

СТАТТИ / ARTICLES

Локальні контексти глобальних філософій / Local Contexts of Global Philosophies

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GASPAR DA MADRE DE DEUS: A BRAZILIAN CONFRONTED WITH ARISTOTELIANISM AND ANTI-ARISTOTELIANISM IN THE 18TH CENTURY

1. Introduction

It is generally reinforced that, unlike Spanish America, Portuguese America did not have universities. However, a series of sources has confirmed the functioning of higher education in philosophy and theology in Brazil during the colonial era [Marques 2021]. These courses would follow knowledge-production patterns identified by the modern scholarly tradition. Modern Scholasticism has been frequently associated with Iberian philosophers related to the University of Salamanca, which reached its peak between the 15th and 16th centuries [Lanza, Tostes 2021].

This model of philosophy teaching had been disseminated and followed in other Iberian and American-Spanish teaching institutions. However, recent studies have acknowledged that, although Salamanca constituted a center of knowledge dissemination, modern Scholasticism has constituted a broader and more complex epistemic community. This community was formed by professors who, while traveling from one place to another, would take ideas, texts, and methods that had their matrices in Salamanca. Such a community was not restricted to the central areas of the metropolises but also connected with the peripheral regions of the colonies. It would, as such, form an intellectual community with standard practices and methodologies that would categorize a given knowledge-production mode and disseminate it globally [Duve 2021].

The presence of a knowledge production mode in common did not put a hold on teaching institutions organizing themselves in multiple ways, with local adaptations. In that sense, it is needed to inquire if the philosophy disseminated by these institutions has also suffered, in the process of its reception, a critical re-elaboration by colony-based authors, that is, whether, far from reproducing European authors, the colony-based authors were rethinking the philosophy coming from the Metropolis and providing new and original contributions to the tradition received. Therefore, the question that guides this text is: how did the reception of global philosophical traditions in the works of Friar

Gaspar da Madre de Deus occur? To answer that question, we have divided this article into two parts. First of all, we have conducted a philosophical analysis of his work, *Philosophia Platonica*, specifically a chapter that addresses certain concepts of logic: noun, verb, and sentence.¹

2. Bio-bibliographical summary on Friar Gaspar

The Order of Saint Benedict, organized in Portuguese domains under the name *Congregação Beneditina de Portugal*, had sent religious people to the colony of Brazil since 1581. However, not receiving the necessary financial subsidies from the Portuguese Crown to maintain their monasteries and estates, they have adapted to the Brazilian context by looking to establish deep ties with the local elite families [Souza 2011]. Friar Gaspar da Madre de Deus was born in 1715 in the city of São Vicente, to one of these families connected to the Order [Taunay 1920a].

As a result of this connection, in 1732 Friar Gaspar entered the Benedictine Order. During his monastic training in Bahia, Friar Gaspar studied Latin, philosophy, and theology. In 1740, he became a “passante”, that is, an assistant professor. After that period, he travelled to Portugal, but the data on this stay in the Metropolis is scarce. Back in Brazil, the Benedictine was transferred to Rio de Janeiro with the mission of teaching a three-year-long philosophy course [Taunay 1920a]. It was after this magisterium that Friar Gaspar had dictated his philosophical work, the manuscript *Philosophia platonica seu cursus philosophicus rationalem, naturalem et transnaturalem philosophiam, sive Logicam, Physicam et Metaphysicam completens*, in 1748. The following year, Friar Gaspar received the title of Doctor in theology [Taunay 1920a]. The philosophy course lectured by Friar Gaspar, therefore, was part of a higher education structure in the colony since the 17th Century, established by the Benedictines [Luna 1947].

After receiving the title of Doctor, Friar Gaspar had an ascending administrative career within the Order. He became abbot of Rio de Janeiro in 1763 and, in 1766, he became provincial abbot, the highest-ranking Benedictine in the colony. In 1769, however, his administrative career ended, and he returned to the city monastery in Santos. In this period, he had dedicated himself to writing the history of the São Vicente captaincy. At last, Friar Gaspar passed away in 1800 [Taunay 1920a].

Regarding *Philosophia Platonica*, it is a *cursus philosophicus*, a genre that experienced widespread diffusion between the 17th and 18th centuries [Heider 2014]. The work was designed to serve as a textbook for the philosophy professors of that time. Its general structure would be based on the philosophy subjects, divided into Logic, Physics, and Metaphysics. The extension of *Philosophia Platonica* consists of 789 written pages.

With the Pombaline Reforms, from the mid-18th Century, the colonial teaching model structured by the religious orders was dissolved [Rocha 2019]. The manuscript of Friar Gaspar has been neglected in the monastery archives, being rediscovered only in 1919, divided into two parts, Logics and Physics, in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, respectively [Taunay 1920b]. Nowadays, the manuscript is found integrally in the archives

¹ Our contextualisation and analysis develop and updates elements of the research entitled “Os elementos da linguagem em Frei Gaspar da Madre de Deus: uma lógica aristotélica no *philosophia platônica* [The language elements in Friar Gaspar da Madre de Deus: an Aristotelian logic in *philosophia platonica*]”.

of the Benedictine monastery of São Paulo. As there are no more written copies of this material, it is regarded as a unique manuscript (*corpus unicus*).

With this finding, the Brazilian historian Afonso de Taunay [1920b] edited and translated, with some mistakes, the preface and the index of the manuscript. He was the pioneer in providing an interpretation of Friar Gaspar's philosophy, presuming that the Benedictine had been a follower of John Duns Scotus. After that, Bezerra [1979], while assessing the data brought up by Taunay, considered that the Benedictine philosopher had affiliated himself mostly with Aristotelianism than with Platonism in physics and that he had knowledge of modern philosophical concepts, such as the ones from Francis Bacon, since *distinction baconica* is referenced in the index.

On the other hand, Mattos [1970, 1972], when correcting Taunay's translation mistakes and editing parts of the manuscript, observed that Friar Gaspar would have been, notably on the problem of universals, a Platonian, as his work title implies, and would have been influenced by Caramuel y Lobkowitz. Mattos deems Friar Gaspar despised Aristotle as an author who had misrepresented Plato. Mattos also identified that the *distinctio baconica* reference on the index was actually from John Baconthorpe, not from Francis Bacon. Since then, Mattos' proposition, which assigns Friar Gaspar a certain degree of Platonism, has been repeated by many authors.

Opposing this Interpretation, Cerqueira [2002] has included Friar Gaspar in a certain "Portuguese Aristotelianism", although he had recognized that the Benedictine had not limited himself to Aristotelianism. More recently, Marques [2023] has emphasized that, beyond Platonism, the Brazilian philosopher might have received a Cartesian influence through Caramuel y Lobkowitz, as Pich [2023] has shown, while editing and reviewing the parts concerning Friar Gaspar's Platonic stance, the particularity of his Platonism, where he found some aspects of Aristotelian tradition.

Despite these important discoveries, Friar Gaspar's manuscript has still not been edited, translated, or reviewed in its entirety. Most authors rely on secondary sources when discussing Friar Gaspar's philosophy. The only ones who actually reviewed the manuscript were Mattos and Pich. Even so, they limited their discussion to his Platonism regarding the problem of universals. Suppose there really is a Platonic stance in this regard. In that case, his positions on other questions have not been clarified yet, which limits understanding of how Friar Gaspar would stand amid the multiplicity of traditions and philosophical stances available in his time. Next, we will work on overcoming these boundaries by reviewing a part of his manuscript that does not address the problem of universal controversy.

3. Aristotelianism and the dialog with the Anti-Aristotelianism in Friar Gaspar's work

In the direction of contributing to an understanding of Friar Gaspar's philosophy, within the broader context of the philosophical currents that spread worldwide in the 18th Century, we seek to identify which of these currents the Benedictine philosopher followed. The manuscript is divided into two volumes: one for Logics, the other for Physics. The Logics one is structured into seven books. The sixth book addresses the three acts of the intellect: simple apprehension, judgement, and reasoning. It is divided into three parts according to these acts. The first part, on simple apprehension, has two chapters: the first one on the general terms, the second on the noun, the verb, and the sentence

(*De nomine, verbo et oratione*). The latter chapter is the one that constitutes our subject of analysis. It addresses the elements that compose the discourse.

The chapter at hand is divided into three propositions: on the noun, on the verb, and on the sentence, respectively. Each proposition starts with a definition. Noun would be the “conventional voice with meaning, no time-reference, definite and straight, in which no part has a meaning separately” [Gaspar da Madre de Deus 1748: 360]². Verb would be the “conventional voice with meaning, time-reference, definite and straight, in which no part has a meaning separately, and is a sign of things that are the predicate of something” [ibid.: 362]³. A sentence is defined as the “conventional voice with meaning, in which some part has a meaning separately” [ibid.: 364]⁴.

Each of these concepts is defined according to Aristotle’s explanations at the beginning of *On Interpretation*. In fact, Aristotle says that “a noun is a sound having meaning established by convention alone but no reference whatever to time, while no part of it has any meaning, considered apart from the whole” [On Interpretation 16a20-22], and that “A verb is a sound which not only conveys a particular meaning but has a time-reference also. No part by itself has a meaning. It always indicates that something is said or asserted of something” [On Interpretation 16b6-8]. At last, he considers that “a sentence is significant speech, of which this or that part may have meaning” [On Interpretation 16b26-28].

The evidence that Friar Gaspar intentionally based himself on Aristotelian definitions, not by lack of contact, is that he probably knew other definitions in circulation at the time. Different definitions of noun and verb are found on Caramuel y Lobkowitz [1642: 12-13]. For him, the noun would be a “concept through which one apprehends something stable on its own, that is, while not formally including the temporality itself”⁵. While the verb would be a “concept through which one apprehends a thing that is necessary and formally affected by its own temporality, whereas the copula of two nouns that identify the subject as an active adjacent potency.”⁶

There are still alternate definitions present in the authors Friar Gaspar quotes in the chapter, in other argumentative contexts, namely, Soares Lusitano [1651: 217-220] and Arriaga [1632: 14-15]. These authors define a noun as “voice declined by the case.”⁷; verb as “voice declined by the time”⁸; and sentence as “voice with meaning that is composed of a noun and a verb congruous to one another”⁹. Some authors of this time, like Lossada [1743], have rejected these definitions by Soares Lusitano and Arriaga, considering them merely grammatical and not taken in a logical sense. In all definitions, Friar Gaspar takes the discourse elements as objects and logical instruments, repeating himself in every explanation that the defined terms are “taken in a logical sense” (*logice sump-*

² Vox significativa ad placitum sine tempore, finita ac recta, cuius nulla pars significat separatim.

³ Vox significativa ad placitum cum tempore, finita, ac recta cuius nulla pars significat separatim, et eorum, quae de aliqua praedicantur est nota.

⁴ Vox significativa ad placitum cuius aliqua pars significat separatim.

⁵ Conceptus, qui apprehendit rem ut per se stantem, hoc est, que non includentem formaliter ipsum quando.

⁶ Conceptum, qui apprehendit rem necessario et formaliter affectam ipso quando tamquam duorum nominum copulam identificantem, subiectoque ut potentia activa adiacentem.

⁷ Vox declinata per casus.

⁸ Vox coniungata per tempora.

⁹ Vox significativa constans nomine et verbo inter se congruentibus.

tum). Therefore, Friar Gaspar would have probably rejected these definitions because of their grammatical orientation.

The presence of these explanations after each definition has definitely cleared up this point. The logical sense to which Friar Gaspar refers indicates that his vision of the discourse was more about semiotics and epistemology than grammar. The part of the definition for a sentence that states that it “in which some part has a meaning separately” differentiates itself from nouns and verbs, which do not have a meaning separately. This difference is based on the fact that Friar Gaspar did not consider material or grammatical parts of the discourse, but did consider the semantical parts. For instance, the word “notice” is a semantical unit; however, when divided into “not” and “ice”, neither “not” nor “ice” has the same meaning as “notice” and neither composes it. In fact, such a division would eliminate the original meaning.

Friar Gaspar’s epistemological perspective clearly appears in his discussion on transcendent nouns. The Benedictine philosopher wonders if the transcendent nouns can become indefinite (*infinitari*). It is worth explaining that such nouns refer to the transcendent ones, which constitute the being and the attributes convertible with the being. Therefore, the nouns “being”, “thing”, and “something” would be transcendent, in the sense that, as indefinite nouns, they end up referring to an infinity of beings when a negative is added. Therefore, “no lion” can be referred to as anything other than a lion, such as a table, a man, or even a fictional being. It is worth explaining that, according to Friar Gaspar, the indefinite nouns are not precisely nouns, since he adds to his definition of noun the term “definite”, that is, the actual noun must have an positive signification. However, he wonders if it is possible for a transcendent noun, such as “being”, “thing”, or “something”, to become indefinite.

To respond to this question, Friar Gaspar explains an opinion that denies the possibility of the transcendent nouns becoming indefinite. The argument that grounds it is attributed to Antônio Rúbio, Francisco de Toledo, and Albertus Magnus. It is grounded in the notion of the indefinite noun in Aristotle [On Interpretation 19b10-15], where the Stagirite states that indefinite nouns refer to what exists as well as to what does not exist. Therefore, in the statement “non being,” the term “being” cannot just be conceived in all its conceptual length, but only as a part of this length, namely, only as a fictional being, as a chimera. It can be concluded, from Aristotelian notion, that the transcendent nouns can never be indefinite.¹⁰ It is remarkable that Friar Gaspar, when explaining the author’s argument, says that the “non being” cannot “affirm” itself of the real being. By using terms such “affirm” and “affirmable” and not “signify”, indicating that such nouns could be used as predicates in a sentence, for example “chimera is *non being*”. That way, the term “being” is understood as a restriction of its conceptual length, given it is understood that chimera is not a real being, but a fictional one.

¹⁰ Nomina transcendencia sit ens, res, aliquiud. Ad quaestionem igitur respondent aliquis negative cum patre Rubio, Toletto Alberto magno, et aliis. Ratio illis est, quia nomine infinitum iuxta Aristoteles debet esset affirmabile tam de entibus veris, quam de fictis; atque hoc nomen infinitum *non ens* nequitur affirmari de entibus veris, quamvis possit de fictis: ergo nomen transcendens, vide gratia ens non potest infinitari. Explicant; quia nomen transcendens infinitatum, seu *non ens* significaret aliquod ens non conceptum sub ente in tota sua latitudine, de quo esset affirmabile; atque implicat ens non conceptum sub ente in tota sua latitudine, de quod possint affirmari *non ens*. [Gapar da Madre de Deus 1748: 361]

Friar Gaspar then presents the opposite proposition, one that the transcendent nouns can be indefinite. He explains the argument that grounds this proposition by demonstrating a notion opposite to the Aristotelian one of what would be an indefinite noun. An indefinite noun would not be the one that refers to what exists (real being) and what does not exist (fictional being), but the one that, while being preceded by a negative, makes that noun predicable to the totality of all beings, apart from the one that is being negated. This definition of an indefinite noun facilitates removing the term “being” from “non-being” by limiting its conceptual scope. This restriction was made impossible by the Aristotelian notion that the indefinite noun refers to what exists and what does not. The alternative concept of the indefinite noun and all the arguments are attributed to Soares Lusitano.¹¹

Friar Gaspar, having established the opposing propositions, takes a stand in favour of the latter proposition, the opposite one. However, despite disagreeing with the notion presented in Aristotle’s Latin text, Friar Gaspar does not directly rebut it. On the contrary, he submits his Aristotelian affirmations to an interpretation, one which Aristotle would be referring only to particular nouns, such as “not man” and “not stone”, and not to transcendent nouns.¹² In that manner, Friar Gaspar limits the reach of Aristotle’s affirmations. He implies that those who negate the indefinability of transcendent nouns, by grounding themselves on the Aristotelian notion, would have misinterpreted *On Interpretation*.

It is noteworthy that, furthermore, Friar Gaspar’s Interpretation of the Aristotelian text is not present in Soares Lusitano [1651], who is adamant in making the mistake that Friar Gaspar denounces. Soares Lusitano [ibid.], in support of his proposition, attacked the Stagirite directly. Moreover, Soares Lusitano [ibid.] is one of the authors who, while disagreeing with the Aristotelian definitions of noun, verb, and sentence, would include those grammatical definitions we quoted before. In addition, Soares establishes his own proposition on transcendent indefinite nouns by grounding himself on these anti-Aristotelian definitions. By doing that, Soares is following in the footsteps of Rodrigo de Arriaga and Hurtado de Mendonza. Friar Gaspar seems to welcome a proposition present in Soares Lusitano and Arriaga, yet without taking into account their blatant anti-Aristotelianism.

This stance, which affirms the possibility of indefiniteness in the transcendent nouns without disagreeing with Aristotle, is not new. It was already present in the Thomist, Antônio Rúbio [1625], whose argument is the same that Friar Gaspar wrongfully attributes to Soares Lusitano. Thus, Friar Gaspar also wrongfully attributed to Rúbio the propositions that negate the indefinability of transcendent nouns. In that manner, he is closer to Rúbio than to Soares Lusitano. Nevertheless, his mention of Soares Lusitano

¹¹ Contrariam sententiam tenent Suarius Lusitanus, et alii asserunt que nomina transcendentia potest infinitari. Ratio illis est; qui ad nomen infinitum sole requiritur quod eo praefigantur negatio, quae tollat ei determinatam significationem, et affirmaretur de omnibus, excepto illo, de quo negatur; atqui hoc certe convenit nomini transcendenti infinitato, vide gratia, *non enti*; si quidem *non ens* affirmatur de omnibus praeter ens verum. [Gaspar da Madre de Deus 1748: 361-362]

¹² Haec secunda sententia est probabilior. Ideo ad rationem contrariam dici potest, Philosophum, dum asserit nomen infinitum debere affirmari tam de entibus veris, quam de fictis sole loqui de illis nominibus, quae communius infinitari solet, ut *non homo*, *non lapis*, etc; nec de omnibus absolute. [Gaspar da Madre de Deus 1748: 362]

shows that he intended to accommodate the contributions of anti-Aristotelian authors partially.

The dialogue with these authors is clear when Friar Gaspar bases his work on Arriaga to address the question of the indetermination of verbs in a proposition. As noted by the Conimbricenses [1606], this question arose from omissions in Latin translations of Aristotle. In these translations, the Stagirite states that the composition of the proposition is made from the noun and the verb or from the indefinite noun and the verb, without indicating a composite proposition with the indefinite verb. From there, it could be deduced that an indefinite verb, such as “not run”, does not remain indefinite when put on a proposition. By inserting itself into the proposition, the verb would become definite and would make the proposition negative, like in “Peter does not run”.

Although Friar Gaspar does not mention the authors who argued against the possibility of the verb becoming indefinite in a proposition, Antônio Rúbio [1625] attributes this opinion to the ancient interpreters of Aristotle, such as Boethius and Albertus Magnus. However, in modern Scholasticism, it was also followed by Caramuel y Lobkowitz [1642], who attributed it to Thomas Aquinas. Contrary to them, the possibility of indefiniteness of a verb in a proposition was defended by Soares Lusitano [1651], who followed, in this regard, the Conimbricenses, and by Rúbio [1625], who also attributed it to Agostino Nifo, Francisco de Toledo, and Tomás de Mercado.

In the midst of this debate, Rodrigo de Arriaga [1632] proposed an intermediary stance. It is that stance that Friar Gaspar follows when explaining that two opinions in dispute may be reconciled. This reconciling is based on the semantic identity between the verb and the predicate, like in “run” and “runner”. Thereby, the sentence “Peter does not run” becomes, on the common usage of language (*in more, de facto*), an equivalent negative proposition to “Peter *is not* a runner”, where the link between the predicate and the subject is negated. On the other hand, a thorough language analysis reveals the possibility of understanding the same sentence as an affirmative proposition equivalent to “Peter is a non-runner”, where the predicate “non-runner” and, consequently, the equivalent verb (does not run) would be indefinite. At this time, the link between the predicate and the subject would not be negated.¹³ This reconciliation based on Arriaga is significative, to the extent that Arriaga [ibid.] does not adopt the Aristotelian definitions sustained by Friar Gaspar, but those grammatical definitions of anti-Aristotelian content that he had criticized. Thus, Friar Gaspar is decisively establishing a dialog with this trend, absorbing its contributions at the heart of its Aristotelianism.

4. Final Considerations

Recent studies on Iberian and colony-based teaching institutions committed to the scholastic methodology have revealed a situation more complex than simple subservience or the reproduction of organizational frameworks from one institution to another. In

¹³ Hic inquiri solet: utrum verbum possit infinitari in propositione? Negant aliqui, affirmantibus aliis. Omnis conciliari possunt, si dicamus cum patre Arriaga non esset in more verba infinitare; in rigore tamen infinitari potest. Ratio utriusque est; quia in haec propositione: “Petrus non currit”, potest negari sola verbi significatio, non verum eius nexus, in quo casum infinitatur verbum “curro”, et propositio facit hunc sensum: “Petrus est non currens”: ac de facto non ita solemus tales propositiones intelligere, sed in sensu mere negativo, ita ut [aliquotiens?] propositio facit hunc sensum: “Petrus non est currens”, ubi negatur nexus, et non infinitatur verbum curro. [Gaspar da Madre de Deus 1748: 363-364]

reality, the institutional interconnections manifest as a network of ideas, methods, and texts, without excluding adaptations to their respective local contexts. It suggests that their own philosophical production was also more complex, revealing a process of critical reproduction of ideas rather than a subservient continuation of a determined tradition or of authors who were global influences.

The dissemination of these authors affects Friar Gaspar's philosophical works. As such, when analyzing the manner in which Friar Gaspar utilizes the authors he references, it is clear that Aristotle serves as the core reference for his thinking regarding the concepts of the noun, the verb, and the sentence. However, in complementary questions that emerge on the discussion of those concepts, the Benedictine philosopher explicitly quotes Soares Lusitano and Arriaga, anti-Aristotelian representatives, whose stances on the logic concepts were grammar-centered. Therefore, Friar Gaspar would take in an opinion from Soares Lusitano while grounding himself on the argument made by the Thomist Antônio Rúbio. On the other hand, he would abandon Rúbio and Soares Lusitano on the matter of the verb's indefiniteness on a proposition to take a reconciliatory stance grounded on Arriaga.

Based on the analysis, we can now respond to the problem we raised. We asked how the reception of globally spread philosophical traditions occurred in the Brazilian colonial period, specifically in the works of Friar Gaspar da Madre de Deus. We have established that Friar Gaspar definitely absorbs global philosophical ideas. But this absorption does not make him a mere replicator of theoretical stances. As far as we can tell, Friar Gaspar's Aristotelianism is open to dialogue with authors who have an anti-Aristotelian stance, in the sense of critically rethinking and producing a philosophy in which the underlying methodology is committed to synthesizing the opposing stances of his time made available by the globalization of knowledge.

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Gaspar da Madre de Deus: a Brazilian Confronted with Aristotelianism and Anti-Aristotelism in the 18th Century

This paper examines how the local reception of philosophies spread throughout the world took place in the work of Brother Gaspar da Madre de Deus, an 18th-century Brazilian philosopher, particularly in his reflections on the concepts of noun, verb, and sentence, as presented in the manuscript *Philosophia Platonica*. Although the title suggests a certain Platonism, the analysis reveals a theoretical commitment to Aristotelianism and, simultaneously, a dialogue with Iberian anti-Aristotelian authors, such as Soares Lusitano and Arriaga, whose thought Friar Gaspar critically rethinks within the scope of Colonial Scholasticism.

Гільєрме Енріке Борін

Гаспар да Мадре де Деус: бразилець, який стикнувся з аристотелізмом і антиаристотелізмом у XVIII столітті

У статті розглядається те, як локальна рецепція філософій, поширених у всьому світі, відбувалась у творчості брата Гаспара да Мадре де Деус, бразильського філософа XVIII століття, зокрема в його роздумах про поняття іменника, дієслова та речення, представлених у рукописі *Philosophia Platonica*. Хоча назва натякає на певний платонізм, аналіз виявляє теоретичну відданість аристотелізму та одночасно – на діалог із іберійськими антиаристотелістськими авторами, такими як Соареш Лузітано й Арріага, чії думки брат Гаспар критично переосмислює в рамках колоніальної схоластики.

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