International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies
Volume 11, Issue 2, 2024, PP 33-40
ISSN 2394-6296

Early Modern Protests against the Tyrant: The Radicalization of the Political Discourse in the Early Sixteenth Century: Ulrich Von Hutten

Dr. Albrecht Classen

University Distinguished Professor of German Studies, University of Arizona, USA

[*]***Corresponding Author:*** *Dr. Albrecht Classen, University Distinguished Professor of German Studies, University of Arizona, USA*

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 16 Apr 2024

Accepted: 03 May 2024

Published: 09 May 2024

Cite this article as:

Classen, Albrecht. "Early Modern Protests Against the Tyrant: The Radicalization of the Political Discourse in the Early Sixteenth Century: Ulrich Von Hutten". International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies, vol. 11, no. 2, May 2024, pp. 33-40.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.62557/2394-6296.110205

ABSTRACT

In the late Middle Ages and early modern age, political commentators increasingly raised their voice against abusive rulers, attacking them as dictators and even as tyrants. They drew, of course, from the ancient tradition of criticism of the ruler, but they had their own cases to complain about. Scholarship has so far investigated numerous treatises and pamphlets by the leading philosophers and theologians from that time, active particularly in Italy, France, and England. In this study, the focus will rest, by contrast, on the significant contribution to this anti-tyrant discourse by the German humanist Ulrich von Hutten (d. 1523), his *Phalarismus*. While the author was motivated to write this sharp critique of tyranny in response to a major conflict affecting his own family, this dialog pamphlet, structurally somewhat indebted to Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia* (ca. 1320), laid the foundation for this genre of political criticism in early modern Germany, which, however, came to full fruition not until the eighteenth century. We can thus recognize Ulrich von Hutten as a major contributor to this European discourse driven by humanist intellectuals who effectively succeeded in exposing the evil nature of a tyrant well ahead of their successors during the age of the Enlightenment. To what extent von Hutten's work became a source of inspiration for them remains an open-ended question.

KEYWORDS: *Tyranny; Ulrich von Hutten; criticism of the ruler; criticism of the court; early modern political discourse; humanism; catabasis*

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to common assumptions, the late Middle Ages and early Modern Age was a time of considerable political unrest, protests, public complaints, uprises, and military campaigns on behalf of religious and ideological concerns and interests. But we can even go one step further back in our search for comments on global discomfort with or opposition to an individual ruler, a dynasty, or Church authorities. Most famously, John of Salisbury and Marsilius of Padua have been regularly recognized as major spokespersons within this global discourse. The former published his political treatise, *Policraticus, sive de nugis curialium et de vestigiis philosophorum*, around 1159, and his *Metalogicon*, a pedagogical treatise regarding scholastic education, a few years later. Subsequent to John, Peter of Blois (*De palpone et assentatore*, ca. 1175, and *Architrenius*, ca. 1185) and Nigel de Longchamps, also known as Nigellus Witeker (*Tractatus contra curiales et officiales clericos*, prior to 1193), chimed in and supported their role model in his harsh criticism of a tyrannical king. They did not, however, argue against the monarchy as a form of government, since the feudal structure, unquestionably prevalent at their time, was consistently identified as God-given. Their objectives, however, aimed at fighting against the abuse of power by a king or another ruler, who had turned into a tyrant (Nederman 2015; Connell 2016; Jinno 2021).

Marsilius of Padua composed his major treatise, his *Defensor pacis*, reflecting on the fundamentals of a well-organized society and targeting hence an evil ruler, in 1342. Within the larger context of a political reflection on the best conditions for a people or a nation, the author also included his criticism of the tyrant.

In both cases, we can recognize personal concerns as well that led the authors to turn against a brutal ruler who had apparently lost or deliberately abandoned the ideal of a just and fair king, or of being the leader of his nation (Moreno-Riaño, ed., 2006; Briguglia 2013; Bryld 2021; Yun 2021).

As important and influential those two authors certainly were in their own rights, scholars have normally treated rather lightly the medieval period in their investigations of tyranny as an evil form of government, and hence also of tyrannicide (Turchetti 2013; Blum, ed., 2017). One of the reasons for this might have been the strong growth of that discourse during the age of Humanism and Renaissance, especially in Italy (Savonarola, 1452-1498; Thomas Cajetan, 1469-1534; Nicolo Machiavelli, 1469-1527) and Spain (Francisco de Vitoria, 1483-1576). The first half of the sixteenth century then witnessed the rise of the Protestant Reformation, during which major intellectuals such as Martin Luther (1483-1546), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), Jean Calvin (1509-1564), and Philippe Melanchthon (1497-1560) contributed in their own ways to this political debate (Turchetti 2013, 335-89), although they were primarily concerned with religious issues and struggled against the traditional authority of the Holy See in Rome. Hence, we often look in vain for comments on the political situation in the sixteenth century in major reference works, such as those edited by Pettegree (2000) and Hsia (2006).

Worse even, it is a strange phenomenon that in this context one of the most influential humanists from that time period, Ulrich von Hutten (1488-1523), is not included as a major voice in the public debate about the danger of tyranny, although he left us a significant dialog treatise on the nature of an evil ruler, his *Phalarismus* (1518-1519). The example of the relevant article in the English-language *Wikipedia* illustrates this unfortunate lacuna quite strikingly. The anonymous author rapidly moves from Polybius (fl. 150 B.C.) to Dante Alighieri (d. ca. 1320), and then skips more than hundred years of intellectual history to continue with Macchiavelli and then even more quickly with the philosophers from the age of Enlightenment – with no reference to Ulrich von Hutten (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrant). In the corresponding article in the German version, the Middle Ages is much better represented (Aegidius Romanus, ca. 1243-1316; Bartolus of Sassoferrato, ca. 1313-1357; and Jean Gerson, 1363-1429), but then, similarly in disregard of alternative voices, the argument quickly jumps to the early modern age (Niccolò Machiavelli, 1469–1527; Jean Bodin, † 1596; and Thomas Hobbes, 1588–1679) (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrannis#Sp%C3%A4tmittelalter_und_ Fr%C3%BChrenaissance; cf. Miethke 1999). Both older and more recent research literature on this topic has investigated consistently Macchiavelli and Luther, for instance (Stricker 1967; Saracino 2019), certainly some of the most outstanding and outspoken participants in this public discourse on the tyrant. However, quite strikingly, even Renaissance scholars have also been rather reticent regarding Ulrich von Hutten (e.g., Kerrigan and Braden 1989), at least concerning his political stance (but see Becker 2013, who focuses on the Latin dialog poems where the author often includes himself).

There is, of course, no shortage of relevant studies on this powerful intellectual who is often identified as a radical rebel in early modern Germany (Rueb 1981; see also the contributions to Füssel, ed., 1989). In fact, he is well known to us both through his own writings and the comments by his contemporaries since he belonged to the intellectual elite of early modern Europe and was extremely well connected (Bernstein 1988). Without going into details, we can be certain that Ulrich von Hutten was a highly contentious individuality and never hesitated to write and publish when a political or religious conflict loomed large (Kraus 2022; Orlick 2023). So we find him in the thick of the religious controversies of his time, strongly opposed to the Catholic Church (Cantimori 2022), but also deeply engaged with the fundamental questions concerning a just government and the danger of tyranny bent on destroying the fundaments of political justice, freedom, and the right of the individual even within the framework of feudal society, monarchy, and the authority of the Holy See (Honemann 1993; Jaumann 2008; Classen 2024b).

ULRICH VON HUTTEN AND TYRANNY

The central purpose of this paper is to discuss Ulrich von Hutten's significant dialog narrative or pamphlet *Phalarismus* as a major expression of his opposition to tyranny. If we manage to situate it within the broader European context of treatises dealing with evil kings and rulers (for the Middle Ages, see Classen 2021), we will be in an excellent situation to identify the global contribution of German intellectuals from the Reformation era (or Humanism) to the political discourse of their time. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were filled with much debate about religion, philosophy, and politics, and so it does not come as a surprise that the question of a fair, good, just, and benevolent ruler was raised as well quite commonly. We can refer here to such luminaries as Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) with his treatise entitled *De tyranno* (On Tyranny; 1400, Leonardo Bruni with his *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* (Praise of the City of Florence, 1403–1404), Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405–1464) with his *De ortu et auctoritate imperii Romani* (On the Origin and Authority of the Roman Empire, 1446), and Niccolò Machiavelli with his *Il principe* (Prince, ca. 1513–1514) and also his *Discorsi* (Discourses, ca. 1514–1519) (see the contributions to Panou and Schadee, ed., 2016; Nederman 2019; revision 2024).

However, to repeat our observations so far and to expand on them slightly, modern scholars engaged with Ulrich von Hutten hardly ever mention his relevant comment in that regard, which truly constitutes a desideratum the present paper intends to fill by means of a first close reading of his arguments. We can be certain that he

preceded in a variety of ways the so-called French *monarchomachs*, such as the Calvinists François Hotman (1524–1590), Théodore de Bèze (1519–1605), Simon Goulart (1543–1628), Nicolas Barnaud (1538–1604), Hubert Languet (1518–1581), Philippe de Mornay (1549–1623), and George Buchanan (1506–1582), as well as Catholic writers such as Juan de Mariana (1536–1624). Hubert Languet (1518–1581), above all, in his *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos sive de principis in populum, populique in principem legitima potestate* (1579), argued, for instance, that kingship was established by God for the well-being of the people, whereas the tyrant has only the own advantage in mind and disregards the mutual obligations of the people, the king, and God (Hüllen 1998; see also Laski, trans. and intro., 1963; Nicollier-de Weck 2015).

From the end of 1516 and until early 1517, Ulrich von Hutten composed his *Phalarismus* in Latin. The final revisions were completed in March of 1517, and the manuscript was printed in Mainz by Johann Schöffer under the official title of *Phalarismus Dialogus Huttenicus*. In February 1519, he decided to translate his text into German, which appeared in print in Speyer in 1521 (printer: Jacob Schmidt) (Ukena, ed., 1979, no. 1). Before we examine the text itself and its impetus targeting evil rulers, we need to realize how much the concern addressed here was very close to the author's heart since he and his family had badly suffered from actions by the Duke Ulrich of Württemberg (1487-1550). The latter had tried to have an affair with Ursula Thumb von Neuburg, the wife of Hans von Hutten, Ulrich von Hutten's nephew. In an altercation, the duke killed Hans on May 7, 1515. The duke's wife, Sabina, who just had delivered a baby boy, was similarly enraged about this affair and many other shortcomings by her husband and even brought a suit against him at the Stuttgart diet in July 1515. Emperor Maximilian imposed the imperial ban on the duke in October 1516, but the former died in 1519 and could no longer pursue the legal process against Ulrich von Württemberg. However, after the duke had attacked and conquered the city of Reutlingen, the Swabian League managed to expel him from his land for good, at least until 1534, when he regained his power position and then immediately introduced the Protestant Reformation in his territory (Brendle 1998; Raff 2014).

Ulrich von Hutten regarded this duke as his personal enemy and pursued him with the full force of his pen, as exemplified by his dialog about the tyrant in hell (globally, see Holborn 1929/1968). However, on that basis, and with his usual literary genius, this author transcended the individual vendetta and created a major narrative reflection on the nature of a tyrant and his/her relationship with the people. As we will observe, Ulrich von Hutten's literary creation closely followed the traditional arguments against a tyrant, but he couched those within a narrative involving the soul of the deceased individual – indirectly identified as Duke Ulrich of Württemberg. The latter enters the underworld, has to cross the river Styx with the help of the infernal ferryman Charon, and thereby learns that he has lost, at least temporarily, his worldly powers and must submit himself under Charon and then the king of Hell, Phalaris, to whom he relates his life story and from whom he learns more tricks how to subjugating his people.

Phalarismus appeared at least ten times in print: Mainz 1517 (in Latin), Landshut 1517 (in Latin), Mainz (in Latin) 1518, Mainz 1519 (in Latin), Basel 1519 (in Latin), Paris 1519 (in Latin), Strassbourg 1520 (in German, under the title *Ein Clagschrift des Hochberümten vnd Ernueste[n] herrn Vlrichs vo[n] Hutten gekröneten Poeten vn[d] Orator an alle stend Deutscher nation : Wie vnformlicher weise vn[d] ga[n]tz geschwind, vnersucht oder erfordert einiges rechte[n]s. Er mit eignem tyra[n]n*), Speyer 1521 (in German), and again in Speyer 1522 (in German), and in Cologne 1537 (in Latin) (all data drawn from Worldcat, KVC, and others), so it was quite popular and enjoyed, though only for a short period, considerable respect. The use of Latin in the first editions indicates that Ulrich von Hutten primarily addressed his learned colleagues and friends among the Humanists; but then, the use of early modern German underscores his great desire to create a mass appeal and hence to rally a wider audience behind his efforts to fight against the tyrannical Duke Ulrich of Württemberg. The title page of the 1521 edition reads as follows: "Hie nach volget ein scharffes künstlichs gedicht vo[n] eine[m] Tyranne[n] vnd etzliche[n] grausamen vnmenschliche[n] geschichte[n]: Eine[m] jeden lustig vnnd nützlich zu lesenn" (Ukena, ed., 1970, 5; Below follows an aggressive, finely developed poem of a tyrant and several cruel inhumane events. Entertaining and useful for everyone). Only recently, an excerpt of the text was translated into modern German (Treu, trans., 1996, 365-67) and also into French (Boulègue, Casanova-Robin, and Lév, ed. and trans., 2013; complete version), but it has not been fully recognized in the Anglophone world, or by modern scholarship at large.

In the introduction, the author explains his choice of the setting, hell, as the location where all evil rulers end up, in particular the infamous tyrant Phalaris, king of the city of Agrigent in Sicily (6), or in ancient Greek Akragas (now Agrigento), who ruled from 570 to 554 B.C.E. (https://www.livius.org/articles/person/phalaris/). His real intention, however, is to discuss a "teutzche[n] Tyrann" (6; German tyrant), who was able to learn from his ancient predecessor of how to carry out his tyranny to the best of his ability and to the greatest harm of the subjects. The account refers, as he emphasizes, to a living contemporary prince, whom he does not mention by name

– Duke Ulrich of Württemberg – and who ought to end up in hell, like all other tyrants.

For Ulrich von Hutten, the tyrant is defined by his evil character, cruelty, and maliciousness. This contemporary had committed already many horrible deeds, and the following narrative hence serves to alert the readers/listeners how to protect themselves from such a horrible tyrant. A tyrant would not be filled with a true faith and would contempt God: "dann wenn sie das nit tun und ein gutes Gewissen hätten, wär nit müglich, daß sie soliche unmenschliche Tat begingen" (6; if they did not do that and would have a good conscience, it would not be possible for them to commit such inhumane deeds).

The best-known example of the tyrant Phalaris's brutality and viciousness was his treatment of the famous Greek sculptor Perillo who had created a bull out of bronze to serve as a torture instrument. Those who were condemned to die from torture were to be locked into the bull, then a fire was lit underneath the sculpture, and the screaming of the poor victim then would imitate the bull's bellowing. Phalaris laughed about this ingenious idea and pushed the sculptor himself into the bull and killed him that way, regarding this torture a "lustig Spiel" (7; a funny game) (Berve 1967, 129-32; cf. also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazen_bull).

Since antiquity, this brutal and inhumane ruler had been identified as the worst example of a tyrant, so it is quite fitting for Ulrich von Hutten to utilize him as the dialog partner for the tyrant in this narrative. That is, Duke Ulrich von Württemberg is closely related to Phalaris, the worst possible comparison for any ruler (Hofer 2000).

The messenger of the gods, Mercurius, brings the tyrant down to hell and explains to the ferryman Charon that Phalaris had called this new tyrant to come to see him because he wants tyranny to be erected in Germany as well (7). For Charon, the idea that this form of government could be established in Germany as well appears as horrifying and unheard of particularly because this new tyrant lived in Swabia which was populated by a "großmütig, tapfer Volk, und das hart bei seiner Freiheit hält" (8; a great-spirited, brave people that strongly holds on to its freedom). When the tyrant protests against Charon's order to help him rowing his boat because of his rank, Mercurious intervenes, granting that as a prince he would deserve his acknowledgment. However, he also presents a brief definition of a tyrant that clearly applies to this visitor to hell. These violent rulers repress their people with heavy taxation and loss of their freedom (8). Moreover, they are characterized by not displaying any signs of justice, mercy, uprightness, fear of God, moderation, gentleness, and pity (9). Instead, they display wrath, greed, lack of diplomatic skill, feminine and weak behavior, uncleanliness, inhumane brutality, and more (9). Mercurius also adds that the tyrant is wasteful and gluttonous (9).

Although the tyrant would have the freedom to wield his power in an abusive manner, ultimately, he would receive the justified punishment for his many evil deeds (10). However, Mercurius also comments that Jupiter had instructed him to report this tyrant to Emperor Maximilian I as the ultimate avenger against this evil lord (10). This would entail, of course, that tyrannical thinking would not exist in the emperor's mind. While Charon doubts that one could trust the emperor in that respect, Mercurius holds a high opinion of Maximilian because he hates this "Wüterich" (10; raging madman), and then leads the tyrant further down into hell where Phalaris is waiting for him.

The tyrant is identified as Phalaris's Swabian student who had followed his master's advice in many different ways, acting cruelly, injustly, meanly, and this even against his most loyal servants, which Phalaris finds amazing since he himself never had gone so much out of his way to hurt even his most trustworthy subjects. Hence, he gives the duke [Ulrich] great accolades and praises him as being even more tyrannical than he himself had been at his time, or other tyrants in antiquity (11). The evil deed consisted of murdering a young lord at his court because he had fallen in love with his wife. To kill him without any problems, he had abused his naive trust in him, and could thus stab him multiple times from the back when they traveled through a forest, and then mutilated the corpse in his rage (12). Ulrich von Hutten here refers to his nephew's tragic murder and emphasizes how much the surviving father and uncles and aunts mourned the loss of this innocent. Young man. Moreover, as the tyrant then proudly admits to Phalaris, he also had another nobleman get killed because he had mourned the death of the first victim (12).

Even though there was a public outcry about this murder, the tyrant pretended to compensate the death with letters and seals, but subsequently he did not follow through, demonstrating further evilness, which Phalaris praises as the greatest asset of a tyrant, to be "treulos und meineidig" (12; not trustworthy and swearing a false oath). The tyrant then continues that he endeavored to get everyone of the surviving family members murdered as well (13). He also turned against his own wife – a specific historical fact, referring to Sabina of Bavaria-Munich (1492–1564) who had fled from her husband and then sued him for many wrongdoings (Panzer 2012, 67–82) – and had tried to murder her as well, but was prevented from doing that because she was out of his reach and protected by her family. Phalaris comments in general that tyrants would regularly experience this destiny, "viel Ding begehren, viel förchten, viel hassen und neiden – und in den allen keinen Bedacht, Ursach, noch Ansehen

haben" (13; to desire many things, fear many, hate and envy many – and in all that to have no justification, reason, or respect). But the tyrant relates that he is planning to organize a military campaign to retrieve his wife and to hurt Bavaria, "mit großer Bosheit und schalckhaftigem Fürsatz" (13; with great evilness and roguish intentions). Tyrannical actions thus targets both individuals and entire countries, and no one would be safe from the ruler's evil intentions. But the situation is even worse because the duke had used a wide range of strategies to repress any public or private criticism by means of diplomatic requests and gifts. As he affirms to Phalaris: "Zu diesen Zeiten seind alle Ding im teutzschen Land umb Geld feil" (14; At these times, everything is available in the German lands for money). Corruption thus emerges as a major vehicle for the tyrant to maintain his power, which sounds uncannily familiar to us today.

The tyrant is not worried about any uprising in his own country because he will send evil supporters (mercenaries) to the front where they would probably die in the fire, and those who pursue virtues and are opposed to him he would get executed (14). There is no end to his brutality, violence, murder, and warfare. Neither foes nor friends would be safe from him, and persecuting everyone would create extensive general fear and hence submissiveness because of his terror regime – again a terrifying analogy to our present world.

Phalaris then takes on the role of a teacher and instructs the tyrant in all kinds of torture methods that had been practiced in antiquity and that he could employ effectively as well. The various strategies pertain to every possible manner of hurting the human body, from slow burning to flaying alive, from cutting off limbs to pulling teeth and tearing out the tongue (15). Most horribly, he recommends to boil children and to make the parents then to eat their flesh (16). The grotesque perversity of Phalaris's mind does not know an end, and one can read the descriptions of the various tortures only with a shudder, especially because for him the greatest delight consists of causing the most pain for the longest possible duration.

Ultimately, the king of all tyrants urges the duke to abandon the belief in God and to respect tyranny as the eternal blessedness (17). The tyrant ought to treat his victims according to their degree of virtues; the more virtuous someone would be, the more pain s/he ought to suffer (18), which altogether would make all of his subjects completely submissive as a result of their fear.

The critical question, however, remains as to how to maintain one's tyrannical power. Phalaris' recommends to support and promote a select group of sycophants who would advocate for the tyrant in public and decry all complaints as the result of propaganda, whereas the ruler had really done everything with the best intention and purposes: "das habest du alles in guter Meinung getan" (17). At the same time, the tyrant would need spies and traitors who would inform him about any attempts by individuals or groups in his country to rise up against him or even to criticize him. This is, so to speak, directly copied from the basic textbook for tyranny, or dictatorship, and we could easily refer to numerous cases in the twentieth and twenty-first century clearly following the prescripts outlined here in Ulrich von Hutten's text, though he condemns them, of course.

Whatever the tyrant would carry out, the public should believe that all his evil deeds, vices, and shamefulness would be nothing but virtuous and selfless in their appearance. The modern word for this method would simply be 'propaganda' by the government to hide its corruption and greed. Ulrich von Hutten uses the term "ehrlich Gestalt" (17; honest appearance). Even if the people would not believe this necessarily, the public pretense would create enough differences in opinion and doubts about the claims by the opposition that he was performing as an evil tyrant.

Occasional good deeds as strategic exceptions would support this strategy to pretend that he is really a good ruler and would weaken the attempts by opponents to criticize and expose him. The more the tyrant would be informed about people's opinion about him, the better he would be empowered to control everyone. Amazingly, Pharalis even goes so far as to recommend spreading rumors of alleged conspiracy, which would rally all those at the bottom of society to come to the prince's support and to fight against the middle and upper class. Did Ulrich von Hutten perhaps predict the events in Washington, DC., on January 6, 2021 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_6_United_States_ Capitol_attack)?

His comments deserve to be quoted at length, especially because they reveal a fundamental strategy of how to manipulate the masses as the tyrant's followers through thick and thin because they would be easily misled by his words and false pretenses, creating a framework of mesmerization and even hypnotization:

> salltu alle dein Zuflucht auf die Zusammenschwerung, die vormals oft in teutzschen Landen angericht, aber nie Vorgang gehabt, setzen; zu dir ziehend das gemein arm Volk, alle Verzweifelte[n], Spieler, Prasser, Buben und diejenigen, so weder an Ehren noch Gütern etwas zu verlieren haben, uff daß sie mit dir die Geistlichen und Reichen uberfallen und einen Raub der gemein teutzschen Nation holen. (18)
>
> [resort to the idea of conspiracy what allegedly had happened in the German lands in the past, but which had never taken place. Attract the

> common poor people, all those who are desperate, gamblers, gluttonous, thieves, and those who have nothing to lose, neither honor nor goods, so that they attack along with you the clerics and the wealthy and carry out a robbing of the entire German nation.] (Classen 2020)

Money would be necessary, of course, to realize all those evil plans, and if the tyrant were to run out of it, Phalaris recommends to him to turn to the Church and rob it wherever possible of all of its possessions (18). However, to avoid a negative fallout from this action, he should publicly pretend and confirm with a written oath that he was forced to resort to such a matter and would restitute everything after the war fully and more than enough (19).

In case of erotic desires, he should resort to poison or other secret measures to get rid of the husband without anyone knowing of his guilt in that matter (19). Phalaris concludes his recommendation with global advice of a political nature that again resonates with us today in a most uncanny manner. He should create internal conflicts all over Germany, push people into bickering, which then would distract them from his own evil deeds, persecuting, torturing, executing whomever he could apprehend and submit under torture. He should declare war on all good, virtuous people, he should never allow peace and harmony to exert any influence, and he should constantly vex the emperor as the highest authority in the land who was a constant danger for his tyrannical desires (19).

Before the duke then departs and returns from hell to his country (Württemberg), Phalaris urges him to greet all the tyrants assembled down there in the infernal space and pay his respect to them. Ulrich von Hutten provides a list of the most infamous tyrants from antiquity down to Herod who had been responsible for the mass infanticide in Bethlehem (20).

Conclusion

The satire and sarcasm of this dialog text are obvious, and yet it proves to be more than just literary entertainment. As Ulrich von Hutten indicates, tyranny has existed throughout times, and there is virtually no torture, no penalty, no evil action, no treason or breaking of an oath that has not been practiced in the past and that is not in practice until today. *Phalarismus* proved to be a sharp and biting attack against Duke Ulrich of Württemberg, and also an attack against the many tyrants of this world. We face here a stunning narrative from the early sixteenth century in which we find mirrored many dictatorships from throughout times, and so also from today. Both Hitler and Stalin, both Pol Pot and Saddam Hussein, both Putin and Idi Amin could be recognized in the projection of the 'best' tyrant as outlined by Phalaris. We could also include other names of world leaders from today, but this paper cannot turn into politics.

As a result, we can now claim that Ulrich von Hutten had created an astoundingly direct attack against tyrants, yet not within a philosophical or theological framework. Instead, following the model set up by Dante Alighieri in his *Divina Commedia*, the traveler, the tyrant, is invited to visit the ancient tyrant Phalaris in hell, learn about the most effective ways of establishing a tyranny, and to take those lessons with him for his time in the present world (*catabasis*).

Altogether, we can now claim that Ulrich von Hutten made a major contribution to the discourse on tyranny in the early modern age. Whereas most scholars have so far focused almost exclusively on famous Italian, Spanish, French, and English authors addressing this topic, we have now identified a significant German voice who succeeded powerfully to dramatize the exchange between the tyrant (Duke Ulrich) and Phalaris, which thus exposes in a theatrical fashion the worst operations and strategies by a tyrant. As the king of all tyrants underscores, if the duke were to follow his suggestions, he would be able to achieve his goal of setting up a dictatorial regime, creating terror, insecurity, distrust, and fear. The more he would divide and conquer, the better he would be able to control the entire country.

Modern tyrants seem to be cut out of the same wool, and it almost proves to be frightful to think how timeless the methods have been with which those individuals have imposed their authority over their subjects, drawing from violence, torture, suspicion, envy, and aggression. It is sad to say that Ulrich von Hutten's *Phalarismus* has not lost anything of its relevance for the present-day discourse on tyranny.

We have also to acknowledge that the focus on this German treatise in dialog sheds new light on late medieval and early modern literature and the intellectual discourse. Whereas the notion of the Renaissance has commonly been determined by progress, idealism, learnedness, and innovation (cf. Klaniczay, Kushner, Stegman, and later Chavy, ed. 1988-2017), here we are suddenly confronted by the truly dark side of that period. Tyranny was, unfortunately, already then fully in place under certain circumstances. People's suffering at the hands of other people in power was not unusual, and so Ulrich von Hutten deserves our full respect as a strong spokesperson who attacked with the full force of his pen the terrible manifestation of tyranny already at his time (cf. Bourdieu 1981/1984, 136). He has, however, not yet been fully recognized for his accomplishments in that regard, and his *Phalarismus* can now be included into a long list of major treatises on tyranny from the twelfth through the eighteenth centuries. This dialogic poem accompanied many other vernacular texts from the Middle Ages and early modern age that had targeted evil rulers and the dangers of courtly life (Classen 2024a), but

it offered a powerful twist in presenting the basic ideas within a dialogue between the ancient tyrant Phalaris and the unnamed tyrant, Duke Ulrich von Württemberg.

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

No funding was received for this work.

Ethical Consideration and Informed Consent

Not applicable.

References

[1] Becker, Arnold (2013). *Ulrichs von Hutten polemische Dialoge im Spannungsfeld von Humanismus und Politik*. Super alta perennis, 15. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht / Bonn: Bonn University Press.

[2] Bernstein, Eckhard (1988). *Ulrich von Hutten: mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten dargestellt*. Rowohlts Monographien, 394. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

[3] Berve, Helmut (1967). *Die Tyrannis bei den Griechen*. Munich: C. H. Beck.

[4] Blum, Wilhelm, ed. (2017). *Tyrannentötung: eine Textsammlung*. (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag).

[5] Bordieu, Pierre (1981/1984). *Questions de sociologie*. Paris: Ed. de Minuit.

[6] Boulègue, Laurence, Hélène Casanova-Robin, and Carlos Lév, ed. (2013). *Le tyran et sa postérité dans la littérature latine de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*. Renaissance latine, 1. Paris: Classiques Garnier. Translation of von Hutten's text by Brigitte Cauvin.

[7] Brendle, Franz (1998). *Dynastie, Reich und Reformation: Die württembergischen Herzöge Ulrich und Christoph, die Habsburger und Frankreich*. Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Geschichtliche Landeskunde in Baden-Württemberg: Reihe B, Forschungen 141. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

[8] Briguglia, Gianluca (2013). *Marsilio da Padova*. Pensatori, 31. Rome: Carocci.

[9] Bryld, Claus (2021). *Marsilius af Padua: middelalderens revolutionære filos of*. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

[10] Cantimori, Delio (2022). *Ulrico von Hutten e i rapporti fra Rinascimento e Riforma*. Biblioteca Aragno. Turin: Nino Aragno editore.

[11] Classen, Albrecht (2024a). *Criticism of the Court and the Evil King in the middle Ages: Literary-Historical Analyses.* Studies in Medieval Literature. Lanham, Boulder, New York, and London: Lexington Books.

[12] *Classen, Albrecht (2024b). "Ulrich von Hutten." Literary Encyclopedia. 1.4.1 (April 16,* 2024), online at: https://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=15215

[13] Classen, Albrecht (2021). "Evil Kings in the Middle Ages: The Literary Testimony of *Huon of Bordeaux*," *Academia: Letters*, Dec. 21, 2021, online at: https://www.academia.edu/65385576/Evil_Kings_in_the_Middle_Ages_The_Literary_ Testimony_ of_Huon_of_ Bordeaux (mentioned in 2155 papers by April 13, 2024).

[14] Classen, Albrecht (2020). "Die Gefahren des Massenwahns aus literarhistorischer Sicht: Von Walther von der Vogelweide und Heinrich Wittenwiler zu Thomas Mann und Gustave Le Bon," *Im Clash der Identitäten: Nationalismen im literatur- und kulturgeschichtlichen Diskurs*, ed. Wolfgang Brylla and Cezary Lipiński. Andersheit – Fremdheit – Ungleichheit: Erfahrungen von Disparatheit in der deutschsprachigen Literatur, 1. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 185–99.

[15] Connell, Charles W. (2016). *Popular Opinion in the middle Ages: Channeling Public Ideas and Attitudes*. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 18. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

[16] Füssel, Stephan, ed. (1989). *Ulrich von Hutten: 1488–1988; Akten des Internationalen Ulrich-von-Hutten-Symposiums 15.-17. Juli 1988 in Schlüchtern*. Pirckheimer-Jahrbuch, 4. Munich: Wilhelm Fink.

[17] Hofer, Marc (2000). *Tyrannen, Aristokraten, Demokraten: Untersuchungen zu Staat und Herrschaft im griechischen Sizilien von Phalaris bis zum Aufstieg von Dionysios I.* Histoire et sciences auxiliaires, 840. Berlin: Peter Lang.

[18] Holborn, Hajo (1929/1968). *Ulrich von Hutten*. Kleine Vandenhoeck-Reihe, 266. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

[19] Honemann, Volker (1993). "Ulrich von Hutten." *Deutsche Dichter der frühen Neuzeit (1450–1600: Ihr Leben und* Werk, ed. Stephan Füssel. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 359–76.

[20] Hsia, R. Po-chia, ed. (2006). *A Companion to the Reformation World*. Blackwell Companions to European History. Malden, MA, Oxford, and Carlton, Victory: Blackwell Publishing.

[21] Hüllen, J. (1998). "Tyrannis." *Historisches Wörterbuch der* Philosophie, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer. Vol. 10. Basel: Schwabe, 1607-18.

[22] Jaumann, Herbert (2008). "Hutten, Ulrich von." *Deutscher Humanismus 1480–1520. Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Franz Josef Worstbrock. Vol. I. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1185–1237.

[23] Jinno, Takashi (2021). "Tyrannicide as an Act of Divine Justice: The Doctrines of Tyrannicide of John of Salisbury and Juan de Mariana," *Christianity and Violence in the middle Ages and Early Modern Period: Perspectives from Europe and Japan*, ed. Fernanda Alfieri and Takashi Jinno. Studies in Early Modern and Contemporary European History, 3. Berlin, Boston, and Munich: De Gruyter Olden bourg, 63–80.

[24] Kerrigan, William and Gordon Braden (1989). *The Idea of the Renaissance* Baltimore, MD, and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

[25] Klaniczay, Tibor, Eva Kushner, and André Stegmann, and later Paul Chavy, ed. (1988, 2011, 2017). *L'Epoque de la Renaissance 1400-1600*. 4 vols. Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages, 7, 13, 26, 30. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó and Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

[26] Kraus, Marius (2022). *Ulrich von Hutten und seine Gegner: humanistische Invektiven am Vorabend der Reformation*. Transalpines Mittelalter. Baden-Baden: Ergon Verlag.

[27] Laski, Harold J., trans. and intro. (1963). Junius Brutus. *A Defense of Liberty against Tyrants.* Gloucester, MA: Smith.

[28] Miethke, Jürgen (1999). "Der Tyrannenmord im späteren Mittelalter." Gerhard Beestermöller and Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven, ed. *Friedensethik im Spätmittelalter: Theologie im Ringen um die gottgegebene Ordnung*. Beiträge zur Friedensethik, 30. Stuttgart: Berlin; Köln: Kohlhammer, 24–48.

[29] Moreno-Riaño, Gerson, ed. (2006). *The World of Marsilius of Padua*. Disputatio, 5. Turnhout: Brepols.

[30] Nederman, Cary J. (2019; substantial revision 2024). "Civic Humanism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Online at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/humanism-civic/ (last accessed on April 13, 2024).

[31] Nederman, Cary J. (2015). "John of Salisbury's Political Theory," *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, ed. Christophe Grellard and Fréderique Lachaud. Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 57. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 258–88.

[32] Nicollier-de Weck, Nicole (2015). "'Es gibt keinen tugendhaften Herrscher mehr auf der Welt.' Hubert Languet, ein Franzose im Dienst Kurfürst Augusts von Sachsen." Dirk Syndram, ed. *Luther und die Fürsten. Selbstdarstellung und Selbstverständnis des Herrschers im Zeitalter der Reformation. Nationale Sonderausstellung im Rahmen der Lutherdekade, Aufsatzband. Beiträge zur wissenschaftlichen Tagung vom 29. bis 31. Mai 2014 auf Schloss Hartenfels in Torgau und im Residenzschloss Dresden*. Dresden: Sandstein, 201–08.

[33] Orlick, Manfred (2023). "Sein Motto war: 'Ich hab's gewagt!': zum 500. Todestag von Ulrich von Hutten." *Literaturkritik.de* 25.8: 66-71.

[34] Panou, Nikos, and Hester Schadee, ed. (2018). *Evil Lords: Theories and Representations of Tyranny from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[35] Panzer, Marita A. (2012). *Wittelsbacherinnen. Fürstentöchter einer europäischen Dynastie*. Regensburg: Pustet.

[36] Pettegree, Andrew, ed. (2000). *The Reformation World*. London and New Yor: Routledge.

[37] Raff, Gerhard (2014). *Hie gut Wirtemberg allewege*. Vol. 1: *Das Haus Württemberg von Graf Ulrich dem Stifter bis Herzog Ludwig*. 6th ed. Schwaigern: Landhege.

[38] Rueb, Franz (1981). *Ulrich von Hutten: ein radikaler Intellektueller im 16. Jahrhundert*. Wagenbachs Taschenbücherei, 76. Berlin: Wagenbach.

[39] Saracino, Stefano (2019). *Tyrannis und Tyrannenmord bei Machiavelli: Zur Genese einer antitraditionellen Auffassung politischer Gewalt, Politischer Ordnung und Herrschaftsmoral*. Humanistische Bibliothek Reihe I: Abhandlungen Ser. Boston: Brill.

[40] Stricker, Günter (1967). "Das politische Denken der Monarchomachen: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Ideen im 16. Jahrhundert." Ph.D. Heidelberg.

[41] Treu, Martin (1996). *Die Schule des Tyrannen: lateinische Schriften*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun.

[42] Turchetti, Mario (2013). *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'Antiquité à nos jours*. Paris: Classiques Garnier.

[43] Ukena, Peter, ed. (1979). Ulrich von Hutten. *Deutsche Schriften*. Munich: Winkler-Verlag.

[44] Yun, Bee (2021). *Wege zu Machiavelli: Die Rückkehr des Politischen im Spämittelalter*. Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, 91. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.