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Mediated Individualities: Dante's Linguistic *Signum* and Rhetorical *Causarum Genera*

Dante defines language as a "rational and perceptible sign" (*Vulg*. *El*. I.iii.2). Whereas medieval and contemporary semiotic theories agree in considering words as signs, Dante uses the singular *signum* for language as a whole. Language is not comprised of multiple signs but is a sign in its own right. Why? In my presentation, I argue that whereas traditional linguistic reflection considers words as mediators between human beings and things, and language as a tool to understand reality, Dante sees language as the space of mediation between individuals and therefore takes it in its entirety as one sign pointing to the individuality of its speakers. To do so, I will show how Dante's reflection on language, as articulated in the first book of *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, is informed by the classical rhetorical tradition, especially Cicero's *De Inventione* and its medieval reception.