Selected Bibliography on the History of the Theories of Non-Existent Objects

BIBLIOGRAPHY


   Actes du Colloque de philosophie antique tenu à Genève les 2 et 3 novembre 1989 à la mémoire d'Henri Joly


   "This paper provides a critical edition of Francis of Prato's Treatise on Being of Reason (Tractatus de ente rationis). It is prefaced by a historico-philosophical introduction. Francis’s Treatise is one of the first Italian reactions to the diffusion of William of Ockham’s philosophy of language and logic. Francis argues here against Ockham’s reduction of being of reason to acts of cognition, accounted for as items existing ‘subjectively’ (subjective) in the mind. By contrast, following Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis, he proposes a relational and ‘objective’ account of being of reason."


"Beings of reason or non-existent objects have always been a source of mind-boggling paradoxes that have vexed philosophers and thinkers in the past and present. Consider Bertrand Russell's paradox: 'if A and B are not different, then the difference between A and B does not subsist. But how can a non-entity be the subject of a proposition?' Or Meinong's paradox: 'There are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects.' At the root of these troubling conundrums are two basic questions: What are beings of reason? What kind of existence do they have? Francisco Suárez was well aware that a solution to the metaphysical questions concerning the essential character of beings of reason and their ontological status would serve as the key to solving the puzzles and paradoxes just described. A solution to these metaphysical questions would also bring about an understanding of how we talk about beings of reason and other problems that they give rise to in the philosophy of language. In this paper, I present Suárez's view on the nature and ontological status of beings of reason and clarify some of the following questions: What kind of beings (entia) are beings of reason? What kind of being (esse) do beings of reason have? This latter concern is related to the following metaphysical issues: What are real beings? What is the nature and ontological status of possible beings? What is the distinction between real beings, actual beings, and possible beings?"


Contents: Preface IX, Introduction XI-XII; Study I. Predication and immanence: Anaxagoras, Plato, Eudoxus, and Aristotle 3; Study II. Ancient non-beings: Speusippus and others 63; Notes 121; Bibliography 179; Index locorum 205; General index 215.


" Abstract. This article tries to show that the ens rationis is nothing else but one of the most relevant cases of the pure object. To reach this conclusion, the different position regarding the pure object as those of Meinong, Hartmann Millán-Puelles and the Schoolmen are examined."


"Abstract. The merely possible is a sort of pure object, framed in the background of the general chart of the unreal feasibly non-existent, and defined by the uncontradictority and the fitness for to exist. In this paper are studied, according to Millán-Puelles, some objections and controversies about that concept. It is emphasized the theory of Leibniz concerning to the exigentia existentiae of the possible. And, also, the speculative importance of that notion in order to Absolute's attributes and the metaphysic concept of creation." p. 345

Some years ago, I published an article about Meinong's theory of objects. (1) I listed there four main theses of Meinong's view:
(1) The golden mountain (and other nonexistents) has no being at all.
(2) Nevertheless, it is a constituent of the fact that the golden mountain does not exist.
(3) Furthermore, it has such ordinary properties as being made from gold.
(4) Existence is not a constituent of any object.
And I argued in that paper that only thesis (1) is true. In particular, I insisted that (3), which I consider to be the most characteristic feature of Meinong's view, is false.
Since then, there have been quite a few discussions of Meinong's view. I would like, in response to some of these works, to reiterate my earlier criticism of Meinong. My purpose is threefold. Firstly, I would like to state once more my own view, which is a version of Russell's theory of definite descriptions, as clearly as possible. Secondly, I shall defend my past contention that the golden mountain is not golden against some recent objections. And thirdly and most importantly, I want to describe the dialectic of the philosophical problem as I perceive it. It seems to me to be an exasperating shortcoming of the discussion that most participants do not clearly state the basic options and their reasons for preferring some to others.


"In this paper I want to argue for two theses concerning entia rationis. My first thesis is that entia rationis, in what I would call the via antiqua (1) sense, are objects of thought and signification, required by a certain kind of semantics, but undesirable as objects simpliciter in ontology. My second thesis is that this


   Translated from Latin by John J. Glanville. Donald G. Hollenhorst and Yves R. Simon


systematic role of entia rationis in the via antiqua tradition of mediaeval thought was simply eliminated by the advent of Ockhamist semantics, which opened the way towards a radical reinterpretation of the concept of entia rationis and towards a new research programme for ontology.

In the next section of this paper, therefore, I start my discussion with a case study of the systematic role played by entia rationis in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, a typical representative of the via antiqua tradition, occasionally drawing parallels with and taking illustrations from the works of other mediaeval thinkers, too. (2) In the third section I give a systematic account of all kinds of entia rationis against the background of a comprehensive semantic theory constructed in the spirit of the via antiqua tradition. In the fourth section I describe the ways William Ockham's approach changed this semantic background, and examine how these changes influenced the concept of entia rationis. In the concluding section of the paper I present a simple formal reconstruction of what I take to be Ockham's basic innovations in semantics, and discuss briefly the new ontological programme it initiated.

(1) One of course has to be very cautious when applying such an expression so much involved in scholarly debate. In the rest of this paper I want to use it in a very restricted, technical sense, referring to a particular way of constructing semantic theory, sharply distinguishable from Ockham's and his followers' way (both to be described later). What I think may justify such a usage is the clear connection of these ways of doing semantics with the manners in which broader philosophical, theological, and methodological issues were treated in the two great trends getting separated later in mediaeval thought. Indeed, this paper may perhaps serve as a modest contribution to the characterisation of the two viae from the point of view of the connections between semantics and ontology. As to the debates concerning the proper characterisation of via antiqua vs. via moderna, see, e.g., Moore (1989).

(2) To be sure, by presenting Aquinas's views as representative of what I call 'via antiqua semantics' I do not want to deny the immense variety of semantic views in mediaeval philosophy even before Ockham. I take Aquinas's views as typical, however, as contrasted with Ockham's, precisely in those of their features that rendered the via antiqua framework unacceptable for Ockham.


In 1597 Francisco Suárez published a comprehensive treatise on beings of reason (entia rationis) as part of his Disputationes metaphysicae. Subsequent scholastic philosophers vigorously debated various aspects of Suárez's theory. The aim of this paper is to identify some of the most controversial points of these debates, as they developed in the first half of the seventeenth century. In particular, I focus on the intension and the extension of 'ens rationis', its division (into negations, privations and relations of reason) and its causes. Additionally, I will discuss how Suárez's views sparked a number of debates within the classical view, debates which ultimately led to the emergence of various alternative theories, especially among the Jesuits. These non-classical views radically revise the previous classical conception of beings of reason.

"Beings of reason are impossible intentional objects, such as blindness and square-circle. The first part of this book is structured around a close reading of Suarez's main text on the subject, namely Disputation 54. The second part centers on texts on this topic by other outstanding philosophers of the time, such as the Spanish Jesuit Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza (1578-1641), the Italian Franciscan Bartolomeo Mastri (1602-73), and the Spanish-Bohemian-Luxembourgian polymath Juan Caramuel de Lobkowitz (1606-82)."

"Si Aristote a eu le mérite de distinguer avec beaucoup de netteté l'art de la logique de la philosophie elle-même, considérant cet art comme un organon, un instrument de la pensée, saint Thomas, commentateur d'Aristote, continue son effort; et dans une perspective critique il précise que si la philosophie regarde l'ens naturae, l'ens extra animam, la logique, elle, considère l'ens rationis, ce qui ne peut naître que dans notre connaissance intellectuelle (1). Examinons ici les principaux textes où saint Thomas expose sa pensée sur ce point, pour essayer d'en saisir toute la signification et, à partir de là, mieux comprendre le réalisme de sa métaphysique. Car si l'ens naturae ne se définit pas par l'ens rationis - c'est plutôt l'inverse qui a lieu, puisque l'ens per se est
l' *ens extra animam*, il peut cependant être mieux manifesté, pour nous, grâce à l'*ens rationis*. Il y a là quelque chose d'analogue à ce qui a lieu entre *ens naturae* et *ens artificiale* (qui peut, lui aussi, être appelé *ens rationis* en un sens élargi): l'*ens artificiale* se définit en fonction de *ens naturae*, et non l'inverse; mais la comparaison des deux nous aide à mieux saisir ce qu'est *ens naturae* au sens fondamental et premier. (p. 91)


"This essay examines the role of non-existent objects in "epistemological ontology" - the study of the entities that make thinking possible. An earlier revision of Meinong's Theory of Objects is reviewed, Meinong's notions of Quasisein and Aussersein are discussed, and a theory of Meinongian objects as "combinatorially possible" entities is presented."


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