On The Role of Historical Analysis in Metapragmatics
A Study on 'Discernment'

Annick Paternoster:[1]   University of Lugano, University of Leeds
annick.paternoster@usi.ch

Dániel Z. Kádár: University of Huddersfield
d.z.kadar@hud.ac.uk

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to bring a historical perspective into metapragmatics, by examining the historicity of scientific metaterms, i.e. words that are used in scientific metadiscourse on language (use) as technical definitions. Our objective is to draw attention to the importance of exploring a) the history and development of such metaterms, as well as studying b) their historically situated meanings. By merging metapragmatics and historical pragmatics we hope to contribute to the broader endeavour of increasing self-reflexivity in interpersonal and intercultural pragmatic research (see Haugh et al. 2013), and so it is important to point out right at the beginning of the paper that this work uses historical data primarily with an illustrative purpose.

Our main argument is what follows: if one uses an interpersonal pragmatic metaterm without proper historical retrospection, there is a potential risk that this term will be regarded as 'scientific,' in that it is supposed to encompass modern scientific conceptualisations – that are broadly agreed in a certain research area – as being valid across space and time. This application may or may not cause significant problems. For example, in the realm of historical politeness research it is broadly agreed that one can use the metaterm 'politeness' to describe a theoretical understanding of politeness behaviour across space and time, as far as one make it clear that this term is used in a modern and scientific sense, provided that it is used on data types in which this metaterm does not carry alternative meanings (see Kádár and Culpeper 2010). This is simply because the particular lexeme 'politeness' is a relatively recent coination that is used mainly in English. However, various other metaterms tend to be historically-loaded from a semantic perspective, and in fact even 'politeness' can be problematic if one attempts to apply it, say, on Victorian English data, in which 'politeness' tends to be defined differently from the modern sense(s) (see e.g. Watts 1991). As the present paper illustrates, this issue becomes particularly important in the case of those modern metaterms, which exist in historical proto-scientific discourses (Kádár and Haugh 2013) in some form. Consequently, if one applies such modern terms uncritically a contradiction may occur between their modern and historical understandings. In other words, by representing such terms as 'scientific' in a modern sense, we unavoidably project our modern understandings on historical data.

This research is not an isolated attempt, as it contributes to intercultural/cross-cultural pragmatics and metapragmatic research in a broader sense. On the one hand cross-cultural studies such as Blum-Kulka and Sheffer (1993), Haugh and Obana

---

(2007), and Kádár and Mills (2013) have argued that it is essential to carefully compare interpersonal pragmatic metaterms across cultures, instead of uncritically using English metaterms as analytic artefacts, as this unavoidably makes us to presuppose that we analyse the same phenomena across cultures, even if we do not. Historical pragmaticians, on the other hand (e.g. Paternoster 2010; Jucker 2010), have drawn attention to the importance of studying historical metaterms, which help us to understand historically situated interpretations of interpersonal pragmatic phenomena.[2] However, previous research has not addressed the important group of interpersonal pragmatic metaterms that are used in both historical and modern analytic discourses. Figure 1 illustrates this knowledge gap:
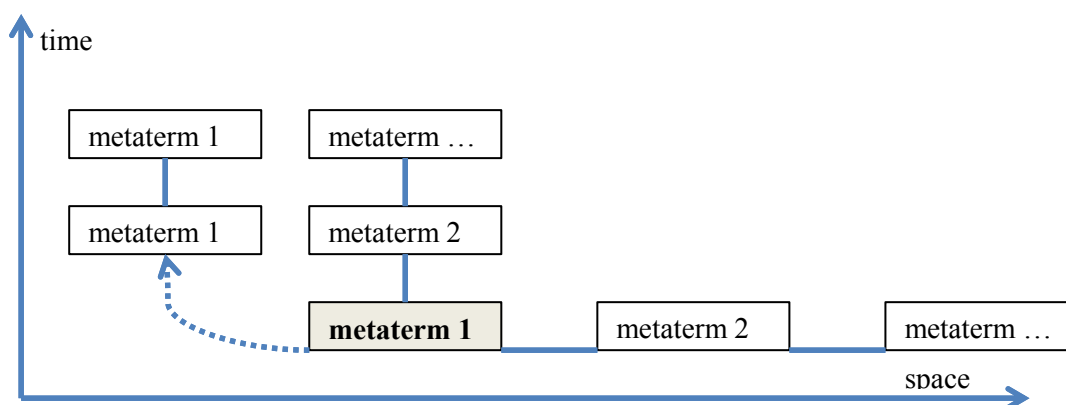

Figure 1: Current gap in metapragmatic research

In terms of space (cultures), existing research has emphasised the relationship between Western (usually English) interpersonal pragmatic metaterms and their culture-specific equivalents. The same applies to time: historical pragmaticians have studied similarities and differences between modern and historical metaterms, and the implications of these differences. However, as the dotted arrow indicates, previous research has not studied the diachronic development of interpersonal pragmatic metaterms, and the implications of this development (but see Kádár et al. forthcoming as an exception).

1.1. The case study: Discernment
We intend to take the now widely used (and debated) concept of 'discernment' as a case study in this article. Discernment has been introduced into the field of linguistic politeness research by Ide (1989), who elaborated the concept of discernment–volition as a critique of Brown and Levinson (1987). Ide (1989) argues that a weak point in the Brown and Levinsonian universal model is its Gricean worldview, i.e. it relies on the idea that politeness comes into existence when the speaker flouts conversational maxims through the means-ends reasoning of individuals (i.e. as speakers use language in 'strategic' ways, in order to trigger a certain inference associated with politeness). Drawing from the Japanese emic metaterm of *wakimae* ('discernment'), Ide (1989) argues that, in Japanese, one's behaviour tends to be judged as polite when one discerns the appropriate communal norm that applies in the situation, and this

2. The joint interest of cross-cultural and historical scholars in this area is not coincidental: as Kádár and Culpeper (2010) argue, cross-cultural and historical pragmatics have a lot in common, as both of them serve as 'testing grounds' for major pragmatic concepts.

overrides individual rationality. Thus, 'discernment' involves "the socially dominant norms of relationally constructive conventional and ritualistic behaviour" (Kádár and Mills 2013:143). This differs from dominant 'Western' practices of politeness, which operate through the means-ends reasoning of individuals, defined as 'volition' by Ide. As a most representative example for the operation of discernment, Ide refers to Japanese honorific register, which, according to her definition, tends to be used in a non-strategic way as the interactants follow societal norms in the choice of a given register in Japanese.

The concept of discernment has been thoroughly criticised in cross-cultural pragmatics: several scholars have challenged the notion that honorific style is always used non-strategically (discernment). O'Driscoll (1996) raised this issue when criticising Hill et al. (1986), whilst Okamoto (1999) and Usami (2002) have shown that the usage of honorifics can be strategic in Japanese. Kádár (2007) has illustrated that the same is the case in other 'honorific-rich' languages such as historical vernacular Chinese. Pizziconi (2003: 1471; see also Pizziconi 2011) argues that "the principles regulating the use of honorific devices in Japanese are not substantially different from those of English, both being similarly strategic." Furthermore, in a recent paper Kádár and Mills (2013) argue that the discernment-volition pair is conceptually inappropriate, due to two interrelated reasons:

1. Ide uses a culture-specific concept, *wakimae*, to set up a broader (culture-outsider) scientific metaterm, 'discernment', which can be used to describe differences across languages and cultures.[3] It is obvious then that 'discernment' has a broader meaning that *wakimae* – however, Ide applies these metaterms in an interchangeable way.
2. Volition is also not on pair with *wakimae*, even though Ide refers to it as a typical North American value of politeness behaviour, simply because it is a scientific concept which does not seem to occur in American folk-theory.

Thus, following Kádár and Haugh's (2013) recent framework, it can be argued that the discernment/*wakimae*-volition framework is problematic, since it uncritically amalgamates different second-order understandings of politeness.

In spite of these problematic characteristics, the notion of 'discernment' has made a significant impact on a number of areas, in particular historical pragmatic research. For example, Jucker (2010) describes Middle English politeness as a 'discernment culture,' Mazzon (2010) draws on this concept in her research on terms of address, and Moreno (2002) applies this notion in the context of historical Spanish formal forms. It seems then that many historical pragmaticians have adopted discernment as a 'modern' scientific concept directly from cross-cultural pragmatics, without taking cross-cultural pragmatic criticisms of this notion into account. We do not intend to argue against the reason behind this decision: discernment seems to work surprisingly well as an umbrella term for historical cultures in which the use of formulaic language is prescribed vis-a-vis a complex nexus of conventions and rituals (see Bax 2010). However, such an essentialist usage is not without danger, as criticisms raised by cross-cultural scholars apply also to the historical context. Even more importantly, from the perspective of our paper, a danger in this view is that historical pragmatic scholars do occasionally use discernment to describe

3. To be fair, Ide (1989) does not use discernment and volition as a clear dichotomy, but rather as tendencies in terms of culture-specific politeness behaviour.

interpersonal behaviour in historical periods in which culture-specific equivalents of 'discernment' existed and, importantly, greatly influenced (proto-)scientific metadiscourse on proper interpersonal behaviour across Europe.

In order to show this point, our paper traces the development of the Italian *discernere*, the contemporary equivalent of 'discernment,' and its synonyms in Italian conduct manuals written during the 16th century (this group of metaterms are referred to by using *discernere* as a collective term; for detailed discussion see Section 3). We argue that there are at least two reasons why the use of 'discernment' is even more problematic when it comes to historical analysis than what previous cross-cultural criticisms of this notion indicate in the case of modern interactional behaviour:

1. the meaning and implication of *discernere* does, to some extent, not only differ but *contradict* to that of 'discernment';
2. it is difficult even to identify *discernere* as the only metapragmatic 'counterpart' of 'discernment,' as this term developed within a broader metapragmatic vocabulary in 16th century Italy.

What makes the picture even more complex is the fact that European cultures have greatly influenced each other, and *discernere*, for instance, had influence well beyond Italy; any historical account should take such intercultural appropriations into account before it adopts a modern metaterm as a broad 'scientific' notion.

In a sense, our work breaks with a 'convention' in interpersonal pragmatics. As Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue, it is an unfortunate tendency in interpersonal pragmatics that East Asian languages are often used to test the validity of Western frameworks. Our aim, however, is to use Western data to challenge a theoretical framework that has been developed by the Japanese team of Ide (1989) and her colleagues. By doing so, we follow an uptake of Culpeper and O'Driscoll (2013) who argue that it is essential to probe into Western culture-specific understandings and practices of politeness.

2. Data and methodology

We examine the historically situated understandings of the metaterm *discernere* in the following two main sources:

1. The *Libro del cortigiano*, *Book of The Courtier*, by Baldassarre (or Baldesar, or Baldessar) Castiglione, published in 1528 (complied between 1508 and 1528).
2. The *Civil conversazione*, *Civil Conversation*, written by Stefano Guazzo, published in 1574 (an extended version published in 1579).

We have selected these manuals partly because of their importance in contemporary scientific metadiscourses on appropriate behaviour across Europe (see below), and also because the verb *discernere* – and its corresponding noun and adjective – play a central role in them. The examination of these sources reveals that in 16th century Italian conduct literature (and, consequently, in the conduct literature of other countries influenced by these works up to the 18th century) the verb *discernere* has a meaning that in many ways contradicts with modern 'discernment'. In addition, these two manuals, respectively from the first and the last quarter of the century, allow us to demonstrate that a noteworthy development had taken place in the metalexical group of *discernere*-related terms (see Section 1).

In what follows, let us briefly introduce the history of the sources studied and the frequency of *discernere* in them. The *Book of The Courtier* is one of the most influential conduct manuals in European history: Burke (1995) identified as many as 153 editions and translations of the work between its publication in 1528 and 1848; notably, 115 of these publications are dated before 1600. These figures talk for themselves, in particular if one takes the fact into consideration that in that period book publication and selling operated in significantly lower volume and at a slower pace than in modern time. The text was very quickly translated into Spanish (1534) and into French (1537). Other languages followed in the second half of the century: Latin (1561), English (1561) and German (1565). The only parts of Europe remaining outside Castiglione's influence sphere are "the Celtic world," the "northern parts of Scandinavia," and to the east, Moscow and the Christian parts of the Ottoman empire: "Serbia, Moldavia, Wallachia, Bulgaria, etc." (Burke 1995:156).

The European fortune of Guazzo's *Civil Conversation* is equally vast. The manual has 43 Italian editions before 1650 (Patrizi 2003), i.e. within less than a century after its publication, and it was translated in French in 1579, and then, from French, in English between 1581 and 1586; these translations were followed by German and Latin ones.

It is important to note that although our paper focuses on Italian data, this language choice has importance and implications beyond Romance studies. This is not only due to a) the broader metapragmatic scope of our inquiry, but also b) due to the fact that Castiglione's and Guazzo's works, and consequently the metalexems studied, have been translated to English. Although we do not specifically interrogate the historical meaning of the English metaterm 'to discern' here, we would like to emphasise the urgent need for a detailed study in that respect. An important finding is that in the first English translation of the *Courtier* by Thomas Hoby, 1561, *every single* Italian metapragmatic use of *discernere* (5 occurrences in Castiglione, see Table 1 below) is translated with the English verb 'to discern;' this can possibly mean that in the 16th century the English 'to discern' was used in a metapragmatic meaning from its modern counterpart.

In terms of methodology, we approach the topic through two stages of inquiry. In Section 3 we study the sources from quantitative and semantic perspectives: we examine the frequency of occurrence and meanings of the *discernere* and related metaterms. Since metaterms such as *discernere* are not necessarily used in their metapragmatic function, it is important to a) examine their contextually situated meanings, and b) capture the relationship between these metapragmatic synonyms. In Section 4 we conduct a discourse analytic case study, by examining the way in which the metaterm *discernere* is used in the sources studied, in order to further differences between modern 'discernment' and its historical Italian 'counterpart.' Whilst we argue in Section 3 that the verbal form *discernere* itself had gradually become less important than some of its synonyms by the time when our second source the *Civil Conversations* was published, we believe that it is important to conduct an examination by focusing on this particular metaterm, as a seeming direct equivalent of 'discern(ment).'

3. *Discernere and related metaterms*
When it comes to a historical metalexical inquiry of the present scope, it is important to be aware of the fact that the historical 'equivalent' of a metaterm, in our case *discernere*, may not only have a different meaning from its modern 'counterpart', but also that it may have synonyms that a research cannot ignore. We argue that in order

to conduct a rigorous examination of historical metalexicon, any inquiry needs to set off by taking an etymological perspective.

In the *Book of The Courtier, discernere* appears 11 times, in various tenses and modes.[4] Whereas in one case the verb *discernere* relates to the action of seeing, indicating a mere sensorial perception, in all other cases it means 'to distinguish;' of these 10 cases, in 5 it describes cases in which appropriate behaviour has to be chosen in respect of the circumstances, i.e. 'to distinguish the appropriate choice.' With *discernere* the courtier distinguishes clearly all the different circumstantial factors, before finding the match between such factors and the choice of appropriate behaviour. Table 1 illustrates the meanings and number of occurrences of *discernere* in the *Courtier*:

Meaning	Number of occurrences
perceive (with one's eyes)	1
distinguish	5
distinguish the appropriate choice (metalexical use)	5
Total	11

Table 1. Discernere in the Book of The Courtier

Considering that the total length of *Courtier* is 116,738 words, this number of occurrence is relatively low; however, an important fact that counterbalances sheer quantity is that *discernere* consistently appears in passages that reflect on the right method for establishing a specific choice of behaviour. It is also pertinent to add that *discernere* has metalexical synonyms in the source: Castiglione never uses the noun *discernimento* ('discernment') but instead he applies the nominal form *discrezione*. This nominal form appears 8 times in the text, and in cases in which it refers to appropriate behaviour it means 'capacity to distinguish the appropriate choice:'

Meaning	Number of occurrences
power to decide	1
capacity to distinguish the appropriate choice (metalexical use)	7
Total	8

Table 2. Discrezion(e) in the Book of The Courtier

In addition, the adjective *discreto* is used in the source in same metapragmatic meaning, i.e. in reference to someone being 'able to distinguish the appropriate choice' in interpersonal communication. Variants of this form (singular, plural, masculine, feminine, adverb, superlative) reach a total of 36 in the *Courtier*:

Meaning	Number of occurrences
able to distinguish the appropriate choice (metalexical use)	36
Total	36

Table 3. Discreto in the Book of The Courtier

To sum up, it occurs that *discernere, discrezion(e)* and *discreto* are used in a

---

4. Concordances of the *Libro del cortigiano* are available at <http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITA1702/_INDEX.HTM>.

complementary way; this use becomes logical, if one considers that these three forms have the same etymologic root, as the following figure illustrates:
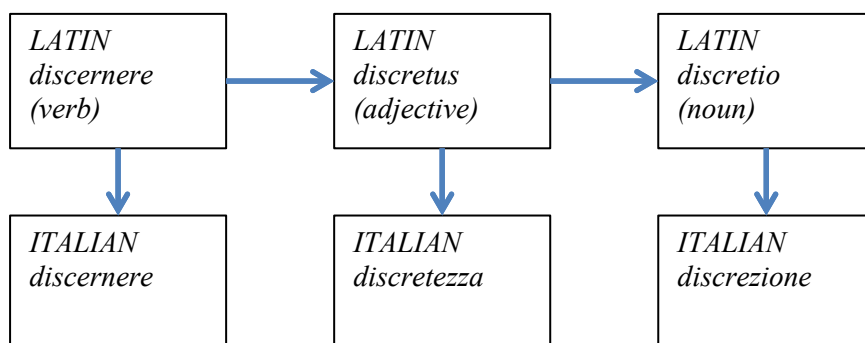

Figure 2. Etymological development of the Italian metaterms studied

Italian *discernere* comes from the Latin verb *discernere*, which is composed by the verb *scernere* 'to choose,' and the prefix *dis-* 'by separating' (Cortelazzo-Zolli: 473). This Latin verb has a past participle *discretus*, which in turn has produced the Late Latin noun *discretio*. These Latin expressions made their ways directly to Italian, as Cortelazzo-Zolli (474) explains.

If one turns to the second source, the *Civil Conversations* by Guazzo,[5] the complexity of comparing historical and modern metaterms becomes even more evident. An inquiry into this source reveals that there is an additional metaterm used in this source: *discretezza*. The meaning of this metaterm is close to that of *modern* of Italian *discrezione* ('discretion'), as it refers to 'the capacity to not mention certain things in a conversation in order to keep a secret or to avoid causing offence.' This demonstrates that metaterms are subject to continuous diachronic development, a factor that makes any uncritical projection of modern scientific metaterms on historical data even more difficult.

In what follows, let us examine occurrences of the four metasynonyms of the *Civil Conversations*. In terms of data size, Guazzo's work is longer than that of Castiglione: it consists of roughly 157,000 words (Guazzo, 1993, vol. 1: 479); in a similar way with the *Book of The Courtier* the frequency of metaterms in the *discernere* group is relatively low on the one hand, whilst these lexemes are used in key points of discussion, on the other. The following tables illustrate the use of *discernere*, *discrezion(e)* and *discreto*:

Meaning	Number of occurrences
perceive (with one's eyes)	1
distinguish	8
distinguish the appropriate choice (metalexical use)	3
Total	12

Table 4. Discernere in the Civil Conversations

Meaning	Number of occurrences
power to decide	3
capacity to distinguish the appropriate choice	7

(metalexical use)	
Total	10

Table 5. Discrezion(e) in the Civil Conversations

Meaning	Number of occurrences
discreet (metalexical use)	11
able to distinguish the appropriate choice (metalexical use)	24
Total	35

Table 6. Discreto in the Civil Conversations

These tables reveal some noteworthy differences between the metalexical inventories of the sources. It seems that the verbal form *discernere* is somewhat less frequent in the *Civil Conversations* than in the *Book of The Courtier*. Furthermore, *discreto* seems to operate in two metalexical functions: that is, it continues to be used as a reference to the ability to distinguish the appropriate choice of a certain form of interpersonal behaviour, and it also occurs in the new sense of being discreet. This new use coincides with the occurrence of the above-mentioned noun *discretezza*, the occurrence of which in the *Book of The Courtier* is illustrated by Table 7:

Meaning	Number of occurrences
discretion (metalexical use)	12
able to distinguish the appropriate choice (metalexical use)	7
Total	19

Table 7. Discretezza in the Civil Conversations

Thus, in the *Civil Conversations* two nominal forms, *discrezion(e)* and *discretezza* are used, and *discreto* a) functions as the adjective for both nouns, and b) some of its uses mean 'discreet,' and others 'able to distinguish the appropriate choice.' The partial synonymy within *discrezione*, *discretezza*, and *discreto* shows that 'discretion' and 'discreet' (in the modern meaning of withholding potentially offensive comments) are born as a specific implication within the concept of having good judgment. Having good judgment in the specific context of conversation evolves towards saying less and speaking with moderation, out of considerateness for one's speech partner's feelings.

To sum up the present section has examined the meanings and occurrences of metaterms of the *discernere* group in the sources studied. The following figures – in which the boldface and underlined area represents the metapragmatic use/meaning of a given lexeme – summarise the meanings of these metaterms:
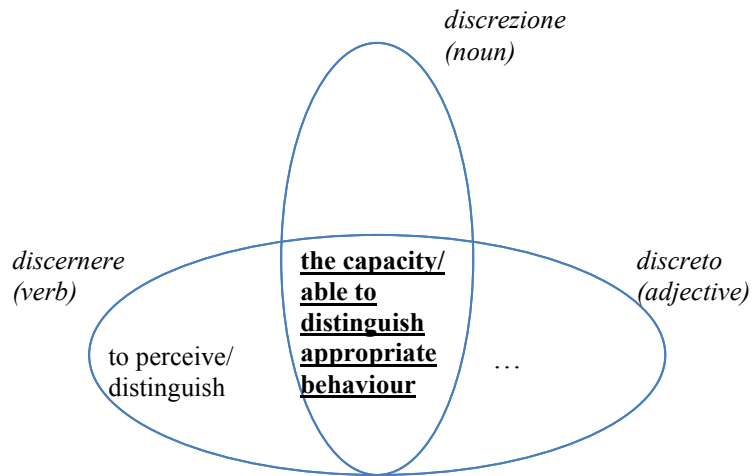
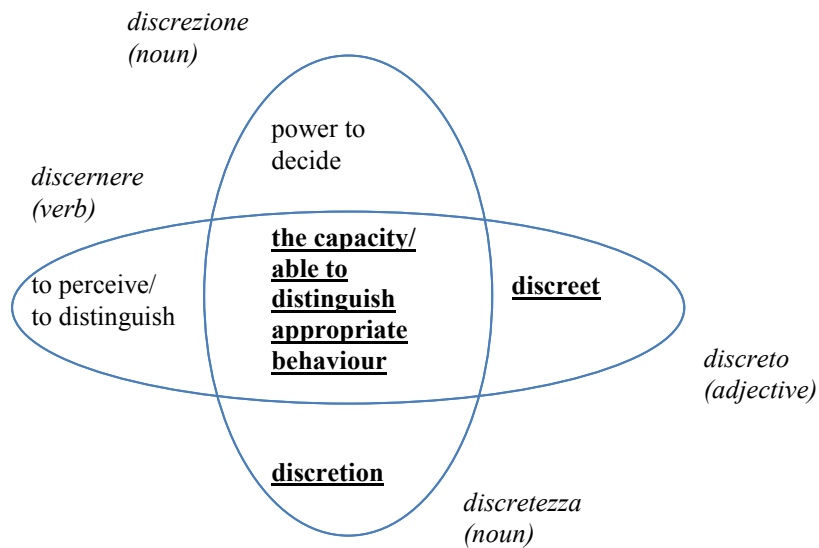*Figure 3. Meanings of discernere, discrezione and discreto in the Book of The Courtier*

Figure 4. Meanings of discernere, discrezione, discretezza, and discreto in the Civil Conversations

These figures illustrate the above discussed widening in the metapragmatic use of the *discerne* group.

It is pertinent to note, in addition to this discussion, that the metapragmatic widening observed here is only temporal, in the sense that it reflects transition between two states of metameaning. If one compares the seven tables above, it becomes evident that, for Guazzo's *discernere*, the meaning of 'to distinguish the appropriate choice' is only present in a quarter of the cases (3 out of 12; see Table 4), whereas in Castiglione it was still present in nearly half of the cases (5 out of 11; see Table 1). Also, for Guazzo's adjective *discreto*, the meaning 'discreet' is already

present in just under a third of the occurrences (11 out of 35; see Table 6), whilst in Castiglione there were none (out of 36; see Table 3). If one takes *discrezione* out of the equation, where the metapragmatic meaning is comfortably dominant in Guazzo as well as in Castiglione (see Tables 2 and 5), for *discernere* and *discreto* the metapragmatic reference to 'appropriateness' is loosing terrain.

Section 3 has proven the two main claims of this article, that is, that a) there is a potential discrepancy between the historical and modern meanings/uses of historically-loaded metaterms, and b) that it is problematic to project modern metaterms on historical data because a modern metaterm can have different equivalents that, in addition, are subject to historical development. In what follows, let us conduct a discourse analytic examination of the verbal form *discernere*, in order to further delve into the first point, by capturing differences between 'discernment' and *discernere* on a more in-depth level.

4. Interactional use of *discernere*
We divide the present section into two parts, by examining the metapragmatic meanings of *discernere* in the two sources.

The Book of The Courtier
The *Courtier* is written as a dialogue: a group of courtiers has gathered at the palace of Urbino to discuss the qualities of the perfect courtier and the perfect lady. The discussions last four evenings, each evening making up the content of one of the four books of the dialogue. Many occurrences of our metaterms appear in Book II. In Book I, the courtiers have discussed the qualities of the perfect courtier: he needs to be of noble birth, behave with effortless grace, speak and write properly. Although his real vocation is in military service, he has to have a sound knowledge of literature, he needs to master the art of drawing (useful for military maps!) and of performing music. In the first half of Book II, then, the courtiers talk about the appropriate way in which the courtier's qualities listed in Book I need to be adapted to specific circumstances. This is where *discernere* appears first, as example (1) below shows, in a context that defines the intellectual capacity necessary to act appropriately. In this conversation the main speaker, Federico Fregoso, discusses the risk of wrongly applying general rules of interpersonal behavioural norms in actual conversations, without carefully considering the actual situation:

(1)

>
> *E potrà occorrere che l'uomo si astenerà da una sciocchezza pubblica e troppo chiara [...] e non saprà poi astenersi di lodare se stesso fuori di proposito, di usare una presunzione fastidiosa, di dire talore una parola pensando di fare ridere, la quale per essere detta fuori di tempo, riuscirà fredda e senza grazia alcuna. E spesso questi errori sono coperti di un certo velo, che scorgere non li lascia da chi li fa, se con diligenza non vi si mira. E benché per molte cause la vista nostra poco <u>discerna</u>, pure sopra tutto per l'ambizione diviene tenebrosa: che ognuno volentieri si mostra in quello che si persuade di sapere, o vera o falsa che sia quella persuasione.* (2002a: 105–6)
> And a man may happen to refrain from some public and all too obvious folly [...], and yet not have sense enough to refrain from praising himself on the wrong occasion, or from indulging in tiresome presumption, or from saying something which he thinks will provoke laughter but which, because said at the wrong time, falls cold and completely flat. And often these errors are

covered with a kind of veil that prevents the one who commits them from seeing them unless he keeps in this a diligent watch; and although there are many reasons why our eyes are wanting in <u>discernment</u> ["and although for many causes our sight <u>*descerneth*</u> but little" (1561:56[6])], it is by ambition that they are especially blurred, because everyone is ready to put himself forward in that wherein he thinks himself to be knowledgeable, no matter whether it be true or not." (2002b: 70)

Federico identifies a basic problem: it is difficult to choose the right form of behaviour in cases in which the terms of the decision are unclear. Here *discernere* covers the mental process by which the courtier distinguishes neatly the hazy terms of an alternative, between the appropriate and the inappropriate option, before choosing one of them and committing to action. *Discernere* is therefore concerned with a heuristics to reach a decision on appropriateness in a specific interactional context – unlike modern 'discernment,' which implies the ability of following according to pre-existing interactional norms, with little individual responsibility in the decision making process. According to example (1), when trying to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour ("on the wrong occasion," "at the wrong time"), the options can be "veiled," especially as the courtier's eyes may be "blurred" by ambition. Since the options appear to be veiled, the courtier needs to discern his options before taking any interpersonal communicative action.

Consequently, *discernere* is an individual skill, and as the following section makes it clear:

(2)

> *E benché il cortigiano sia di così buon giudizio che possa <u>discernere</u> queste differenze, non è però che più facile non gli sia conseguire quello che cerca, essendogli aperto il pensiero con qualche precetto.* (2002a: 106)
> And although the Courtier may be of such good judgment as to perceive these differences ["that he can <u>*descerne* </u>these differences" (1561:56)], it will surely be easier for him to do what he is striving to do if his mind's eye is made attentive by some precept. (2002b: 70-1)

Social norms which make someone's mind's eye "attentive," hence facilitating individual decisions, are rather simple in the *Courtier*: there in only one specific behavioural norm, the need of avoiding affectation, as example (3) illustrates:

(3)

> *Voglio adunque che il nostro cortigiano in ciò che egli faccia o dica usi alcune regole universali le quali io estimo che brevemente contengano tutto quello che a me si appartiene di dire. E per la prima e più importante, fugga [...] <u>sopra tutto l'affettazione</u>. Appresso consideri bene che cosa è quella che egli fa o dice, e il luogo dove la fa, in presenza di cui, a che tempo, la causa perché la fa, l'età sua, la professione, il fine dove tende, e i mezzi che a quello condurre lo possono. E così, con queste avvertenze, <u>si accomodi discretamente</u> a tutto quello che fare o dire vuole.* (2002a:108)

---

6. As we have consulted a pdf, these numbers refer to a document image, not to the actual page.

Therefore, in all that he does or says, I would have our Courtier follow certain general rules which, in my opinion, briefly comprise all I have to say. And the first and most important of these is that he should avoid affectation above all else [...]. Next, let him consider well what he does or says, the place where he does it, in whose presence, its timeliness, the reason for doing it, his own age, his profession, the end at which he aims, and the means by which he can reach it; thus, keeping these points in mind, let him act accordingly in whatever he may choose to do or say. (2002b:72)

Apart from the specific notion of avoiding affection, Federico's discussion remains general, as he advises the Courtier to "*si accomodi discretamente*" "act accordingly," i.e. distinguishing the different circumstances before making an interpersonal behavioural choice. The notion of 'circumstances' is considerably vague in the discussion: later in the text Federico names some substantial circumstances (*circumstantiae locutionis*) to consider, including the notions of "*quis, quid, cui dicas, cur, quomodo, quando?*" "who, what, with whom, why, how, when?" These norms are considerably vague from the modern observer's perspective, and so it is not a coincidence that one of Frederico's speech partners Morello da Ortona makes a sarcastic remark, by making an analogy between Frederico's notion of appropriate behaviour and the act of confession, where the degree of sin depends indeed on the 'circumstances' in which it was committed:

(4)

> [...] *benché mi ricordi ancora qualche altra volta averle udite dai frati coi quali confessato mi sono. E parmi che le chiamino le circostanze*. (2002a: 108)
> [...] although I do remember having heard them sometimes from fiars when I was at confession, and they call them 'the circumstances', it seems to me. (2002b:72)

In sum, *discernere* involves an individualistic act/ability, which implies responsibility in a vague context. Interestingly, the individualistic character of *discernere* becomes even more evident as it is presented as a capacity with which the individual needs to supplement the inherent limitations of the conduct manual. This use is illustrated by example (5), in which Ludovico Pio is asking what a courtier is to do if his prince were to ask him to perform "dishonorable and disgraceful" acts (2002b:85). Federico gives the following response:

(5)

> "*Vero è che molte cose paiono al primo aspetto buone che sono male, e molte paiono male eppure sono buone. Però è lecito talora per servizio dei suoi signori ammazzare non un uomo ma diecimila, e fare molte altre cose, le quali, a chi non le considerasse come si deve, parериano male, eppure non sono.*"
> *Rispose allora il signor Gaspare Pallavicino: "Deh, per vostra fede, ragionate un poco sopra questo e insegnateci come si possano discernere le cose veramente buone dalle apparenti."*
> *"Perdonatemi," disse messer Federico "io non voglio entrare qua che troppo ci saria che dire, ma il tutto si rimetta alla discrezione vostra."* (2002a: 129-30)

"It is true that many things that are evil appear at first sight to be good, and many appear evil and yet are good. Hence, when serving one's master it is sometimes permitted to kill not one man but ten thousand men, and do many other things that might seem evil to a man who did not look upon them as one ought, and yet are not evil."

Then Signor Gaspar Pallavicino replied: "I pray you, by your faith, go into this a bit more, and teach us how one can <u>distinguish</u> what is really good ["how we maie *descerne* thinges good in deede" (1561:67)] from what appears to be good." "Excuse me," said messer Federico, "I do not wish to go into that, for there would be too much to say; but let the whole question be left to your <u>discretion</u>." (2002b:86)

In example (5) both *discernere* and its nominal variant *discrezion* are used. Unsatisfied with the generic reply, Gaspar asks Federico to be more specific, to distinguish (using metapragmatic *discernere*). Federico provides a tautology as a response: in order to distinguish the appropriate choice, Gaspar needs to use *discrezione*, the capacity of distinguishing the appropriate choice. Instead of developing rules for specific cases, Federico substitutes regulation with the courtier's personal judgment.

It is pertinent to note that a noteworthy feature of example (5) is that it ventures outside the realm of etiquette – or 'moral oughts' (see Culpeper 2011) – and brings appropriate behaviour into the world of moral choices or 'moral oughts' (see Kádár and Marquez-Reiter forthcoming). This is another feature that distinguishes *discernere*, and other metaterms in the lexical group, from 'discernment,' as the latter is basically a social rather than a moral concept. This calls for a further contextualisation of Castiglione's metapragmatic terms under examination. Discernment as a moral capacity to separate right from wrong is present in the treatises of the Church fathers, where the notion appears in Latin (see Papasogli 2013). Whilst the examination of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper, it us useful here to refer to the religious application of the Latin *discretion* – the equivalent of *discrezione* in example (5) – in Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (first published in Latin as the *Exercitia spiritualia* in 1548) was written between 1522 and 1524, when Castiglione was in the last stages of writing the *Courtier*. The *Spiritual Exercises* is a manual for meditation, written mainly for Jesuit novices; it consists of exercises for self-review, which help the novice to meditate about the true nature of his vocation. One of the main aims of the *Exercises* is to develop *discretio* in the novice, that is, the ability to distinguish between good desires and evil desires, between Godliness and sinfulness, in cases where evil may be veiled as good, and this good is only an apparent good. This notion seems to represent an explicitly religious and moral version of Castiglione's social concept of *discernere* as represented by example (5).

Civil Conversations
As *discernere* only appears 3 times with a metapragmatic meaning, in what follows we analyse all the occurrences of the term in the text. The first manifestation of *discernere* occurs within an elaborate discussion of the question whether socialising with noblemen who play betting games with cards and dice in public, on the town square, is appropriate or not. The question is framed as a 'judgment' (*giudicio*; 1993:45), and the author of the text considers several arguments: two opposing views and a middle ground. The first argument is in favour of the idea of such socialisation

practices: the author argues that playing cards in public is an accepted practice. The second one is an argument against mingling with such people, as playing cards in public has always been considered a scandalous act. The third argument, involving *discernere*, reads as follows:

(6)

> *Tuttavia fra queste estreme ragioni io ne <u>discerno</u> una nel mezo, che mi fa conchiudere che questi s'abbiano a sopportare, conciosiacosaché se bene hanno per consuetudine questo abuso, voi troverete però che communemente non se ne servono a quell'ingordo e vizioso fine ove tendono alcuni giocatori, anzi giuntatori, ma sì bene per passatempo e per maniera di trastullo.* (1993:45)
>
> Nothwithstanding, betwéene these twoo extréeme reasons, I <u>sée</u> one in the middest betwéene them, which maketh mée of opinion that these men are to bée counted tollerable, for that though they haue by vse this abuse of playing, yet you shall finde that they apply it not to that ende, which other gamesters doe, to make a gaine of it, but for pastetime and recreation sake. (1581, vol.1:26)

Discernere here indicate the decisive step in the decision making process that determines the choice of an appropriate form of behaviour (joining or not the group). To join noblemen in a public betting game is appropriate since the mental process of *discernere* has distinguished between what only appeared to be vicious, and what is in fact an innocent pastime. Example (6) seems to be closely related to Castiglione's use of *discernere* as a method for establishing the appropriate decision in interpersonal behaviour.

In the other examples studied here, *discernere* appears both in discussions of the extreme difficulty of distinguishing between a friend and a flatterer, that is, between a true friend and a false friend. Similarly to the previous examples in Section 4, *discernere* appears as an individualistic and moral evaluation of, and choice between, an evil (flattering) act veiled as good (friendship) and genuine behaviour:

(7)

> *E con tutto che alcuni valenti scrittori abbiano trattato de' modi co' quali si conosce l'amico dall'adulatore, nondimeno è cosa molto malagevole, per non dir impossibile, il conseguir questa conoscenza, così perché il mondo è ripieno di queste fiere domestiche, come perché non si può chiaramente discernere quel male che ha sembianza di bene.* (1993:57)
>
> And albeit some famous writers haue intreated of the meanes to discerne a friend from a flatterer, yet is it in my opinion verie harde (that I may not say impossible) to attaine to that knowledge, as well for that the worlde is full of these tame beastes, as also for that it is harde to discerne the euill which resembleth the good. (1581, vol. 1:32)

(8)

> *Poiché l'amico e l'adulatore hanno tanta conformità insieme, che con fatica si discernono, mi piacerebbe che m'insegnaste come farò sì ch'io non sia tenuto adulatore.* (1993:62)
>
> For so much as the friend, and the flatterer haue so great conformitie together, that hardly one can bée knowne from the other, I woulde gladly haue you

instruct mée howe I ought to behaue my selfe not to bée reputed a flatterer. (1581, vol. 1:39)

In sum, the present section has shown that *discernere* is used in a consistent way in 16th century Italian manuals on appropriate behaviour. On the basis of the 8 examples studied in this section, we can conclude that contemporary 16th century understandings of *discernere* include the following properties of this notion:

1. an individualistic act/ability;
2. an act/ability that implies the responsibility of an individual;
3. it operates in a vague context;
4. it not only fulfills a social ought but also, potentially, a moral value in the philosophical sense of the word.

These characteristics are clearly different from 'discernment,' which according to Ide (1989) is:

1. pre-negotiated and part of interactional expectations (i.e. everyone in a given culture should have the skill to communicate by observing it);
2. consequently, once it is followed, the individual has no responsibility;
3. it operates in specific contexts;
4. it is a social ought, and although it is subject to moralising discourses it is not a moral value by itself.

In addition to these significant differences between *discernere* and 'discernment,' let us recall the argument of Section 3, even at the cost of sounding repetitive, that *discernere* is just one of the various metasynonyms in a group, which started to disappear when the *Civil Conversations* was written. This further demonstrates the extreme complexity of using modern, historically-loaded metalexemes without proper historical retrosprection.

5. Conclusion
Points to discuss
- The importance of historical metapragmatic inquiry; not stand-alone endavour, as it helps us to revisit concepts that we use in cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics
- This calls for a blending of historical and intercultural inquiries (see Kadar, forthcoming in JHP)
- We need to emphasise again that we have conducted this study in order to contribute to broader metapragmatic and self-reflexive research, and that a more in depth study on discernere will be conducted by Annick

- In terms of general conclusion, there are some implications to consider for future research: 1) any metalexeme may have different historical equivalents – the need of etymological research – occasionally, we may not even be aware that a term has a historical counterpart!! 2) the need to make an in-depth comparision between the meanings of modern and historical terms ----- importantly, the existence of such differences may not even mean that modern terms such as 'discernment' must not be used on historical data, but any of such use must be preceded by a self-reflexive historical inquiry!

References:

Blair, Ann (2007), *Le florilège latin comme point de comparaison*, "Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident"*,* 1, 185-204.

Burke, Peter (1995), *The Fortunes of the* Courtier, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Castiglione, Baldessar (1561), *The courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure bookes. Very necessary and profitable for yonge gentilmen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palaice or place, done into English by Thomas Hoby*. Imprinted at London by Wyllyam Seres at the signe of the Hedghogge (30 November 2014, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>).

Castiglione, Baldassarre, 2002a, *Il Cortigiano*, ed. by Amedeo Quondam, Milan: Mondadori.

Castiglione, Baldesar, 2002b, *The Book of The Courtier*, ed. by Daniel Javitch, translated by Charles Singleton, New York-London: Norton and Company.

Cortelazzo, Manlio, Zolli, Paolo (1999), *Il nuovo etimologico. Dizionario etimologico della lingua italiana,* Bologna: Zanichelli.

Cortini, Maria Antonietta (2004), *'Et in udendo il silentio": una lettura del "Galateo",* Rome: Bulzoni.

Della Casa, Giovanni (1994[3]), *Galateo. A Renaissance Treatise on Manners*, Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by K. Eisenbichler and K.R. Bartlett, Toronto: CRRS Publications, University of Toronto.

Della Casa, Giovanni (2000[2])*, Galateo*, ed. by S. Prandi, introduction by C. Ossola, Turin: Einaudi.

Guazzo, Stefano (1581), *The ciuile conuersation of M. Steeuen Guazzo written first in Italian, and nowe translated out of French by George Pettie, deuided into foure bookes. In the first is conteined in generall, the fruites that may bee reaped by conuersation ... In the second, the manner of conuersation ... In the third is perticularly set foorth the orders to bee obserued in conuersation within doores, betwéene the husband and the wife ... In the fourth, the report of a banquet.* Imprinted at London By Richard Watkins (30 November 2014, <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>)

Guazzo, Stefano (1993), *La civil conversazione*, ed. by A. Quondam, Modena: Panini (2 vols).

Guicciardini, Francesco (1992[4]), *Maxims and Reflections,* translated by Mario Domandi, Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania Press.

Guicciardini, Francesco (1988[4]), *Ricordi*, ed. by Emilio Pasquini, Milan: Garzanti.

Lewis, Charlton T., Short, Charles (1879), *A Latin Dictionary,* New York-Oxford, (30 November 2014, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059>)

Lievsay, John Leon (1961), *Stefano Guazzo and the English Renaissance*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Loyola, Ignatius of (1920), *Exercitia spiritualia, versio litteralis ex autographo hispanica*, ed. by J. Ph. Roothaan, Ratisbonae: Friderici Pustet.

Nani Mirabelli, Domenico, Ryckius, Justus (1512), *Polyanthea opus suauissibus floribus exornatum*, Venundatur ab Joanne parvo et Jodoco Badio Ascensio (30 November 2014, <http://books.google.co.uk>)

Papasogli, Benedetta (2013), *Discernere*, «Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa», 49, 1, 3-16.

Patrizi, Giorgio (2003), *Guazzo, Stefano*, 30 November 2014, http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ludovico-ariosto_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ (or. ed. *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 60, Rome: Istituto dell'enciclopedia italiana).

Prandi, Stefano (2000[2]), *Bibliografia*, in Giovanni Della Casa*, Galateo*, edited by S. Prandi, introduction by C. Ossola, Turin: Einaudi, IL-LIX.

Santoro, Mario (1978[2]), *La "discrezione" nel 'Galateo' di G. Della Casa*, in *Fortuna, ragione e prudenza nella civiltà letteraria del Cinquecento*, Naples: Liguori, 545-82.

Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca (1612), Venice: Giovanni Alberti (30 November 2014, <http://www.lessicografia.it>).

Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca (1691), Florence: Stamperia dell'Accademia della Crusca (30th November 2014, <http://www.lessicografia.it>).

Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca (1729-1738), Florence: Domenico Maria Manni (30th November 2014, <http://www.lessicografia.it>).