

Ideas in Development

Ideas in Development:

Essays on the History of Philosophy

By

Paniel Reyes-Cárdenas

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FOREWORD

This book is a collection of different studies in the history and development of powerful philosophical ideas, it is not confined to a particular stage in this history, and the reader will be able to see that there is not a diachronic plan. However, the book will show the reader that looking at the history of some insightful connections and theories makes one aware of the importance of providing a historical context that develops a conversation: ideas require minds concerned with them, and this makes ideas themselves somewhat real through this conversation. If this conversation is an intelligent process, since it requires serious and continuous thought, then these ideas progress along with the minds that think of them. The stream of thought reflected in the different essays contained in this volume grows towards an ideal limit animated by the desire for truth.

This text has been developed over several years of personal reflection and shared dialogue: it will be noticed that it spans a plurality of topics of different philosophical bearings. However, I am certain that through the whole book is a conviction that there is a live philosophical community in which I join by touching these topics. This, I believe, is a powerful idea that prompted me to recognize that one way or another all that is presented here is a process of ideas in development that require philosophical minds to entertain them and at the same time to make them grow.

Given that this book is motivated by the exercise of philosophically oriented history or philosophical interest in the history of ideas, it is likely that my approach might not be fully welcome from a purely historical perspective or a purely philosophical focus. I have

consciously taken that risk, and without being too apologetic I would like the reader to consider that the topics touched on here aim to show a first step of a double effort: we try to understand ideas in their context and we try to understand ideas as processes. This presupposition is important: I might have committed mistakes, but I believe the book holds its value if it helps to enlarge the conversations that it introduces.

I have acknowledged in some chapters the help that many colleagues and friends have given to the ideas presented here. I would particularly like, however, to say a special word of thanks to Christopher Hookway, my former PhD supervisor, with whom I had so many enlightening conversations, help and guidance over the years when I was carrying out my doctoral studies and the wonderful friendship that grows to this day, I am convinced I learned to ask questions from the best.

A word of thanks to many friends and colleagues who helped through the years: Hugh Pyper and Azucena Palavicini were the inspiration for my interest in Kierkegaard; Shannon Dea, whose gentle but firm criticism was always helpful; Robert Stern, Stephen Houlgate, Antonio Pardo Oláquez and Paul Redding kindled my interest in Hegel and Hegel's connections with the pragmatist tradition. Susan Haack, Josh Black, Cathy Legg, Andrew Howat and many other friends of the Pragmatist reading group in Sheffield fostered an unrestricted interest in philosophy and its plural history. Jorge Medina, Roberto Casales, and Eugenio Urrutia from the People's Autonomous University of Puebla State, Mexico (UPAEP) were very generous in giving me the time and resources to write this book. Sergio Gallegos, Ahti-Veiko Pietarinen, Douglas Niño, María José Frapolli and many more should be thanked as well.

My dear friend and colleague Daniel Herbert deserves special thanks, his encouragement should be mentioned as a catalyzer of

philosophical ideas too, particularly regarding pragmatism and German idealism.

For the process of editing the book, I do have to acknowledge the great help of Siobhan Denham and José Luis de la Torre Nemenz for his accurate proof-reading work and to Juan José Sánchez Altamirano for his typesetting help. A word of gratitude goes to the staff of Cambridge Publishing Scholars, particularly to Victoria Carruthers and Anthony Wright: they have been incredibly supportive, patient and helpful in all the stages of the manuscript of this book.

Ennis, Co. Clare
Ireland
December 2017

INTRODUCTION

PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, AND COMMUNITY

This book is a collection of essays on the different developments of ideas that affected a very important philosophical insight in philosophers from all epochs. The timeline, however, finds a particular line of progress and continuity from Leibniz, Hegel and Kierkegaard to Peirce and the trends of contemporary interaction between Pragmatism, Epistemology and the Philosophy of Language.

The reader might be able to notice, if they start from beginning to end, that I am not very attached to a strictly diachronic plan. There will be some leaps from one historical period to another, sometimes involving many important changes in between, but the purpose is to offer the reader a sample of what will be shown as the main thesis of such a plural book in this introduction, namely, that the history of philosophy is a conversation not restricted by time but nurtured by a continuous search for truth and intellectual insight that begets a community of inquirers.

This introduction is also a reflexive step in hindsight as to how there is an underlying unity in the different pieces of philosophical and historical research carried out here: beyond being a collection of essays under the heading of being a historical and philosophical work, there is a positive effort to connect the two activities as necessarily mutual. The cross-fertilization of philosophy and its history is possible only because there are ideas that develop and envelop philosophy beyond restrictions of space and time, these

ideas are somehow alive and generate a community of inquiry. In what follows this important unifying thesis will be explained further.

Philosophy and its History

The premise on which this book relies is one that conceives the history of philosophy not only as a descriptive endeavour, but a live engagement with the serious philosophical environment that allows an ongoing conversation: this fact begets a community that is not restrained by time or space in the traditional sense. Ideas are alive, they crop up on and off in the history of philosophy, some of them are veiled through centuries waiting for the right maturation but when their time is ripe they strike minds with unusual force. Philosophers presented in this plural study have intertwined paths, crossroads where their insightful ideas get handed over and gain in depth and breadth. They have been inspired in different times by these powerful ideas, and so the conversation goes on and on.

As Maria Rosa Antognazza (2015: 161) states, the history of philosophy is a kind of history and a kind of philosophy: on the one hand, it is a historical task of knowing the past, in a critical and committed manner; on the other hand, it is a philosophical task that while it generates understanding, helps in propelling ideas forward. Antognazza (2015:62) proposes that there have been two approaches to the history of philosophy that line up either with appropriationism or contextualism. The appropriation consists in a pure analysis of arguments regardless of the time and situation that prompted their formulation. The appropriation activity analyses arguments from a logical viewpoint, without concerning itself much with the possibilities of interpretation of a contentious premise, but taking premises at face value. The contextualist approach differs in the behaviour towards a premise: it seeks for an understanding of the conditions in which ideas developed, attending to the situation in which an argument was articulated.

This does not mean that it is allowed to oversee the logical structure of the argument, or the plausibility of an idea. Here, as elsewhere in this book I propose a pragmatist move. The strategy is to overcome the dichotomy between analysis and interpretation and find a virtuous midway: we need to attend to a context in order to take an argument seriously, and we also need to explore a context by critically engaging with the thesis that was addressed to present a problem and solve it.

The ideas I present in this book underlie the importance of questioning the contextual development of ideas; it affirms that it is beneficial to establish relations and connections through philosophical traditions. Unfortunately, contemporary analytic philosophy was frequently conceived as an un-historical activity, as though arguments were completely devoid of context and some content linked to that context. Analytic philosophy exacerbated the appropriationist approach, or even sometime ignored the history of philosophy altogether.

This situation left unattended many important reasons for establishing a given thesis, and, of course, devoid of its content, more than one philosophical thesis looks little more than far-fetched: consider, for example, the kind of thesis offered by the Pre-Socratic philosophers; these philosophers talked about a world made of water, the impossibility of movement, etc. In order to be fair to their thesis we ought to interpret it, and hence connect with tradition and context.

I propose that in order to understand an argument belonging to a discussion —particularly when that argument is rooted in the discussion of a community—, there is a need to recognize relations between arguments with other arguments, of premises with other premises, of facts against facts described in the premises, these are conditions for their full and coherent understanding.

The state of academic discussion, in my opinion, tends to reflect an unhealthy frenzy for publication, of innumerable papers with ideas that are presented with a tag of being brand new, but due to lack of enough maturation and dialogue one can easily notice that many of these are, one way or another, unchecked with the tradition and history of ideas, and thereof are weak repetitions of ideas that have been discussed amply in previous times. This is rather unfortunate: it is not only a problem of a poor knowledge of history, but a repetition of mistakes and blunders that were previously discussed and settled, and brings the philosophical world and conversation to a halt.

The sorry state of the lack of historical knowledge and context of the development of ideas is present since the beginning of the analytic tradition, in which Bertrand Russell set a paradigm that splits in two the activities of focusing in “mainly historical” and “mainly philosophical” approaches, establishing a dichotomy that is not justified, and that supposed that the two activities exclude each other (Russell, 1900: xi-xii).

The history of philosophy, however, is a sub-discipline of philosophy that fortunately has improved in the self-consciousness of its importance, leaving the dichotomy behind and noting that when one approaches a philosophical idea there is the need of a context and the need of joining a conversation in order to aim for progress and development. In addition, it is not enough to describe an idea in its development, the history of philosophy requires a dialogue that strives to answer unsolved questions or contribution to the stream of an idea with a new insight that may or may not be present in it, but that will propel the idea for a revival in the conversation.

The importance of taking history seriously is undeniable, but let me go even further here: through this book I adopt the belief that entering a conversation with the philosophical tradition is

equivalent to the expansion of an ongoing debate, and this expands the ideas giving them a sort of independence of idiosyncratic considerations. Consider, for example, the problem of continuity analyzed here both in Leibniz and Peirce's philosophies: the latter developed his philosophy taking seriously the former, and both of them introduced decisive advantages in mathematics and philosophy out of this insightful source of reflective considerations.

A Community unconstrained by space and time

The community that philosophical conversation begets is a particular kind of human group. We could restrain our inquiry into a community that seems like a particular kind of phenomenon. However, I will go further here proposing that this community has metaphysical relevance: it is the community generated by the independence of thought, by the unleashing of the reality that we could call "a stream of thought". This bold thesis aims to present that ideas themselves develop, they are in some way independent of the constraints of space and time, and they are in some way completely dependent on the particular philosophers that speak and think these ideas.

Some of the chapters of this book touch on the problem of universals: universals are the kind of ideas that emerge time and time again in the philosophical discussion. The thesis about the development of ideas, however, goes further: we recognize that there are some ideas that appear over and over again in the discussion because these ideas themselves are universals: they have a general nature awaiting instantiation in particular philosophical problems. Minds that take philosophical ideas seriously have to grapple with some of the ideas presented in this book, other ideas have been less seriously considered, but if they were, the conversation would be enlarged.

The philosophical conversation is the space of the reality of universal philosophical ideas. To use a famous expression of John McDowell: the place where we recognize the live character of ideas is “the space of reasons”.

This can be considered a conceptual idealism: but is it not an exaggeration to depart from the strands of different ideas to a bold metaphysical thesis that ideas have a life of their own? Let me try to explain why I think the consideration of idealism in the mentioned way can help us to understand the formation of a community: if ideas are real and alive in a stream of thought, then the conversation is also a real relation between the minds that think those ideas, and the continuity expressed generates not only a tradition, but a service to the betterment of humankind.

Once the way in which I want to present the development of ideas as a philosophical and metaphysical thesis is described, we move into seeing what ideas I have collected in order to realize a presentation of philosophical strands that run through philosophy in different and important periods.

The Ideas in Development

The ideas presented in this book, ideas and trends of thought that I recognize almost as living organisms, frequently overlap and somehow mate generating new ideas and new strands of thought. Let us see which ideas concern us here, bearing in mind that they cut across our different chapters showing, thus, that they are pervasive in a contextualist reckoning of the history of philosophy.

Philosophers and mathematicians have been fascinated by the idea of continuity: think of the pre-Socratics and their ideas about flux and fixity; the contrast of something known as static first and then known in its development, generated the most interesting opinions about change and what is to be an object.

The focus of modern epistemology is on the object and nothing but the object, but the toil paid for this focus has affected epistemology to the point of forgetting the conditions and circumstances of the knower. Virtue epistemology recovers focus in the knower, but not only that, but on what kind of doxastic character and epistemic attitudes are convenient in order to thrive in the growth of significant knowledge.

This problem is as ancient as philosophy, and nonetheless there is a renaissance in the awareness of its importance. The problem is traditionally presented as the problem of how one can be over many: for example, how a colour can be present in many things and still have an identity. We could rephrase the problem and articulate it in the inverse order: how many objects, things, items can be part of one unifying concept. There are two very distinctive positions on this problem of universals: one can accept they are real and be a realist or one can deny their reality and be a nominalist. The reader might be able to notice that the author of this book tilts towards realism, due to the particular way that ideas are presented as entities that have objectivity. We must suspend a final verdict here, though, as we need to consider and assess the reasons for and against universals and then see if they deserve a central place as ideas in development.

The choice between either reference or description as the activity that marks the focus of the philosophy of language is a fascinating problem. It is a reasoned and long debate that reached a peak moment in the last two decades of the twentieth century and has waned since. I defend in this book that this debate should be very much alive, and that it is not an isolated problem of philosophers of language, but concerns the history of philosophy and also crosses and enriches other ideas presented here and some others not yet considered.

Pragmatism, according to William James's catchy phrase, is a new name for old ways of thinking. Pragmatism, however, is a distinctive powerful philosophy that has influenced philosophers in different ways. We explore the ways in which pragmatism is a promising and interesting approach to philosophical issues that helps, in Peirce's happy expression "to make our ideas clear". We also deplore some misunderstandings about pragmatism and its relationship with other philosophical approaches.

Essays in the History of Philosophy

Once we have seen the underlying thesis of these works we move to a brief description of the specific contents of these ideas that are developing and nurturing intuitions in particular philosophers.

Chapter one starts our journey early on in the medieval times: There are a number of logical principles wrongly attributed to John Duns Scotus and some other principles, properly coming from him, that have raised little attention even in scholarly circles. It seems as though Duns Scotus is too much a metaphysician for the historian of medieval logics and too much a logician for the historians of medieval philosophy. I propose a reading that changes the focus in a deep way: I offer a reading of Scotus' logic as a case of meta-logic, and as one of the philosophers that managed to see the metaphysical status of many logical principles. In this article, I will extract a set of logical principles that are authentically Scotus' and that are the result of recent critical research. In addition, this essay introduces Scotus' logical ideas in a manner that aims to explain the contemporary sense of medieval technicalities and some of their impact in the light of contemporary developments.

Chapter two introduces the idea of continuity in Leibniz's thought. Leibniz famously advocated for a general conception of continuity as a principle of nature, some of his famous slogans on this seem to appeal to intuitive considerations: "nature never makes leaps" (A.

VI, vi. 56) and “...all natural change is produced by degrees” (NE 56). However, it is less well known that Leibniz’s account of the Principle of Continuity was famously initially articulated in his foundational document on continuity of 1687 that appeared in the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*. This articulation is really important for his thought and for the history of the idea of continuity and needs to be revisited. It is little known that Leibniz presents a systematic account of what he conceived to be the principle as such. In this article, I will present this account by emphasizing how it represents a very important step in the efforts (even in our contemporary systematic approaches to metaphysics) to understand how the unity of metaphysics needs to be approached. This article proposes a way to understand Leibniz’s principle of continuity in a systematic way in order to make it a suitable instrument of philosophical and metaphysical thought in general.

In chapter Three, “Peirce’s Theory of Evolutionary Love in the context of his Metaphysical Doctrines” I pursue a reasonable presentation of one of Peirce’s less understood philosophical ideas. The chapter introduces Peirce’s doctrine of evolutionary love (“agapism”) in the context of Peirce’s general approach to the realism of Categories and his metaphysical doctrines, aiming to show that the context of the doctrine helps to have a comprehension of its value, beyond being a rather eccentric proposal. Peirce’s doctrine of evolutionary love appears as the necessary corollary of the acceptance of the development of the universe after tychism (chance) and synechism (continuous development of patterns) took place. Agapism also sheds light on how one is to understand some of Peirce’s surprising claims about the grounding of logic and a community of inquiry. Finally, the author offers the conclusion that agapism is not an eccentric doctrine, but a natural consequence of Peirce’s desire to achieve *a posteriori* metaphysics.

In chapter four, “Kierkegaard and Hegel on Truth, Subjectivity and Regulative Hopes”, I formulate an approach that proposes a consideration of the particular senses that both Kierkegaard and Hegel gave to the concept of Truth; from that consideration emerges an attitude towards truth that in the Kierkegaardian sense of subjectivity might appear as a regulative hope. The essay presents Hegel and Kierkegaard’s accounts in such a way that they appear to be closer to each other than has been thought before. Finally, the essay introduces the pragmatic concept of regulative hope in order to disclose the kind of convergence that both accounts amount to.

“Kierkegaard and Virtue Epistemology: belief formation and formation of the self” is our fifth chapter. Virtue epistemology is a philosophical stance on knowledge that predicates that understanding how belief-formation is inextricably related with self-formation is fundamental. Kierkegaard’s epistemological ideas are sometimes misunderstood as fideistic, but one will be surprised when it is discovered that a careful look at Kierkegaard’s epistemology discloses a philosophy teemed with important revealing ideas as to how human communication and belief-formation happens in a process of direct and indirect communication, how one needs a double reflection that engages our commitments to both truth and morality, etc. In this essay, I present important points of convergence between virtue epistemology and Kierkegaard’s epistemological ideas: this will reveal a very detailed account of the Danish philosopher that has often been neglected or misread.

Chapter six is entitled: “Royce, Hegel, and the Doctrine of the Concrete Universal Revisited”. Yet another chapter is aimed at connecting, an American Pragmatist philosopher and Hegel: Royce, Hegel and the Doctrine of the Concrete Universal Revisited. In this piece, I have a twofold aim: I will revisit the doctrine of universals as it was inspired by Hegel and understood by some other figures

of the British and American Idealist tradition as the doctrine of the “Concrete Universal”, and particularly through a study of Royce’s interpretation of Hegel. I will also show that this doctrine has not been appreciated enough, and if it was, contemporary metaphysics might profit from a serious systematic approach to the problem that will, ultimately, offer a fresh new perspective against contemporary forms of nominalism.

Chapter seven touches on pragmatism and religious belief: “Epistemic Contextualism About Religious Belief: A Reading Of William James’ ‘The Will To Believe’”. William James’ famous “Will to Believe” paper poses an interesting problem to overcome an alleged origin on the dichotomy between faith and reason from a pragmatist point of view. Faith and reason are regarded as resources in a way of inquiring more than two initial incommensurable positions. Clifford’s claim of resisting belief without evidence might be reinterpreted in a charitable way but not taken as a command. James’ contentious claim is that it is rational to believe propositions even if we have little or no evidence to support our judgements. James allows passional considerations a major role in the rationality of belief, even in advance of evidential support. Beliefs can be rational when the reasons to hold them are prudential or practical. Is James’ a genuinely epistemological argumentation? Contemporary approaches in epistemology shall reconsider a more charitable reading of James; I delve into three of these knower-focused approaches in order to show the plausibility of James’ ideas.

Chapter eight comes back to issues of Kierkegaard’s philosophy: “Kierkegaard’s Indirect Communication, the Unity of his Authorship and The Upbuilding discourses”. In this chapter I explain that Kierkegaard scholars tend to read two major authorship stages in Kierkegaard; their statements find a hinge in the period of the *Upbuilding Discourses* and the *Edifying Discourses*, which is the same one of the parallel publication of *Fear and Trembling*. Notwithstanding, the opinion comes to a consensus of unity in the

whole authorship by means of many interpretative keys. I would like to put forward, as one of these keys, several examples along the lines of the Indirect Communication that pervades what goes on hand in hand with the discourses as an expression of theology in the same way that indirect communication permeates the philosophy of existence in sometimes either narrative or poetic forms.

By means of the literary recourse of Indirect Communication one can, following Kierkegaard's narrative, be aware that distinctively Christian religious experience is the demand and fulfilment of a logic inscribed in the very structures of human beings' quest for self-knowledge and their attempts to speak rightly about love, but Kierkegaard addresses this rather general claim under particular discourses given in experiences of individuals and their situations: how we can learn from the lilies and the birds is an hermeneutical exercise of how we can really know through examples and their philosophical significance. The last section of this essay will draw from the concept of indirect communication some ideas of why the unity of the authorship is of philosophical relevance for any kind of reader.

The ninth chapter comes back to Peirce's metaphysical doctrines, particularly his Synechism or theory of continuity. This chapter "Peirce's Synechism as a Realism of Universals" shows that Peirce's conception of universal grew exponentially refined in this stage, and that both mathematical accounts of continuity and metaphysical reflections about the need of realism of generality and categories begot a fascinating doctrine that accounts for universals in a completely novel way: grounding them in continuity and understanding them as true continua.

Chapter ten brings together two philosophers that are not usually thought to have a convergence: Hegel and Peirce. The title: "Hegel and Peirce on Idealism, Realism and the Threat of Nominalism", speaks about the way in which the two philosophers are read. I

propose that there is a false opposition between realism and idealism, as the two doctrines account for the independent reality of mind and world with respect to our opinions. However, the foe that emerges is the nominalistic prejudice that only individuals are real. We explain the problems of nominalism and why Peirce's and Hegel's philosophies can be read as a reaction to nominalism.

Our penultimate chapter "Open questions in the Philosophy of Language: Causal Theories of Reference, Hybrid theories of Language and Designation", touches on contemporary philosophy of language. It presents the work of Devitt and Sterelny, who take themselves as naturalizing the philosophy of language, as a midpoint in the conflict between the philosophy of language focused on meaning, such as the tradition initiated by Frege and Russell, and the philosophy of language focused on reference, introduced by Kripke and Putnam.

The last chapter of this collection touches on a topic that emerges in contemporary debates in the history of philosophy: the exploration of the connections between Hegel's philosophy and the pragmatist tradition. "Hegel and Pragmatism" does not deal with a new topic, as others have asked whether Hegel can be considered a pragmatist or whether the pragmatist philosophers can be considered as followers of Hegel. The response to this issue that I offer, though, is somewhat new: we propose that the deeper aspects of pragmatism are already present in Hegel's philosophy, and that Hegel's philosophy can be considered pragmatic in a particularly relevant sense that overcomes the traditional dichotomy between realism and idealism, creating a system that opposes nominalism.

In the same way that these ideas need to be open-ended, the book leaves the topics opened and ready for further discussion. There is in each chapter, however, some conclusive paragraph that aims not to close the debate, but to explain in which way an open-ended matter is worth pursuing further.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE LOGICAL IDEAS OF JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

Introduction: Scotus and Logic

There are a number of logical principles misleadingly attributed to Duns Scotus and others, appropriately coming from him, that have received little attention. In this chapter I will extract a set of logical principles that are genuinely Scotus' and the result of recent critical research. In addition, this essay introduces Scotus' logical ideas in a manner which aims to explain the contemporary sense of medieval technicalities, and parts of their impact in the light of contemporary developments.

John Duns Scotus did not write any particular work that might be construed as a commentary of logical problems, nor a logical formal theory, in the contemporary sense. However, documents such as *Lectura* and *Ordinatio* hold an important number of introductory methodological issues—or “Praenotanda”—which work as logical prolegomena to the works they introduce and, in performing this function, they also provide logical principles, or even the re-interpretation of other traditionally accepted logical principles.

An important number of authors state that the logical contribution of Duns Scotus is insubstantial (Bos, 1987:122; Pinborg, 1974), or rather, simply ignore a particular chapter devoted to his logic (as is the case of the imposing work of Bochenski in the history of medieval logic, who only vaguely mentions our philosopher in his introduction). This attitude is still present; even the last materials

produced when this work is written ignore Scotus. Such is the case of Catalina Dutihl Novaes (2016) who in *Cambridge Companion to Medieval Logic* does not give space to Scotus, or the Pseudo-Scotus for that matter.

On the other hand, authors such as Antonie Vos (2006) recognize that a key fact needed to understand Scotus lies in his semantic and logical fundamental turn. This semantic/logical turn would have happened during the time when the *Quaestiones super libros Metaphysiciorum Aristotelis* and the *Lectura* were written. The semantic/logical turn is grounded in a specific change with regard to logical ideas. However, these turning ideas are not only important for Scotus himself and the development of his thought, but also have to be understood as genuine contributions to the history of medieval logic.

In addition, knowing Scotus' ideas will prompt us to acknowledge that he must be detached from the Parisian tradition of the *modistae* logic, which preserves unaltered the Aristotelian canon in the division of concept-proposition-syllogism. Scotus distanced himself from this canon in important ways, as will be shown below.

Hence, my aim in this chapter is to present some of Scotus' outstanding logical ideas by grouping them in such a way that the reader may notice the explicit and implicit logical principles. I will also tackle the topic of some erroneously attributed principles, based on critical research of Scotus' authentic works.

To conclude, we must mention that Scotus' works on important theological pieces—such as the *Lectura*, *Ordinatio*, *Reportatio Parisiensis* and *Quodlibet*—are all teeming with distinctions that involve a logic and semantic treatment of philosophical and theological problems. In this regard, we at least attempt to mention in this chapter some key principles that have involved and influenced these philosophical and theological endeavours.

The Object of Logic

Duns Scotus is one of the medieval theologians/philosophers more concerned with establishing the object of each discipline and determining the relations these hold with each other. It is well known that Scotus offers a definition of metaphysics which aims to mediate the discipline clash in the limits of theology and philosophy. However, little has been said on how important logic is for Scotus and why it is likely that the problem of the object of logic is the indispensable beginning for any comprehensive approach to the works of the Franciscan philosopher.

For Duns Scotus, the material object of logic is not the true or false content of a proposition, as is the case for his contemporaries such as William of Sherwood and Albert the Great. Scotus recognizes that the material object of logic is *formal*, i.e., the object of logic is the study of forms *qua* forms. This kind of study is called “second intentions” (a second-order study). Logic is a science because it provides the necessary principles to understand the relations between forms, and these relations are proved effective, in a second moment, in sound argumentation.

Another important point to consider is the way Scotus differs from the former logical orthodoxy, by distancing himself from the understanding of logic as a science of linguistic entities; a tradition based in the canonical interpretation of Aristotle’s *Organon* and known as “Sermocinalism” (Kretzmann, 1982: 370).

As stated above, Scotus proposes that logic is a science which sees terms as second intentions, and here he follows the Arabic philosopher Ibn-Sina (Avicenna). In his study of logic, Scotus indeed analyses the relationship of language and logic (in the same way as Ibn-Sina does, but always under the focus of demonstration, leaving the linguistic aspects behind).

This approach to second intentions and the stress in formal relations is what allows Scotus to focus on a different level of second intentions and discover an analysis of modality. Certainly, the possibility, contingency, or necessity of a proposition is unleashed as a logical dimension. The formal object of logic, along with the priority given to formal aspects of the material object of logic, allows Scotus to give a particular focus to logic altogether. Scotus' focus on logic will be along the argumentative concepts of derivability, validity and self-evidence; aspects which not only involve the proposition or its linguistic character, but also interactions between propositions.

Aristotelian Categories

One of the discussions inherited from Greek antiquity by medieval philosophy is the debate about the interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories*. Two readings stand out: Plotinus and Alexander of Aphrodisias favour an ontological interpretation of *Categories*; while Porphyry—as opposed to his teacher Plotinus—prefers a logical interpretation, which is also present in Western commentators such as Boethius. Remarkably enough, the Arabic East, particularly Ibn-Sina, also reads the *Categories* as a treatise over words, meaning, and beings, in a logical sense. The interpretation of Porphyry and Ibn-Sina, though, still reads the *Categories* without distinguishing their linguistic aspects from the logical ones. Here is where Scotus will contribute to the discussion.

We need an important historical precedent before heading to Scotus' contribution to this debate. As Pini (2002: 12) reports, the appearance of the Latin translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the Latin world changed the whole philosophical panorama. *Metaphysics* introduces a list of *Categories* too, so the logical reading had a big setback, since there were new grounds for an ontological reading. This debate became more intense, and happened to overlap with the debate in relation to understanding logic as a science of second

intentions, as seen above. Scotus contributed by reading the concept of category with two distinctions: the extensional concept of category means being part of a set, whereas the intentional aspect of the concept of category is a part of the meaning of an object. The distinction settles the debate somewhat.

Scotus' proposal on how to understand the *Categories* leans towards an understanding of *Categories* as logical aspects of intentions, though interpreters, such as Pini (2002: 17) see several stages in Scotus' development. Scotus' final opinion—as he established it in his commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*—is that they are fundamentally logical and intentional, not so much regarding how things are, but about the modes in which inference (in Latin: *consequentia*) can alter logical relations. Of course, this is not the end of the discussion; Scotus himself will propose a metaphysical reading of categories as universals, but this presupposes the logical priority of the concept.

Concepts and Propositions

One could think that Scotus follows the traditional Aristotelian schema of considering logic as a levelled study, a progressive approach in the following order: firstly, the concept through the introduction of *Categories*, followed by the study of the proposition with the study of *De Interpretatione* (*Peri Hermeneias*), and finally, introducing the theory of syllogisms by means of the *Prior Analytics* and *Second Analytics*. A deeper reading of Scotus shatters these preconceptions; it shows evidence of an entirely different approach discussing semantics as a logical discipline in its own right. Scotus' writings show a turn; concepts hold priority not as products of an epistemological approach to reality (as in the *Categories*), but as logical contents. The traditional medieval interpretation started logic with a rather epistemological focus on the “phantasm” and the “intelligible species” present in the formation of concepts.

Scotus fought this psychologism, and emphasized the logical formation of concepts.

For Scotus, concepts have inferential elements. This realization implies that the traditional reading of logic as growing from concepts to propositions, and finally to syllogisms is not as simple as it was supposed. Concept formation is not grounded on direct experiences of our senses, but on the complex result of inferential logical patterns that produce them with more and more clarity. Perception is not passive, but inferential. Hence Scotus proposes a distinction of these inferential patterns in his theory of “simple concepts” and “composite concepts”: the composite aspect of concepts can be described by inferential activities. Scotus says in *Lectura*:

Simple concepts being grasped by one act of knowing are twofold, namely, concepts which are irreducibly simple and concepts which are not irreducibly simple (*Lectura* I 3: 68).

Scotus' sophisticated theory of concept as an entity logically construed shows us that the concept is a limiting case of inferential activities. The simplicity of simple concepts, he tells us, can be of two kinds: one is found in the individual; for instance, when we call somebody by a proper name, say, “John”, we reach the ultimate simplicity that shows us the limit of what knowing John implies. The other way, and an even more interesting aspect of concepts, is that general concepts are the simpler ones, concepts such as transcendentals and universals. When I get to know a universal or transcendental, such as “being,” I have reached a simple concept of generality as my inference pattern cannot explore more since I reached a limiting case of what can be experienced.

Modal Theory

One of the more specific contributions of Duns Scotus is, with no doubt, the different approaches that he acknowledged in Modal