

Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages

A Tribute to Stephen F. Brown

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CONTENTS

Preface	xi
Introduction	1

PART ONE

METAPHYSICS & NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

The Transformation of Metaphysics in the Middle Ages	19
JAN A. AERTSEN	
The Division of the Waters (Gen 1,6–7): The History of a Conundrum and its Resolution by the Early Oxford Masters	41
R. JAMES LONG	
The Problem of the Knowability of Substance: The Discussion from Eustachius of Arras to Vital du Four	63
TIMOTHY B. NOONE	
The Division of Metaphysical Discourses: Boethius, Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart	91
ANDREAS SPEER	
Thomas Aquinas and the Unity of Substantial Form	117
JOHN F. WIPPEL	
Aquinas's Conception of the Great Chain of Being: A More Considered Reply to Lovejoy	155
OLIVA BLANCHETTE	
Between Unity and Perceptibility—Richard Conington and the Concept of Being	189
WOUTER GORIS	

Medieval Natural Philosophy and Modern Science—Continuity and Revolution	213
ANDRÉ GODDU	

PART TWO

EPISTEMOLOGY & ETHICS

St. Augustine on <i>Memoria</i> and <i>Commemoratio</i>	237
FR. MATTHEW L. LAMB	

Transcendental Prediction in Boethius' Signification Theory: <i>De hebdomadibus</i> in the Context of the Commentaries on <i>Peri hermeneias</i>	249
PAUL J. LACHANCE	

Reexamining the Doctrine of Divine Illumination in the Latin Philosophy of the High Middle Ages	275
STEVEN P. MARRONE	

« Sive dormiat sive vigilet » Le sommeil du juste et l'activité du sage, selon Albert le Grand, Boèce de Dacie et Maître Eckhart	303
OLIVIER BOULNOIS	

A Question of Justice: The Good Thief, Cain and the Pursuit of Moral Perfection	321
ANTHONY J. CELANO	

Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus on Individual Acts and the Ultimate End	351
THOMAS M. OSBORNE	

Peter Auriol on the Categories of Action and Passion: The Second Question of His <i>Quodlibet</i>	375
LAUGE O. NIELSEN	

William of Ockham and Walter Burley on Signification and Imaginary Objects	437
THOMAS DEWENDER	
Dénomination extrinsèque et « changement cambridgien ». Éléments pour une archéologie médiévale de la subjectivité	451
ALAIN DE LIBERA	
Desire, Consent and Sin: the Earliest Free Will Debates of the Reformation	471
RISTO SAARINEN	

PART THREE

PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

The Problem of Philosophy and Theology in Anselm of Canterbury	487
EILEEN C. SWEENEY	
The Doctrine of the Creation of the Soul in Thomas Aquinas	515
B. CARLOS BAZÁN	
St. Thomas Aquinas on Theological Truth	571
JOHN P. DOYLE	
Thomas Sutton on Theology as a Science: An Edition of Questions 1, 3, and 4 of Sutton's "Cowton Critique"	591
KLAUS RODLER	
The Roots of Love of Wisdom: Henry of Ghent on Platonic and Aristotelian Forms	623
JUAN CARLOS FLORES	
At the Outer Limits of Authenticity: Denys the Carthusian's Critique of John Duns Scotus and His Followers	641
KENT EMERY, JR.	

<i>Pia Philosophia—Prisca Theologia</i> . Die Idee vom Universalen Christentum	673
THEO KOBUSCH	

PART FOUR

THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

Trinitarian Missions and the Order of Grace According to Thomas Aquinas	689
JEREMY D. WILKINS	
Questions Concerning the Existences of Christ	709
MICHAEL GORMAN	
The Psychology of the Incarnation in John Duns Scotus	737
SIMO KNUUTTILA	
Ockham on the Papacy	749
MATTHEW LEVERING	
John Calvin's Trinitarian Theology in the 1536 <i>Institutes</i> : The Distinction of Persons as a Key to His Theological Sources	781
JOHN T. SLOTEMAKER	

PART FIVE

TEXT & CONTEXT

Matthew of Aquasparta and the Greeks	813
CHRISTOPHER D. SCHABEL, FRITZ S. PEDERSEN & RUSSELL L. FRIEDMAN	
Jacques de Lausanne, Censeur et Plagiaire de Durand de Saint-Pourçain: Édition de la q. 2, dist. 17 du l. I, de son <i>Commentaire des Sentences</i>	855
JEAN CÉLEYRETTE (LILLE) / JEAN-LUC SOLÈRE	

Durandus at the Stuart Court	891
ANNE A. DAVENPORT	
Theological Bachelors at Paris on the Eve of the Papal Schism. The Academic Environment of Peter of Candia	921
WILLIAM J. COURTENAY	
From Siger of Brabant to Erasmus. Philosophy and Civilization in the Late Medieval Low Countries	953
CARLOS STEEL	
List of Contributors	981
Indices	
Index codicum	991
Index nominum	993

INTRODUCTION

This book is a gift, in the customary form of a *Festschrift*, to Stephen Brown, a great scholar and a friend, mentor and benefactor to all of us. In his many editions of texts and interpretative studies of medieval logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics, noetics, ethics and the relationship between philosophy and theology, Stephen has made profound, original contributions to scholarship. There are many great scholars; more exceptional, perhaps, Stephen has been a patron and true friend to so many colleagues and students, and for decades has worked tirelessly to promote the common good in the study of medieval philosophy and theology.

This *Festschrift* was conceived in honor of Stephen's 75th birthday. Many of the authors of essays in this volume gathered together in Boston in March 2008 to honor Stephen in a Colloquium organized by some of his colleagues in Philosophy and Theology at Boston College; at that event Andreas Speer and Kent Emery presented Stephen with a printed booklet containing abstracts and prospectus of the essays now published more than two years later in this volume.¹ That booklet served as a pledge, which we hope this book pays in full. That a *Festschrift* in honor of Stephen was long overdue may now seem obvious, but that it was so long in coming does not bespeak any afterthought or negligence; quite the contrary, it is largely Stephen's own fault, for, because he is so youthful and vigorous and continues to be as active now as he was three or four decades ago, even some of his closest friends were surprised to learn that he had already lived three-quarters of a century. We have never thought of Stephen as someone who is ready to relinquish "gladly learning and gladly teaching", or as a venerable Master in philosophy and theology about to lay down his pen who deserves recognition for a course well-run, for he has not yet stopped running the course. Even now he is fully occupied in various scholarly projects—editions, articles and books—as well as in his teaching at Boston College and as a visiting professor at other universities.

* * *

¹ This volume was delayed when, mid-way through the editing, one of the editors was suddenly struck down.

Stephen Brown received his Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1964 at the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie at the old, undivided Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium). He is one of that generation of Louvanistes—some others of whom have contributed essays to this volume—who expanded the influence of that venerable institution on the study of medieval philosophy in North America. Stephen's first teaching appointment was as an Instructor at Siena College, a small Franciscan college in New York State (1959–1961). Thereafter he was appointed as an Assistant Professor at St. Bonaventure University in up-state New York, where he taught from 1965 until 1973.

In the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure, Stephen underwent a scholarly apprenticeship under the great textual editor, Gedeon Gál, OFM, whom he venerated and who shaped his understanding of the scholarly life. It was at St. Bonaventure, working on the landmark critical edition of the works of William of Ockham, where Stephen already as a young scholar earned the reputation of being a master in the study of medieval philosophy. In 1987, Stephen was one of a small group of scholars (including Guy Beaujouan, Linos Benakis, Jerome Brown, Winfried Fauser, SJ, André Goddu, Mark D. Jordan and David Luscombe) who after the World Congress in Medieval Philosophy (SIEPM) at Helsinki took the long train trip to Leningrad (now again Saint Petersburg) in the Communist Soviet Union. The trip was organized to be strictly touristic and was tightly controlled. Kent Emery, however, had garnered intelligence as to how one might be able to enter the great public library in Leningrad (Publičnaja Biblioteka im. M.E. Saltykova-Ščedrina), which at that time was normally closed to Westerners. So one day Kent and Stephen broke away from the guided tour-group, slipped into the library through the employees' door, and, after some expostulations and negotiations with startled library staff, successfully gained entrance to the manuscript room, where they enjoyed a long afternoon of heady research among the manuscripts (celebrated that evening with a bottle of excellent vodka). During the whole time that they were in the library, they were eyed studiously by the regular *habitués* of the manuscript room. When it came time for the library to close, a Russian reader approached Stephen at his table and said: "Are you the famous Stephen Brown of St. Bonaventure, New York?" When Stephen, modestly, replied that he believed he probably was, the young Russian scholar said: "You are one of my heroes". Few humble editors of medieval texts, one supposes, could have imagined

that their own repute—carried on the back of the *Venerabilis Inceptor*, to be sure—would penetrate the Iron Curtain.

After a year of teaching (1973–1974) at the Presbyterian Bloomfield College in New Jersey (it was there, perhaps, that he was first prepared psychologically to receive the several eager Calvinist students who later came to study *mediaevalia* with him), Stephen as a missionary carried Scholastic culture to the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, an elite bastion of High Episcopalian and Old Southern culture. It is curious to imagine how the crabbed dialectic of medieval Scholasticism and the theory of supposition went over in the rhetorical halls of Anglican patristicism; anyone who has listened to him lecture, however, knows that if there is anyone who can make Scholastic thinking seem charming and graceful, it is Stephen Brown. Stephen taught at Sewanee from 1974 to 1979; it was there that he was first promoted to the rank of Full Professor in 1976.

Following his sojourn among the Protestants, in 1979 Stephen was snatched by the Jesuits and was appointed to teach in the Department of Theology at Boston College, where he was promoted to Full Professor in 1982, served as the Chair of the Department from 1988 to 1991, and where he has taught ever since. His appointment in Theology was significant. Medieval masters were exquisitely aware of formal causality and of the *officia* attached to their positions. Now teaching in a Department of Theology, Stephen's purview of medieval intellectual life broadened to include not only Scholastic disputation but scriptural exegesis and the tradition of mystical theology. In recent years he has become especially interested in the Scholastic duty and practice of *praedicatio*, as it was exercised, notably, in *principia* to commentaries on the Scriptures and on the *Sentences*. In 1992 Stephen founded the Institute of Medieval Philosophy and Theology, of which he has been the Director ever since. The Institute quickly became a vital center for the study of medieval philosophy and theology, attracting not only students (who take their degrees in departments) but visiting scholars from Europe as well as North America. As its name suggests, at the Institute the medieval disciplines of theology and philosophy are never discussed or studied in isolation from each other. As all who have been privileged to speak in them have experienced, the lecture series of the Boston Colloquium in Medieval Philosophy (of which Stephen has been Co-Chair since 1980) joined with the Bradley lecture series of the Institute, at which gather scholars in medieval philosophy and

theology from the many universities in the Boston area, are noteworthy for their liveliness and high level of discussion, which continues at an ageable symposium after the lectures. In 2006 with a young colleague, Boyd Taylor Coolman, Stephen founded the Boston Colloquy in Historical Theology. Each year at the end of July or beginning of August this Colloquy brings together scholars (American and European) of patristic and medieval theology, from university departments of theology, religious studies, philosophy and history, divinity schools and seminaries, who usually work and speak in separate ‘networks’. In a very short time, the Colloquy has become an important institution, invitations to which are coveted. Stephen Brown is completely self-effacing and generous, casting all of the attention on his guests, but as Director of the Institute, the lecture series and the Colloquy he has performed the role of a maestro, who sets the agenda and orchestrates the discussion of “philosophy and theology in the long Middle Ages”.

From 1988 to 1990 Stephen was the President of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy; he was elected to serve on the Bureau of the Société Internationale pour l’Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale for the years 1987–1997, serving as Vice-President of the Société in the years 1992–1997. Since 1963, indeed, Stephen has been an especially dutiful citizen of the SIEPM, which was founded at his beloved *Alma Mater* in 1957; it was he, more than anyone else, who recruited American scholars to the Société, to the great advantage of both his American colleagues and the Société. Philosophy and theology: in 2005 Stephen Brown was awarded the degree *Doctor honoris causa* in Theology at the University of Helsinki. His long intellectual friendship with his fellow medieval theologian at Helsinki, Simo Knuuttila, continues to bear fruit, as they now direct their students from Boston and Helsinki in a collaborative critical edition of Adam Wodeham’s commentary on the *Sentences*. Stephen Brown has never ceased to be a mid-wife of thoughts, words and deeds in his students and fortunate colleagues.

* * *

Trying to summarize all of the facets of Stephen F. Brown’s scholarly production, even in a cursory way, is difficult to say the least, for no other reason than the sheer diversity of his writings. Brown has written

popular works for high school students on major world religions.² He has had a hand in translating Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*, and in gathering together central texts by Thomas Aquinas on the relation between faith and reason.³ He has published on the patristic background to medieval thought,⁴ on twelfth- and thirteenth-century theology⁵ and on specific later thirteenth-century authors,⁶ especially Henry of Ghent.⁷ Further, his scholarly work ranges into the late fifteenth century, with a commentary on a text authored in connection with the "Quarrel over Future Contingents" at Louvain.⁸ He has published work on a broad spectrum of topics in the history of philosophy and

² *Christianity*, New York 1991; *Judaism*, New York 1991 (co-authored with Martha Morrison; second expanded edition 2002); *Catholicism & Orthodox Christianity*, New York 2002 (co-authored with Khaled Anatolios; second edition 2006); *Protestantism*, New York 2002 (second edition 2006).

³ *St. Bonaventure, The Journey of the Mind to God (Itinerarium Mentis in Deum)*, revised edition of Philotheus Boehner's translation, with new introduction, notes and bibliography, Indianapolis-Cambridge 1993 (reprinted 1998). *Thomas Aquinas: On Faith and Reason*, edited with introductions, Indianapolis-Cambridge 1999. See also Brown's "Reflections on the Structural Sources of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*", in: G. Holmström-Hintikka (ed.), *Medieval Philosophy and Modern Times*, Dordrecht 2000 (Synthese Library 28), pp. 1–15.

⁴ "The Patristic Background", in: J. J. E. Gracia / T. B. Noone (edd.), *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Oxford 2003, pp. 23–31.

⁵ E.g., "Abelard and the Medieval Origins of the Distinction between God's Absolute and Ordained Power", in: M. D. Jordan / K. Emery, Jr. (edd.), *Ad litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, Notre Dame 1992 (Conferences in Medieval Studies 3), pp. 199–215; "The Eternity of the World Discussion at Early Oxford", in: A. Zimmermann / A. Speer (edd.), *Mensch und Natur im Mittelalter*, Berlin-New York 1991 (*Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 21/1), pp. 259–280; "The Reception and Use of Aristotle's Works in the Commentaries on Book I of the *Sentences* by the Friar Preachers in the Early Years of Oxford University", in: J. Marenbon (ed.), *Aristotle in Britain during the Middle Ages: proceedings of the international conference at Cambridge, 8–11 April 1994*, Turnhout 1996 (*Rencontres de philosophie médiévale* 5), pp. 351–369.

⁶ E.g., "Petrus Ioannis Olivi, *Quaestiones logicales*: Critical Text", in: *Traditio* 42 (1986), pp. 336–388; "Richard Fishacre on the Need for Philosophy", in: R. J. Long / R. Link-Salinger (edd.), *A Straight Path: Studies in medieval philosophy and culture. Essays in honor of Arthur Hyman*, Washington (D.C.) 1988, pp. 23–36.

⁷ E.g., "Henry of Ghent (1217–1293)", in: J. Gracia (ed.), *Individuation in Scholasticism: The Later Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation, 1150–1650*, Albany (N.Y.) 1993, pp. 199–223; "Henry of Ghent's *Reductio Artium ad Theologiam*", in: D. Gallagher (ed.), *Thomas Aquinas and His Influence on the Middle Ages*, Washington (D.C.) 1994, pp. 294–206; "Godfrey of Fontaines and Henry of Ghent: Individuation and the Condemnation of 1277", in: S. Wlodek (ed.), *Société et église: Textes et discussions dans les universités d'Europe centrale pendant le Moyen Âge tardif*, Turnhout 1995 (*Rencontres de philosophie médiévale* 4), pp. 193–207.

⁸ "The Treatise: *De Arcanis Dei*", in: *Miscellanea Francescana* 96 (1996), pp. 572–620. [Introductory doctrinal exposition in Cardinal Bessarion's *De arcanis Dei* (ed. G. Etzkorn), Rome 1997 (Maestri Francescani 8)].

theology, from highly technical logical treatises to the metaphysics of the Incarnation, from the epistemology of belief and knowing to the problem of individuation.⁹ Many of these areas are represented in the present book, for example by Michael Gorman's and Simo Knuutila's contributions on Christology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, John Doyle's essay on Thomas Aquinas on faith and reason, and Steven Marrone's and Timothy B. Noone's discussions of epistemological issues in later-medieval thought. Yet for all of the significance of that work, most would agree that Stephen Brown's major contributions to the history of medieval philosophy and theology concern fourteenth-century thought, particularly three of its many aspects: Peter Auriol and the univocity of the concept of being, Peter of Candia and the medieval discussion of the scientific nature of theology, and the works and thought of William of Ockham.

Brown's doctoral dissertation at Louvain, titled "The Unity of the Concept of Being in Peter Aureoli's *Scriptum* and *Commentarium*", displays many of the traits that have marked his research throughout his career. Specifically, these include returning to the manuscript sources and making state-of-the-art critical editions as the foundation for his research into medieval philosophy and theology; looking at his chosen topic with a sensitivity to both the philosophical and the theological dimensions of the issues; a close attention to terminology, to arguments, and to the theological and philosophical background to the issues and texts that he is studying. The dissertation particularly treats Peter Auriol's (d. 1323) position on the issue of the univocity of the concept of being, whether the concept or the term 'being' that we predicate of God has precisely the same meaning as the 'being' that we predicate of creatures, or whether the meanings are 'analogical', i.e., related in some (indirect) way without being fully univocal. On a philosophical plane, a similar question could be asked: Is the 'being' that we predicate of substance univocal with the 'being' that we predicate of accidents? Answers to these questions had far reaching ramifications for the notion of theological language as well as the metaphysics of the categories. By choosing to focus on Auriol's treatment

⁹ "Thomas Aquinas and his Contemporaries on the Unique Existence in Christ", in: K. Emery / J. Wawrykow (edd.), *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans: Representations of Christ in the texts and images of the Order of Preachers*, Notre Dame 1998 (Conferences in Medieval Studies 7), pp. 220–237; "Peter of Candia on Believing and Knowing", in: *Franciscan Studies* 54 (1997), pp. 251–276; cf. also, *supra*, nn. 6 and 7.

of this problem, Brown was led through the later-medieval discussion of his topic by an author who was a meticulous reader of the theological literature of his day, and who systematically presented his own view as a reaction to the views of other Scholastic theologians and philosophers of the thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries. In order to provide the strongest possible foundation for his philosophic analysis, in the first part of his dissertation Brown presented a critical edition of Peter Auriol's *Reportatio in primum Sententiarum*, dist. 2, partes 1–2, which is a detailed treatment of the univocity of the concept of being. It should be noted that this work of Auriol's is still today mostly unedited, and Brown's was the *editio princeps* of this particular text; he later published the edition with an introduction in the journal *Traditio*.¹⁰ Since it postdates Auriol's better known *Scriptum in primum Sententiarum*, knowledge of the *Reportatio in primum* is extremely important in order to judge the development of Auriol's thought over the course of his relatively short scholarly career (ca. 1316–1321). Equipped with his edition of Auriol's text in the *Reportatio* as well as the early printed edition of the *Scriptum* (1596), Brown studied the problem of the univocity of the concept of being from Auriol's point of view. With that said, one of the things that makes Brown's work especially useful is that he was not content to accept Auriol's description of his interlocutors' positions: he went back to the original texts, in one case (Gerard of Bologna's *Quodlibet* I, q. 1) even editing the text from manuscripts since it was not otherwise available. Thus, in the second part of his dissertation, Brown traced the discussion concerning the univocity of the concept of being from the foundational texts in Aristotle and especially Avicenna (whom Auriol really considers to have set the stage for the later-medieval discussion) to Auriol's primary interlocutors: Henry of Ghent, Gerard of Bologna, Hervaeus Natalis and John Duns Scotus. Scotus, as is now well known, was crucial on this topic, having argued forcibly for the univocity of the concept of being, especially between God and creatures. In his dissertation Brown shows how Auriol understood and criticized his predecessors, and how he built upon them. Brown summed up his findings in an article published in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

¹⁰ "Petrus Aureoli: *De unitate conceptus entis (Reportatio Parisiensis in I Sententiarum, dist. 2, p. 1, qq. 1–3 et p. 2, qq. 1–2)*", in: *Traditio* 50 (1995), pp. 199–248.

his doctorate, an article that has since become a classic in the field.¹¹ Indeed, one can claim certainly that Brown's early work on this issue was a catalyst to the lively interest of scholars evident today in both the figure of Peter Auriol and in the philosophical doctrine of the univocity of the concept of being. Brown himself continued to work on these themes, publishing a number of editions of later-medieval texts dealing with the univocity of the concept of being,¹² and writing entries on Auriol in standard encyclopedias of medieval philosophy.¹³ Both of these topics are represented in the present volume, by Lauge Nielsen's article on Peter Auriol and Wouter Goris' discussion of Richard of Conington's view on the analogy of being.

A second area in which Stephen Brown has been especially interested is the medieval discussion of the scientific nature of theology. In fact, this is probably the area of medieval thought upon which Brown has published most. Brown's interest in theology as a scientific discipline seems to be linked with his interest in the late fourteenth-century Greek-born theologian, Peter of Candia, who shortly before his death in 1410 became Pope Alexander V. Brown first published an article on Peter of Candia in 1976;¹⁴ since then Peter has been a recurring figure in his work concerning the scientific status of theology, and most recently has been the subject of his attention in a study

¹¹ "Avicenna and the Unity of the Concept of Being. The interpretations of Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, Gerard of Bologna and Peter Aureoli", in: *Franciscan Studies* 25 (1965), pp. 117-150.

¹² "Richard of Conington and the Analogy of the Concept of Being", in: *Franziskanische Studien* 28 (1966), pp. 297-307; "The Analogy of Being according to Robert Cowton", in: *Franciscan Studies* 31 (1971), pp. 5-37; "Gerard of Bologna's *Quodlibet* I, *Quaestio* 1: On the Analogy of Being", in: *Carmelus* 31 (1984), pp. 143-170; "Univocity of the Concept of Being in the Fourteenth Century: III. An Early Scotist" (with Stephen D. Dumont), in: *Mediaeval Studies* 51 (1989), pp. 1-129; "Nicholas of Lyra's Critique of Scotus' Univocity", in: B. Moisisch / O. Pluta (edd.), *Historia Philosophiae Medii Aevi. Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Kurt Flasch zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia 1991, pp. 115-127; "Guido Terrena, O. Carm., and the Analogy of Being", in: *Documenti e Studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 2/1 (1994), pp. 237-269; "L'unité du concept d'être au début du quatorzième siècle", in: L. Honnefelder / R. Wood / M. Dreyer (edd.), *John Duns Scotus: Metaphysics and Ethics*, Leiden-New York-Köln 1996 (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 53), pp. 327-344.

¹³ "Walter Burley, Peter Aureoli and Gregory of Rimini", in: J. Marenbon (ed.), *Routledge History of Philosophy*, vol. III: Medieval Philosophy, London-New York 1998, pp. 368-385.

¹⁴ "Peter of Candia's Sermons in Praise of Peter Lombard", in: R. S. Almagno / C. L. Harkins (edd.), *Studies Honoring Ignatius Charles Brady, Friar Minor*, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1976 (Franciscan Institute Publications: Theology Series 6), pp. 141-176.

that determines the *status quaestionis* concerning Peter's commentary on the *Sentences*.¹⁵ Peter of Candia appears to have provided Brown with a bird's eye view of the later thirteenth- and the fourteenth-century discussion of theology as a science. He presented this synoptic view first in an article that, typically, contains an *editio principis* of the first question of Peter's Prologue to the *Sentences*.¹⁶ In that article, in the form of a commentary on Peter of Candia's text, Brown traces the discussion of theology as a science, first concentrating on Peter Auriol's notion of theology as a declarative habit, by means of which the theologian through practice learns to bring clarity to the articles of faith and thereby gives to their apprehension a cognitive status that is greater than faith but less than demonstrative science. Brown next turns to Gregory of Rimini's rejection of Auriol's declarative theology in favor of demonstrative theology, a theological habit through which one may deduce conclusions that follow necessarily from the basic truths revealed in Scripture. Lurking behind both Auriol's and Gregory of Rimini's views is the rejection of the argument that theology is a science in any strict sense of the word, a position most often associated with Thomas Aquinas and his followers; both Auriol and Gregory rejected the notion because they recognized that we can gain no evident knowledge through theology, since we always start from articles of faith about which we can have no evident knowledge. In his own solution, Peter of Candia leans towards Auriol while still leaving room for Gregory of Rimini's vision of the scientific nature of theology: according to Peter of Candia, theology has both declarative and deductive aspects, depending on how the theologian approaches divine revelation. It should be noted that in presenting this history of the theologian's role, Brown—again, typically—does not rely exclusively on Peter of Candia's presentation of the views of various theologians,

¹⁵ "Peter of Candia's Commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard", in: P. Rosemann (ed.), *Medieval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, vol. 2, Leiden 2010, pp. 439–469. Cf. also, "Peter of Candia's Portrait of late Thirteenth-Century Problems concerning Faith and Reason in Book I of the *Sentences*", in: R. E. Houser (ed.), *Laudemus viros gloriosos: Essays in Honor of Armand Maurer, CSB*, Notre Dame 2007 (Thomistic Studies), pp. 254–282; "Aristotle's View on the Eternity of the World according to Peter of Candia", in: M. Treschow / W. Otten / W. Hannam (edd.), *Divine Creation in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought: Essays Presented to the Rev'd Dr Robert D. Crouse*, Leiden-Boston 2007 (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 151), pp. 370–404.

¹⁶ "Peter of Candia's Hundred-Year 'History' of the Theologian's Role", in: *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991), pp. 156–190.

but rather turns to their own texts. Much of Brown's further work on this subject has been based on investigations of the original texts (to which Peter of Candia may have directed him), which have enabled him to see how those texts fit into the overall development of the discussion of theology as a science in the late-thirteenth through the fourteenth centuries. Thus, Brown has published on criticisms and defenses of Thomas Aquinas' view that theology is a science (in a rather strict sense of that term) that is subalternated to divine knowledge, to which we have access only indirectly through revelation,¹⁷ and on the controversy between Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines over the scientific status of theology, Henry holding that the theologian has a special light that grants him a type of knowledge that is more exalted than faith although falling far short of the direct vision that the blessed enjoy in heaven, and Godfrey rejecting these lofty claims for academic theology.¹⁸ From this controversy in particular, John Duns Scotus was motivated to devise his distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition, attributing to abstractive cognition a type of cognition of God that is theoretically possible in this life but only with divine assistance (e.g., for the Apostles and saints).¹⁹ More recently, Brown has widened his investigation of this topic to include yet other thinkers, some well known, like Durand of Saint-Pourçain,²⁰ others nearly unknown, like Prosper of Reggio in Emilia.²¹ This too bespeaks

¹⁷ "Henry of Ghent's Critique of Aquinas' Subalternation Theory and the Early Thomistic Response", in: R. Työrinoja / A. I. Lehtinen / D. Føllesdal (edd.), *Knowledge and the Sciences in Medieval Philosophy. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Medieval Philosophy (S.I.E.P.M.), Helsinki 24–29 August 1987*, t. III, Helsinki 1990 (Annals of the Finnish Society for Missiology and Ecumenics 55), pp. 337–345.

¹⁸ "John Duns Scotus' Debate with Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Godfrey of Fontaines on the Nature of Theology", in: L. Sileo (ed.), *Via Scoti. Methodologia ad mentem Joannis Duns Scoti. Atti del Congresso Scotistico Internazionale, Roma 9–11 marzo 1993*, Rome 1995, pp. 229–243; "Late Thirteenth Century Theology: *Scientia* Pushed to its Limits", in: R. Berndt / M. Lutz-Bachmann / R. M. W. Stammberger (edd.), "*Scientia*" und "*Disciplina*": *Wissenstheorie und Wissenschaftspraxis im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2002 (Erudiri sapientia 3), pp. 249–260.

¹⁹ "The Medieval Background to the Abstractive vs. Intuitive Cognition Distinction", in: J. A. Aertsen / A. Speer (edd.), *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert*, Berlin-New York 2000 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 27), pp. 79–90.

²⁰ "Declarative Theology after Durandus: Its Re-presentation and Defense by Peter Aureoli", in: S. F. Brown / T. Dewender / T. Kubusch (edd.), *Philosophical Debates at Paris in the Early Fourteenth Century*, Leiden-Boston 2009 (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 102), pp. 401–421.

²¹ "*Duo Candelabra Parisiensia*: Prosper of Reggio in Emilia's Portrait of the Enduring Presence of Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines regarding the Nature of Theological Study", in: K. Emery, Jr. / J. A. Aertsen / A. Speer (edd.), *Nach der*

a salient feature of Brown's research: his interest in determining the ebb and flow of the medieval debate on whatever topic he is studying leads him to examine not only major but also minor figures, whose thought at least serves to help modern interpreters to contextualize the thinking of the major thinkers. His attention to minor figures serves also to emphasize the point that the study of philosophy and theology in the Middle Ages was a corporate enterprise of authoritative institutions, the Church and the university. Brown's work on theology as a scientific discipline, one may note, is continued in this volume by Klaus Rodler's editions of several texts on the subject by the Dominican Thomas Sutton.

The third major area of fourteenth-century thought that Brown has investigated, and probably the one for which he is best known, concerns the thought of William of Ockham. Brown worked with the group around Fr. Gedeon Gál at St. Bonaventure University to produce the critical edition of Ockham's works. Between 1970 and 1984, he personally worked on Ockham's *Scriptum in primum Sententiarum*,²² *Summa logicae*,²³ Ockham's commentary on the *Perihermenias*,²⁴ as well as on three of Ockham's four treatments of Aristotle's *Physics*.²⁵ Alongside his work on the edition proper, Brown discovered and exposed original materials that illuminate Ockham's intellectual world. Thus, in the course of editing the Prologue to Ockham's commentary on the *Sentences*, he also edited texts from four authors—John of Reading, Richard of Conington, Robert Cowton and William of Alnwick—whose positions on such issues as demonstration and the practical or speculative nature of theology Ockham considers critically and at

Verurteilung von 1277: Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts. Studien und Texte, Berlin-New York 2001 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 28), pp. 294–329.

²² Guillelmus de Ockham, *Scriptum in librum primum Sententiarum*: Prologus et Distinctio prima, in: *Opera Theologica* I, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1967—as assistant editor to Gedeon Gál; and Guillelmus de Ockham, *Scriptum in librum primum Sententiarum*: Distinctiones II–III, in: *Opera Theologica* II, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1970—as main editor with the assistance of Gedeon Gál.

²³ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Summa logicae*, in: *Opera Philosophica* I, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1974. The edition was initiated by Philotheus Boehner, but redone and completed by Gedeon Gál and Stephen F. Brown.

²⁴ Included in Guillelmus de Ockham, *Expositio aurea*, in: *Opera Philosophica* II, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1978, pp. 340–539.

²⁵ Guillelmus de Ockham, *Brevis Summa Libri Physicorum, Summula Philosophiae Naturalis, et Quaestiones in Libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, in: *Opera Philosophica* VI, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1984. The *Quaestiones in Libros Physicorum Aristotelis* is Ockham's final word on this subject.

length.²⁶ Brown did a similar service for Ockham's logical and physical works, in a string of articles editing, among others, logical works by Walter Burley that Ockham may have known.²⁷ Brown tied much of this logical and natural philosophical material together in his masterly article "A Modern Prologue to Ockham's Natural Philosophy",²⁸ in which he explains many of the central conceptual tools, such as supposition theory and the distinction between absolute and connotative terms, and the philosophical intuitions, such as Ockham's suspicion of reifying concepts and his belief that linguistic analysis should be at the heart of natural philosophy, which are necessary for understanding Ockham's natural philosophy. This kind of work at the boundary of logic and natural philosophy is continued in the present volume in the contributions of André Goddu (on the medieval background to the scientific revolution) and Thomas Dewender (on how Ockham and Burley in very different ways deal with the issue of the signification of terms referring to non-existents like *chimaerae*).

One example perhaps suffices to show the way in which Brown used his editorial skills to advance new views concerning Ockham's philosophy and theology: his study concerning "Ockham and Final Causality".²⁹ Here Brown begins from a consideration of an article by Gerhard Leibold, an editor of *Expositio in libros Physicorum* (OPh IV–V), the one treatment of the *Physics* by Ockham that Brown himself did not participate in editing. In his article, Leibold had pointed out that there were discrepancies between the doctrine of final causality as found in the *Expositio*, which is firmly attributed to Ockham, and in other works less certainly attributed to him, such as the *Quodlibeta*, the disputed question *De fine* and the *Summula philosophiae naturalis*. The discrepancies among these works seemed to pertain to the status

²⁶ "Sources for Ockham's Prologue to the *Sentences* [I]", in: *Franciscan Studies* 26 (1966), pp. 36–65; "Sources for Ockham's Prologue to the *Sentences* [II]", in: *Franciscan Studies* 27 (1967), pp. 39–107.

²⁷ "Walter Burley's *Tractatus de suppositione* and its relation to William of Ockham's *Summa logicae*", in: *Franciscan Studies* 32 (1972), pp. 15–64; "Walter Burley's Middle Commentary on Aristotle's *Perihermenias*", in: *Franciscan Studies* 33 (1973), pp. 42–139; "Walter Burley's *Quaestiones in librum Perihermenias*", in: *Franciscan Studies* 34 (1974), pp. 200–295.

²⁸ In: W. Kluxen et al. (edd.), *Sprache und Erkenntnis im Mittelalter. Akten des VI. internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie der Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale*, 29. August–3. September 1997 in Bonn, Berlin–New York 1981 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 13/1), pp. 107–129.

²⁹ In: J. F. Wippel (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, Washington (D.C.) 1987 (Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 17), pp. 249–272.

of a final cause: Is it merely a “metaphorical” cause, as the latter three texts claim, or does it have the same type of causality as the incontestably authentic *Expositio* appears to claim? Leibold suggested that the works containing doctrine that conflicts with the certainly authentic *Expositio* were in fact not authored by Ockham. As both Leibold and Brown point out, if Leibold should be correct, then, because of its close textual links with the *Quodlibeta*, the authenticity of the *Quaestiones in Libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, which Brown had edited and studied, would also be called into question. Brown employed his extensive knowledge of Ockham’s corpus and the theological context in which he worked, as well as his skill in paleography to unravel the mystery and argue for the authenticity of these works. Brown showed not only that cross-references between the *Expositio* and the *Quaestiones* appeared to correspond, which would seem to argue for the works having one and the same author, but also that Walter Chatton’s criticism of Ockham reappeared in the *Quodlibeta*, which fact also argues strongly for Ockham’s authorship of that work.³⁰ Even more significantly, Brown found in a work that could incontrovertibly be assigned to Ockham, namely the *Scriptum in primum Sententiarum*, the same view found in the three works that Leibold wanted to eliminate from Ockham’s corpus: the view that final causality is merely “metaphorical” causality. Going one step further, Brown offered a textual conjecture that served to remove any discrepancy between the position on final causality offered in the *Expositio* and that offered in the works known to belong to Ockham. The troubling passage from the *Expositio*, “[...] *quia finis est quodammodo causa causarum, quia aliquo modo mediate movet efficientem ad agendum [...]*”, seems to allow that final causality is in fact moving the efficient cause to its act, but Brown rightly pointed out that the abbreviation for *mediate* (me^{te} or me^{ce}) could easily be read *metaphorice*. If *metaphorice* were in fact the reading, then there would be no disagreement in doctrine between this incontestably genuine work of Ockham’s and the other works that were presumed, with substantial evidence to back up the presumption, to be his. This close paleographic inspection of the text enabled Brown to give a general interpretation of Ockham’s view of final causality. This example

³⁰ Brown had already argued for this at length in: “Walter Chatton’s *Lectura* and William of Ockham’s *Quaestiones in Libros Physicorum Aristotelis*”, in: W. A. Frank / G. I. Etzkorn (edd.), *Studies in Honor of Allan B. Wolter*, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1985 (Franciscan Institute Publications: Theology Series 10), pp. 81–115.

reveals the hallmarks of Stephen Brown's scholarly work: his recourse to the manuscripts, his careful reading of terms and arguments, his engagement with the scholarly views of other researchers. In sum, this example shows well the reasons why over the course of more than four decades Stephen F. Brown's scholarly work has been a mainstay of the study of fourteenth-century philosophy.

* * *

The term 'Middle Ages' in its common modern usage was conceived by Enlightenment ideologues and historiographers to signify the darkened stretch of time between the final extinction of the glories of antiquity and the rebirth of culture and thought sometime in the fifteenth century, and more fully in the sixteenth (the so-called "Renaissance"). The prejudicial willfulness of this conceit is indicated, for example, by the fact that for Saint Augustine the 'Middle Ages' designate all of those moments of time passing into non-existence between the Incarnation of Christ and the Last Judgment. In any event, the actual continuity of the tradition of philosophical and theological learning that Stephen Brown has striven to understand extends from the time of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon well into the seventeenth century, a duration that we may call 'the long Middle Ages'. The title of this volume—*Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages*—thus signifies the encyclopedic range of Stephen's philosophical and theological erudition from the era of the Fathers through the entire Middle Ages to the Reformation and beyond. The 35 contributions to this *Festschrift* are disposed in five parts: Metaphysics and Natural Philosophy, Epistemology and Ethics, Philosophy and Theology, Theological Questions: Text and Context. These five headings articulate Stephen Brown's underlying conception and understanding of medieval philosophy and theology, which the editors share: The main theoretical and practical issues of the 'long medieval' intellectual tradition are rooted in an epistemology and a metaphysics, which must be understood not as separated from theology but as being in a fruitful exchange with theological conceptions and questions; further, in order to understand the *longue durée* of this tradition of philosophical and theological discourse, scholars must engage the textual traditions that conveyed it, in commentaries on Aristotle and Plato as well as on the Lombard's *Sentences*, on the *Physics* as well as on the Scriptures, taking continual recourse to the very manuscripts in which these texts were transmitted.

As we said at the beginning, this book is a tribute to Stephen F. Brown from colleagues and students who span at least three academic generations, in gratitude for the inspiration, ideas, prudent practical guidance and friendship that he has bestowed upon all of us over many years. We hope that this *Festschrift* in his honor is a worthy testimony to our gratitude, respect and affection. On the occasion of the publication of this volume, as we did on the celebration of his 75th birthday, we the editors and contributors congratulate our dear colleague and friend and wish him “many happy years” in the fourth-quarter of his active life, expressing our delight in his ever-youthful and inspiring mind, and wishing him, his beloved wife Marie, his children and his grandchildren all of the Lord’s blessings.

Kent Emery, Jr. (Notre Dame), Russell L. Friedman (Leuven) and
Andreas Speer (Köln)

THE TRANSFORMATION OF METAPHYSICS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

JAN A. AERTSEN

INTRODUCTION

According to medieval authors, metaphysics is identical with philosophy as such (*philosophia simpliciter*). In his commentary on the *Metaphysics* (ca. 1245), Roger Bacon observes that every science can be called “philosophy”, but in the proper sense of the word only metaphysics deserves this name, since it considers being-as-being, the ultimate causes of things and the divine.¹ Bacon’s argument for the fundamental character of the discipline is traditional, and his text reflects the fact that in the Latin world the notion of metaphysics was strongly determined by its Greek origin. But there also are interesting new developments, even transformations of the ancient model, and this innovative aspect will be the subject of this essay.² In order to specify the scope and aim of this essay, I shall make three introductory remarks.

First, the investigation will be confined to the Aristotelian tradition. That is a real restriction, for Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* did not appear (in a rather incomplete translation) in the Latin world until the middle of the twelfth century.³ One must distinguish two periods in medieval metaphysics: “the Boethian age”, the period from 500 until 1200, and

¹ Cf. Roger Bacon, *Quaestiones altere supra libros prime philosophiae Aristotelis* (edd. R. Steele / F. M. Delorme), *Opera hactenus inedita* 11, Oxford 1932, p. 112: “[N]omine communi quolibet scientia potest dici philosophia, set nomine proprie (*lege*: proprio) vel appropriato ista sola, scilicet Methaphysica, philosophia nuncupatur, quia cognoscit ens increatum aliquantulum [...], et etiam ens creatum modo certo et vero, et omnia que sunt entia [...]; secunda causa, quia probat statum in 4. omnibus causis; tertia, quia amor maxime circa divina consistit”. Cf. Peter Aureoli, *Scriptum Super Primum Sententiarum*, prooem., sect. 1, n. 120 (ed. E. M. Buytaert), vol. 1: Prologue—Distinction 1, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1952 (Franciscan Institute Publications 3), p. 167: “sic philosophia simpliciter et universalis, qualis est metaphysica”.

² For a bibliography of medieval metaphysics, cf. M. Benedetto / L. I. Martone, “La metafisica nel Medioevo: una bibliografica essenziale”, in: P. Porro (ed.), *Metaphysica, sapientia, scientia divina. Soggetto e statuto della filosofia prima nel Medioevo, Quaestio 5* (2005), pp. 587–602.

³ For a survey of the translations, cf. the Praefatio in *Aristoteles Latinus XXV/3: Metaphysica. Recensio et Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka* (ed. G. Vuillemin-Diem), Leiden-New York-Köln 1995, pp. 1–8.

the period after the reception of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.⁴ The absence of the *Metaphysics* in the *aetas Boetiana* did not mean that there was no metaphysics at all.⁵ Boethius' treatise *De hebdomadibus*, which discusses the relation between being and the good on the basis of nine axioms was the starting-point of metaphysical reflections in the Latin world, but these reflections lacked the systematic framework of a science or discipline.

Secondly, after the *entrée* of his *Metaphysics* in the Latin West Aristotle's authority was not undisputed. Several authors severely criticized his project of metaphysics. According to Bonaventure, the "true" metaphysician studies the exemplary cause of being. Aristotle had secluded himself from this center of metaphysics, because he had cursed (*exsecratur*) Plato's Ideas. Consequently he fell into several errors: he ignored the exemplary cause of things and denied divine providence.⁶ In his discussion of Plato's doctrine of the Ideas, the Scotist Francis of Meyronnes called Aristotle "the worst metaphysician" (*pessimus metaphysicus*).⁷ The vitality of the Platonic tradition is manifest in the voluminous commentary on the *Elementatio theologica* of Proclus, which was written by Berthold of Moosburg, Eckhart's successor as head of the *Studium generale* of the Dominicans in Cologne, sometime between 1327 and his death in 1361.⁸ In the *praeambulum* of his commentary, Berthold opposes "the Platonic science" (*scientia Platonica*), which is concerned with the divine things, to "the Peripatetic metaphysics" (*metaphysica Peripatetica*), which deals with being insofar as it is being. He argues that the Platonic position is superior to

⁴ Cf. A. de Libera, "Genèse et structure des métaphysiques médiévales", in: J.-M. Narbonne / L. Langlois (edd.), *La Métaphysique. Son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux*, Paris-Québec 1999, pp. 159–181, esp. p. 161.

⁵ Cf. A. Speer, "Das 'Erwachen der Metaphysik'. Anmerkungen zu einem Paradigma für das Verständnis des 12. Jahrhunderts", in: M. Lutz-Bachmann / A. Fidora / A. Niederberger (edd.), *Metaphysics in the Twelfth Century. On the Relationship among Philosophy, Science and Theology*, Turnhout 2004 (Textes et Études du Moyen Âge 19), pp. 17–40; id.: "The Hidden Heritage: Boethian Metaphysics and its Medieval Tradition", in: *Quaestio* 5 (2005), pp. 163–181.

⁶ Cf. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, VI, 2–4 (ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae), in: *Opera omnia* V, Quaracchi 1891, pp. 360 sq.

⁷ Francis of Meyronnes, *In Sententiarum*, I, dist. 47, q. 3 (ed. Venetiis 1520), f. 134rb F.

⁸ The critical edition of Berthold's commentary *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, which has been appearing since 1984 in the *Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi* (CPTMA) VI, will cover 9 volumes. On Berthold of Moosburg, cf. A. de Libera, *Introduction à la mystique rhénane d'Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart*, Paris 1984, pp. 317–442.

the Aristotelian *habitus* of metaphysical wisdom and is therefore called a “superwisdom” (*supersapientia*), because it deals not only with the principles of being but also with principles that are above being, such as the first good. The commentator clearly identifies himself with the Platonic project by speaking of “our (*nostra*) superwisdom”,⁹ but this position does not represent the mainstream of medieval metaphysics.

My third introductory remark concerns the epoch-making importance modern scholarship (L. Honnefelder) has attributed to the reception of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* by the Latin authors of the thirteenth and fourteenth century. When one compares the original, Greek concept of First Philosophy with the medieval understanding of this discipline, it is argued, it becomes clear that the medieval rediscovery and re-foundation has the character of a “second beginning of metaphysics”.¹⁰ The appropriateness of this phrase should be examined critically: Does it not exaggerate the originality of the medieval achievements? In order to gain insight into the place of Latin philosophy in the genealogy of Western metaphysics, I shall focus on two interrelated questions that transformed Aristotle’s conception of metaphysics in the Middle Ages: the question concerning the proper *subiectum* of First Philosophy and the question concerning the first *obiectum* of the intellect.

I. THE “BASIC” QUESTION CONCERNING THE *PROPRIMUM SUBIECTUM* OF METAPHYSICS

(1) The importance of the question concerning the *proprium subiectum* of First Philosophy appears from the fact that such prominent medieval commentators of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* as Albertus the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, as well as Francisco Suárez in his *Disputationes metaphysicae*, begin their works with this question.¹¹ Let us look at each in turn.

⁹ Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem theologiam Procli*, praefationem C (edd. M. R. Pagnoni-Sturlese / L. Sturlese), Hamburg 1984 (CPTMA VI/1), pp. 65 sq. and p. 68.

¹⁰ L. Honnefelder, “Der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik. Voraussetzungen, Ansätze und Folgen der Wiederbegründung der Metaphysik im 13./14. Jahrhundert”, in: J. P. Beckmann / L. Honnefelder / G. Schrimpf / G. Wieland (edd.), *Philosophie im Mittelalter. Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen*, Hamburg 1987, pp. 165–186.

¹¹ The classic study on this issue is A. Zimmermann, *Ontologie oder Metaphysik? Die Diskussion über den Gegenstand der Metaphysik im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, Leuven² 1998 (1st ed. 1965).

In the first treatise of his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Albert the Great makes a “digression” in order to explain what “the proper subject” (*proprium subiectum*) of this science is. A preliminary account, he states, is necessary because of the diversity of opinions among the philosophers. He lists three different positions on this issue. Some philosophers claimed that the first causes are the proper subject of metaphysics, because science is knowledge of the causes and First Philosophy traces reality back to first or ultimate causes. Others held that God and the divine things are the subject. A third group of philosophers maintained that it is “being” (*ens*).¹² In the manner of a disputation Albert advances arguments for and against the three views and resolves the question on the basis of the formal features of a “subject” of science.

In the prologue of his commentary on the *Metaphysics* (dateable ca. 1270), Thomas Aquinas also discusses a threefold consideration of metaphysics, but his approach is different from Albert’s. Thomas argues that there must be a first and directing science that treats of the “most intelligibles” (*maxime intelligibilia*). Intelligibility and that which is “most intelligible” can be understood in three ways, i.e., in relation to causality, universality and immateriality. Taken in the first sense, the “most intelligibles” are the first causes; from the perspective of universality, they are that which is common to things, such as “being” (*ens*); and from the third perspective they are God and the Intelligences. At this point of his *Prooemium*, Thomas has identified three different classes of “most intelligible” objects. He next contends that the threefold consideration of “the most intelligibles” should not be attributed to different sciences, but to one, and establishes the unity of First Philosophy by the determination of the proper “subject” of this discipline.¹³

In the Prologue of his *Questions on the Metaphysics*, John Duns Scotus describes the twofold orientation of First Philosophy: it treats what is most common, the *transcendentia*, and it treats the first causes. Are

¹² Albertus Magnus, *Metaphysica*, I, tract. 1, c. 2 (ed. B. Geyer), in: *Opera omnia* XVI/1, Münster 1960, pp. 3 sq.: “Et est digressio declarans, quid sit huius scientiae proprium subiectum; et est in eo disputatio de tribus opinionibus philosophorum, quae sunt de subiecto. [...] Nonnulli enim fuerunt, qui posuerunt causam in eo quod causa est prima in unoquoque genere causarum, esse subiectum huius scientiae, ratione ista utentes, quod ista scientia considerat de causis ultimis, ad quae resolvuntur omnes causae [...]. Ideo fuerunt alii qui dixerunt deum et divina subiectum esse scientiae istius [...]. Amplius, tam hi quam primo inducti philosophi ratiocinantur ens non posse subiectum huius scientiae”.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, prooem. (ed. M.-R. Cathala), Turin-Rome 1950, pp. 1 sq.

these two kinds of objects so related to one another that they pertain to the consideration of one and the same science? Scotus observes that there are various views on the question of which of these ought to be its proper object and points to the Arabic background of this controversy: "Therefore the first question is whether the proper subject of metaphysics is being-as-being, as Avicenna claimed, or God and the intelligences, as Averroes assumed".¹⁴

A milestone in the history of metaphysics were the *Disputationes metaphysicae*, published by Francisco Suárez at the end of the sixteenth century (1597). Because he wants to explain the entire field of the discipline as a system, he breaks with the established tradition of a commentary. Directive for the entire work is the first Disputation, in which Suárez examines "the nature of First Philosophy or metaphysics". He begins this inquiry in the first section by raising the question as to what is the adequate "object" or "subject" of this science.¹⁵

From this survey it is evident that authors from the thirteenth until the sixteenth century devoted much attention and attached considerable weight to the question concerning the "subject" of First Philosophy. Adopting Martin Heidegger's phrase "die Grundfrage der Metaphysik", one might say that this question is the "basic question" of medieval metaphysics.¹⁶ But what is meant by this subjectivity?

(2) The term *subiectum*, of course, should not be taken in a modern sense, as the "knowing subject", although that meaning was not unknown to the Middle Ages. As such different authors as Giles of

¹⁴ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, I, q. 1 (edd. R. Andrews / G. Etzkorn / G. Gál / R. Green / F. Kelley / G. Marcil / T. Noone / R. Wood), in: *Opera philosophica* III, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1997, p. 15: "De isto autem obiecto huius scientiae ostensum est prius quod haec scientia est circa transcendentia; ostensum est autem quod est circa altissimas causas. Quod autem istorum debeat poni proprium eius obiectum, variae sunt opiniones. Ideo de hoc quaeritur primo utrum proprium subiectum metaphysicae sit ens in quantum ens (sicut posuit Avicenna) vel Deus et Intelligentiae (sicut posuit Commentator Averroes)".

¹⁵ Francisco Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, I, prolog. (ed. C. Berton), in: *Opera omnia* XXV, Paris 1866, p. 2a: "[E]t ideo primum omnium inquirendum nobis est huius doctrinae obiectum, seu subiectum".

¹⁶ Cf. M. Pickavé, "Heinrich von Gent über das Subjekt der Metaphysik als Ersterkanntes", in: *Documenti e Studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 12 (2001), pp. 493–522, p. 493. Cf. J.-F. Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, Paris 1990, p. 9: "À partir du milieu du XIII^e siècle [...], la question du statut de la métaphysique, de sa nature et de son 'objet' se rassemble dans la détermination du *subiectum metaphysicae*". For Heidegger's *Grundfrage*, cf. M. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Tübingen 1958, pp. 1–6.

Rome and William of Ockham indicate, the expression *subiectum scientiae* can be taken in two senses. In one sense, it means that in which (*in quo*) knowledge is as in a subject. But this first meaning of “subject of science” is not at issue, for it designates a subject that is common to all sciences, namely the intellect itself, and does not differentiate them from one another. The other sense of *subiectum scientiae* refers to that about which (*de quo*) something is known; it is in this way, Ockham explicitly states, in which Aristotle understands “subject” in his *Posterior Analytics*.¹⁷ *Scientia* is demonstrative knowledge, that is, knowledge produced by a demonstration. That which is scientifically knowable in the proper sense is therefore the conclusion of a demonstration, in which a predicate is attributed to a subject. The background of the term “subject” thus is the (propositional) structure of a demonstrative science.

Not everything of which a science treats is its (proper) subject. Giles of Rome devoted the opening question in his commentary on the *Sentences* (around 1271–73) to this issue: *Utrum omne quod consideratur in scientia sit subiectum?* His account illustrates the increased systematic importance that medieval thinkers attributed to the notion of “subject”, which plays a modest role in Aristotle’s theory of science. Giles argues that a science acquires five marks from its “subject”: unity, distinction, dignity, order among the sciences and necessity.¹⁸ The most fundamental feature is the first one; the proper “subject” of a science is that which constitutes its unity. Giles supports this claim by a reference to the authoritative text on this point, a passage in the *Posterior Analytics* wherein Aristotle maintains that the unity of a science is based on the unity of the subject according to its generic nature, the subject-genus or simply the subject, of which the parts and properties

¹⁷ Cf. Aegidius Romanus, *In I librum Sententiarum*, prol., q. 1 (ed. Venice 1521, reprinted in Frankfurt a.M. 1968), fol. 2ra. William of Ockham, *Expositio in libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, prol., § 3 (edd. V. Richter / G. Leibold), *Opera Philosophica* IV, St. Bonaventure (N.Y.) 1985, pp. 8 sq. Ockham carefully explains the terminology, although he is critical of the presumptions of the question as to the “subject of metaphysics”. It is striking that one of the codices underlines Ockham’s distance from the common view by adding: “Contrarium istorum ponit Aegidius” (*Opera Theol.* I, p. 247, Nt. 1). As we shall see, Giles of Rom strongly emphasizes the systematic importance of the notion of “subject of science”.

¹⁸ Cf. Aegidius Romanus, *In I Sent.*, prol., q. 1 (cf. n. 17). The printed version contains the ordinated version of Giles’ commentary on the first Book (around 1271–1273); cf. id., *Quaestiones metaphysicales* I, q. 6, (ed. Venice 1501, reprinted in Frankfurt a.M. 1966), fol. 3vb.

are considered in that science.¹⁹ By the same token a science is distinct from other sciences on the basis of its subject.²⁰ From this, Giles concludes, it also appears that the subject of a science is not identical with that which a science considers. If everything that is considered in a science would be its subject, the unity of a science would be eliminated, because there would be a variety of subjects in one and the same science. Likewise the distinction from other sciences would be eliminated, because one and the same thing can be considered in different sciences and would thus be the subject of several sciences. Therefore *esse de consideratione scientiae* and *esse subiectum* are not identical.²¹

(3) What is new in the commentary tradition is not the idea of the “subject of science” as such, although medieval philosophers reevaluated its systematic importance, but the application of this notion to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. In this way the Latin commentators intended to establish both the unity of First Philosophy and its distinction from other sciences, in particular Christian theology. Both aspects deserve further attention.

By raising the question as to what is the *subiectum metaphysicae*, the commentators attempted to invest Aristotle’s writing with a structural unity that it never had in the Philosopher himself. As Albertus the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus observe, First Philosophy seems to be ambiguous because of Aristotle’s divergent determinations of *meta ta physika*: it is a universal science, the study of being-as-being, as is said in Book IV of the *Metaphysics*, and it is the divine science or “theology”, the study of the “most dignified” kind of being, as is suggested in Book VI.²² Can this be the case in one and the same

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, I, c. 28, 87 a 38 (ed. L. Minio-Paluello), in: *Aristoteles Latinus* IV/1–4 (trans. Gerardi), Bruges-Paris 1968, p. 240: “et scientia una est in qua est subiectum unum”.

²⁰ Cf. Aegidius Romanus, *In I Sent.*, prolog., q. 1 (cf. n. 17), 2ra.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 2ra–b.

²² For a review of the scholarship, cf. J. Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian ‘Metaphysics’*. A Study in the Greek Background of Medieval Thought, Toronto 1963. Id., “The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian *Metaphysics*—Revisited”, in: P. Morewedge (ed.), *Philosophies of Existence, Ancient and Modern*, New York 1982, pp. 33–59. “Métaphysique et ontologie: Études sur la métaphysique d’Aristote”, special issue of *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 90 (1992), pp. 385–522. E. Berti, “La *Metafisica* di Aristotele: ‘onto-teologia’ o ‘filosofia prima’?”, in: *Rivista di Filosofia neoscolastica* 85 (1993), pp. 256–282. For a more recent evaluation, cf. D. Fonfara, “Aristoteles’ Erste Philosophie: universalistische oder paradigmatische Ontologie?”, in: K. Engelhard (ed.), *Aufklärungen. Festschrift für K. Düsing*, Berlin 2002, pp. 15–37.

science? The question as to the “proper subject” of metaphysics is the specific contribution that medieval commentators made to the ongoing debate on the nature and unity of this discipline.

The Arabic philosopher Avicenna provided the model for their discussion in his work *De philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, which is not a commentary on the *Metaphysics* but an independent and original account.²³ He starts his work with an inquiry into the “subject” of First Philosophy, which is crucial in his endeavour to give metaphysics a solid scientific basis and unity. “It is certain that every science possesses its proper subject (*subiectum proprium*)”, but in the case of the divine science it is not evident what the subject is.²⁴ Avicenna was the first to raise what would become the “basic question” of medieval metaphysics.

Another aim of this question was to distinguish metaphysics from the other sciences, for the subject of a science also distinguishes it from other sciences. In the Middle Ages the main concern of the Latin commentators was not, as Aristotle’s threefold division of the theoretical sciences into physics, mathematics and theology would seem to suggest, the distinction of metaphysics from physics but the distinction of metaphysics from Christian theology. This concern reflects a fundamental innovation of the thirteenth century: the rise of Christian theology as a *scientia* distinct from philosophical theology.²⁵ This development is a central motive for medieval reflections on the subject of science, as, for example, in Giles of Rome’s account in his commentary on the *Sentences*.

A good example of the “double” intention of the basic question is Thomas Aquinas. He twice explains his conception of metaphysics systematically, first in his commentary on Boethius’s work *De Trinitate* and later in the Prologue of his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Both expositions determine the “proper subject” of metaphysics, but with distinct aims: whereas the Prologue of the commentary on the *Metaphysics* establishes the unity of First Philosophy in itself, in the commentary on Boethius Thomas wants to show the difference of

²³ Cf. A. Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle’s ‘Metaphysics’ in Avicenna’s ‘Kitab al-Sifa’*. A Milestone of Western Metaphysical Thought, Leiden 2006.

²⁴ Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima*, I, c. 1 (ed. S. Van Riet), Louvain-Leiden 1977, p. 4: “Constat autem quod omnis scientia habet subiectum suum proprium. Inquiramus ergo quid sit subiectum huius scientiae”.

²⁵ Cf. M.-D. Chenu, *La théologie comme science au XIII^e siècle*, Paris ³1957 (Bibliothèque thomiste 33); U. Köpf, *Die Anfänge der theologischen Wissenschaftstheorie im 13. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 1974 (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 49).

First Philosophy from Christian theology. Thomas distinguishes two kinds of theology (*theologia sive scientia divina est duplex*), philosophical theology, which is also called “metaphysics”, and “the theology of sacred Scripture” or Christian theology. He concludes that these sciences differ from one another not only through the sources of their knowledge but also because of their “subjects”. In philosophical theology the divine is not the subject—that is being-as-being—but the causal principle of this subject. Christian theology, on the other hand, considers the divine in itself as the subject of its science.²⁶

(4) The “basic” question of medieval metaphysics seems to be rather formal, but proves to have doctrinal consequences. Its effect becomes evident in Albert the Great’s commentary. In accordance with the Avicennian model he discusses, as we have seen, he reports three opinions about the “proper subject” of this science: the first causes, the divine things and being. He rejects the first and second positions, because these do not meet the formal conditions of a “subject”. The *subiectum* of a science is that to which its parts are reduced as to a common predicate, upon which the properties demonstrated in that science are consequent. Neither the first causes nor the divine things, however, are the common predicate of what is studied in metaphysics. Moreover, God is what is sought (*quaesitum*) in First Philosophy and cannot therefore be the subject, since a feature of the subject of science is that its existence is presupposed in that science; consequently no selfsame thing is both *subiectum* and *quaesitum* in a science (here Albert adopts the terminology of the *Avicenna latinus*).²⁷ From this conclusion it follows that only

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Boethium De trinitate*, q. 5, art. 4 (ed. Leonina), vol. 50, p. 154: “Unde et huiusmodi res diuine non tractantur a philosophis nisi prout sunt rerum omnium principia, et ideo pertractantur in illa doctrina in qua ponuntur ea que sunt communia omnibus entibus, que habet subiectum ens in quantum est ens. Et hec scientia apud eos scientia diuina dicitur. [...] Una [*scil.* theologia] in qua considerantur res diuine non tamquam subiectum scientie, set tamquam principia subiecti, et talis est theologia quam philosophi prosequuntur, que alio nomine metaphisica dicitur; alia uero que ipsas res diuinas considerat propter se ipsas ut subiectum scientie, et hec est theologia que in sacra Scriptura traditur”.

²⁷ Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Metaph.*, I, tract. 1, c. 2 (cf. n. 12), p. 3 (ll. 62–80) and *ibid.*, p. 4 (ll. 38–50), esp.: “Quod autem erronea sit haec opinio, constat per hoc quod nihil idem quaesitum est et subiectum in scientia aliqua; deus autem et diuina separata quaeruntur in scientia ista; subiecta igitur esse non possunt”. Cf. Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima*, I, c. 1 (cf. n. 24), p. 4: “Dico igitur impossibile esse ut ipse Deus sit subiectum huius scientiae, quoniam subiectum omnium scientiae est res quae conceditur esse, et ipsa scientia non inquit nisi dispositiones illius subiecti [...]”.

being-as-being (*ens inquantum ens*) can be the subject of metaphysics. But Albert also provides an interesting positive reason for this position. This science is called “First” philosophy because it deals with something that is first. The question is thus, why and in what sense is “being” the first and not, as one would expect, God or the first causes? Albert’s argument for the primacy of being is ontological: *ens* is the first foundation (*primum fundamentum*) of all things and is itself not founded in something prior.²⁸

Albert’s conclusion that First Philosophy is the science of “being” is typical of the outcome of the medieval discussion on the subject of metaphysics. The Latin commentators rejected the theological understanding of metaphysics, which prevailed among the Greek commentators of Aristotle in Late Antiquity, who considered the *Metaphysics* as the study of what is “beyond nature” and as a philosophy of the transcendent, a view that Boethius in his work *De Trinitate* had transmitted to the Middle Ages.²⁹ God, however, is not the proper subject of metaphysics, but being-as-being or being in general. The outcome of the medieval discussion meant a transformation of the conception of First Philosophy; most authors upheld an ontological conception.

“Ontology” is a modern term with a specific connotation; it was coined in the early seventeenth century and expresses the beginning of the separation of a general science of being from the study of the divine. When we apply the term “ontology” to medieval metaphysics, it does not have this modern connotation, although the idea of dividing metaphysics was not unknown in the Middle Ages. It can be found in the work of a highly original thinker who was active at the University of Paris around 1320, Francis of Marchia (ca. 1290–after 1344). In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, he draws the remarkable conclusion that metaphysics is twofold (*duplex*), a general (*communis*) and a particular (*particularis*) metaphysics, which are distinct sciences because of their different subjects. The subject of general metaphysics is the

Sed non potest concedi quod Deus sit in hac scientia ut subiectum, immo est quaesitum in ea”.

²⁸ Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Metaph.*, I, tract. 1, c. 2 (cf. n. 12), p. 4: “Cum enim sit prima ista inter omnes scientia, oportet quod ipsa sit de primo, hoc autem est ens [...], oportet, quod omnium principia per istam scientiam stabiliantur per hoc quod ipsa est de ente, quod est primum omnium fundamentum in nullo penitus ante se fundatum”.

²⁹ Cf. K. Kremer, *Der Metaphysikbegriff in den Aristoteles-Kommentaren der Ammonius-Schule*, Münster 1960 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters 39/1). C. Steel, “Theology as First Philosophy. The Neoplatonic Concept of Metaphysics”, in: *Quaestio* 5 (2005), pp. 3–21.

thing as thing (*res secundum quod res*), not contracted to a thing of a determinate genus, but common to all things of the first intention. The subject of particular metaphysics, by contrast, is the immaterial thing.³⁰

But most medieval thinkers hold on to the inner unity of the science of being and the divine science. Metaphysics as the science of being includes the study of the divine and consequently has an “onto-theological” structure.³¹ This structure was elaborated in different ways, but the decisive viewpoint from which the divine is studied is that of the subject of this science, being in general. In that sense medieval metaphysics as the *scientia communis*—the expression used by Thomas Aquinas³²—becomes “ontology”.

(5) The ontological conception of First Philosophy was the condition for a further transformation, the “transcendentalisation” of medieval metaphysics. Illustrative of this new understanding is the explanation of the name “metaphysics”, which Duns Scotus presents in the Prologue of his *Questions on the Metaphysics*. “It is from *meta*, which means *trans*, and *ycos*, which means *scientia*. It is, as it were, the ‘transcending science’ (*scientia transcendens*), because it is concerned with the *transcendentia*.”³³ In the passage just before this account, Scotus had introduced the term *transcendentia* as another name for the *communissima*, such as being qua being and its properties.

³⁰ Cf. Franciscus de Marchia, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, I, q. 1 (ed. A. Zimmermann, cf. n. 11), pp. 88 sq.: “Quarta conclusio: Quod duplex est metaphysica, quaedam communis, et quaedam propria sive particularis. [...] Secundum hoc dico, quod subiectum metaphysicae communis primum est res secundum quod res est, non contracta ad aliquam rem determinati generis nec substantiae nec quantitatis nec alicuius alterius generis, nec ad rem abstractam nec non contractam, sed est res simpliciter communis ad rem primae intentionis. Subiectum vero metaphysicae particularis est res separata a materia secundum rationem et secundum rem”. Cf. S. Folger-Fonfara, *Das ‚Super‘-Transzendente und die Spaltung der Metaphysik. Der Entwurf des Franziscus von Marchia*, Leiden 2007 (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 96).

³¹ Cf. O. Boulnois, “Quand commence l’ontothéologie? Aristote, Thomas d’Aquin et Duns Scot”, in: *Revue thomiste* 95 (1995), pp. 85–108. id., “Heidegger, l’ontothéologie et les structures médiévales de la métaphysique”, in: C. Esposito / P. Porro (edd.), *Heidegger e i medievali, Quaestio 1* (2001), pp. 379–406.

³² Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In Metaph.*, prooem. (cf. n. 13), p. 1: “Unde restat quod in una communi scientia huiusmodi tractentur. [I]sta scientia [...] non tamen considerat quodlibet eorum ut subiectum, sed ipsum solum ens commune”.

³³ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, I, prol., n. 18 (cf. n. 14), p. 9: “Et hanc scientiam vocamus metaphysicam, quae dicitur a ‘meta’, quod est ‘trans’, et ‘ycos’ ‘scientia’, quasi transcendens scientia, quia est de transcendentibus”.

Scotus' use of the term *scientia transcendens* in his Prologue has often been interpreted as a programmatic text that reveals the originality of his metaphysics, because it made "the step to transcendental philosophy".³⁴ In fact, however, the text is traditional rather than innovative. Its traditional character emerges in a textual comparison with the Prologue of Aquinas' commentary on the *Metaphysics*, which shows that all elements in Scotus' prologue can be traced back to Aquinas' Prologue. Scotus' term *scientia transcendens* continues the thirteenth-century linking of metaphysics with the doctrine of the transcendentals.³⁵ Albert the Great, in his discussion of the proper subject of metaphysics, was the first to make this connection. Metaphysical knowledge, he summarizes in the conclusion of his disputation, is concerned with the *prima* and *transcendentia*, with what is first because of its transcendental commonness.³⁶ Consequently, one must modify Heidegger's claim in his lectures titled "The Basic Concepts of Metaphysics" that the real concern of medieval metaphysics, under the influence of Christian theology, was "that which is beyond" (*das Jenseitige*) or transcendent.³⁷ On the contrary, the ontological understanding of First Philosophy tends to a transcendental interpretation of metaphysics in the Middle Ages.

This tendency becomes manifest in another main concern of a demonstrative science: every *scientia* must not only consider its subject but also the properties (*passiones*) that belong to the subject *per se*, that is, inseparably and necessarily.³⁸ In the case of metaphysics as the science of "being", the properties of the subject are the transcendentals *unum*, *verum* and *bonum*. From the outset philosophy had reflected on being, unity, truth and goodness, but it was not until the thirteenth century that these basic notions of philosophy were interrelated in a systematic way. This systematic framework is the science

³⁴ Cf. L. Honnefelder, "Der Schritt der Philosophie zur *scientia transcendens*", in: W. Kluxen (ed.), *Thomas von Aquin im philosophischen Gespräch*, Freiburg-München 1975, pp. 229–244. Id., "Metaphysics as a Discipline: From the 'Transcendental Philosophy of the Ancients' to Kant's Notion of Transcendental Philosophy", in: R. L. Friedman / L. O. Nielsen (edd.), *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400–1700*, Dordrecht-Boston-London 2003, pp. 53–74.

³⁵ Cf. J. A. Aertsen, "Metaphysics as a Transcendental Science", in: *Quaestio 5* (2005), pp. 377–389.

³⁶ Cf. Albertus Magnus, *Metaph.*, I, tract. 1, c. 2 (cf. n. 12), p. 5 (ll. 12–15).

³⁷ M. Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* (Gesamtausgabe II, vol. 29/30), Frankfurt a.M. 1983, p. 64.

³⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, I, c. 10, 76 b 11–16.

of metaphysics, in which “one”, “true” and “good” are considered as properties of “being”.

A work that documents the transcendental transformation of metaphysics are the *Disputationes metaphysicae* of Francisco Suárez. He understands metaphysics as a “transcendental science”, for the universal *rationes* it considers are *transcendentales*.³⁹ The characteristic profile of his conception appears in Disputations 2–11, which treat “being” in general and its properties “unity”, “truth” and “goodness”, which Suárez calls *transcendentia* or *transcendentalia*. No other metaphysical project possesses such an extensive and elaborated theory of the transcendentals.

(6) The ontological-transcendental conception of metaphysics presupposes the primacy of “being”, but its priority was not uncontested. It was more than once challenged by the claims of other transcendental notions: by the primacy of *bonum* (“good”), which was typical of the Neoplatonic tradition as expressed by Dionysius the Areopagite in his work *De divinis nominibus*, the Good is the first divine name; and by the primacy of *verum* (“true”), insofar as it signifies the *ratio* of intelligibility, the condition of possibility for intellectual knowledge.⁴⁰ But the primacy of “being” was particularly challenged by a new transcendental, *res* (“thing”).

The introduction of *res* into medieval philosophy comes from the Latin Avicenna; the term does not have an antecedent in Aristotle’s thought.⁴¹ In the first treatise of his *Metaphysics*, Avicenna presents “thing” and “being” as the primary notions of the intellect (see sect. II.2, below). What is the philosophical sense of the term *res* and what was the motive for its introduction?

The surprising answer is that this notion in itself does not contain anything new. The Avicennian “thing” is related to the *certitudo* of a thing, by which it is what it is; it signifies its “whatness”. *Res* expresses

³⁹ Francisco Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, I, sect. 2, n. 27 (cf. n. 15), p. 21b: “rationes universales, quas metaphysica considerat, transcendentales sunt”.

⁴⁰ The primacy was maintained by Henry of Ghent, although not without qualification. Cf. *Summa*, art. 1, q. 2 (ed. G. A. Wilson), in: *Opera omnia* 21, Leuven 2005, pp. 37 sq.

⁴¹ There exists no comprehensive study on *res* as a philosophical concept. A good overview is offered by J. F. Courtine, “Res”, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 8, Basel 1992, pp. 892–901. Cf. also J. A. Aertsen, “‘Res’ as Transcendental: Its Introduction and Significance”, in: G. Federici Vescovini (ed.), *Le problème des transcendantaux du XIV^e au XVII^e siècle*, Paris 2002 (Bibliothèque d’histoire de la philosophie), pp. 139–157.

the Greek tradition of intelligibility, which centers on the quiddity of a thing by posing the question as to *what* it is. What is new in Avicenna's account is not the introduction of *res* but rather the conceptual differentiation of *res* from *ens*, which signifies *that* something is. The basis for this differentiation is an ontological distinction fundamental to Arabic metaphysics, namely that between "essence" and "existence".⁴² After having shown the conceptual difference between *res* and *ens*, Avicenna emphasizes their extensional identity. *Ens* is a necessary "concomitant" of *res*: "The concept of *ens* is always concomitant with *res*, because the thing has being either in the singulars or in the estimation or in the intellect. If it were not so, it would not be a thing".⁴³ The term "concomitant" suggests a conceptual priority of *res*, insofar as notions that "accompany" the term "thing" are later than that which is "accompanied".

What remains implicit in Avicenna's account was explicated by the remarkable fourteenth-century author Francis of Marchia. In his *Questions on the Metaphysics*, he poses as the first question "Whether *res secundum quod res* is the subject of metaphysics or something else?"⁴⁴ The phrasing of the question is noteworthy, since it replaces *ens* by *res* in the traditional formulation of the basic question as to "the subject". In his reply, Francis claims that "being" is a property of thing and appeals to the authority of Avicenna: *secundum intentionem Avicennae*, the concept of *ens* is concomitant with the concept of *res*. Now the expression "concomitant" implies a relation of *posterior* and *prior*. "Being" thus is not the first concept and consequently cannot be the subject of metaphysics.⁴⁵ Only "thing-as-thing" meets the condition of its subject, which, in Francis' argument, is closely connected with the idea of a first concept. This insight provides a link to our second question.

⁴² Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima*, I, c. 5 (cf. n. 24), pp. 34 sq. Cf. A. M. Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sina (Avicenne)*, Paris 1937.

⁴³ Cf. Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima*, I, c. 5 (cf. n. 24), p. 36: "Nec separabitur a comitantia intelligendi ens cum illa ullo modo, quoniam intellectus de ente semper comitabitur illam, quia illa habet esse vel in singularibus vel in aestimatione vel intellectu. Si autem non esset ita, tunc non esset res".

⁴⁴ Franciscus de Marchia, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, I, q. 1 (cf. n. 30), pp. 84–98; analysis of the question on pp. 348 sqq.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86: "Ex quo patet secundum intentionem Avicennae, quod intentio entis concomitatur intentionem rei. Sed intentio posterior concomitatur intentionem prioris. [...] Ergo intentio entis, cum non sit prima intentio, non erit primum subiectum metaphysicae".

II. THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE FIRST *OBIECTUM* OF THE INTELLECT

(1) The key term in the second question, *obiectum*, is a medieval “invention”; it appears for the first time as a philosophical expression in early thirteenth-century treatises on the soul and its powers.⁴⁶ Between the key term of the first question, *subiectum*, and the term *obiectum* there exists an analogy, according to Thomas Aquinas: “The ‘subject’ is related to science as the ‘object’ is related to the power or *habitus*”.⁴⁷ Subject and object belong to different orders; “subject” refers to the structure of *scientia*, whereas the background of the term “object” is the Aristotelian psychology of knowledge in *De anima*; its correlate is *potentia* (“power” or “faculty”) and *habitus*. Aquinas does not specify the proportionality of “subject” and “object”, but it must consist in their similar determining functions.

Just as the “subject” gives a science unity and distinction, so the “object”, which is related to a power of the soul as moving principle, determines the unity of that power and its distinction from other powers. But just as not everything which a science considers is its “proper” subject, so not any variety of objects causes diversity of powers of the soul but only a difference with respect to the “proper” object. To that end Scholastic thought distinguishes between the “material” and “formal” object. The unity of a power (e.g., seeing) is determined by its formal object, that is, the object under the formal aspect (*ratio*) of which all material objects are referred to that power. Man and stone, for instance, are referred to sight in that they are colored; hence what is colored is the proper object (*proprium obiectum*) of sight.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁶ Cf. L. Dewan, “‘Obiectum’. Notes on the Invention of a Word”, in: *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraires du Moyen Âge* 48 (1981), pp. 37–96. Cf. T. Kobusch, “Objekt”, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. VI, Basel 1984, pp. 1026–1052.

⁴⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, art. 7, corp. (ed. Leonina), vol. 4, p. 19: “Sic enim se habet subiectum ad scientiam, sicut obiectum ad potentiam vel habitum”.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: “Proprie autem illud assignatur obiectum alicuius potentiae vel habitus, sub cuius ratione omnia referuntur ad potentiam vel habitum, sicut homo et lapis referuntur ad visum, inquantum sunt colorata: unde coloratum est proprium obiectum visus.” Cf. *ibid.*, I, q. 1, art. 3, corp., p. 12: “Est enim unitas potentiae et habitus considerata secundum obiectum, non quidem materialiter, sed secundum rationem formalem obiecti; puta homo, asinus et lapis conveniunt in una formal ratione colorati, quod est obiectum visus”.

question as to the first object of the human intellect thus concerns the scope of the intellect, its possibilities and boundaries.

(2) This question is closely connected with the doctrine of the primary notions of the intellect, a doctrine that goes back to Avicenna. Avicenna contends that “thing” (*res*) and “being” (*ens*) “are such notions that they are impressed immediately in the soul by a first impression and are not acquired from other and better known notions”.⁴⁹ This programmatic statement is probably the text from Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* that is most cited in the Middle Ages.

Why is it necessary to accept primary notions? Avicenna’s argument rests on an analogy between two orders of intellectual knowledge, the order of “assent” (in the Latin translation *credulitas*) and that of “conception” (in the Latin translation, *imaginatio*). The analogy consists in the claim that in both orders a reduction is necessary to first principles that are known *per se*. Just as there must be first principles, known through themselves, in the realm of assent or demonstration, so also in the realm of conception there are principles that are conceived *per se*.⁵⁰ Avicenna’s originality consists in his application of the finite structure of *scientia* to the order of concepts as well. The impossibility of an infinite regress in the order of demonstration and the reduction to a first likewise holds for the order of concepts. Just as propositions must be reduced to first indemonstrable principles, so too in the order of conception there must be primary notions that are not acquired from other, better-known notions.

Avicenna’s doctrine of what is first known captivated such medieval thinkers as Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus, for his teaching aims at the systematic beginning of human thought. Because according to Avicenna *res* and *ens* are the first notions because they are most common, the idea of primary notions was incorporated into the medieval accounts of the *transcendentia* as expressing another mark of them: transcendentals also are the “firsts” in a cognitive respect.

The interpretation of what is first known in terms of the proper object of the intellect appears in Thomas Aquinas. He argues that what

⁴⁹ Avicenna latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima*, I, c. 5 (cf. n. 24), pp. 31 sq.: “Dicemus igitur quod res et ens et necesse talia sunt quod statim imprimuntur in anima prima impressione, quae non acquiritur ex aliis notioribus se”.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32: “Sicut credulitas quae habet prima principia, ex quibus ipsa provenit per se, et est alia ab eis, sed propter ea [...]. Similiter in imaginationibus sunt multa quae sunt principia imaginandi, quae imaginantur per se”.

is first conceived by the intellect is “being” (*ens*), because something is knowable insofar as it is in act. From this he draws the conclusion that “being” is the *proprium obiectum* of the intellect and thus the *primum intelligibile*, just as sound is the *primum audibile*.⁵¹ Sound is the formal aspect upon the basis of which something is audible and capable of becoming an object for the sense of hearing. The same relation exists between being and intellect. Being is that upon the basis of which things are capable of being known by an intellect.

(3) In medieval philosophy there was a fierce debate on what is “first known”.⁵² The first stage of the dispute is represented by Thomas Aquinas’ criticism of the position of Franciscan thinkers (Gilbert of Tournai, Bonaventure) who establish a complete parallelism between the cognitive and the ontological order in such a way that the first known is the first being or the Absolute. Thomas’ main objection is the dependence of human knowledge on sense experience. What is first known by us is first in the domain of things abstracted by the intellect from the phantasms, like “being” and “one”. It is not what is absolutely first, for this is not included in the *ratio* of the proper object of the intellect.⁵³

In a later stage of the debate, Thomas himself was criticized. Duns Scotus ascribes to Thomas the view that the “quiddity of a material thing” (*quidditas rei materialis*) is the adequate object of the human intellect. Scotus regards this position as completely false and cannot imagine a theologian and philosopher maintaining it.⁵⁴ His philosophical critique is focussed on the fatal consequences of Aquinas’

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 5, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 47), p. 58: “[I]llud ergo est prius secundum rationem, quod prius cadit in conceptione intellectus. Primo autem in conceptione intellectus cadit ens: quia secundum hoc unumquodque cognoscibile est quod est actu [...]. Unde ens est proprium obiectum intellectus: et sic est primum intelligibile, sicut sonus est primum audibile”.

⁵² On this debate, cf. the studies of W. Goris, in particular his book *Absolute Beginners. Der mittelalterliche Beitrag zu einem Ausgang vom Unbedingten*, Leiden-Boston 2007 (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 93).

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Boetium De trinitate*, q. 1, art. 3, ad 3 (cf. n. 26), p. 88: “Quamvis illa que sunt prima in genere eorum que intellectus abstract a phantasmatis sint primo cognita a nobis, ut ens et unum, non tamen oportet quod illa quae sunt prima simpliciter, quae non continentur in ratione proprii obiecti, sicut ista”.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I, dist. 3, p. 1, q. 3, nn. 110–112 (ed. Commissio Scotistica), in: *Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera omnia* III, Vatican 1954, pp. 69 sq. For a more complete analysis of the controversy between Aquinas and Scotus, cf. J. A. Aertsen, “Aquinas and the Human Desire for Knowledge”, in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79 (2005), pp. 411–430.

conception for the possibility of metaphysics. This science is only possible if the intellect conceives something under a more general aspect than Thomas holds, namely under the aspect of being in general (*ens in communi*). Otherwise metaphysics would not be a *scientia transcendens* to a greater extent than physics. Scotus here uses the expression by which in his *Questions on the Metaphysics* he explains the name “meta-physics”. The first object of our intellect cannot be anything that is more particular than “being-as-being” (*ens in quantum ens*), since then being in itself could in no way be understood by us.⁵⁵ Scotus’ criticism indicates a necessary connection between the subject of metaphysics and the adequate object of the intellect: both are “transcendental”.

(4) There appears to be a fundamental correspondence between the first *objectum* of the intellect and the proper *subjectum* of metaphysics: both are concerned with being in general. *Ens* is both what is first known and the proper subject of First Philosophy. The object, which answers to the ontological conception of the subject, is the condition for the possibility of metaphysics as science of being.

In commentaries on the *Metaphysics* after Thomas Aquinas, we see a tendency to “objectify” the subject. Whereas for Thomas there is an analogy between subject and object, insofar as they determine respectively the unity of *scientia* and that of the *habitus*, for later authors there is even identity. The identification of subject and object was possible because in the Aristotelian tradition (*Nic. Ethics* VI, 3) *scientia* is also understood as the *habitus* of an intellectual power.

The tendency to “objectify” the subject is manifest in the commentary on the *Metaphysics* (dateable after 1277) by Peter of Auvergne, a secular master at the University of Paris (d. 1304). He begins his commentary with a discussion of the basic question as to what is the science’s “subject”, which term, he explicitly states, must be understood as identical with “object”. Peter enumerates four formal conditions of a “subject” which are in fact the determinations of an “object”. The

⁵⁵ Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, I, dist. 3, p. 1, n. 118 (cf. n. 54), p. 73: “Praeterea, tertio, et redit quasi in idem cum secundo: quidquid per se cognoscitur a potentia cognitiva, vel est eius obiectum primum, vel continetur sub eius obiecto primo; ens ut ens est communi sensibili, per se intelligitur a nobis, alias metaphysica non esset magis scientia transcendens quam physica; igitur non potest aliquid esse primum obiectum intellectus nostri quod sit particularius ente, quia tunc ens in se nullo modo intelligeretur a nobis”.

“subject of a science” is that under the aspect (*ratio*) of which everything is considered in that science; it is that which among all things is first known; is what is most manifest to the intellect; finally, it is that from the knowledge of which one proceeds towards the cognition of other things.⁵⁶ On the basis of these requirements, Peter concludes that only “being in general” can be the subject/object of metaphysics.⁵⁷

Consequently medieval metaphysics acquires, as for instance in Henry of Ghent, a new, *epistemological* foundation that is based on the identification of the “subject” of metaphysics with the first “object” of the human intellect.⁵⁸ Metaphysics is First Philosophy not because it treats of the first being but because it deals with what is first conceived by the mind, “being”. What is first known by a faculty is the first object of that faculty. A clear example of the agreement between subject and object is to be found in Richard Conington, an English Franciscan, who was a disciple of Henry of Ghent and a contemporary of Duns Scotus at Oxford. In his *Quodlibet*, I, q. 9 (written before 1308), he discusses the question “Whether ‘being’ that is the *subiectum* of our metaphysics is the first adequate *obiectum* of the intellect?”; in the question he affirms their identity.⁵⁹

This identity between subject and object has a further consequence, which is explicitly drawn by the student of Duns Scotus, Nicholas Bonet (d. 1343). Metaphysics is the easiest science, Nicholas argues, because its subject, being-as-being, is the first in the genesis of knowledge (and as such most manifest). One could object, Bonet recognizes, that according to Aristotle and many other philosophers metaphysics is the last in the order of sciences. But there is a reason for their view,

⁵⁶ Peter of Auvergne, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, I, q. 1 (ed. A. Monahan), in: J. R. O’Donnell (ed.) *Studies and Texts I, Nine Mediaeval Thinkers*, Toronto 1955, p. 152: “Alio modo dicitur subjectum idem quod objectum, et sic quaerimus hic de subjecto [...]. Subjectum in scientia quattuor requirit condiciones. Subjectum enim in scientia est illud, sub cuius ratione considerantur omnia quae considerantur in scientia illa. Iterum, ipsum est quod primo inter alia quae considerantur occurrit intellectui nostro. Iterum, oportet quod subjectum de his quae considerantur in scientia, manifestissimum sit intellectui. Quarto requiritur quod sit tale ex cuius cognitione proceditur ad cognitionem omnium aliorum”.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, q. 3, p. 156: “sed hoc est ens universaliter. Quicquid enim consideratur in scientia ista, consideratur secundum quod ens [...]. Item, ens primo occurrit intellectui, ut dicit Avicenna, et quilibet in se experitur. Item, ex cognitione entis proceditur in cognitionem aliorum”.

⁵⁸ On Henry’s identification, cf. M. Pickavé, “Heinrich von Gent über das Subjekt der Metaphysik” (cf. n. 16), p. 512.

⁵⁹ Cf. W. Goris, *The Scattered Field. History of Metaphysics in the Postmetaphysical Era*, Inaug. Address Free University of Amsterdam, Leuven 2004, pp. 26 sqq.

and Bonet's account is remarkable: Aristotle's *Metaphysics* conveys to us not only purely metaphysical (*pure metaphysicalia*) but also theological issues, such as the "separate substances", which are most difficult. If, however, there were nothing but purely metaphysical issues in this science "as in our metaphysics (*metaphysica nostra*)", wherein only predicates that are convertible with being-as-being are proven, this science would be the first both in the order of discovery and in the order of teaching.⁶⁰ Just as the commentary on the *Metaphysics* by his contemporary Francis of Marchia, Bonet's account shows the division of metaphysics into a general science of being and a theology.

CONCLUSION

The most significant transformations of metaphysics in the Middle Ages are the ontological-transcendental conception of First Philosophy, which results from the discussion on the "proper subject" of this science, and the epistemological foundation of First Philosophy on what is first known, which results from the discussion on the "first object" of the intellect.

Although generally I am not inclined to minimize the importance of medieval philosophy, I wonder whether the phrase "the second beginning if metaphysics" is an appropriate expression for the development of the discipline in the Middle Ages. If there is a "second beginning", there are good reasons for claiming that the main work of Arabic metaphysics, Avicenna's *De philosophia prima*, rather than the Latin philosophy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries deserves this place in the genealogy of Western metaphysics. Many years ago Stephen Brown published a study on Avicenna's influence on medieval views of the concept of being, which has become classic in the meantime. It seemed therefore appropriate in my contribution to the volume in honor of our learned colleague and friend to highlight another aspect

⁶⁰ Nicolaus Bonetus, *Metaphysica*, II, c. 7 (ed. Venedig 1505), fol. 18rb–va: "Respondeo tibi quod in Metaphysica Aristotelis non sunt pure metaphysicalia tradita, sed sunt ibi multa theologica de substantiis separatis et de intelligentiis que sunt multum alta et difficillima; et ideo ultima est ratione illorum in ordine inveniendi et in ordine docendi. Sed si non essent ibi nisi purum metaphysicalia, sicut in nostra metaphysica, in qua non probantur nisi pure metaphysicalia predicata cum ente in quantum ente convertibilia, ipsa esset prima in ordine inveniendi et in ordine docendi. [...] quia [ista metaphysica] inter alias est facillima ad adiscendum cum subiectum eius quod est ens inquantum ens prima impressione imprimitur in intellectu".

of Avicenna's importance by focusing on two innovations that determined medieval metaphysics.⁶¹ First, his inquiry into the "subject" of First Philosophy provided the model for the medieval "basic" question and for the rejection of the prevailing theological conception of First Philosophy; second, his doctrine of the primary notions of the intellect inaugurated the debate concerning what is first known and introduced the concept of *res* into medieval thought.

This recognition of the fundamental importance of the Arabic heritage does not mean in the least that medieval metaphysics was not the scene of sweeping renewals. Its most original views, which had an impact on the development of the discipline in modern times, were the understanding of First Philosophy as "the transcendental science" of being and the idea of a necessary correlation between the proper subject of metaphysics and the first object of the human intellect.

⁶¹ S. F. Brown, "Avicenna and the Unity of the Concept of Being. The interpretations of Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, Gerard of Bologna and Peter Aureoli", in: *Franciscan Studies* 25 (1965), pp. 117–150.