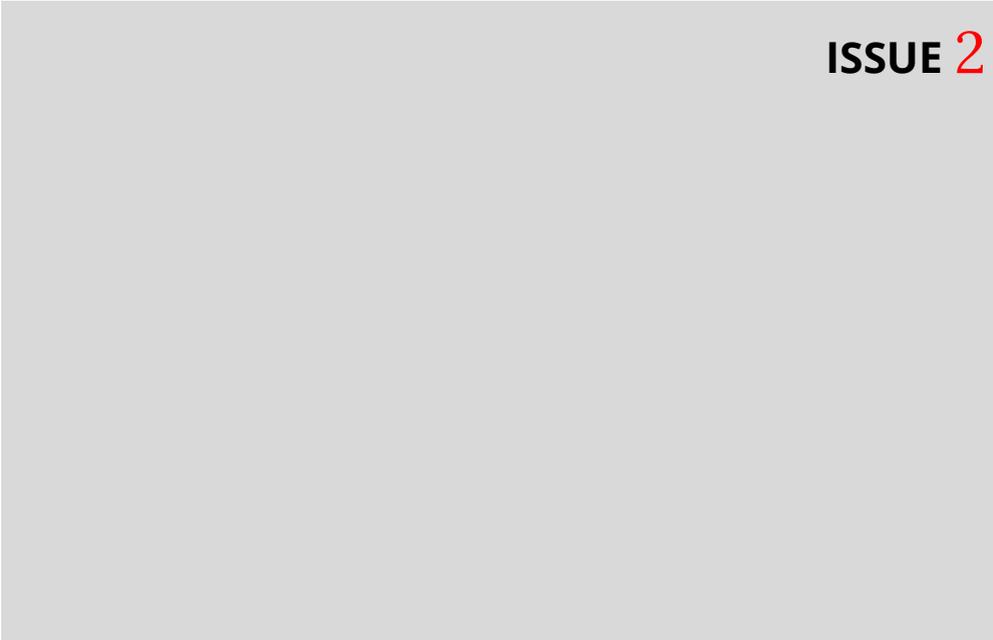
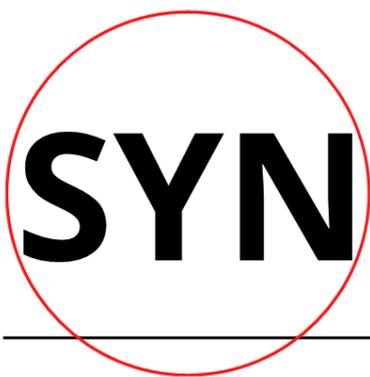




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2

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List of contributions

Parmenide, Platone, Tommaso d'Aquino. Lineamenti di una Ontologia Continua by <i>Lorenzo Pampanini</i>	7
Why is Being not a Genus? by <i>Andrea Buongiorno</i>	37
Geraldus Odonis on Being, Logic and Intelligibility by <i>Ana Rieger Schmidt</i>	65
The Notion of Res in the Medieval Theories of Signification: A Reconstruction of Duns Scotus's and Antonius Andreae's Contributions by <i>Maria Cabré Duran</i>	91
Praxisorientierte Dingontologie. Die Kulturelle Situiertheit des Menschen als Zugang zum Nichtmenschlichen by <i>Giovanna Caruso</i>	119
Why the Objective World Depends on Thought. Dissolving Stroud's Metaphysical Aporia Using Kant's Notion of an Object by <i>Till Hoepfner</i>	145

Ana Rieger Schmidt
(Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul)

Geraldus Odonis on Being, Logic and Intelligibility

Abstract: For medieval philosophers, the question of the starting point of intellection is linked to the starting point of metaphysics, understood as the science of first principles. According to the Franciscan theologian Geraldus Odonis (1285 - 1348) in his treatise *De principiis scientiarum*, the object of the first principles includes a domain of being which can be signified without requiring real existence nor non-existence. He seeks to introduce a broader notion of being, common to *ens reale* and *ens rationis*, which can account for the limits of intelligibility and any true discourse. The only suitable candidate for the first principles subject is the *ens tertio adiacens*, that is, the being signified by a propositional composition. This unusual identification must be understood in the light of other medieval discussions on the proper subject of Logic, propositional realism and the first object of the intellect. These considerations allow us to identify similarities between Odonis' theses and the developments around the notion of 'supertranscendental' and reflect on his contribution to a new understanding of metaphysics as a science of the pure intelligible.

Keywords: *first principles; propositional realism; subject of logic; ens tertio adiacens; supertranscendental*

Introduction

Geraldus Odonis (1285-1349) wrote the longest and most complete medieval treatise on the first principles of knowledge: the principle of non-contradiction (*de nullo simul esse et non esse*) and the principle of excluded middle (*de quolibet esse vel non esse*). According to him, a treatise on this subject was yet to be written, since Aristotle did not give a sufficiently clear explanation of the common principles of the sciences in the *Analytics* and in the *Metaphysics*. This subject is challenging, since the terms composing the two first principles are the most universal and, therefore, the most remote from the senses. While Odonis openly expresses his intention to complement Aristotle's work, the consequences of his exposition would defy central Aristotelian theses. If the

absolute primacy of principles is preserved and justified in detail, the status of metaphysics – its superiority over all the other sciences – will be called into question. It is not without reason that the treatise *De principiis scientiarum* belongs to a volume dedicated to Logic: according to Odonis, the first principles are strictly speaking logical – and not metaphysical.

The first chapter of the treatise presents a rigorous analysis of the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle and their properties. Odonis argues that the priority of first principles rests upon the scope of their component terms (subject and predicate), as well as their universality. The argument thus concentrates on analyzing the meaning of their terms. Looking for a domain of beings that corresponds to the scope of the principles, Odonis will move on by presenting the notion of *esse tertio adiacens* (the propositional copula) and the being that corresponds to it (*ens tertio adiacens*). In what follows, we will see how the generality of first principles rests on the generality and indeterminacy of the kind of being that serves as the foundation of meaningful discourse. This notion of being, which corresponds to the subject and predicate of the first principles, will immediately affect the understanding of metaphysics as the supreme science.

1. *The scope of first principles*

The division of scientific principles assumes the criterion of generality as presented in the *Second Analytics* (76a32-b2): among the principles of the demonstrative sciences, we distinguish those specific to each science (such as the definition of the line for Geometry) and the common principles, present in several sciences (such as ‘of equal things, we remove equal things, the remainders are equal’, valid for Geometry as well as for Arithmetic). Besides the common principles, we can speak of the most common principles, observed by any science and any demonstration: the principle of non-contradiction (*de nullo simul esse et non esse*) and of the principle of excluded middle (*de quilibet esse vel non esse*). Both principles outline the limits of meaning and for that reason consist in the very first certain knowledge – indeed, no one can be mistaken about them. Also, the first principles are absolutely unconditional, and all other

principles presuppose them. For this reason, it is not possible to provide a proof of their truth since this would presuppose that which it is supposed to demonstrate. To respond to objectors who think they can deny their universal validity, Aristotle shows in Book IV of his *Metaphysics* (1006a11-1007a20) that allowing for contradiction is to annihilate any possibility of meaningful discourse.

It should be noted that the complex formulation of the principles does not affect their priority. In fact, a distinction is made at this point: one can speak of a principle's simplicity in relation to its wordy formulation (*quantum ad voces*) or one can consider what is actually being stated (*quantum ad sententiam*). According to the first criterion, the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle are complex and cannot be called first; according to the second criterion, on the other hand, they are absolutely first, the reason being that they provide the logical limitations of the meaningful discourse and do not establish a determined predication. Analogously, to say that 'a line is straight' is simpler than saying that 'a line is either straight or curve'. But the second option is prior than the first statement, since it does not determine a given line, going beyond its common possibilities.

These considerations provide the answer to the objection according to which the proposition '*ens est ens*' (let us call it the 'identity principle') would be first with respect to the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle (probably criticizing Antoine Andre's position¹). Because it has a simpler

¹ It is very likely that Odonis is addressing the position of John Duns Scotus' pupil Antoine Andre († 1320). In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Andre argues that the proposition '*omne ens est ens*' is prior to the principle of non-contradiction. Andre accepts Aristotle's assertion that the principle '*impossibile is idem simul esse et non esse*' is the most certain (*firmissimum*). Yet, it is not to be considered the absolutely first principle (*simpliciter primum*). Andre's argues the true principium simpliciter primum must not be analyzed into simpler terms. However, the principle of non-contradiction is overly complex. See Antonius Andreae, *Quaestiones subtilissimae super duodecim libros Metaphysicae Aristotelis*, ed. Venetiis: 'Si ergo queratur quid est primum complexum simpliciter et primo primum, dico quod istud *ens est ens*. Istud enim principium habet terminus primo primos et ultimo ultimos et per consequens qui non sunt resolubiles in aliquos priores, immo omnis resolutio conceptuum stat ad conceptum entis ut ad simpliciter primum inter conceptus quidationis', (1491: q. 5). Also, in the 14th century there are other cases where the opinion according to which *ens est ens* is presented (and criticized) as an opponent to the primacy of the principle of

SYNTHESIS

formulation and the predicate is immediately contained by the subject (they are, off course, identical), it should be concluded that the identity principle should be prior to any other principle. Odonis' answer to this objection is based precisely on the distinction between 'to say more' and 'to say less' in a proposition: '*Ens est ens*' is an affirmation which expresses a determined predication. Therefore, the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle remain first because of the indeterminate nature of their predicates. According to Odonis, the determination implied in the copula decides its primacy: the copula presented in the proposition '*ens est ens*' is more determined than the disjunction '*esse vel non esse*' or the conjunction '*non esse and non-esse*'.

Throughout his treatise, Odonis seeks to show the formal and semantic independence of the principles, i.e., their ability to apply to everything conceivable and signifiable. Ultimately, he seeks to identify the kind of being which fulfills all the conditions that correspond to the subject (*nullo, quolibet*) and predicate (*esse and non esse*) of the first principles. In order to do that, three main consequences are drawn: (i) given that the first principles are stated simply and universally, without requiring anything except the nominal definition of their terms and the logical form they employ, they are best known, and no one can be mistaken about them². (ii) Odonis asserts that the principles do not presuppose the actual existence of their subject (*constantia subiecti*)³. This means that the actual existence of the things designated by the subject and the predicate of the principles (their *supposita*) is not required for the determination of their truth. (iii) these principles are minimal in concept and maximal in scope,

non-contradiction: such as in John of de Baconthorpe, John Buridan, and Nicolas of Autrecourt. I discuss these texts in Schmidt (2018).

² Geraldus Odonis (1997: 331): 'Intendit igitur Aristotiles dicere [Met. IV, 3, 1005b12] quod hec principia sunt simpliciter et universaliter, et absolute et absque omni ypothesi seu suppositione, vera, habitis tantum quid nominis estremorum et debita forma enuntiandi. Unde infert Philosophus quod sunt fimissima intantum quod nullus possit errare circa ea'.

³ Odonis (1997: 331): 'Ex quo inferri potest amplius quod in hiis principiis non supponitur constantia subiecti'.

meaning they are most abstract and universal⁴. In this context, Odonis connects the notions of certainty, abstraction, simplicity and priority. Applied to the principles, this connection reveals their maximum scope (*in ambitu maxima*). This means that the subject and the predicate of the first principles can refer to anything – nothing escapes their reach.

The argument has three moments: (a) the domain of real beings is excluded as a candidate for the subject of first principles; (b) the same is done in relation to beings of reason, which opens the way for (c) the introduction of a third kind of being, or rather a more common domain, enveloping real and fictional being, which will be identified with the subject of the principles because of its ‘omni-encompassing’ scope. Since the terms of the principles extend to everything that can be composed in a proposition – basically everything we can speak about – it follows that their scope goes beyond that of the *ens reale*⁵. It is a confrontation between the domain of opinion (taken in the sense of a true or false significant discourse) and that of real things:

Each of the terms of these principles extends to whatever can be the subject and whatever can be the predicate [in a proposition]. [...] But this is not the case for real beings, which is clear from book four of the *Topics* [121b1-2], that the [scope of] opinion is more common than the [the scope of real] being.⁶

This conclusion entails a somewhat surprising consequence: according to Odonis, the exclusion of the domain of real beings from the scope of the first principles (that is to say, beings endowed with essence and existence) imply that the principle of non-contradiction and excluded middle are not properly

⁴ Odonis (1997: 331): ‘Tertio suppono quod hec principia sunt minima in conceptu et maxima in ambitu, et hoc est ea esse abstractissima et universalissima’.

⁵ Clearly, one can speak of non-existing things as of existing things. One can speak as well of man as chimeras and even privations, such as blindness. The problem that begins to take shape here, and which will be developed later, is that of ‘empty references’, i.e., the problem of signifying non-existents and still producing true propositions.

⁶ Odonis (1997: 346): ‘Item. Utrique terminus horum principiorum extenditur ad omne subicibile et ad omne predicabile [...]. Sed ens reale non; patet quarto Topicorum quod opinabile communius est ente. Quare, etc.’.

SYNTHESIS

metaphysical⁷. Understood as a science of reality, metaphysics cannot possess principles that go beyond its own subject matter. Further, beings of reason are excluded as adequate candidates to the scope of first principles by the same arguments that have invalidated real beings. Here is the main argument:

[...] given that the terms of these principles do not suppose the constancy of the thing, they do not suppose the opposite, namely, the non-constancy of the thing. But the being of reason divided against real being supposes the non-constancy of the thing. As if we said that 'formal difference is either a real being or a being of reason'; if it is a real being, it possesses the constancy of the thing, if it is a being of reason, it does not possess the constancy of the thing. This is why the being of reason thus taken is not one of the terms of these principles⁸.

The being of reason, understood in opposition to real being, is by definition the non-existent. Accordingly, a term that designates a being of reason in a proposition supposes the non-constancy of the thing signified. Thus, the scope of each of these domains is not broad enough to coincide with the scope of the first principles. Accordingly, Odonis seeks to introduce a being that can account for both: real beings and beings of reason. This can only be accomplished by postulating a third domain of being indifferent to the *constantia rei*. The mode of being that possesses these properties is immediately presented: the *esse tertio adiacens* – or the thirdly adjacent being, i.e., the copula unifying subject and predicate – and the being that corresponds to it: *ens tertio adiacens*⁹. Odonis is seeking the answer to the problem of the scope of first principles in the kind of being responsible for the propositional composition.

Further in the text we learn that the *ens tertio adiacens* is identified with the 'thing taken in the logical sense' (*res sumpta logicaliter*), which is synonymous with the thinkable thing (*res a reor reris*). This expression attests

⁷ Odonis (1997: 347): 'Respondeo quod hec non sunt principia metaphisica adequate'.

⁸ Odonis (1997: 347-8): 'Termini horum principiorum sicut non supponunt constantiam rei, sic nec supponunt oppositum, scilicet non-constantiam. Sed ens rationis divisum contra ens reale supponit non-constantiam rei. Ut si dicatur 'formalis differentia vel est ens reale vel est ens rationis' ; si ens reale, habet constantiam rei, si ens rationis, non habet constantiam rei. Quare ens rationis ut sic non est aliquid de terminis horum principiorum'.

⁹ See de Rijk (1997) and Spruyt (2009).

that Odonis' division of beings is a reaction to two of its antecedents, namely the distinction between the two meanings of 'res' (*res a reor reris*, *res a ratitudine*) found in Henri of Gand and, more prominently, in Duns Scotus. To better grasp Odonis' explanation fully, we will present a brief account of both antecedents.

2. *Res a reor reris*

Henry of Ghent distinguishes the two meanings of *res*: a pure object of thought (*res a reor reris*) and a possible being (*res a ratitudine*)¹⁰. This division surpasses the dichotomy between beings of reason and real beings by adding a third way of considering something indifferently to its quiddity. We find the core of the distinction in article 21, question 4 of Henry's *Summa*¹¹. In short, the *res a reor reris* can be assumed as a thinkable being; its sense encloses the possible as much as the impossible, what actually exists and what that does not exist in reality. It consists of everything of which a concept can be formed in the soul. On the other hand, the thing taken in the 'ratified' sense (*res a ratitudine*) is a possible quidditative being. Besides, among the things liable to exist, we can distinguish quidditative beings having received existence. Thus, a *res* is foremost a pure thinkable content, a simple *aliquid*; but it possesses a *ratitudo*, that is, a quidditative being, only insofar as it possesses an idea or a model (*exemplar*) in the divine intellect. Things which are not thought by God (the *figmenta*) are deprived of quidditative being and consequently of any being of existence. Thus,

¹⁰ See Porro (2002).

¹¹ Ghent (1520: fol. 127rO): 'Alia est ratio cuiuslibet rei creatae ut res est a reor reris dicta, quam ipsius esse essentiae quod convenit ei ex eo quod est natura et essentia quaedam; et res a ratitudine dicta, et hoc est ex eo quod habet rationis exemplaris in Deo, ut saepe dictum est. Dicitur enim omnis creatura res absolute ex hoc quod de se dicit aliquid de quo saltem natus est formari conceptus aliquis in anima. Dicitur autem essentia et natura quaedam ex eo quod habet in divino esse rationem exemplaris, secundum quam nata est produci in actuali esse, a quo convenit ei esse essentiae. Unde, ut dictum est supra, quod tale rationem exemplarem in Deo non habet purum nihil est in natura et essentia, nec est res alicuius praedicamenti nec possibile fieri in effectu, quia Deus nihil potest facere in effectu cuius rationem exemplarem in se non habet ut sit in qualibet creatura. Alia intentio, quae dicitur res absolute a reor reris, quam habet ex hoc solo quod de se potest formari conceptus aliquis in anima, nec determinat ista rei intentio quod ipsa sit essentia quaedam in Deo exemplata, sed per indifferentiam se habet ad hoc et ad suum contrarium'.

the creation of a thing by God consists in giving being of existence to what already possesses being of essence (because considered in the divine intellect). There are, therefore, two levels of indetermination: that of the *res a reor reris* in relation to essence, and that of the *res a ratitudine* in relation to existence.

In his 3rd *Quodlibet*, Duns Scotus takes up Henry of Ghent's division of being but detaching it from divine exemplarism¹². In a more general sense, the *res* is defined by the non-contradictory. *Res*, taken in the most common, presents itself as an '*aliquid*', understood as a purely conceivable thing (*quodlibet conceptibile*) and envelops both *ens rationalis* and *ens reale*. It is also identified with the first object of the intellect. In the less common sense, the *res* includes everything that exists or can exist outside the intellect. The notion of *res* in the most common sense has no limits and encompasses everything thinkable except the nothing (*nihil*), or the unrepresentable. For Scotus, the possibility of representation is entirely based on non-contradiction. Unlike Henry, Scotus considers that a being does not have any essence (quidditative being) before the creation (condition for there to be a creation *ex nihilo*). Similarly, after being created a thing acquires both its quidditative being and its being of essence.

According to Odonis, similarly to Henry's and Scotus' accounts of *res*, we can distinguish an omni-encompassing domain, common to real beings and to beings of reason (it should be noted that Scotus' *res a reor reris* does not include fictions such as the goat-stag and the golden mountain). As we can see, all three philosophers offer a typology of the *res* according to which the range of things that can be signified in a proposition is not confined within the dichotomy *ens reale/ens rationalis*. Despite differences in formulation, according to them the notion of '*res a reor reris*' shares some essential features: i) it corresponds to

¹² Scotus (1639: 114): 'Hoc nomen 'res' potest sumi communissime [...], prout se extendit ad quodcumque quod non est 'nihil'; [...] ens ergo vel res isto primo modo accipitur omnino communissime, et extendit se ad quodcumque quod non includit contradictionem, sive sit ens rationis, hoc est praecise habens esse intellectu considerante, sive sit ens reale, habens aliquam entitatem extra considerationem intellectus. Et secundo accipitur in isto membro minus communiter pro ente quod habet vel habere potest aliquam entitatem non ex consideratione intellectus. [...] Et isto intellecto communissime, prout res vel ens dicitur quodlibet conceptibile quod non includit contradictionem (sive illa communitas sit analogiae sive univocationis, de qua non curo modo) posset poni ens primum obiectum intellectus; [...]. In secundo autem membro [...] dicitur res quod habere potest entitatem extra animam'.

'everything of which a concept can be formed in the intellect', ii) it is independent of the *esse existentiae*; iii) it is only opposed to pure nothingness and iv) it accommodates the *ens reale* as well as the *ens rationalis*.

3. Propositional being: *ens tertio adiacens*

According to Odonis, the *esse tertio adiacens* can compose beings or non-beings indifferently since, when placed as third adjacent in a proposition, the verb 'is' is expressing a composition of the subject with the predicate without imposing any existential value, i.e., without requiring the *constantia rei* of the coupled extremes. It is only based on this characteristic that one can admit the truth of propositions like '*cecitatem esse cecitatem*' (blindness is blindness) without imposing existence on a privation. The verb 'is' having the function of uniting the things signified in a proposition, also signifies this union (or division, in the case of negations). Thus, the *esse tertio adiacens* has a double function: it operates the copula and signifies it at the same time. The verb 'is' couples the subject and the predicate, while signifying the union, which ensures the intelligibility of the proposition.

Up to this point, we were talking about the mode of being (*esse*) involved in the copula of a proposition in Odonis' treatise. Now, it is important to speak of the being (*ens*) that corresponds to it: the *ens tertio adiacens*. Odonis explicitly identifies it with the *enuntiabile* of the proposition, i.e., its signification and immediate truth-maker:

The being [*ens*] said from this being [*esse*] is called in some way a compound of subject and predicate, and this mode of being is nothing other than the whole that can be enunciated by the proposition.¹³

This consideration is fundamental to understanding the realist dimension of the propositional signification for Odonis – which allows us to consider him as a propositional realist. According to him, the signified composition of the

¹³ Odonis (1997: 485): 'Secundum hoc ergo ens dictum a tali esse dicitur quasi compositum ex subiecto et predicato ; et hoc modo ens nihil aliud est quam totum enuntiabile per enuntiationem'.

SYNTHESIS

copula in a proposition is identified with its *enuntiabile*. The propositional composition involves more than a mental composition, since it immediately refers to a complex entity. However, the *esse tertio adiacens* only considers this value in composition: it is not intelligible without the extremes. In the context of a complete utterance, the *esse tertio adiacens* corresponds to a composition: its *enuntiabile*.

Like other realists, Odonis admits that there is actually something that corresponds to the meaning of the totality of the proposition, which is irreducible to the meanings of its terms. The *esse tertio adiacens* transcends all levels of signification, for it is already implied at the simple level of the subject's representation of the proposition, insofar as it must be able to express its own identity (*affirmatio subiecti de seipso*). For example, in 'Sortes est albus', the identity of Socrates is implied and complexly expressed by the following statement: *Sortes est Sortes*. So, the *esse tertio adiacens* is already supposed by the identity of the terms that form a proposition. Non-being and blindness cannot constitute the foundation of truth of propositions, since they are not. For Odonis, the *esse tertio adiacens* is the only *esse* that can constitute the foundation of such propositions like '*non ens esse non ens*' and '*cecitatem esse cecitatem*', which are manifestly true. In view of what has been said, the truth-maker of propositions should correspond to an entity, to a domain of beings, specially when it does not signify existent things in reality. However, Odonis says so expressly: the *ens tertio adiacens* is neither real nor mental, but indifferent to this dichotomy of beings. Because of its indifference, the being that corresponds to the composition signified by the copula is grasped in the most universal and general way¹⁴.

¹⁴ Odonis (1997: 355): 'Sumitur igitur universalissime ens a tali esse indiferenter et generalissime ad omne habens tale esse tertio adiacens'.

4. The broadening of the notion of being and propositional realism

We have seen that, in Odonis, the *ens tertio adiacens* or the *res* plays the role of propositional signification and truth-maker when taken logically, and what makes it suitable for this logical function is its indifference to real existence. The *ens tertio adiacens* is defined by its omni-encompassing scope. Like other medieval logicians, Odonis found it necessary to identify the truth-maker of propositions with a special entity¹⁵, echoing the notion of *enuntiabile* found in logical treatises of the twelfth century: *Ars Burana* and the *Ars Meliduna*¹⁶. Odonis shares this realistic orientation with other 14th-century philosophers, such as Walter Burley, Grégoire de Rimini and Jean Wyclif. All of them developed personal but related solutions to what precisely is signified by propositions. In each case, the reasoning behind the postulation of an entity signified by any mental or oral proposition depends on a notion of being that shares the properties features by the *ens tertio adiacens*, or the thing taken in the logical sense (*res sumpta logicaliter*), its equivalent. Similarly, this is the case of Burley's *ens maxime transcendens*, when coupled by the proposition in re; likewise, we find the same meaning attributed to the triplet *ens-res-aliquid* when it concerns Rimini's complexe *significabilia*; it is also the case of Wyclif's *ens logicum*. For all these philosophers, what is signified by a proposition does not consist in a merely linguistic or mental entity, but rather in an extramental – and yet non-real – entity. It does not belong to any Aristotelian category, but overcomes them, envelops them. The necessity of postulating an all-encompassing notion of being within a given propositional theory arises from the problem of explaining the truth of propositions whose reference is 'empty'¹⁷: propositions dealing with non-existents or what we may call non-standard propositions, such as 'Caesar is dead'. Thus, these borderline cases have motivated a common trend among these authors: a broadened notion of 'ens',

¹⁵ Cf. Nuchelmans (1973: 177ff).

¹⁶ de Rijk (1967: 453-638, 292-390).

¹⁷ See de Libera (2002).

SYNTHESIS

'res', and 'aliquid'. This attitude is anticipated by Odonis, alongside Burley, and also present in Rimini and Wyclif.

According to Burley for every true affirmation, there must be at the reality level an identity between two things. This amounts to saying that the terms of the proposition suppose for the same thing in reality. The totality of this propositional composition forms a proposition in re (or its synonyms, *ens copulatum* or *res complexa*)¹⁸. It is signified by the mental proposition and acts as its primary truth-maker. Like the other logicians, Burley must account for problems concerning propositions and 'empty references'. What could be, in reality, a truth-maker for the proposition 'Cesar is dead'? Surely, says Burley, in such cases we cannot have any real identity or composition between the subject and the predicate. But then what does the proposition stand for? Burley will introduce a distinction within the understanding of the notion of *ens* as a solution to this. Here, understanding the status of the proposition in re amounts to understanding the nature of the *ens maxime transcendens*.

It must be said that concerning the dead Caesar there is the identity between Caesar and Caesar, however this identity does not exist, but is an identity of reason. And for the identity between Caesar and Caesar it is not required that the identity and the diversity always be distinctions of [real] beings, but of transcendental [beings] in the highest degree, which is in the intellect. From this we can say that being is said in two ways: in the one way as common to all intelligible; on the other as existing. Similarly, in one way identity and difference are distinctions of transcendental being [at the highest point], in the other they are [distinctions] of being in effect, which is actually existent¹⁹

Thus, like the *ens tertio adiacens*, the *ens maxime transcendens* is abstracted from actual existence and envelops both the *ens reale* and the *ens rationis*. Both

¹⁸ See Cesalli (2001; 2003); Biard (2003a, 2003b).

¹⁹ Burley (1497: fol. 58rb): 'Dicendum quod Caesare corrupto identitas est Caesaris ad Caesarem, sed illa identitas non existit, sed est identitas rationis. Et idem Caesarem (sic) idem Caesari identitate quae non est nec oportet quod idem et diversum semper sint differentie entis <existentis sed entis> maxime transcendens quod scilicet est in intellectu. Unde sic potest dici, quod ens dicitur dupliciter: uno modo ut est commune omni intelligibili, alio modo idem est quod existens. Sic idem et diversum dicitur uno modo ut sunt differentie entis transcendens, alio modo ut sunt differentie entis in effectu, hoc est in actu existentis'.

correspond to pure intelligibility, that is to say, to everything of which a concept can be formed and can appear as subject or predicate in a proposition.

In the treatise *De ente*, Burley explains that we can distinguish between levels of transcendentality (were 'transcendental' stands for a notion common to several categories). This definition allows us to distinguish the notions common to all categories and those common to only a few. We can thus speak of more transcendental notions, less transcendental notions, and notions that are transcendental at the highest point. Besides the transcendental being, Burley speaks of the being common to all intelligible (*commune omni intelligibili*), operating a second movement of transcendentality; since it surpasses the being common to the ten categories, it is transcendental to the highest degree²⁰. Note also that Walter Burley identifies the *ens maxime transcendens* with the adequate object of the intellect (*adaequatum obiectum intellectus*)²¹. In our opinion, like what we have seen in Odonis, this identification echoes Duns Scotus' *Quodlibet III*, insofar as the broadest sense of *res*, understood as a simple *aliquid* and opposed to nothing, is presented as convertible with every intelligible and identified with the first object of the intellect.

In a very similar spirit, Gregory of Rimini develops the notion of *complexe significabile*²². In his *Lectura super primum et secundum Sententiarum* (1345), Rimini distinguishes three meanings of the notions *aliquid*, *res*, and *ens*, sorting

²⁰ Burley (1964: 106): 'Item intelligendum quod illud dicitur transcendens quod est commune diversis predicamentis. Verbi gracia: omne absolutum est transcendens quia est commune tribus predicamentis- ut substancie, qualitati et quantitati. Similiter omne respectivum est transcendens septem predicamentis; et illud quod est commune omnibus predicamentis est transcendens, et est magis transcendens quam illud quod est commune aliquibus predicamentis et non aliis. Et ideo transcendens recipit comparacionem quia aliquid est magis transcendens, et aliquid minus, et aliquid maxime. Verbi gracia: absolutum est *ens* transcendens; et *ens* quod est commune per se decem predicamentis; et *ens* quod est commune omni intelligibili est maxime transcendens'.

²¹ Burley (1955: 59): '[...] *ens* potest accipi tripliciter. Uno modo ut est maxime transcendens et commune omni intelligibili. Et sic est adaequatum obiectum intellectus. [...] *ens* primo modo dictum dicitur *ens* in intellectu, quia est obiectum intellectus; et ita est *ens* in intellectu obiective'.

²² See Bermon (2007), Biard (1997), de Libera (2002).

them out according to their commonness level²³. In the more common sense (*communissime*), a *res* is anything that can be signified (either in a simple way, by nouns, or in a complex way, by propositions). Its meaning envelops true and false propositions, either bearing on real substances bearing on fictions. The whole meaning signified by a proposition must correspond to the notions of ‘ens’ or ‘aliquid’ according to this first sense only, but when compared to real existing things, it is said to be nothing. To explain this last counter-intuitive assertion, according to which the *complexe significabile* can be something and nothing, Rimini connects the broader meaning of ‘ens’ (aliquid, *res*) to the proposition ‘*non-ens est non-ens*.’ Indeed, according to the broader sense of being, one can say that even that which is not (in the sense of ‘not existing as a real thing’) is something²⁴. Odonis’ understanding of a broader notion of being is similar to Rimini’s.

To conclude this section with a last case of a propositional realist whose ideas are very familiar to Odonis’, we will address the question of propositional being in John Wyclif (c. 1326-1384)²⁵. Wyclif admits that propositions that are about things that don’t exist (anymore or not yet) – such as ‘*Caesar fuit*’, ‘*Antichristus potest esse*’ and ‘*chimera non potest esse*’) are equally true according to what they signify. Correspondingly, their primary propositional significations are called *entia logica* (or *entia rationalis*) and their status is determined negatively: they are neither substances nor accidents but are extracategorical²⁶.

²³ Rimini (1984: 8-9): ‘[...] hoc nomen ‘aliquid’ sicut et ista alia sibi synonyma ‘res’ et ‘ens’ possunt accipi tripliciter: uno modo communissime secundum quod omne significabile incomplexo vel complexo, et hoc vere vel false, dicitur res et aliquid. [...] Alio modo sumuntur pro omni significabili complexo vel etiam incomplexo, sed vere, id est per veram enuntiationem ; quod autem false, tantum dicitur non ens. [...] Tertio modo, sumuntur ista ut significant aliquam essentiam seu entitatem existentem’.

²⁴ Rimini (1984: 8-9): ‘[...] Philosophus IV *Metaphysicae* satis propre principium dat istam “non ens est non ens”, et hoc dico sumendo oppositum ad aliquid tertio modo sumptum’.

²⁵ See Gaskin (2009), Cesalli (2005).

²⁶ Wyclif (1893: 77): ‘Iste etiam sunt vere, “Cesar fuit”, “ego non sum asinus”, “Antichristus potest esse”, et cetera huiusmodi; quia veritas est quod Cesar fuit, quod ego non sum asinus, quod Antichristus potest esse, etc. Et illas veritates dicte propositiones primarie significant, et sic universaliter potest arguere de omnibus categoricis yppoteticis, et e contra. Iste tamen veritates nec sunt substantie nec accidentia, sed entia logica vel entia rationis’.

We find the development of this extracategorical notion of being in the treatise *De ente predicamentali*²⁷. Wyclif argues that the notion of ‘ens’ is not limited to categorial beings, for the division between substance and accident does not exhaust all beings, since there are special cases such as propositional truths. Any significant proposition corresponds firstly to an *ens logicum*, an extracategorical entity. Because every proposition is intelligible (including non-standard propositions) it corresponds to this the extracategorical being. In fact, Wyclif establishes that there must be a common notion of being coextensive with anything able to be signified by a proposition (*primaria signabile per complexum*). Wyclif means by ‘signabile’ whatever has the property of being signified in the context of a proposition²⁸.

Thus, as we can see, in the context of realist accounts of the proposition in the 14th century, some philosophers found that the scope of intelligibility should be thought in connection with the limits of propositional discourse and its verification devices. This is precisely the case of Geraldus Odonis’ notion of *ens tertio adiacens*.

5. The first object of the intellect

Odonis presents the *ens tertio adiacens* as having five convertible properties: *conceptibile*, *significabile*, *subicibile*, *predicabile* and *contradictorie opinabile*²⁹. This means that it is convertible with the most common properties considered in Logic, which are all convertible with the thing taken in the logical

²⁷ Wyclif (1901: 1): ‘Supposito ex superius declaratis et dicendis in posterum, quod *ens* communissimum possibile equum cum intelligibili: Restat videre, si omne *ens* sit *ens* predicamentale. Videtur quod non quia omne *ens* predicamentale est substantia vel accidens; non omne *ens* est substantia vel accidens, ergo etc. Minor patet de negacionibus, et pretericionibus, futuricionibus et potenciis cum aliis veritatibus ypoteticarum, que non possunt appropriare alicui predicamento’.

²⁸ Wyclif (1930: 36): ‘Prima pars patet ex hoc quod omne *ens* esse est primarie signabile per complexum. [...] Et ex istis elicitur quam amplum sit *ens*, quia tam amplum sicut est primarie signabile per complexum. Voco autem signabile quod habet aptitudinem ut significetur, ut est omne *ens*, et patet quod omne *ens* est primarie signabile per complexum’.

²⁹ Odonis (1997: 355): ‘Huiusmodi *ens* habet quinque proprietates secum convertibiles, scilicet conceptibile, significabile, subicibile, predicabile, contradictorie opinabile’.

sense (*res logicaliter sumpta*). Indeed, terms like ‘*conceptibile*’ and ‘*significabile*’ are like adjectives of ‘*res*’ taken in this technical sense: as if one said ‘*conceptibile, idest res conceptibilis*’³⁰. Thus, whenever we take something to be meaningful, the logical thing is implied. Odonis adds that in the Aristotelian adage ‘*ab eo quod res est, vel non est, oratio vera vel falsa dicitur*’³¹, the notion of ‘*res*’ must be taken in this logical sense. In consequence, the *ens tertio adiciens* corresponds to the subject matter of Logic, given that its scope contains basically propositions and the logical relations between them³².

Therefore, the logical thing is common to all intelligible, indeterminate in relation to both real being and being of reason, subject of the first principles, truth-maker and final signification of the proposition. Odonis connects the primacy of the first principles to the first adequate object of the intellect, as was common for medieval philosophers. The principle of non-contradiction and excluded middle are absolutely first because they deal with the very beginning of intelligibility: the first common notion of being we can possibly grasp. In this context, the properties convertible with the *ens tertio adiacens* are identified with the first adequate object of the intellect. From this identification, Odonis concludes that Logic is supposed to be the supreme science due to the absolute community and abstraction of its subject.

By taking up the distinction of the first objects of the intellect introduced by Duns Scotus (Scotus 1960: 69) in his *Ordinatio* (*ordo originis, ordo perfectionis, ordo adaequationis*), Odonis claims that the divine science remains prior from the point of view of perfection. But if there is a supreme science in the absolute

³⁰ Odonis (1997: 483): ‘Hec nomina “conceptibile”, “significabile” etc., et etiam signa distributiva, puta “quicquid” et “omne” sunt adiectiva, tamen sumuntur in neutra genere tamquam neutra substantiva. Quare subintelligitur aliquod substantivum quo ista substantivantur. Illud autem substantivum significat ens hoc modo sumptum vel rem hoc modo sumptam, cum dicimus “omne, idest omnis res” vel “conceptibile, idest res conceptibilis”.

³¹ Odonis (1997: 483): ‘Illud autem cui intelliguntur attribui dico ipsum ens dictum a tali esse vel rem logicaliter sumptam, sicut dicitur in Predicamentis; “Ab eo quod res est vel non est, oratio vera vel falsa dicitur”.

³² Odonis (1997: 483): ‘Illud cui tamquam priori adaequantur passiones prime et communissime considerate in logica, ipsum est subiectum primum in logica. Sed huius modi enti adaequantur. [...] quia, ut dictum est, huiusmodi passiones, puta conceptibile, significabile, subicibile, predicabile, oppositum vel opponibile, convertuntur cum huiusmodi ente’.

sense, it must be Logic³³. What determines the primacy of a science is the community of its subject, and not its ontological primacy, or its real status. That is the reason why Metaphysics is not the supreme science simpliciter: it deals only with real entities. For Odonis, the *ens tertio adiacens* constitutes a prior knowledge insofar as it is more common than the domain of *ens reale*. The same entity also explains the unconditional validity of the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle. We can thus say that the *ens tertio adiacens* is the foundation of any true and meaningful (non-contradictory) discourse. By doing this, Odonis simultaneously dissociates the subject of metaphysics from the primary object of the intellect and the scope of the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle. As a direct consequence, metaphysics loses its status of supreme science.

It is clear that Odonis' position concerning the conflict between metaphysics and logic is a consequence of his views on the nature of proposition and the scope of meaningful discourse. Despite its chief metaphysical consequences, we argue that Odonis' treatise assumes a logical, rather than a metaphysical stand. Given the connections between the scope of logic and the centrality of the notion of *ens tertio adiacens* in Odonis' realistic interpretation of propositional meaning, we can see that the question of the priority of first principles is decidedly dislocated from metaphysical territory. Nonetheless, Geraldus Odonis is not alone in dissociating the first object of the intellect from the subject of metaphysics, nor in considering the scope of the principle of non-contradiction as going beyond the limits of real being³⁴.

³³ Odonis (1997: 427): 'Et cum probatur quod scientia divina est prima scientiarum, verum est perfectione [...] sed loquendo de prioritate formali, secundum quam una scientia alterum presupponit formaliter, sic dico quod logica est simpliciter prima scientiarum omnium, de cuius subiecto primo hec principia formata sunt. [...] quod autem logica sit simpliciter prima scientiarum omnium probatur primo ex eius communitatem [...]. Sed logica est omnium scientiarum communissima, ut patet, quia est de obiecto communissimo [...] ergo est simpliciter prima'.

³⁴ The idea that the scope of metaphysics is not as encompassing as the scope of intelligibility can also be found in two 14th century philosophers: Francis of Marchia (c. 1290 – c. 1344), Nicholas Bonetus (c. 1280 -1343). We also believe that Scotus' 3rd quodlibet have had an important impact into these Franciscans' works. It influenced their understanding of the subject of metaphysics and its relation to the first principle of non-contradiction, realizing that both no longer rely on the same notion of being. That means we are facing a relevant detachment between what used to be

In fact, Odonis' positions place him in a broader historiographical debate: the discussion of medieval advancements of super-transcendentals and their role in a new understanding of metaphysics. These discussions emerge from the conception of being as univocal to *ens reale* and *ens rationalis*.

6. *The starting point of intelligibility and the supreme science*

The question of the starting point of intelligibility arises whenever philosophers postulate common notions such as Odonis' *ens tertio adiacens* or *res sumpta logicaliter*, leaving aside any link with real existence – thus enveloping both real beings and beings of reason – we can see a rearrangement of traditional transcendental schemes. The transcendentals (*ens*, *res*, *unum*, *verum*, *bonum*) give way to notions like 'cogitabile' or 'intelligibile'. During the second scholasticism these notions will be called supertranscendentals: notions that pose nothing but pure representation. This could be seen as a fundamental trait of modern metaphysics.

Faced with these changes in the treatment of transcendentals – more precisely regarding the scope of *ens* and *res* – some scholars claim that we find advancements of the doctrine of supertranscendentals, or even a definitive 'turning point' from medieval metaphysics to modern metaphysics amongst

considered an imperative union, that is, the principle of non-contradiction is the first metaphysical principle precisely because it is founded upon the first object of the intellect. In his *Quodlibet*, Francis of Marchia will disqualify the intention of being (*ens*) as the first intention of intellection. Instead, the intentions *res* and *aliquid* are both taken as more common and more encompassing. Each one is described as a neutral intention (*intentio neutra*), that is, prior to the division into first and second intention. Concerning Nicolas Bonetus' *Metaphysics*, we can mention three major theses: (i) the subject of metaphysics embraces at once real beings and beings of reason; (ii) the first adequate object of intellect is not the same as the subject of metaphysics (since they do not share the same scope); and, in connection to that, (iii) the scope of the principle of non-contradiction is broader than the scope of the univocal notion of being, subject of metaphysics. Bonetus' understanding of the subject of metaphysics, drew the attention of some scholars who consider his work as an anticipation of a supertranscendental conception of metaphysics. I will not be able to explore these texts here. I discuss Odonis' connections to Bonetus and Marchia's explanations of common intentions in a forthcoming paper, titled 'The first object of the intellect among Franciscans in the 14th century: the cases of Francis of Marchia, Nicholas Bonetus, and Geraldus Odonis'. See also Folger-Fonfara (2008), Mandrella (2008), Aertsen (2012: 481-95), Goris (2008, 2011).

authors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries³⁵. We argue that the notion of *ens tertio adiacens* (or its synonym, the *res sumpta logicaliter*) in Odonis' work can be qualified as supertranscendental, insofar as it includes everything that one can think or speak of, surpassing the level of categories. In Odonis, well before the first appearance of the term 'supertranscendental', we find a theory of common notions of intellection. However, our goal is not to determine which philosopher represents the '*tournant*' from medieval to modern metaphysics – that is, if one can really speak of a definitive turning point. Our aim is rather to locate Odonis in the debate on the origins of supertranscendental terms as the basis of intelligibility. Of course, it is not appropriate to speak, already in the 14th century, of a metaphysical refoundation based on the notion of *res* as a thinkable thing. But we can find some points of tension, or rather adjustments concerning the subject of metaphysics and its status in this context. We have seen why Odonis dissociates the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle from metaphysics, replacing it by Logic as first science.

Of course, even if one could hold the objection that the distinctions of *res* proposed by Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus does not amount to a supertranscendental status, one must recognize that they provided the conceptual framework for it. The notion of *res* taken in its most common sense in Henry and Scotus share two essential traits with the supertranscendentals: they are indifferent to the *ens reale* or the *ens rationis*, as well as to the *esse essentiae* or the *esse existentiae*. Regarding Scotus' 3rd *Quodlibet*, one must add that the common notion of *res* is explicitly identified with the first adequate object of the intellect, which represents another central feature of the supertranscendents. Nevertheless, if for these two philosophers the status of the notion of *res* does not affect the primacy of the notion of *ens*, this problem will immediately be posed by their successors. Henri and Scotus provide a 'topology of being' from which Odonis and his contemporaries departed from, reflecting on the relationship between intelligibility and reality, Logic and metaphysics.

³⁵ See Courtine (1990), Boulnois (1999, 2013), Paulus (1938), Guerizoli (2007), Doyle (1997).

7. The doctrine of supertranscendentals

The notion of ‘supertranscendental’ in the 16th and 17th centuries represents an important step in the understanding of the relationship between medieval and modern metaphysics. According to the studies of J. Doyle (2012)³⁶, the notion of ‘supertranscendental’ would be the ‘lost link’ between the medieval and the Kantian meaning of ‘transcendental’. Doyle seeks the elements that would explain the transformation of medieval metaphysics (understood as the science of *ens in quantum ens*) into modern metaphysics (understood as the science of the pure representable). This investigation is carried out by observing numerous occurrences of the term *supratranscendens* in logical and metaphysical treatises of the second scholasticism. According to him, the notion of *supratranscendens*, understood as a conceptual community between real beings and beings of reason, will become a commonplace from the 16th century on, and will eventually operate the ‘widening’ of metaphysics as a field of investigation. This evolution would represent the replacement of Aristotelian metaphysics in favor of a supertranscendental science of the object. Its subject matter would correspond to the ‘omni-encompassing’ notions of *aliquid* and *intelligibile* and which we would later call *ontologia*³⁷. These notions are seen as a second overcoming of traditional transcategorical notions – *ens*, *verum*, *bonum* – hence the prefix *supra-transcendens*. We will now briefly consider two remarkable occurrences of these notions in order to determine if it is possible to spot similarities between Odonis’ theory and the developments of the sixteenth century³⁸.

Our first occurrence appears in the Logic manual *Summulae summularum* by Domingo Soto (1495-1560), one of the most important Dominican theologians of the 16th century and member of the famous ‘school of Salamanca’. In this work, we find the description of an *arbor terminorum* where one of the branches

³⁶ See Doyle (1997).

³⁷ See Devaux (2009).

³⁸ Doyle still presents us with a significant number of cases of philosophers who, in the seventeenth century, employed a supertranscendental notion identified with the intelligible as such – the great majority of whom consider supertranscendentals as properly logical concepts. Doyle (2012).

constitutes the common terms, the other the singular terms. The common terms are divided into *non-transcendens*, *transcendens* and *supratranscendens*:

Among the common terms, some are universal in the highest degree, what logicians call 'transcendent', because they mean everything; they are six in number [...], namely, thing, being, one, good, something and true. Other terms are called 'supertranscendentals', which extend to more things than transcendentals, such as 'imaginable'.³⁹

We find a similar distinction in Pedro da Fonseca (1528-1599). A Portuguese Jesuit philosopher and theologian. In his *Commentariorum in libros metaphysicarum*, Fonseca advances solutions that will be largely taken up by later metaphysicians. He also identifies the notion of supertranscendental with the pure intelligibility.

The name 'transcendental' is that which is said of all true things and only of them. Thus, the transcendentals are said to be six: the being, the one, the true, the good, something, and thing. [...] The other things, according to this opinion, are non-transcendental, and among which are counted what have lately been called supertranscendentals, such as opinabile, cogitabile, apprehensibile, and others (if there are) are affirmed not only of true things, but of anything.⁴⁰

In his commentary on Metaphysics, Fonseca remarks that the term '*aliquid*' can be understood *latissime*, that is to say, by encompassing both beings and non-beings: '[...] *sumendum est quam latissime, ut entia and not entia comprehendat*'⁴¹. However, it should be noted that Fonseca claims that the *ens communissime sumpto* (i.e., common to real beings and rational beings) is not

³⁹ Soto (1554: fol. 10r): 'Circa terminum communem adhuc est notandum, esse aliquos terminos universalissimos, quos dialecti vocant transcendentales, quia omnia significant, qui nimirum sunt sex, [...] videlicet, res, ens, unum, bonum, aliquid, verum. [...] sunt etiam alii termini qui dicuntur supratranscendentales, qui ad plura se extendunt quam transcendentales, ut imaginabili, etc'.

⁴⁰ Fonseca (1607: 62): 'Nomen transcendens est, quod de omnibus ac solis veris rebus dicitur. Sex porro transcendentia esse dicuntur, Ens, Unum, Verum, Bonum, Aliquid, Res [...]. Reliqua iuxta hanc sententiam sunt non transcendentia: in quibus numerantur ea, quae a recentioribus dicuntur Supertranscendentia, ut, Opinabilis, Cogitabilis, Apprehensibilis, et si quae sunt alia, quae non tantum de omnibus rebus veris, sed etiam de quibuscunque aliis vere affirmatur'.

⁴¹ Fonseca (1615: fol. 12C).

SYNTHESIS

the subject of metaphysics⁴². Metaphysics is a distinct from Logic as a science dealing with real beings, and thus it does not treat beings of reason as its proper subject. Hence, metaphysics does not deal with beings which only possesses an objective being in the intellect (like fictions do).

Conclusion

We outlined the historiographical debate on the super-transcendentals through the successive reiteration of the idea that the notion of 'res' or 'ens', taken as supertranscendental, is at the basis of all intelligibility. Indeed, the positions that introduce a notion of intelligible being within a metaphysical approach are quite specific, so it does not seem appropriate to speak of a continuous evolution of the medieval understanding of metaphysics towards modern metaphysics, taken as a science of the object, or ontology. Nevertheless, we can speak of 'recoveries', even of a particular course of the notion of 'res', of 'aliquid' as the starting point of intelligibility.

More precisely, the philosophical issue that seems to run through all these considerations is the double reflection on the limits of intelligibility and its independence from reality; it is a question of knowing whether intelligibility must be described as an objectivity prior to the *esse existens*, that is to say, the possibilities of representations are considered apart from the possibilities of existence. Accommodating this reflection within the scope of metaphysics indicates a certain valorization of the mental over the real – an attitude always in tension with the authority of Aristotle and the traditional view of metaphysics as *scientia realis*.

With regard to Geraldus Odonis, we established a conceptual nexus between the *ens tertio adiacens* and the supertranscendental. The uprising of a supertranscendental notion of being in the early 14th century derives from the conflict between the metaphysical and the logical conception of being. These debates drove Odonis to provide a critical view of metaphysics: the science of

⁴² Fonseca (1615: fol. 647E): '[...] quia ens communissime sumptum non potest esse scientiae subiectum'.

the *ens reale* must not occupy itself with logical concepts as its proper subiectum. The role of the *ens tertio adiacens* is both to ensure the possibility of true discourse about every intelligible thing or fact, as well as to explain the unconditional validity of the principles of non-contradiction of excluded middle. We saw how the *ens tertio adiacens*, synonym of the *res a reor reris*, is defined by its indifference concerning the real being and the being of reason and constitutes the subject of the first science: Logic. In this way, we highlighted the logical dimension of the discussion on supertranscendentals through Odonis' treatise, while renewing the appreciation of its medieval sources.

SYNTHESIS

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