories, some of those already envisaged for the new *ThlL* could be retained:

- Commenta, scholia, didascaliae, indices
- Grammatici et lexicographi
- Rhetores

By combining all available filters, users should be able, for example, to extract all technical terms used within a specific time period, in the works of a given author, or even in a particular text. Building on this functionality, the system could also enable the identification of terms attested in Greek sources but absent from Latin ones, or viceversa. To ensure consistency and facilitate interoperability across related digital resources, all references to authors and works could be directly linked to the *IRG* and the *Index Grammaticorum Latinorum*.<sup>15</sup>

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13 It is important to note that the two currently available digital versions of the *ThlL* – namely, the open-access version hosted on the servers of the BAdW (<https://publikationen.badw.de/de/thesaurus/lemmata#--0a->), and the commercial version published by De Gruyter and accessible behind a paywall – offer only limited search functionalities. The former allows for basic text searches restricted to lemmata, while the latter enables full-text searches across all articles. However, neither platform provides advanced semantic or structural querying capabilities, nor do they support complex filtering of data.

14 The example is presented in JSON format and serves purely illustrative purposes.

15 <https://latigrammarianscollection.uniroma1.it/site/index-grammaticorum-latinorum>.

Linguistic encoding constitutes the second aspect worthy of reflection. More specifically, with regard to ontologies for the description of rhetorical phenomena, three major initiatives may be presented.

The first is the *Rhetorical Annotation Ontology Project (RAOP)*,<sup>16</sup> developed by Marchesini and Mancinelli for the mapping of rhetorical concepts in both written and oral texts. Specifically, it identifies three main categories based on the classification proposed by Mortara Garavelli [12]: figures of speech, figures of thought, and tropes. However, for our purposes, a fundamental limitation becomes apparent: the restricted number of categories. They not only fail to adequately represent the complexity of rhetorical phenomena as a whole, but they also fall short in capturing the nuances inherent in the classification of figures and tropes themselves. This limitation is understandable considering the example discussed in § 2. In light of this, a framework grounded exclusively in Mortara Gravelli's manual proves insufficient to capture the full diachronic and conceptual complexity of rhetorical phenomena, not least because the manual itself is not strictly conceived for classical studies.

The second ontology is *EuporiaRhetorica*, developed by Boschetti in collaboration with Raschieri as part of the *Digital Lexicon of Ancient Rhetoric (DiLAR)* project, which is intended to serve as a lexicon of Latin and Greek rhetorical terminology. *DiLAR* adopts a bottom-up method: rhetorical categories are derived from the annotation of texts, using *EuporiaRhetorica* which employs two main tags – #rtp for thematic rhetorical topics and #rtm for lexical rhetorical terms – while the *exempla ficta* and literary examples can respectively be tagged using #exe and #quote [14]. While *EuporiaRhetorica* represents a potentially viable model for an annotation ontology from a theoretical standpoint, the *DiLAR* workflow is notably extensive. The project first began with the *Rhet. Her.* and the rhetorical works of Cicero, with plans to expand in later phases to include the works of Seneca the Elder, Quintilian, the texts collected in Halm [10], and subsequently Greek rhetorical texts [14]. More critically, several key texts essential for tracing the historical development of rhetorical terminology are not included in the planned corpus. Among them are exegetical works such as Porphyrio's and Pseudo-Acron's commentaries on Horace, Donatus on Terence, and Servius on Virgil, to name but a few. Moreover, grammatical texts that contain what Baratin and Desbordes [1] define as the «troisième partie» of the *artes grammaticae* – that is, the section dedicated to the *vitia* and *virtutes orationis* – are also absent.<sup>17</sup> Further material excluded from the corpus consists of grammatical texts that focus on specific categories of rhetorical phenomena, such as the treatise of the grammarian Consentius on barbarisms and metaplasm. Whilst the creation of a new Ernesti is in itself a monumental undertaking and a lexicographic enterprise comparable only to that of Schad [17], the level of detailed annotation proposed by *DiLAR* appears difficult to achieve within a reasonable timeframe.

Alongside these two initiatives, a more recent proposal for an ontology has been developed for the implementation of the linguistic layer of the grammatical texts in the *Latin Grammarians Collection (LGC)*.<sup>18</sup> This database is built using the open-source and open-access system Cadmus,<sup>19</sup> which facilitates the management of heterogeneous objects within a unified environment and enables export in XML/TEI format. The rhetorical ontology [5] I designed

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<sup>16</sup> <https://github.com/bakulf/raop/>.

<sup>17</sup> On the interest of grammar teachers in rhetoric, see Holtz [27].

<sup>18</sup> <https://latingrammarianscollection.uniroma1.it>.

<sup>19</sup> <https://myrmex.github.io/overview/cadmus/>.

was based on a systematic review of Latin rhetorical texts, ranging from the *Rhet. Her.* to Martianus Capella. Below, I provide a sample excerpt of the tags:

- progymnasmata
- vitia
  - de barbarismo
  - de soloecismo
  - de ceteriis vitiis
- virtutes
  - de metaplasms
  - de schematibus / de exornationibus / de figuris et de tropis
    - genus
      - schemata / exornationes / figurae
      - logou
      - lexeos / verborum / elocutionis
      - dianoeas / sententiarum
    - tropus
  - definitio
    - allegoria
      - allegoria
      - aenigma
      - antiphrasis
      - asteismos / astismos
      - cacophemia
    - ironia / irrisio / dissimulatio
      - paroemia
      - ironia / irrisio / dissimulatio
      - ironia / irrisio / dissimulatio
      - ...

This type of ontology addresses a central challenge in the management of heterogeneous textual corpora – particularly with respect to figures and tropes – namely, the inconsistency in classification systems. By maintaining a distinction between *genus* and *definitio*, it becomes

possible to annotate rhetorical, exegetical, and grammatical texts while keeping the number of tags to a minimum. In doing so, the model avoids forcing the annotation process to conform to a single classificatory system. This is particularly important given that exegetical texts often do not specify any category at all, and that certain figures are consistently classified one way in grammatical texts, but differently in Latin rhetorical texts (e.g., irony).

This last approach enables the creation of annotation layers that can be queried in combination, vastly expanding the scope of possible research questions. Applied to an entire corpus, this encoding model becomes an invaluable tool, unlocking a wide range of queries that would otherwise be prohibitively time-consuming or even impossible to conduct manually.

For example, it allows for the identification of recurring literary examples that are either employed or deliberately omitted in illustrating specific rhetorical phenomena. Moreover, it opens up the important avenue of tracking the recurrence of technical terms across genres and historical periods. One could, for instance, pinpoint terms shared between rhetorical and grammatical manuals within a defined chronological framework, and further examine their reappearance in later exegetical commentaries. This investigation is especially crucial given the lack of a comprehensive study on this phenomenon, which until now has been explored only through isolated case studies – most notably by Schindel [18], who demonstrated the dependence of Cassiodorus on an anonymous list-based rhetorical handbook (*Schem. dian.*) for his Commentary on the *Psalms*.

In conclusion, the development of a new *Ernesti* – semantically enriched and digitally structured – is proposed here primarily as a theoretical and methodological framework. The purpose of this article has been to articulate the conceptual conditions under which such a resource might be conceived, rather than to outline a concrete project or implementation plan. The perspective advanced nonetheless suggests how, if such an enterprise were to be undertaken, it could enable the scaling of the types of analyses discussed here, allowing rhetorical terminology to be traced across authors, works, periods, and classificatory traditions with a degree of precision and systematic breadth previously unattainable.

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