

La teoria della conoscenza di Francisco Macedo. Un filosofo a confronto con Tommaso e Scoto

ANNA TROPIA (2020)

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In this book, Anna Tropia deals with Francisco Macedo's (Coimbra, 1596 - Padua, 1681) theory of knowledge focusing on his *Collationes doctrinae sancti Thomae cum Scoti* (Padua, 1671-1673). This work was written by Macedo "nell'ultima fase della sua vita, quando è titolare della cattedra di filosofia morale a Padova" (p. 12). In the *Preface* (pp. 9-17), Tropia shows the usefulness of today's reading of Macedo's *Collationes*, stating that this work offers a good summary of the theories of knowledge developed by Scotus and Thomas and can therefore serve as a didactic tool for teaching these theories today. This is because Macedo's *Collationes* illustrate the raging controversy between the Thomistic and Scotist schools, which has resulted in a multi-secular discussion since the low Middle Ages. In this opposition between schools, Macedo defends Scotus's doctrines, an option that, according to Tropia, is to some extent related to Macedo's journey through the various religious orders in which he has professed in the course of his life (pp. 10-11). In Tropia's view, Macedo's *Collationes* can be considered "un testo importante nella storia dello scotismo e della sua diffusione alla fine del XVII secolo" in which readings of Scotus produced by several schools converge, including the Jesuit one (p. 13). In the *Introduction* (pp. 19-23) Tropia points out the focus of analysis of her study – the main issues of the theory of knowledge discussed at the time, such as the need for intelligible species and the adequate object of human intellect. She also explains the methodology that she will follow in her study, which consists in putting together both the historical and conceptual analysis and the publication of relevant passages of Macedo's work. In her book, Tropia also intended to translate long passages of Macedo's *Collationes* from Latin to Italian. Therefore, this book also contains the first edition of some parts of Macedo's *Collationes*, which are now available in a rigorous and clear translation in a modern language. Hence, at the end of each chapter the reader finds, in *Appendix* and for the different questions analysed, an Italian version of relevant passages of Macedo's *Collationes*, in

which either his theory of human knowledge or his commentary on the positions of Thomas and Scotus are explained.

Tropia's book is organized into four chapters. In the first two, she analyses the theory of human knowledge as explained in the *Collationes*. In the first chapter, *La teoria della conoscenza umana nelle Collationes*, (pp. 25-68), Tropia focuses especially on the problem of the first object of human intellect. As mentioned before, Macedo's methodology follows the dialectic style between schools Thomistic and Scotistic. He first describes both positions and then puts forward his own arguments in defense of Scotus's statements. According to Tropia, however, discrepancies can be pointed out in Macedo's interpretation concerning Scotus's doctrine on the subject: "La sostanza immateriale (quale? Dio, gli angeli, l'anima?) e non l'ente in quanto tale è detto essere da Macedo l'oggetto adeguato dell'intelletto umano" (p. 36). As Tropia shows, Macedo's theory is based on the fact that the intellect is immaterial by its own nature. Thus, "il fantasma non è un mezzo adeguato alla natura dell'intelletto" (p. 36) since it is the intellect "a stabilirne l'oggetto primo e adeguato, ed è la sua stessa natura a farne una facoltà indipendente e autonoma tanto dalla materia che dal fantasma" (p. 37). Chapter one closes with an analysis of Macedo's interpretation of Scotus's doctrine of the adequate object of the intellect (pp. 47-49), continuing in chapter two, *Le specie intellegibili: angeli e uomini* (pp. 69-120) with Macedo's analysis of human knowledge, focusing on the question of the need and function of intelligible species in the process of abstractive perception of the material world. As Tropia shows, a peculiar aspect of Macedo's analysis of human knowledge is the close connection he establishes between human and angelic knowledge. In the wake of Scotus, Macedo considers that both natures share common ways of intellectual knowledge: "Filosofi come Tommaso hanno delineato con precisione la distanza tra le due menti [...]. Altri invece, come Scoto, hanno osservato che la natura intellettuale dell'angelo e dell'essere umano li accomuna..." (p. 20).

In the two first chapters, Tropia follows Macedo's text closely, exposing the theories under analysis, either Thomistic or Scotistic, in an extremely clear manner. They become, therefore, transparent to the reader in their divergences and their theological and philosophical developments. From Tropia's exposition, it is clear, according to Macedo, that the human mind is naturally perfect, capable of autonomously reaching its ultimate natural end, which is the knowledge of God *in patria*. This bold thesis of Macedo is recurrently emphasized by Tropia: "Macedo quindi conclude la sua perorazione ricordando che la modalità di conoscenza umana, in sé, non è affatto imperfetta, nella misura in cui l'intelletto non è costretto a cooperare con la facoltà *sensibile*; *il modo in cui conosce*, attraverso i fantasmi, rispecchia il suo ruolo superiore rispetto a questi ultimi" (p. 79). Macedo's notion of perfect mind is outlined by Tropia concerning the relationship of the intellect with the phantasms, the active nature of the cognitive process, the functions of the agent intellect in it, and the cognitive mechanism humans share with angels. Both natures can therefore be understood in correlation, the study of one highlighting the perfection of the other, *La mente perfetta* (p. 104).

Having explained Macedo's theory of knowledge in chapters one and two, Tropia devotes chapter three, *Sulle orme di Scoto: fonti e contesti diversi* (pp. 121-166) to the comparative analysis between Macedo's theory and that of other philosophers and theologians of the time, commenting on Suárez, Mastri, Luke Wadding, Hugo McCaghwell and John Maldonado, and explaining their theories on knowledge. In doing so, Tropia analyses "alcuni testi che precedono nel tempo l'analisi di Macedo e che presentano dei punti di contatto importanti con la sua teoria della conoscenza" (p. 121). This comparative analysis of texts and theories of authors who are close in time and precede Macedo is based on Tropia's conviction that these philosophers and theologians have in common a wide range of characteristics: they share the same intellectual environment, discuss identical problems, and base their arguments in common sources. According to Tropia these aspects are mainly found among Jesuit authors: "ce infatti un'aria di famiglia tra il testo delle *Collationes* e quelli di alcuni gesuiti" (p. 121). In chapter three, section one, Tropia provides an Italian translation of Maldonado's unpublished treatise *De origine, natura et immortalitate animae* (pp. 156-162), while in section two, she compares some passages from the Latin version of

the commentaries on the *De anima* by Suárez and McCaghwell showing the close dependence of the latter on the former (pp. 161-164).

According to Tropia, McCaghwell's commentary is relevant also as a testimony of both the first reception of Suárez's *De anima* and the use of Suárez's text to explain Scotus's theories (p. 161). Finally, and by way of conclusion, in chapter four, *Psicologia o metafisica? Qualche osservazione conclusive* (pp. 167-170), Tropia takes stock of the results of her study, discussing mainly the following aspects: the relationship between psychology and metaphysics; the reasons why, although Macedo claims to follow Scotus's opinion, his theory of human knowledge does not correspond exactly to that of Scotus's; the influence of Jesuits like Francisco Suárez and Gabriel Vazquéz on Macedo's theory of knowledge; and the significance of the analogy between human and angelic minds in Macedo's statements on human knowledge. Tropia's book ends with a carefully selected bibliography of text sources and secondary literature (pp. 171-185), as well as with an index of cited authors (pp. 187-190).

The present book is testimony to the importance of better understanding the authors, works and doctrines that belong to the period of the so-called second scholasticism. Studies on the Portuguese theologian Francisco Macedo's works and doctrines are scarce, and they all date from the 20th century. Tropia's book is relevant since it provides insight into an important work of this theologian and explains his theories as part of a wider discussion carried out in the 16th and 17th centuries among the Thomistic and Scotistic schools, particularly on the nature of the human mind and knowledge. Moreover, with the translation of long passages of Macedo's work into Italian, Tropia makes it available to today's scholarly public. Therefore, the value of her study is priceless as an instrument to divulge not only Macedo's philosophical work, but also the Thomist and Scotistic scholastic tradition and its reception in modern times. Tropia's book is of excellence for its methodological and scientific rigor, manifested in the in-depth knowledge of the sources and the rigorous analysis of the arguments. Published by Carocci (Rome), a renowned publisher house, in collaboration with Charles University Press (Prague), this study illuminates research in the field and makes a valuable contribution to both the state of the art and the progress of knowledge.