

Debates & Rhetoric

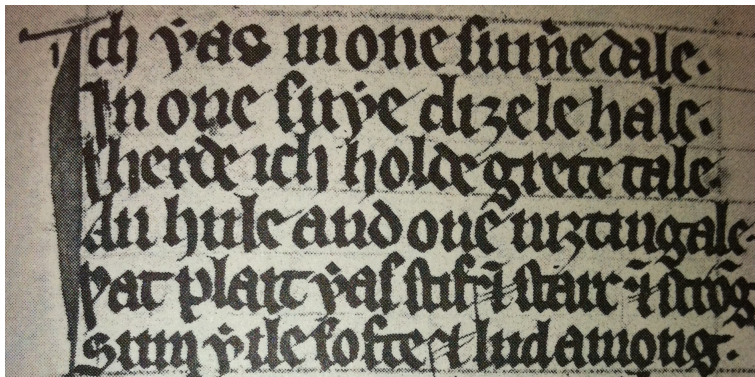


Figure: *The Owl and the Nightingale*, British Museum MS Cotton Caligula A. IX fol. 233 (CC: [source](#))

The Dialectic Method

- ▶ **Socratic dialogue:** the superior thinker proves his conversation partner's assertions wrong by taking them to their logical extreme
- ▶ **Quaestio:** a question-and-answer exchange between master and pupil

Curriculum

Bachelor of Arts (4 years)

Trivium

- ▶ Grammar
- ▶ Logic
- ▶ Rhetoric

Quadrivium

- ▶ Geometry
- ▶ Arithmetic
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Astronomy

Master of Arts (3 years)

→ *ius ubique docendi*

Doctorate (10+ years)

Law

Medicine

Theology

Debate Literature

- ▶ Virgil: *Eclogues*
- ▶ Alcuin: *Debate Between Spring and Winter*



Figure: Illustration from the *Eclogues*, Vatican MS Latinus 3867, fol. 11^r (public domain: [source](#))

Middle English Debate Poetry

- ▶ The contestants are birds or abstractions
- ▶ The narrator is a chance observer
- ▶ Frequently set in a dream, experienced in a nature setting
- ▶ Often no resolution
- ▶ Ad hominem attacks as important as the formal content

Middle English Debate Poems

- ▶ *The Owl and the Nightingale* (c. 1200)
- ▶ *Wynnere and Wastoure* (c. 1353)
- ▶ *The Parliament of Fowls* (c. 1380)
- ▶ *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (s. XIV^{ex})
- ▶ *The Parliament of the Three Ages* (s. XIV^{ex})
- ▶ *Liffe and Death* (s. XIV^{ex}/XVⁱⁿ)