

Theory and History of Ontology (www.ontology.co) by Raul Corazzon | e-mail: rc@ontology.co

Annotated bibliography on the Debate about the Subject Matter of First Philosophy (Second part)

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Résumé: "La présente étude a pour visée ultime la détermination du sens de l'être comme « objectivité » dans les *Disputationes Metaphysicae* de F. Suarez. La question est ici abordée indirectement à travers la mise au jour d'une thèse non thématique sur le néant ; les *Disputationes*, en leur projet même d'ontologie générale, et à travers leur architectonique, pointent en direction d'une métaphysique de l'objet encore indéterminé (*aliquid-nihil*) , métaphysique qui trouve son plein déploiement dans la *Schulmetaphysik*, et se maintient jusqu'à Kant ."
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Repris dans P. Donini, *Commentary and Tradition: Aristotelianism, Platonism, and Post-Hellenistic Philosophy*, edited by Mauro Bonazzi, Berlin: de Gruyter 2011, pp. 107-123.

Abstract: "To our knowledge Alexander was the first who attempted to reconcile Aristotle's (apparently conflicting) views regarding the object of that science which Alexander now and there already dubs "metaphysics". For much of his commentary, in fact, Alexander acknowledges that the universal science of being qua being is identical to the science of first substances that are unchangeable, unmoved, and divine, i.e. that science which in *Metaph.* E 1 Aristotle once even dubbed "theology". But this unified conception of Aristotle's "first philosophy" is strangely marred in Alexander's commentary by a few pages (pp. 245-246 H.), where a wholly different situation arises. In his effort to account for a text of *Metaph.* Γ 2 that differs from the one found in manuscripts and in modern critical editions, Alexander suggests that two different levels of first philosophy should be distinguished, even though he applies the same designation to both levels: 1) the first and most universal level of first philosophy as a general science of being qua being, where being is regarded as a genre. This level of first philosophy is responsible for the partition of being into ten categories and for their distinction. In addition to that 2) a second-level science would address each of the individual species of being (i.e. each category) that is conceived of as a species subject to the most universal science. Amid these special sciences of being, however, abides yet another "first philosophy" ("first" but subordinated to the other) operating at a second and thus lower degree of universality, namely, the science of first substance (the immovable and immaterial substance of the divine). Since all other substances are subordinated to the first substance, in accordance with the Aristotelian principle of ἀφ' ἐνός καὶ πρὸς ἓν, this science also deals with all the other substances and any properties belonging to them. The idea of a two-level first philosophy takes up limited space in the commentary and would not necessarily be contradictory in itself if only Alexander had squarely associated the general science of being qua being with just one of the two distinct levels. As this is not the case and both "first" philosophies are identified with the science of being qua being, the outcome is a confused and inherently inconsistent presentation. But more problems lie ahead in pp. 245-246: the biggest is that among the special sciences of being we find practical philosophy, whose object is hard to bring into line with or condense into any one (and if so, which?) of the ten categories. Moreover, the suggestion by those modern scholars, who would liken Alexander's distinction between the two levels of first philosophy with the later distinction between general metaphysics and special metaphysics, appears somewhat flawed. In any case, identifying the doctrine of categories as the content of the more universal science of being almost seems

- typical of an age in which this doctrine was attacked or defended as if it were considered the mainstay and the cornerstone itself of Aristotelian philosophy." [H. = *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck, Berlin 1891]
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Abstract: "This article is devoted to the interpretation of the object of metaphysics and theoretical sciences proposed by Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. 200 AD). I shall propose two conjectures on crucial passages from his commentary on the *Metaphysics* (In *Metaph.* 245.37-246.6 et 246.6-13) and, on this new textual basis, defend the thesis according to which Alexander articulated a primary fundamental philosophy, devoted to immobile substances and treated by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Λ, and a philosophy, if one can say so, more primary but less ontological, hence less fundamental, devoted to the general structure of being and treated by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Γ. The latter seems to differ from the *Categories*, according to Alexander, in that in the *Categories*, Aristotle studies the general classes of beings as general, while in *Metaphysics* Γ, he studies them as beings."

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Abstract: "In late antiquity, in the context of the jagged tradition of Neo-Platonism, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the specific science that is traced out in it are indicated with the current denominations of *meta ta physika* and *theologikē pragmateia*, which are seen as consistent with one another and closely interconnected. In this connection, the *Metaphysics*, in the wake of previous philosophical readings, is considered as a treatise on "theological science" — the most elevated among the sciences — and the denomination *meta ta physika* is seen in a specifically theological sense.
According to a widespread Neo-Platonic reading, the science thematized in the *Metaphysics* is "metaphysics" in that it is theological science, an epistemic discourse on divine realities, which, within the *ordo rerum*, transcend the physical ones, and, therefore, according to the *ordo cognoscendi*, must be studied after the latter."
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Sommario: "Da lungo tempo è stato riconosciuto il carattere scotista dell'Expositio in libros Metaphysicorum di Antonio Andrea, a tal punto che essa figura tra le opere di Scoto nelle edizioni del Wadding e di Vivés. Anche ora che la paternità di Antonio Andrea per quest'opera è stata comunemente riconosciuta, accade spesso che si faccia ricorso all'Expositio al fine di illuminare questo o quel punto oscuro del pensiero di Scoto. Tuttavia, una volta analizzata, quest'opera mostra di essere un adattamento puntuale del commento alla Metafisica di Tommaso dal punto di vista delle teorie di Scoto. Attraverso l'introduzione sistematica nelle formulazioni di Tommaso delle nuove dottrine scotiste dell'univocità dell'ente e della natura communis, Antonio realizzò il progetto di fornire ai primi discepoli di Scoto un manuale della scienza dell'ente come scientia transcendens."
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Appendix von Russell L. Friedman: Franciscus de Marchia, *In libros Metaphysicarum, Proemium* pp. 502-514.
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"The history of modern metaphysics is essentially marked by its splitting up into a metaphysica generalis and a metaphysica specialis, a well-known distinction especially within Christian Wolff's systematic conception of metaphysics. This study investigates the actual origins of this significant development, which can be already found at the beginning of the 14th century. On the basis of a fundamentally revised doctrine of transcendentals the Franciscan theologian Francis of Marchia (~1290-1344) introduces for the first time a dissociation of the primum cognitum of the human intellect from the subject of metaphysics, according to which metaphysics is no longer one science in the sense of a scientia transcendens, as most of his predecessors claimed in the 13th century, but rather twofold: ontology and theology."
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"In the fourteenth century, a new version of the first solution makes its appearance. Unlike its thirteenth century predecessor, this version of the solution is aware of the notion of the formal object uniting the various discourses comprising a science, yet it rejects such a notion. This deconstruction of the problematic surrounding the subject of metaphysics may be seen most clearly in the writings of Ockham and Buridan. With this development, the medieval history of the problematic of the subject of metaphysics may be said to reach its apogee by returning to its origins. The notion of a formal unity in a science, a unity that transcends the merely logical unity of a particular demonstrative syllogism, is once again missing from the discussion.

In this, the second edition of his classic study, Albert Zimmermann has once again provided scholars with a remarkable collection of otherwise unavailable texts along with penetrating studies on that perennial metaphysical question: what is the subject of metaphysics. As indicated by the title, Zimmermann's treatment of the medieval discussion on the object of metaphysical knowledge ranges over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, covering authors from the generation of Richard Rufus and Roger Bacon up to John Buridan. The new edition takes account of most of the considerable literature that has appeared since the original publication in 1965. (...) Zimmermann's volume divides into two parts. The first presents texts drawn from medieval commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in which the subject of metaphysics is discussed. The second part is subdivided into three chapters: the first sketches out the primary sources for the medieval discussion -- found chiefly in the writings of Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroes; the second describes the advent of the three basic solutions proposed by medieval authors for the solution to the problem; and the final chapter shows the subsequent development of these three solutions. The study closes with reflections upon the medieval treatment of the problem and what impact the medieval discussion had upon the development of early modern philosophy as well as contemporary European thought.

Given the ambiguity of Aristotle's various statements on the subject of metaphysics, Avicenna and Averroes attempted to work out systematic accounts of the subject of metaphysics. Applying rigorously the model of scientific knowledge expressed in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, Avicenna concluded that being as being, understood as common to substance and accident, had to be the subject of metaphysics since God's existence was sought in metaphysics and no science proves the existence of its subject. Agreeing with many of the basic assumptions of Avicenna, Averroes came to the opposite conclusion: metaphysics has as its subject God since the existence of God is already shown in natural philosophy and thus may be assumed for the purposes of metaphysical investigation.

The medieval philosophers worked out three alternative solutions to the problem presented to them by the texts newly received at the outset of the thirteenth century. The first solution, clearly evidenced in the writings of Roger Bacon, proposed that there are various subjects for the science of metaphysics and thus diffused the disagreement between Avicenna and Averroes. In the case of Bacon, the three subjects are being as being, substance, and God, subjects that are treated successively in the sequence of books in the Aristotelian *Metaphysics*. As Zimmermann notes, this solution is not only too facile but indicates that its proponents had not developed the notion of a single, formal subject that unites all the features treated within the scope of a science; Bacon is an especially clear case in this regard since he located the unity of metaphysical knowledge in the reducibility of all metaphysical objects to the First Cause and not in any formal unity of the subject matter.

The second solution Zimmermann finds most fully expressed in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, though he sees adumbrations of it in the commentaries of Albert the Great and Richard Rufus. Unlike the defenders of the first solution, those

advancing the second solution are distinctive in having a refined notion of the formal object of the science and positing the unity of the science to be derived from the formal object. According to this solution, being as being or being in general (*ens in communi*) is limited to the range of creaturely being, a notion of which we attain through our acquaintance with sensible substances. The existence of God is not presupposed for metaphysical science though some judgment (*separatio*) that being is separate in notion and reality from merely sensible things is required. Instead, God relates to metaphysical knowledge as the cause and the principle of the subject of the science or *ens commune*; hence, God's existence may be known in and through metaphysics, but the names derived from the concept of being that constitutes the object of the science can tell us little about His nature.

The final solution developed by medieval philosophers was also the one most commonly adopted by them. Positing being as being as the subject in the widest possible sense, these thinkers claimed that God falls under the subject of metaphysics in that sense, albeit they often qualified that claim by stating that the sense of being that applies to God and creature is only analogously the same. One of the earliest adherents of this view was the great Dominican theologian Robert Kilwardby, but the most famous of those subsequently defending the view were Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus. In many ways, as Zimmermann notes (p. 329), Scotus's systematic presentation of this view marked the culmination of its development and led to the form that the medieval discussion would have thereafter, connecting the discussion of the subject of metaphysics to distinctively Scotistic theses such as the univocity of being."

Timothy Noone, Review in: *The Review of Metaphysics*, 54, 2000, pp. 183-185.

Estudios en Español

1. Cabré Duran, Maria. 2022. "Notas sobre el primer sujeto de la metafísica según el comentario a la *Metafísica* de Antoni Andreu." *Anuario Filosófico* no. 56:59-77. Resumen: En este artículo estudiaremos algunos elementos propios de la formulación del problema del sujeto de la metafísica tal y como aparece en el comentario de Antoni Andreu a la *Metafísica* aristotélica. Esta cuestión está estrechamente vinculada a la concepción de la univocidad aplicada al ser transcendental, pero también a la inclusión de las sustancias separadas en el dominio de la metafísica. La afirmación de un concepto de ser unívoco y real como sujeto-objeto de la metafísica es la base del realismo metafísico propuesto por Antoni Andreu." Abstract: "This article examines certain aspects of the problem of the subject-matter of metaphysics as presented in Antonius Andreae's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This question is closely linked to the conception of univocal transcendental being, but also to the inclusion of separate substances into the domain of metaphysics. The assertion of the univocal and real concept of being as the subject of metaphysics is the basis of metaphysical realism as proposed by Andreae."
2. Cumsille Marzouka, Kamal Andrés, and Figueroa Lackington, Benjamín Antonio. 2021. "Al-Farabi, 'Sobre los propositos de Aristoteles en la Metafísica'. Texto, traducción y notas." *MEAH, Sección Árabe-Islam* no. 70:441-452. Resumen: "El presente texto ofrece una nueva traducción al castellano del *Maqāla fī agrāḍ al-ḥakīm fī kitāb Mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a* (*Tratado sobre los propósitos de "el Sabio" en el libro de la Metafísica*) de Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (m. 339/950-951). Desde un punto de vista filológico, nuestra versión toma por referencia los enfoques hermenéuticos de Jon McGinnis, David Reisman, Amos Bertolacci y, más considerablemente, de Dimitri Gutas, tanto en lo que refiere a la traducción de términos filosóficos técnicos como de reorganización del texto en párrafos. En

este sentido, hemos querido ofrecer al público hispanohablante una nueva traducción del *Agrād*, basada en la edición de Friedrich Heinrich Dieterici, que tuviera en cuenta los avances más recientes en el campo de los estudios árabes y, en particular, en los estudios de la obra filosófica de al-Fārābī. Para facilitar la contrastación con el texto de Dieterici, hemos incluido aquí su versión transcrita, con puntuación y párrafos reordenados."

Abstract: "This document offers a new Spanish translation of the *Maqāla fī agrād al-ḥakīm fī kitāb Mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a* (*Treatise on the Aims of „the Sage” in the Book of Metaphysics*) written by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950-951). On a methodological level, our interpretation is mainly informed by the work of Jon McGinnis, David Reisman, Amos Bertolacci, and —more significantly— Dimitri Gutas, with regard to both the translation of key philosophical terms and to the rearrangement of the text in paragraphs. In this sense, we aim to provide a new Spanish translation of the *Agrād* —based in Friedrich Heinrich Dieterici's edition— that takes into account the latest developments in the field of Arabic studies and, particularly, in the study of al-Fārābī's philosophical oeuvre. To facilitate the comparison of the original and the translated text, we have included Dieterici's transcription with punctuations and rearranged paragraphs."

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Resumen "La *Philosophia Prima* de Avicena ocupa un lugar relevante en la historia de la metafísica. En sus primeros cuatro capítulos encontramos una definición de la metafísica como sabiduría y filosofía certísima. Avicena busca con todo ello destacar el carácter científico de la metafísica. En este mismo sentido, la elucidación del objeto propio de esta disciplina se inserta en el debate entre sus fuentes árabes (Al-Kindi y Al-Farabi), pero a su vez se extiende en la discusión histórica sobre el lugar de Dios y el ser en la metafísica.
En este artículo se presenta la definición de la metafísica como ciencia primera, y el establecimiento del ente como el objeto propio de la metafísica, y Dios como aquello buscado."
Abstract. "Avicenna's *Philosophia Prima* occupies a relevant place in the history of metaphysics. In its first four chapters, we find a definition of metaphysics as wisdom and the more certain philosophy that highlights the scientific character that Avicenna seeks to give metaphysics. The elucidation of the subject matter of this discipline is developed in the debate among its Arab sources (Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi), but at the same time, it extends in the historical discussion on the place of God and being in metaphysics. This article presents the definition of metaphysics as the first science, and the establishment of the being as the proper subject of metaphysics, and God as what is sought."
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Resumen: "Los estudios sobre la constitución de la noción y el término «metafísica» han sido poco abordados por la historia de la filosofía, y sobre todo, por la tradición filosófica misma. Este trabajo, sobre la base de lo realizado por Pérez Fernández (1975), es una parte de una serie de publicaciones que pretende arrojar luz sobre este proceso. Concretamente, aquí se narra brevemente cómo el término «metafísica» fue mudando gradualmente su uso y grafía en la tradición latina. Sugeriré que Boecio usa las locuciones *theologia* y *μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ* en dos sentidos, la primera la emplea para referirse al tema que es propio de los libros metafísicos de Aristóteles (i.e. teología filosófica), en tanto que la segunda locución la usa en un sentido bibliográfico. De este uso daría cuenta Abelardo en sus obras, que plausiblemente influyeron más tarde en la constitución definitiva del término en la Escuela de Toledo. Se incluyen imágenes de manuscritos para ilustrar lo apuntado." Abstract: "Studies on the evolution of the notion and the term «metaphysics» have been scarcely addressed by the history of philosophy, and specially, by the philosophical tradition itself. This work, based on what was done by Pérez Fernández (1975), is part of a series of writings that aims to shed light on this process. Specifically, here I will briefly describe how the term «metaphysics» gradually changed its use and spelling in the Latin tradition. I will suggest that Boethius uses the locutions *theologia* and *μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ* in two senses, the first one uses it to refer to the subject that is proper to the metaphysical books of Aristotle (i.e. philosophical theology), while the second locution uses it in a bibliographic sense. Of this last use, Abelard would give account in his works, which plausibly later influenced the definitive constitution of the term in the School of Toledo. Images of manuscripts are included to illustrate the point."

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Pérez Fernández, Isacio, «Verbización y nocionización de la Metafísica en la tradición latina », en: *Estudios filosóficos* 24 (1975), pp. 161-177 [222]

1. Costa Sousa, Meline. 2023. "Avicena e o problema do sujeito da metafísica: a hipótese das causas." *Veritas, Porto Alegre*:1-11.
 Resumo: "Um dos problemas com os quais os leitores da *Metafísica* de Aristóteles se deparam é a dificuldade de delimitação do sujeito da sabedoria. Avicena (séc. X), em seu tratado metafísico *As coisas divinas (Ilāhiyyāt)*, põe-se a investigar cada um dos três candidatos à posição de sujeito dessa ciência (a dizer, Deus, as causas e o ser). Devido à amplitude da investigação, a análise que se segue se restringirá à segunda hipótese – se, em algum sentido, seria a filosofia primeira uma ciência sobre as causas (uma aitiologia). Desse modo, inicia-se com a exposição do contexto da *Ilāh. I*, que antecede à análise da hipótese das causas. Na sequência, aborda-se a hipótese, juntamente com os argumentos, para mostrar sua falsidade. Por fim, a conclusão apresenta a relação entre causalidade e ser, tendo em vista a resposta ontológica que será dada ao problema central e os problemas que decorrem dessa resposta."
 Abstract: "An issue the readers of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* must deal with is the delimitation of the subject-matter of the wisdom. An attempt to answer this problem was proposed by Avicenna (10th Century) in his metaphysical treatise *On Divine Things (Ilāhiyyāt)*. In its first book, the philosopher investigates each one of the three candidates for the position of the subject-matter of this science (i.e., God, causes, and being). Having in mind the difficulties of this topic, the following analysis is limited to the second hypothesis, namely, if the first philosophy is the science of the causes (an aitiology). I will start contextualizing the *Ilāh. I* since it precedes the analysis of the hypothesis of the causes. Then, I will discuss the hypothesis of the causes and show Avicenna's arguments against it. Finally, I will conclude this investigation discussing briefly the relation between causes and being in view of Avicenna's ontological answer to the main problem and the problems emerging from it."
2. Martins, António Manuel. 1994. *Lógica e ontologia em Pedro da Fonseca*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
 English abstract: "The aim of the dissertation is to show the place of Fonseca's work in the history of ontology. Starting with a close analysis of the texts connected with the core of classical metaphysics it is argued that the *Commentarii in libros metaphysicorum Aristotelis* far reaches than a mere textual commentary of Aristotle's text and represent one of the rare efforts to bring out a real synthesis of the main theoretical problems and questions emerging in the context of the aristotelian project of a first philosophy. This systematic work is carried out in the second half of the sixteenth century, just before the beginning of modern philosophy. Chapter one is dedicated to a brief account of Fonseca's work in his historical context. The remaining chapters explore some of the central topics of Fonseca's ontology. Chapter two, after a brief discussion of the aristotelian project of first philosophy, follows the transformation of this project in Fonseca's text discussing in particular his analysis of the concept of being under the heading *ens commune* and the meaning of the thesis of *analogia entis* as well as the distinction between a formal and an objective concept of being. In chapter three we discuss the question of the distinction between essence and existence in order to grasp the meaning of Fonseca's thesis of a modal distinction *ex natura rei*. Chapter four seeks to articulate Fonseca's interpretation of the classical doctrine of the transcendentals (*unum, bonum, uerum*). The wish to articulate the universality and transcendentalism of the concept of being has taken us to introduce the problem of the categories in this chapter and a brief historico-critical survey beginning in Aristotle and ending in Kant. Finally, chapter five discusses the meaning of the principle of non contradiction in Aristotle and in Fonseca."
 Capítulo 2. *Determinação do objecto da metafísica*, pp. 61-190.