

Summistae: The Commentary Tradition on Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*
(15th-18th Centuries)

Conference to be held in Oporto, 10-12 October 2013

1. For more than a thousand years philosophy was written in the form of commentaries, whether on the Bible, Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, or Aristotle's works. Indeed, the chief works of generations of authors, from Simplicius and Galen in late antiquity to William of Ockham and Domingo de Soto in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, were in point of fact simply commentaries. As the noted medievalist William Courtenay argued at a conference devoted to medieval philosophical commentaries, "the best discussions of some problems of philosophical importance are found in questions on the *Sentences*".

The *Sentences* was the standard theological text from the late thirteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth century. Yet, by the end of the fifteenth century, the *Sentences* started to be replaced by the *Summa Theologiae* as the standard textbook to be taught and commented on at the faculty of theology. The reading of the *Summa* was already a practice in fifteenth-century Dominican *studia*, most notably in Cologne where the earliest commentaries on the *Summa* came to light. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, Iberian universities adopted the *Summa* as the official text of university teaching at a faculty of theology on a permanent basis. This replacement was later extended to many Counter-Reformed universities all through Europe and even to the universities of the Spanish empire. The *Summa* remained as the theological textbook until the eighteenth century.

This explains the huge number of commentaries on the *Summa*. While the *Sentences* commentaries started to fade away in the sixteenth century, the commentaries on the *Summa* became a widespread genre. As the content of the *Sentences* and of the *Summa* is quite different, the commentators started to deal with some issues to an extent greater than previously contemplated at the faculty of theology. This explains why ethical topics such as the passions, the moral virtues and issues related to justice — the core of both the *Prima secundae* and the *Secunda pars* of the *Summa* — became more central in the sixteenth-century university teaching. Furthermore, the interpretation of the *Summa* gave rise to different and even opposing standpoints (for instance, between Suárez and Vázquez) and for this reason it would be mistaken to see this commentary tradition merely as a homogeneous adoption of Thomism.

2. If not for anything else, the *Summa* commentaries are important for the history of philosophy for two reasons: they continue the tradition of medieval thought — the commentators still draw on authors such as Ockham, Scotus, Buridan, Gabriel Biel and

Durandus of St. Pourçain — and they represent a significant part of the Scholasticism which was known to Descartes and Leibniz. However, the commentaries stand as original works on their own, as shown by the commentaries composed by Soto, Báñez, Arriaga, Wiggers, Lessius and many others.

The interest for the *Summa* commentaries has grown in the last decades. Apart from the old catalogue of Michelitsch, some tools have more recently provided a significant input to the study of these texts, as it is the case for the website Scholasticon (www.scholasticon.fr) and its section entitled Nomenclator, which offers a list of the theology and philosophy professors of the period 1500-1800. Further, some works have dealt with a great number of commentaries (cf. Agostini, Knebel, Renemann, Schmutz), which permit us to grasp the intense philosophical activity advanced in the commentary tradition on the *Summa*. But since many of the commentaries are still extant only in manuscript form or in editions which have only recently become available to scholars from around the world, thanks to the digitization of old printings, the study of the commentaries remains largely uncharted territory. Although some conferences and collective volumes have been dedicated to the study of a single author, to the late scholastic political thought or to the commentaries produced in the sixteenth-century University of Salamanca, no symposium has ever been specifically devoted to the *Summa* commentaries which span from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. As the *Summa* deals with nearly all the theological and philosophical topics and touches on all the philosophical domains, this conference may provide an outline of the philosophical thought produced in early modern university.

3. Our purpose is to hold a conference on the *Summa* commentaries following the structure of the *Summa* itself. What we are proposing is that each participant selects a question, a set of articles from a question or even a delimited group of questions, from one part of the *Summa* and carries out an investigation on how different commentators (and from different backgrounds and regions) dealt with a given issue. The commentaries on the *Summa* are here understood in a broad sense, including thus *Disputationes* and *Cursus Theologici* based on the text of the *Summa*.

The papers do not necessarily have to be eminently historical or with a diachronic approach. Our main interest is to see the ways in which various commentators touched on the same question. For this reason we also welcome studies that may compare the commentators with early modern philosophers, such as Descartes, Hobbes, or German Protestant authors. Further to this, we welcome papers that may offer a study of the commentaries against the background of early modern Aristotelianism. Our only request is that each participant deals with more than one commentary and, if possible, takes into account not only the most notable authors, but also names such as Augustinus Reding, Juan Salas, Nicolas Ysambert, or Francisco de Araújo, given their importance in their own time.

This conference is part of a broader project entitled *Iberian Scholastic Philosophy at the Crossroads of Western Reason: The Reception of Aristotle and the Transition to Modernity* carried out by the Gabinete de Filosofia Medieval of the University of Porto.

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