

BENEDICTUS PERERIUS AND THE *ORDO DOCTRINAE*. LESSONS AND TEXTS IN THE FIRST JESUITS' PHILOSOPHY

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1. Phasing out Aristotle

The shift from commentary to textbooks during the last decades of the Sixteenth century had a standpoint in the work of the jesuit philosopher and theologian Benito Perera (Benedictus Pererius, Benito Pereyra, 1535-1610), who taught at the Collegium Romanum for a very long while¹.

This shift followed the gradual declining of Aristotle as the main *auctoritas* in universities' philosophy. For centuries, his authority had been based not only on the substance of the things he had stated in his books, but also on the order of reasoning that he had observed in dealing with the issues inside and between his works.

The Fifteenth century reception of the greek codes in Italy triggered a relentless philological activity that raised a widespread dissatisfaction toward the medieval translations of Aristotle's works. At the beginning of the Sixteenth century, new editions in greek and latin were provided and followed by a longlasting

¹ Unfortunately, the proceedings of the Conference "*Benet Perera (Pererius, 1535-1610). Un gesuita rinascimentale al crocevia della modernità. A Renaissance Jesuit on the Threshold of Modernity*" (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 13-14 Dec. 2014, organized by M. Lamanna) were not yet available when I gave this paper at this conference. They would have shed more light on the issue I handle here.

debate on the meaning (as originally intended by Aristotle) of this or that word, proposition, or passage.

As Schmitt has pointed out, the invention of print fueled the diversity between Aristotle texts, in such a way that a scholar might feel the “real” Aristotle had been shattered by that mess of printed versions. In a word, one could build his *own* Aristotle, and blame the others’ one for being untrue and unfaithful, as well².

This was true for the ones who still considered themselves to be followers of Aristotle. But, what about Aristotle’s own relation to truth?

Pomponazzi’s *affair* had challenged the Christianized version of Aristotle on which Thomas Aquinas’ system was based. The V Lateran Council forced Christian philosophers to defend that version, fighting against the double truth theory and providing rational argumentations to state the link between faith, theology and philosophy³.

But, as long as the versions conflicted with each other, Aristotle underwent into a process that undermined his authority in both substance and method. Of course, this process was not steady: like a flag, Aristotle deserved either a strong defense or he was to blame, depending on the point of view of the scholar. Aristotle became a banner, so did his major interpreter, Averroes. One cannot sketch a clear profile of a Sixteenth century Aristotelian, to say nothing of an Averroist, but these labels were often used to criticize or to polemicize with other scholars.

It is important to say that challenging Aristotle was not the sole property of the platonic humanists, like Erasmus, Vives, Rabelais: nor was it only the champion of the empious wordly learned men whom Luther blamed, before being softened by Melanchton. Aristotle was challenged also in the universities, his own

² SCHMITT 1988.

³ On the impact of this Council to the Jesuit culture, see SANDER 2014.

realm, because something in his doctrines was trampling, and because his method was insufficient for a new epistemology.

Before the substance, the method of Aristotle was exposed to many challenges. That is, not only the concept of “method” as it was discussed by Ramus (and defended by Antonio de Gouveia) before the King of France at the middle of the Century: that was a mere fact of Logic. It dealt with some logical issues pertaining to the rules of reasoning and distributing the topics in a rhetorical speech. The method meant here is that concept of order which, according to Aristotle, can be considered as twofold: 1) the order of facing issues scientifically (i.e., philosophically); the order of books (i.e., epistemology)⁴.

2. Following a given order: a Jesuit problem

According to the *Constitutions* of the Order, the Jesuits were bound to follow Aristotle⁵ in the philosophical disciplines. And the *Ratio Studiorum*, which was published only in 1599, still maintained this statement. But what did ‘Aristotle should be followed’ really mean?

A fair number of Aristotle’s doctrines were considered impious by the Church, including his doctrine on the eternity of the world, and his negation of divine providence as well. There is no doubt about the fact that Aristotle believed in them and professed them in his works, but there were also some doctrines that either seemed to be unclearly stated in his books, or became object of centuries-old disputation as to their proper interpretation. This was the case, for instance, with the unity of the intellect and the immortality of the rational soul.

⁴ On the concepts of ‘method’ and ‘order’ in natural philosophy, see DI LISCIA, KESSLER, METHUEN 1997 and GILBERT 1960.

⁵ «In logic, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, and metaphysics, the doctrine of Aristotle should be followed» (*Part Four of the Constitutions*, Chapter 14, par. 3).

So, what did the Jesuits have to do with *this* Aristotle? According to Ignatius, who was neither a scholastic philosopher nor had ever been interested in these kinds of disputation, they simply had to follow the V Lateran Council's statement, defending the Christianized version of Aristotle, paradoxically against both the 'aristotelians' who had theorised the legitimacy of the double truth, as Pomponazzi had done, and those Catholic scholars, such as Caietanus, who had accepted the idea that Aristotle was not suitable for a Christian philosophy.

Ignatius cared more that the Jesuits followed the university traditions. Since Aristotle was the pillar of the universities' pedagogy, he must be respected. Aristotle was more an order than a doctrine, and this order must be followed.

But, again: What kind of 'order'?

3. Scholastic definitions

As I said before, centuries of Scholasticism had dwelled on the concept of order providing a large, multicolored, variegated number of distinctions for its meaning. What a Sixteenth century scholar would immediately understand by the word 'order' was likely what Thomas Aquinas had set about three centuries earlier, namely the twofold expression *ordo doctrinae* (or, *ordo disciplinae*).

In the fourth *Quodlibetal Question*, Aquinas addresses the issue of defining a theological question by posing a distinction between two kinds of disputation, one which aims to remove any doubt about the fact that the matter does exist, the other which he calls 'magisterial':

Disputatio autem ad duplicem finem potest ordinari. Quaedam enim disputatio ordinatur ad removendum dubitationem an ita sit; et in tali disputatione theologica maxime utendum est auctoritatibus, quas recipiunt illi cum quibus disputatur (...). Si autem nullam auctoritatem recipiunt, oportet ad eos convincendos, ad rationes naturales confugere. Quaedam vero disputatio est magisterialis in scholis non ad removendum errorem, sed ad instruendum auditores ut inducantur ad intellectum veritatis quam intendit: et tunc oportet rationibus inniti investigantibus veritatis radicem, et facientibus scire quomodo sit verum quod dicitur: alioquin si nudis auctoritatibus magister quaes-

tionem determinet, certificabitur quidem auditor quod ita est, sed nihil scientiae vel intellectus acquirere et vacuus abscedet.⁶

Someone argued that the entire *Summa Theologiae* is the supreme example of the second type of disputation, since it would seem not to attempt to generate certainties but rather to foster the understanding of certainties that are already grasped as such by the assent of faith.⁷ But this kind of procedure is derived from the concept of 'order', which is faced as an issue by Aquinas in several commentaries to Aristotle's works. At the very beginning of *Ethics*, Aquinas distinguishes four meanings of 'order' in relation to human reason: the first one is the order of things in nature (*ordo naturalium*), which the mind can only consider; the second is the order between concepts that the mind gives them through its functioning; the other two pertain to the order of the moral actions triggered by an act of the mind.⁸ Each kind of order matches a philosophical science, such that the first kind is the subject of both metaphysics and math, the second pertains to logic, and so forth.⁹

⁶ *Quodlibet IV*, qu. 9, art. 3.

⁷ See GORMAN 2000, 150.

⁸ «Ordo autem quadrupliciter ad rationem comparatur. Est enim quidam ordo quem ratio non facit, sed solum considerat, sicut est ordo rerum naturalium. Alius autem est ordo, quem ratio considerando facit in proprio actu, puta cum ordinat conceptus suos adinvicem, et signa conceptuum, quae sunt voces significativae; tertius autem est ordo quem ratio considerando facit in operationibus voluntatis. Quartus autem est ordo quem ratio considerando facit in exterioribus rebus, quarum ipsa est causa, sicut in arca et domo» (*Sententia Ethic.*, I, 1, 1).

⁹ «Et quia consideratio rationis per habitum scientiae perficitur, secundum hos diversos ordines quos proprie ratio considerat, sunt diversae scientiae. Nam ad philosophiam naturalem pertinet considerare ordinem rerum quem ratio humana considerat sed non facit; ita quod sub naturali philosophia comprehendamus et mathematicam et metaphysicam. Ordo autem quem ratio considerando facit in proprio actu, pertinet ad rationalem philosophiam, cuius est considerare ordinem partium orationis adinvicem, et ordinem principiorum in conclusiones; ordo autem actionum voluntariarum pertinet ad considerationem moralis philosophiae. Ordo autem quem ratio considerando facit in rebus exterioribus constitutis per rationem humanam, pertinet ad artes mechanicas. Sic igitur moralis philosophiae, circa quam versatur praesens intentio, proprium est considerare operationes humanas, secundum quod sunt ordinatae adinvicem et ad finem». (*Sententia Ethic.*, I, 1, 2)

It should not be surprising that the last consideration led Aquinas to establish another distinction about the concept of 'order'. Indeed, if each science matches one of the four kinds of order, there must be a ranking of dignity between them, as well as there is in the four kinds of order. It was an epistemological ranking which the scholastic scholars would debate into the Seventeenth century.

In sum, Aquinas distinguishes two different major orders, one pertaining to things and one pertaining to mind. While the order of perfect knowledge reflects the order of things (*intellectus est rei adequatio*), the order of apprehension is quite different, because what is prior in nature (*quoad se*) is not necessarily prior in our understanding of it (*quoad nos*)¹⁰. So, according to Aquinas: «(...) iste est naturalis modus sive ordo addiscendi, ut veniatur a nobis notis ad ignota nobis; inde est quod oportet nos devenire ex notioribus nobis ad notiora naturae».¹¹ This gnoseological belief, which was shared by the majority of the scholastics, is extremely important for Aquinas's pedagogy. In *De magistro*, in fact, Aquinas recognized that this natural way of proceeding should be a teacher's main concern. In the same book, however, he points out that the student uses two kinds of understanding: the one by which he follows his teacher's argumentation (which later would be called *ordo* or *modus disciplinae*), and the one by which the student advances in understanding by means of his own power of argumentation (which is called *inventio*).

¹⁰ «Et quia prius et notius dicitur dupliciter, scilicet quoad nos, et secundum naturam; dicit consequenter quod ea, ex quibus procedit demonstratio, sunt priora et notiora simpliciter et secundum naturam, et non quoad nos. Et ad huius expositionem dicit quod priora et notiora simpliciter sunt illa, quae sunt remota a sensu ut universalialia. Priora autem et notiora quoad nos sunt proxima sensui, scilicet singularia, quae opponuntur universalibus, sive oppositione prioris et posterioris, sive oppositione propinqui et remoti». (*Expositio Posteriorum*, I, 4, 15)

¹¹ In *Physic.*, I, 1, 7. Aquinas' argument continues as follows: «Notandum autem est quod idem dicit nota esse naturae et nota simpliciter. Simpliciter autem notiora sunt, quae secundum se sunt notiora. Sunt autem secundum se notiora, quae plus habent de entitate: quia unumquodque cognoscibile est in quantum est ens. Magis autem entia sunt, quae sunt magis in actu: unde ista maxime sunt cognoscibilia naturae. Nobis autem e converso accidit, eo quod nos procedimus intelligendo de potentia in actum; et principium cognitionis nostrae est a sensibilibus, quae sunt materialia, et intelligibilia in potentia».

What did a Sixteenth century scholar understand, then, when exposed to the word 'order'?

Basically, the concept meant Aristotle's order of books. Secondly, the concept of 'order' was twofold. Firstly, it was a way, a method, of inquiry. Secondly, it was the way of learning sciences.

The way of inquiry, in turn, is twofold: one is the way that one follows when he is finding something new through speculation, and it is called *inventio*; the other is the way that one follows when he listens to his teacher who is declaring a doctrine already known. The learning of sciences is threefold, too. Firstly, it is the pedagogical order of sciences, in the sense that one science is linked to another according to its propedeuticity, that is, the order from the simpler to the more complex. Secondly, it is the ranking of dignity of the sciences: the more a science deals with immaterial things, the more it is praiseworthy. Thirdly, it is the ranking of the sciences, according to the certainty of their doctrines.

4. Pererius and *his own order*

Why is Pererius important for the history of the concept of *ordo doctrinae/ordo disciplinae*? Let me firstly sketch a profile of his career: born in a *pueblo* near Valencia (1535), the city where he joined the Society of Jesus in 1551, he was soon called to attend the Roman college, as he was well known for being a brilliant student. There, he was charged to teach Rhetoric. His philosophical career started in 1558, when he was appointed professor of Physics, which he taught alternatively with Metaphysics and Logic until 1567. During this period, he had to face tough attacks from his Rector, Diego de Ledesma, who accused him of teaching averroistic doctrines. He finally overcome these difficulties, being appointed as master of Theology and Holy Scripture, a corpus of disciplines that

he taught for a long while at the Roman college (1567-1597). He died in 1610, being hailed as a great learned scholar¹².

He wrote several commentaries on the Holy Scripture and an intriguing brief treatise against Astrology (from a “scientific” point of view). Yet, his masterpiece is *De communibus omnium naturalium principiis*, which he published in 1576 in Rome.

This work is not important merely for its doctrines, although some of them did have a tremendous impact on the early modern epistemology, particularly in German lands. Pererius’ *De principiis* was also important because of its form. Although strongly linked to what it is called “aristotelian physics”, Pererius’ way of presenting the issues and argumenting them did not strictly reflect Aristotle’s *order*. This was the very first case in the history of Jesuit philosophy. Instead of writing a commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, he arranged the subject in a way that he called “rational”. It has been argued that Pererius’ order is heavily indebted to the Aristotelian one.¹³ But the very fact that he advocated for a rational way to face the issues pertaining to the pillars of a discipline, distinguishing it from Aristotle’s books, stands as evidence that something had broken off.

Ac licet nobis multas ob causas (quas hoc loco exponere non est necesse) visum non fuerit Comentariorum in Aristotelem scribere, quibus eius sententias & verba, sigillatim interpretaremur, sedulo tamen curavimus, ut quicquid Aristoteles de rebus, quas hoc opere docemus, usquam sensit, & scriptum reliquit, variis ex libris eius colligentes, suo quodque loco pertracteremus.¹⁴

What was the order that Pererius would have followed? In the *Introduction*, he states that his work is divided in two parts, the first one dealing with the principles and causes (*principia et causae*) of natural things, and the second one facing the issue of the common affections shared by all natural things (namely, the categories like Quantity, Place, Time, and Movement). The two parts take different

¹² On Pererius’ reputation, see LAMANNA 2009.

¹³ See BLUM 2006.

¹⁴ PERERIUS 1585, cc. 2r-v.

sizes: the first one is significantly longer than the other (9 books the first, 6 books the second). A mere comparison between Aristotle's *Physics* and Pererius' *De principiis* reveals more than a slight difference.

One can figure out that Pererius' display of freedom from the Aristotelian order was due to the audience to whom the work was addressed. Blum gives a precise account of this, identifying the profile of the reader as an Italian scholar, strongly exposed to the platonic and neo-platonic culture triggered by the humanists. This argument relies on the fact that Pererius' lessons at the Roman College were strictly bound to the traditional order, that is: 1) reading and exposition of the Aristotle's texts according to the traditional division and enumeration established centuries before; and 2) commenting by means of questions respectful of the exposition order.

That is true. Indeed, the manuscripts still extant of Pererius' courses show his respect of the scholastic tradition.

Yet, Pererius was one of the jesuit philosophers that Ledesma required to write a report on the pedagogical issue of how to teach philosophy, in such a way that the teaching at the Roman College could be fostered and become the rule for every jesuit college in the world. This Superior's request triggered a significant debate within the Roman College, which reached its acme in Ledesma's condemnation of the Averroistic doctrines allegedly professed by Pererius. By responding to the task given to him by his Superior, Pererius wrote several documents, over the course of a few years, that are very useful today to understand the pedagogical framework at the very base of the order he chose to follow in the *De principiis*.¹⁵

First question: was the choice of putting aside Aristotle's order legitimate in dealing with philosophical issues? And, if so, how? In his *Brevis ratio studendi*,

¹⁵ LUKÁCS 1965 and 1974.

Pererius writes a chapter on the expedient way to teach (*Quomodo legere oporteat*). The beginning of this chapter makes clear that following one order instead of another is an individual choice, not an absolute:

Scriptorum genera duo sunt: Unum eorum qui aliorum sententias suis vel scholiis vel commentariis explanant; alterum eorum qui nullius interpretationi adstricti non alienas, sed suas scriptis exponunt sententias.¹⁶

Pererius lists his suggestions about how to be a good teacher in both cases. Quite interestingly, he requires the teacher to be very familiar with the author's original language. Pererius' knowledge of the ancient languages is well-known. But he did not intend this suggestion as a sort of self-exaltation: on the contrary, this belief kept him from being a fan of either one or the other interpreter. Every interpreter of Aristotle, with the exception of Alexander (whom Pererius praises to be the best in explaining Aristotle), commented Aristotle on a rough translation. Even the best of them could have made horrible mistakes in their work. Of course, teachers have to be acquainted with the effective history of the work on which they are commenting, and with the author's other works as well.

Although the task of exposing an author's doctrine appears to be less propositive than creating one's own (the teacher seems to be committed to digging into the author's text, rather than to creating and exposing his own doctrine), Pererius argues for the teachers' active role in disposing and commenting on the author's work. This activity is precisely what most clearly reveals Pererius' attitude for an individual philosophy that is not servile to any authority. The teachers have firstly to point out the aim, or goal, of the author, and to connect each topic of the work to this general aim. Then, Pererius states a weird proposition concerning the concept of order:

Deinde universam tractationem illius in aliquot praecipua capita distribuere, eorumque inter se connexionem et seriem atque totius doctrinae methodum et ordinem explicare.¹⁷

¹⁶ LUKÁCS 1965, 678.

Thus, Pererius seems here to require a juxtaposition of the interpreter's own order to that of the author. Even if this operation were to be extremely respectful of the order followed by the author, the interpreter would add titles that belong to his *own* authorship, but that are not present in the author's original work.

Pererius' usage of the expression «doctrinae methodum et ordinem» in this proposition is not clear in itself, because it could either refer to the connection of the topics within the entire work or to a more specific reference to the logical rules adopted by the author in arguing his doctrines.

When Pererius comes to sketching the task of explaining the second kind of author, the meaning of this expression becomes clearer. The teacher who has to explain the work of an author who wrote his own doctrines without commenting on someone else, should observe quite a similar order to the one who has to comment on an interpreter: he should point out the main goal of the work and divide it into main titles, in order to make it easier for one to orient himself. Nevertheless, the teacher should be careful in paying attention to another list of issues pertaining to the work, which is not necessary to inquire into a work of an interpreter:

Qua in re quatuor consideranda erunt: unum est inventio, alterum dispositio, tertium elocutio, quartum nonnullae circumstantiae quae unicuique scriptioni extrinsecus adiunctae sunt.¹⁸

According to Pererius, method belongs to the same category as disposition. He states that «dispositio *seu* methodus» is twofold: it can pertain to either doctrine or prudence. In fact, the latter can be oratorical, poetical, or historical. Consequently, one should find out what kind of method the author used, and also if he succeeded in doing so.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 679.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 679.

On the contrary, the *method of doctrine* pertains to the composition, division (that is, definition), or solution. Pererius curiously cites Galen as an authority on this topic, according to whom these categories are present as well as clearly separated in each constituted discipline. Although he does not mention here the concept of “order”, it is quite clear that he is referring to it when he states that one should verify that the author begins with what is more known and commonplace, more certain and evident to us; that is, with the causes and principles of things, the simplest and most perfect of things. This is properly one of the definitions of the *ordo doctrinae* mentioned above. And it is here blended carelessly with the concept of method, which usually belongs to the field of Rhetoric (and Logic). So, the usage that Pererius makes previously of the twofold expression «*doctrinae methodum et ordinem*» seems to echo the couplets of words that scholastic scholars frequently used almost as synonyms (i.e. *conexio & series*). In this case, method refers to the rhetorical rules and figures used in argumenting, while order refers to the proper succession of arguments. In relation to the latter concept, Pererius suggests, for instance, that one should find out whether, at the beginning, the author has introduced the issues he is going to discuss, and whether he has explained their connection and order. Concerning method, Pererius suggests to determine whether the author has used *metabasis* (which, according to him, means “transition”), a rhetorical figure that he forbids the use of, since it frees the author from following the purposes he has stated at the beginning; and, finally, whether the connection and series of the statements is clear and keeps in mind what has been already said and raises the expectations of what is coming. One should find out whether the author has observed the method in the general distribution of the argumentation, but he criticizes those who follow this method too meticulously, applying it to even the smallest of details. Then, he should examine whether the author has respected all the rules of division in examining the issues. And finally, whether the author has been ex-

cessive in dividing the issues and whether he has not neglected or dissimulated the method required by the issue.¹⁹

Anyway, rather than limiting his suggestions for being a good teacher, Pererius points out how to be a good author without being forced to comment on an ancient authority (most likely Aristotle). Pererius reveals two sides of the same coin: the order that must be followed in teaching and the order that one has to follow if he wishes to write a very good book. Both of them seem to be different than the order followed by Aristotle.

And that is precisely the point. According to Pererius, the order of rationality does not necessarily match Aristotle's. Thus, the authority of the Stagirite is challenged.

In a manuscript entitled *Documenta quaedam perutilia iis qui in studiis philosophiae cum fructu et sine ullo errore versari student*, Pererius recommends to study and follow Aristotle as a guide, because his way of philosophizing is most consistent with the nature of our intellect. This way is quite different from the poetical and metaphorical way, wrapped in fables and myths, followed by other philosophers. Yet, one should keep in mind the following:

Ordo & methodus quod in Aristotele singularis fuit & ab omnibus mirifice commendatur, et fere est vel resolutionis, vel compositionis, sed ea in disposi-

¹⁹ «Sequitur dispositio seu methodus, quae duplex est: una doctrinae, altera prudentiae. Haec vero alia oratoria, alia poetica, alia historica. Videat igitur, utra usus fuerit author et quam bene. Methodus doctrinae alia est compositionis, alia divisionis vel definitionis, alia resolutionis; quae si quidem Galeno credimus, cernitur in omnibus disciplinis bene constitutis. Consideret igitur, an inceperit ab iis quae sunt magis nota et communia, certa magis ac manifesta nobis, a causis et principiis rerum, a simplicioribus aut perfectioribus rebus; an in principio proposuerit ea quae tractaturus erat, et seriem atque ordinem eorum ostenderit; an utatur metabasis, idest transitione, qua figura, cum aliquid eorum quae initio proposita fuerant, absolutum est, admonemur; et quid iam dictum fuerit, et quid deinceps dicendum sit ut et praeteritorum memoria iuuetur et excitetur expectatio sequentium, utrorumque series et connexio appareat. Num in generali quidem distributione tractationis methodum servaverit, in singularum autem partium explicatione minime». (*Ibid.*, 680)

tione principalium partium scientiae atque librorum elucet, in singulis autem capitibus et disputationibus interdum obscurum et perturbatior est.²⁰

Elsewhere, Pererius reports the same charge to Avicenna, pairing the two authorities with no particular concern for the gap of dignity between them. Thus, through calling to the fore Aristotle's order of reasoning, Pererius shows not only his loose and fairly personal way of following him, but also his critical attitude toward any authority in philosophy.

5. Pererius' rankings

Given that Pererius does not follow Aristotle's order when he writes books, it would be fair to expect him not to follow Aristotle's order in his courses, as well. Yet, things go differently. The manuscripts still extant about his classes (mostly on *Physics*, *Psychology*, and *Metaphysics*) reveal a teacher very respectful of the Scholastic tradition: expositions of numbered texts from Aristotle's books are intermingled with questions in the form of traditional commentary.²¹ Anyway, the problem of the 'order' is still alive in these manuscripts, arising whenever Pererius has to handle an epistemological issue. It should not surprise that the majority of the questions that Pererius faces are intended to outline a precise epistemological profile.

Many scholars have pointed out Pererius' peculiar way of ranking and defining the disciplines. Long before Francisco Suárez would propose his own tripartition of metaphysics, Pererius had divided the first science into two parts, naming the first one "prima philosophia" and sketching the second one as a rational theology. According to Lohr, Pererius' division was one of the outcomes of an epistemological reassessment which had started in the University of Valencia and

²⁰ *Documenta quaedam perutilia*, c. 26r.

²¹ See, for instance, the very traditional order of questions that he follows in *De anima libri III*.

soon spread all around Spain, where metaphysics had been taught in the course of Theology since the Medieval Age.²²

I leave aside a discussion on this topic, because it is impertinent to the aim of this paper. What I would like to point out here is that this “revolution” was made possible by some authors that started to write books no longer in the commentary fashion but, *per methodum doctrinae*, that is, as an organic whole derived from the first principles of philosophy. Pererius was one of the scholars who undertook the task of writing and thinking according to *their own* logic. The criteria adopted by Pererius in dividing metaphysics and theology have heavy repercussions on the order of the other disciplines. Pererius had in mind his own concept of science, neither servile nor bound to the scholastic tradition.

This is quite fair about the relation he states between physics and mathematics. And it is interesting to cite here what he taught about psychology in a course on *De anima*:

Scientia de anima est nobilissima et post mathematica scientia de anima est certissima omnium, (...) quod scientia de anima est certior metaphysicae.

(...)

Falsum est quod scientiae mathematicae habeant suam certitudinem propter abstractionem, nam verum est quod non possent considerari entia mathematica nisi abstracte, nam certitudinis non est abstractio, sed est ex natura propria ipsius rei.²³

So, what are the orders of disciplines as proposed by Pererius? One should use the plural expression (“order-s”) because there are at least three different ways to rank the disciplines. These are veiled by the question of which discipline is *prior*, *certior*, & *nobilior*. For instance, theoretical philosophy is *prior* to practical philosophy because of the nature of intellect’s work. Indeed, the intellect’s very first operation is the *cognitio simpliciter*; therefore, it comes before the *cognitio practica*. Secondly, Pererius states that theoretical sciences are *prior*es to the practical ones

²² LOHR 1988, 608-609.

²³ *Lectiones de Anima*, c. 20v.

because of their subject: «Nam in Metaphysica agitur de Deo & intelligentiis; in Physica, de caelis & elementis, quas res natura priores esse his rebus quas tractant scientiae practicae, per se manifestus est».²⁴ In order to resolve his doubt about the priority of the theoretical philosophy *according to us* ('secundum nos'), Pererius also faces the question about which of the two kinds of disciplines was first invented by men. It is simple for Pererius to demonstrate that theoretical philosophy is more certain and noble than the moral one, even though others argued that mathematics is less worthy than ethics because of its subject matter (namely, human happiness *versus* quantity). Yet, according to Pererius, despite its subject, mathematics is more praiseworthy than ethics because of its method.

What about the ranking of the disciplines which stand in both of the main genres (theoretical and practical)?

Pererius lingers on the sense of the tripartition of the theoretical sciences in metaphysics, natural philosophy, and mathematics, but he has no doubt about which of them is the most certain and noble, that is, metaphysics. Yet, this does not mean that metaphysics can be automatically considered the *first* of them. Pererius has to disambiguate the word 'first' in order to affirm the general priority of metaphysics to the other disciplines.

In fact, 'first' means something pertaining to either the nature of a science or the order of men's learning. So, thanks to the ambiguity still extant in the definition of metaphysics, it is easy for Pererius to demonstrate the priority of the nature of metaphysics: its subjects are predicates, first and general causes of all things, transcendentals and transcendent beings. On the contrary, according to Pererius metaphysics is the last in the order of men's learning (the order of doctrine), since

²⁴ PERERIUS 1585, 12-13.

homines enim iam cognitis & perceptis ab iis rebus, tandem ad extremum, perveniunt ad notitiam rerum divinarum propter summam earum difficultatem, & remotionem a sensibus nostris (...) & quoniam in multis praesupponit cognitionem aliarum scientiarum, praesertim autem Physicae.²⁵

In conclusion, metaphysics comes first. What about physics and mathematics? Pererius states clearly that mathematics comes first in relation to both the orders: 1) according to us, because its principles are evident both in themselves and to us: in fact, they do not need a great experience to be learned. This is proved by the fact that children can easily learn mathematics, while they have problems in advancing in physics; and 2) in its own nature, because mathematics considers quantity *as* quantity, while physics considers movement and the sensible, which presupposes quantity.

Speculative disciplines are all set. In relation to the practical ones, Pererius lists the order of doctrine as follows: Ethics, Politics, and Economy, following the argument according to which principles always precede their applications and the whole always precedes the part. Pererius leaves aside Logic from this philosophical ranking, contrasting the Platonic and Stoic statement of the philosophical nature of Logic. He argues that philosophy, as meant in his order, is that which deals with real being (*ens realis*), but Logic does not deal with it; hence, it has to be excluded. Secondly, Pererius reasserts a traditional statement about logic, stating that logic is not a philosophical discipline, but philosophy's instrument.²⁶

What about the *ordo doctrinae* as pertaining to gnoseology? Pererius draws a general rule from Aristotle's *Physics*, aimed at distinguishing what is known 'according to us' from what is known by itself (*secundum naturam*): the first kind of

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 54. Pererius also confutes those who «aiunt Metaphysicam etiam ordine doctrinae priorem esse ceteris disciplinis» (*Ibidem*), since every cognition of each other disciplines hangs from a metaphysical statement.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

things is what is reached by human senses, while the second kind embraces what is *prior* with respect to the causal relation²⁷.

This rule leads him to confute the Stoicist gnoseology and to draw a clear profile of man's order of learning:

Nos enim multa prius cognoscimus, quae, si natura rerum spectetur, posterius cognosci deberent, si quidem ante percipimus accidens, quam substantiam, at substantia per se ac suapte natura vehitur atque ducitur ad sciendum. Homo enim naturaliter expetit scire non quocunque modo, sed per causas, talis enim scientia est perfectio intellectus humani explens atque saturans naturalem appetitum eius. Itaque homo naturaliter expetit res cognoscere per ea quae sunt priora & notiora secundum naturam, seu per causas, potius quam per ea quae sunt notiora secundum nos, veluti per effectus. Nec denique nuncupant naturalis, quod ita sit homini insita & infixata, ut ab ea nunquam divelli & separari possit. Nam quamvis rudes & indocti cum primum aggrediuntur ad cognoscendas res, hanc intelligendi rationem sequantur, tamen qui sunt foecundo & subtili ingenio & in scientiis exercitati, cognoscunt res convenienter naturae ipsarum, & quod secundum naturam prius atque notius est, illis quoque prius & magis notum habetur.²⁸

Pererius adds a distinction to Aquinas' explanation of the second text of Aristotle's *Physics*. In his commentary, Aquinas did not mention, indeed, the difference between an ordinary learner and a talented one. This is a pedagogical statement that Pererius draws from his own concept of 'order', which neither Aquinas nor the Greek interpreters, whom Pererius likes the most, stated.

Who is so talented as to think in the very same way of nature? Pererius does not directly answer this question, but it is quite likely that he took himself to be one of those people. The table of contents of the *De principiis* mirrors the order of things *secundum naturam*; therefore, writing it meant to think in the very same way as nature. What does this chiefly mean? It means that the talented philoso-

²⁷ «Quaecunque cadunt sub sensu[m], vel sunt propinqua sensibus, sunt nota nobis; quae vero a sensibus remota sunt, habentur ignota & quo magis minusve sensus nostros attingunt vel refugiunt, eo magis minusve nota aut ignota iudicari debent: At nota secundum naturam vel simpliciter, censeri debent quaecunque sunt priora, & a quibus pendent alia: e contrario vero quae sunt posteriora, & manant atque pendent ab aliis, sunt ignota secundum naturam». (PERERIUS 1585, 129).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

pher can recognize the rational order of the things in this world and speculate according to their proper order, without any apprenticeship or servile following of an order imposed on him by any philosophical authority, including that of Aristotle (and Aquinas, if you will).

The recognizable rational order of this world is then again confirmed by Pererius as a theologian. Commenting on the verse *Vidit Deus cuncta quae fecerat, & erant valde bona* (*Gen.*, 13), he states:

Huic varietati adiuncta est quasi comes, principalis mundi decor & ornamentum, ordo, & aptissima pulcherrimaque rerum omnium dispositio: qua si careret mundus, ne ille quo vastior mole esset, plenioque atque multiformior, eo sane deformior esset ad speciem, ad motum impeditior, impotentior ad effectum, ad sui tutelam invalidior, & ad diuturnitatem infirmior. Ordo autem mundi in eo cernitur, quod omnes eius partes aptum sibi congruentemque locum tenent & servant, quod pro ratione nobilitatis & dignitatis rerum, aliae res sunt inferiores, aliae superiores, quaedam inter has mediae, & aliae per alias aguntur, serbantur, ac reguntur. Hunc ordinem tanti aestimavit Aristoteles, ut extremo *Met.* libro duodecimo, maximum & supremum Universi bonum, in ordine & dispositione collocaverit.²⁹

Curiously, the philosophical authority cited in this passage by Pererius to endorse his doctrine on the rational order of the world is the same from whose order Pererius is moving away.

6. Pererius and the authority

Pererius' relation to philosophical authority is still a historiographical dilemma.³⁰ Rather than being blame for laying himself away from the traditional Aristotelian order of reasoning, Pererius was accused by Ledesma and Gagliardi to be an Averroist and to spread the empious Commentaor's doctrine all around the Society. But, was that true?

²⁹ PERERIUS 1606, 50 b 161.

³⁰ See BLUM 2006, BLUM 2007, BLUM 2012, CARVALHO 2013.

Actually, the *Ratio Studiorum* enjoined the professor of philosophy to neither praise nor cite authors hostile to Christianity, but stopped short of imposing a total censure: such a prohibition would in practice have been counterproductive, sparking a contrary curiosity in the students and an interest in the forbidden. An awareness of such a risk is evident when the *Ratio* warns the teacher to be on the alert to check students' enthusiasm for such authors, and for one authority in particular who was more than any other deemed contrary to the Christian faith, Averroës. Of course, what sixteenth century Averroism amounts to is an open question, more perhaps an occasion for polemic than a school of thought³¹, and to call any sixteenth century author, even Zimara, Averroist, is problematic. None the less, a number of telling criticisms were mounted in the name of Averroës or of Alexander of Aphrodisias against certain of Thomas Aquinas's arguments (his demonstration of the immortality of the soul for example), particularly in an Italian context where secularising Aristotelianism had found fertile ground. It is natural therefore that Jesuits teaching or studying at the *Collegio Romano* or the College at Padua should, by the above-mentioned process of adaptation to local circumstances, have been susceptible to the allure, even when the doctrines of these two Aristotelian commentators involved a denial of the immortality or individuality of the soul. Such a tendency is clearly behind the structure in the *Ratio Studiorum* which outlaws praise of the commentator, while allowing that he may be the author of some *good* doctrines. The teacher «should not deal separately with Averroës's divagations (and the same should be true of similar authors); but if he needs to cite some good passage from his works, he should do so without praising him; and if possible show that he derived it from others».

In 1567 the same controversy blew up in Germany, with the Canisius brothers

³¹ See AKASOY and GIGLIONI 2013.

(one the Provincial, the other a college rector) together opposing the excessive freedom with which certain students, returning from the *Collegio Romano*, had taken to promoting Averroës's theories, apostrophising him as "divine" and disdaining Aquinas. The underlining motivation was that the Canisiuses felt that the struggle against the Protestants was being undermined, as the latter were being presented with an opening for accusing the Catholics of propagating atheist doctrines. In 1568 the provincial Congregation of Upper Germany declared: «We greatly desire that a severe law be promulgated throughout the whole Society, so that the opinion of either Averroes or any other philosopher that fights with the Christian faith or with the common doctrine of the schools in any respect may not be defended or confirmed».³² The controversy was further inflamed by the protests of Antonio Balduino, a pupil of Pererius's recently arrived in Dillingen to teach Logic, against the Canisiuses' severity. But when Peter Canisius was succeeded as Provincial by the less zealous Paul Hoffaeus, the waters calmed.

The anti-Averroist ruckus at the *Collegio Romano* illuminates not only the Jesuits' relationship with Averroës but more generally the attitudes many of them displayed in their dealings with less "sound" *auctoritates*. A series of documents drawn up between 1564 and 1565 by professors at the *Collegio Romano*³³ detail the criticisms levelled, notably by Diego de Ledesma and Achille Gagliardi, at the Averroism allegedly propounded by Pererius while he held the chair in dialectics. Of these documents, a *Relatio de Professorum Consultationibus circa Collegi Romani Studia* in particular deals specifically with the question of Averroism, among others. This puts on the record in a single document the statements of several teachers including Ledesma, Gagliardi, Toletus, Iacobus Acosta, Manuel de Sá, Perpinyà, but excludes Pererius himself, and states that Mariana had re-

³² LUKÁCS 1965, 40.

³³ LUKÁCS, 1974, 464-503.

fused to express himself on the matter. As far as Averroës is concerned, these rehearse the usual formula of forbidding teachers to praise him, as an infidel, and enjoining them to eulogise instead Aquinas and Albertus Magnus. The teacher must not show himself an Averroist, nor favour the Greek commentaries at the expense of the Latin. For Ledesma though the problem was not clear-cut «in teaching philosophy a twofold abuse should be avoided: first, too much liberty, which indeed harms the faith, as experience shows in the academies of Italy; second, that people are bound to the doctrine of just one or another author. This has produced hateful and contemptible things in Italy».³⁴ He returned to the theme in the same year (1564) in two documents, in the first of which he also dwells on pedagogical strategies for expounding the material (the teacher must explain things in such a way that a mediocre intellect can follow), while in the second he provides a list of philosophical doctrines to be taught and championed alongside a list of erroneous doctrines as propounded (presumably) by Pererius or found in the students' notes. While his supposed Averroism has been reappraised³⁵, and the polemicising with Ledesma and Gagliardi shown to be largely motivated by internal rivalries, it still cannot be denied that Pererius's philosophical position was openly favourable to the commentator.

But what exactly were the doctrines in dispute between Ledesma and Pererius? A look at the propositions the former contests gives a fairly clear picture of the anti-Averroist position, largely connected to the question of the rational soul, which the Averroists equated with the undivided intellect: 1) the soul is an *assistens* but not informing form of the body, given that, the soul being immortal and the body mortal, it cannot free itself of the latter if integral. 2) science is not applicable to the separated soul. 3) nor to its operations in that state. 4) neither can we know whether the rational soul be an aspect of the body. 5) nor whether

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 478.

³⁵ See BLUM 2006.

it existed before the body or how it is made. 6) it is not necessary to deal with reasoning against faith, nor is it appropriate to bolster faith with rational argument. 7) form is the whole of *quidditas*. 8) in man there are three souls, the vegetative, the sensitive and the rational. 9) the blood and the humours are not integral parts of the human body (with reference to the theological problem of transubstantiation).

Ledesma then adds a few further arguments with the insinuation that Pererius had co-opted the authority of the Superior General Laynez to justify them: 1) Aristotle believed the soul to be mortal and denied divine providence, and on this count, Laynez emphasises, was condemned by all the early Doctors of the Church. 2) again according to Laynez the question “If the soul is immortal, why is it attached to a mortal body?” is irresolvable by the natural light of reason. Ledesma then winds up with the accusation that Pererius exalts Aquinas insufficiently and indeed frequently challenges him, along with the Latin authorities generally.³⁶

These propositions mirror those in the two lists proposed by Ledesma in the same document regarding the doctrines to be taught or defended by the teacher. In these lists Ledesma adds several propositions to the effect that each soul is unique to one and every man, and that the actual and potential intellects are capacity's of the soul and not substances distinct from man. On the proper attitude towards *auctoritates*, Ledesma upholds the necessity of revering Aquinas but does not exclude, any more than the *Constitutions* or, following these, the *Ratio Studiorum*, that the teacher may differ from him on certain points, while remaining humble and tentative so as not to alienate the students from Thomas's doctrines. Masters must never belittle their colleagues' teachings, nor the Latin authorities vis-à-vis the Greek.

It is possible that the principle head of disagreement between the position taken

³⁶ LUCKÁCS 1974, 496-503.

here by Ledesma, but espoused equally by Gagliardi and Canisio, and that of Pererius, is really just this question of the basic attitude expected of the teacher, which for Pererius was a matter of philosophising freely and eclecticism.³⁷ In a paper entitled *De Modo Legendi Philosophiam* (1564), Pererius in fact agrees with Ledesma in requiring modesty and open-mindedness of the master, while adding that his teaching should be conducted in an orderly and firm manner. Pererius also affords us an interesting glimpse at what was meant at that time by «new opinions», which all the Jesuit documents warn against partiality towards. When Pererius seconds this advice to the teacher he does so saying: «He should not be fond of new opinions, that is, those discovered by himself»³⁸. This is useful in its framing of novelty, which here refers exclusively to the elaboration of a personal doctrine not underpinned by either ancient or contemporary authorities. For one of the goals of the whole Society regarding philosophical doctrine, apart from that ever elusive uniformity, was up-to-dateness, in the form of «acceptability by the large scientific community».³⁹

The open-mindedness Pererius demanded of a philosophy master he himself extended even to those authors who, like Averroës, might seem quite controversial doctrinally: «Reading Averroës is most useful, both for his teachings, and for the reputation he enjoys in Italy; and to understand him, read his followers, such as Janduno, Barleo, Paulo Veneto, Zimarra, Nipho».⁴⁰

Similarly the master should engage with the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Simplicius of Cilicia and Themistius, alongside, naturally, the more generally accepted ones of Albertus Magnus and Aquinas. Further, in his *Explanatio Prologi Averrois* introducing his lecture on the *Analitica Posteriora*, Pererius states his disagreement with «those who for trivial motives deny the greatness

³⁷ BLUM 2006, 281.

³⁸ LUKÁCS 1974, 667.

³⁹ BLUM 2006, 284.

⁴⁰ LUKÁCS 1974, 665-66.

of Averroës's commentaries, who is called Great not for his prolixity but for the vastness of his learning and doctrines»⁴¹It is possible that this eclectic self-positioning of Pererius's was intended to meet the particular demands of an Italian humanist public, but elsewhere he returns specifically to underlining Averroës's value to Jesuit philosophical education, distancing himself from his colleagues at the *Collegio Romano*. Called upon to comment on a draft of the *Ratio Studiorum* in 1586, each of the provinces and the principal colleges sent in their comments in the form of a deposition. While the other European provinces made no mention of the problem of Averroës, and we can assume they approved the critical assessment that carried through to the final 1599 version of the *Ratio*, both the Jesuits of the Veneto province and the professors of the *Collegio Romano* made specific representations. The former, perhaps alarmed by the secularising ambience of the University of Padua, approved the draft's anti-Averroist formulae in principle but were concerned that specific proscription might have the opposite effect on the students, stimulating an interest in the disparaged Averroës. The latter shared the psychological concerns of the Venetians but also felt obliged to register Pererius's caveat. Specifically they say: «De Averroë: Placet totus ut iacet; excepto P. Pererio, cui videntur quaecunque et in Averroë et in aliis gentilibus vere dicta sunt, simpliciter esse citanda atque docenda; praesertim cum in digressionibus Averrois uberius soleat esse philosophiae doctrina».⁴²

In 1565 the third Superior General, Francis Borgia, responding to the controversy surrounding Pererius's Averrosim, had published a list of forbidden propositions, among them the mortality of the soul. With his death in 1572, followed by that of his old adversary Ledesma in 1575, Pererius's position improved somewhat.

⁴¹ BLUM 2006, 282.

⁴² LUKÁCS 1992, 261.

But, how did he really feel about Averroes and other philosophical authorities? When he wrote the *Preface* to his masterpiece, Pererius states clearly that Averroes is one the best interpreters of Aristotle's thought, as is Alexander of Aphrodisias. Yet, since Averroes did not know the original language of Aristotle's book, namely the Greek, sometimes he makes even serious mistakes about the understanding of Aristotle⁴³. This statement leads Pererius to point out a general rule for the philosophers:

Quid igitur magis a Philosophiae gravitate, dignitateque remotum, & alienum esse potest, quam Philosophum, id est amatorem sapientiae, quem ad hanc rerum omnium universitatem animo perlustrandam, atque contemplandam, solutum, & liberum esse decet, unius hominis, non omnium mortalium sapientissimi, quasi utile mancipium, &, ut Poëta quidam ait, servuum pecus effici?⁴⁴

According to Pererius, the same underlying proverb ("Amicus Plato sed magis amica Veritas") works for Aristotle as an authority. Even not clearly stated in his published works, this statement is recurrent in Pererius' courses manuscripts, and in the document entitled *Documenta quaedam perutilia...*, I cited before.

In the last, Pererius, reminds his reader that Aristotle is a great classic, in such a way that reading his books means always to find out something new. Yet, in relation with aristotelian doctrines that could be in contrast with Christian faith, Pererius shows in open words what he thinks about Aristotle's relation to truth, and about the opportunity of bounding a philosopher to Aristotle's doctrines: «Cum Aristoteles more aliorum hominum, et potuerit errare et interdum erraverit, tum in hoc tum in alijs rebus, non est mirandum veritatem fidei pugnare cum erroribus Aristotelis».⁴⁵

⁴³ «Negari tamen non potest, Averroem, interpretando Aristotelem, ob ignorationem linguae Graecae, mendososque codices, & bonorum interpretum penuriam, multifariam hallucinatum esse» (PERERIUS 1585, c. 3v).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ *Documenta quaedam perutilia...* c. 26r.

In conclusion, rather than a follower or an enemy of a particular ancient philosopher, Pererius seems to be an enemy of the authority in itself. The gap between the concept of philosophical authority and the moral or institutional authority is narrow. This is very likely what Ledesma and Gagliardi foresaw in Pererius' doctrines, and sought to fight.

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