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Post-scriptum:

In the Title read "c. 1485-1492" instead of "c. 1497", cfr. p. 324, n. 6.

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***METAPHYSICS AND THE MODUS MULTIPLICANDI  
SCIENTIAS IN THE QUESTIO PERUTILIS DE CUIUSCUMQUE  
SCIENTIE SUBIECTO BY GOMES OF LISBON (c. 1497)\****

Nicoletto Vernia, one of the exponents of Aristotelianism and Averroism at the University of Padua, taught philosophy between the years 1468 and 1499 and had as his students Petrus Pomponazzi, Ioannes Pico della Mirandola and Augustus Nifo<sup>1</sup>. In 1480 Vernia published a question at Padua in 1480 arguing that the *ens mobile* is not the first subject matter of natural philosophy or physics. Some years later Gometius Hispanus (also called Gomes of Lisbon), a Portuguese and master at the University of Pavia, published a question against Vernia's positions. In this study I will introduce this question and trace Gomes's arguments in it.

**1. Nicoletto Vernia and Gomes of Lisbon on Natural Philosophy**

While discussing several opinions, which he rejects, Nicoletto Vernia maintains that the subject matter of natural philosophy is the *corpus mobile*<sup>2</sup>. In the face of a proliferation of divergent opinions on

\* I would like to thank Alexandra Abranches for the translation of this study, as well as Roberto Hofmeister Pich, whose comments contributed much to its improvement. The study falls within the project *Aristotelica Portugalsia* of the GFM/Instituto de Filosofia da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, Portugal.

<sup>1</sup> On Nicoletto Vernia cfr. the first four essays collected in E. P. MAHONEY, *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance. Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo*, Aldershot, Ashgate 2000. The printed *quaestiones* by Vernia (with the exception of *Quaestio an coelum sit animatum*) can now be found in Nicoletto Vernia, *Quaestiones*, ristampa anastatica delle rispettive edizioni originali, premessa di E. DE BELLIS, Ed. Eurocart, Casarano 1998 (Bibliotheca Vetus et Rara, 2), with some further bibliography on Vernia in n. 1, p. V.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Nicoletto Vernia, *Quaestio an ens mobile sit totius philosophiae naturalis subiectum*, Johann Herbort, Venetiis 1480 (reissued in Nicoletto Vernia, *Quaestiones*, op. cit., pp. 3-8). In the original edition, the question constituted an appendix (ff. 129r-131v) to the commentaries by Aegidius Romanus, Marsilius of Padua and Albertus Magnus on Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione*. On this issue, cfr. E. P. MAHONEY, « Philosophy and Science in Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo », in A. POPPI (ed.), *Scienza e Filosofia all'Università di Padova nel Quattrocento*, Edizioni Lint, Padova – Trieste 1983, pp. 135-303 (Contributi alla

the first object of physics, Vernia, explicitly following the Aristotelian method (*procedendo more Aristotelico*), begins by refuting the opinions of those who deviate from the positions of Aristotle and Averroes, Aristotle's most subtle and diligent Commentator. He then establishes his doctrine on the object of physics, and finally answers those arguments supporting the opinions he considers to be false. Vernia's targets are various, but Themistius and Alexander of Aphrodisias are not yet among his sources; on the contrary, Aristotle, together with Averroes, is his main source, as is the case later when he attempts to recover Aristotle's own position or *intentio*. Vernia begins by summarizing Thomas Aquinas's position, according to which the subject matter of natural philosophy is the *ens mobile*, and not the *corpus mobile* as Albertus Magnus had maintained, which was why Giles of Rome himself had criticized Thomas. He then rejects the proposals of two « followers of the Subtle Doctor », Ioannes Canonicus (the 'substantia finita naturalis') and Antonius Andreas (the 'substantia naturaliter inquantum naturalis') because for them it is not the *mobilitas* of the body but rather its *naturalitas* that provides the formal intelligibility (*ratio formalis*) of the subject matter of natural philosophy. Vernia wishes to remain within the boundaries of natural speech (*naturaliter loquitur*) – to meet a certain standard of rationality which he thinks neither Ioannes nor Antonius does. In Antonius, when it comes to the succession of the motion of angels, Vernia finds a defense of an infinite velocity through an infinite space that he apparently considers to be unacceptable and irrational<sup>3</sup>. He also rejects the positions of Paul of Venice (the *corpus naturale*) and Thomas de Vio Cajetan (the *substantia sensibilis*).

Storia dell'Università di Padova, 15), repr. in E. P. MAHONEY, *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance*, Essay I, pp. 142-145.

<sup>3</sup> Vernia's opusculum rejects Scotus argument according to which angels are naturally mobile because they cannot receive different « place » (*ubi*). Vernia assumes a clear distinction and even a separation between theology and philosophy to affirm, with Averroes, that substances such as angels are absolutely simple, lacking any composition in potency and act or essence and existence, and therefore cannot receive an accident such as place. Still, he admits that, beyond philosophical argument, according to which that is a position that should be rejected, one can speak in another way, « according to faith and to truth » (*secundum fidem et veritatem*), as theologians do in the book of *Sentences*, cfr. E. P. MAHONEY, op. cit., pp. 142-145.

In the second part of the question, Vernia maintains that the positions of Aristotle coincide with those of his Commentator, Averroes, in that both consider the *corpus mobile* to be the subject matter of natural science. In this they are also « partly » followed by Albertus Magnus and Giles of Rome, although Vernia remarks that these two authors deviate from Averroes, because for them the body is made up of matter and substantial form, whereas Averroes considers the heavens as a *corpus mobile*, though not compounded (f. 130r). Vernia then reviews several theories concerning the conditions necessary for determining the object of a science (e.g., those of Duns Scotus, Ioannes Canonicus, Antonius Andreas, and Paul of Venice), and proposes his own list of eight conditions, concluding that only the *corpus mobile* fills them all (f. 130v). Both his refutation of the authors he reviews and his adherence to positions that he identifies as those of Aristotle and Averroes are based on the discussion of these conditions (f. 131r). Vernia's main point in rejecting the Scotists is to demonstrate that the *ens* cannot be the first and proper subject matter of physics because, in his view, that would make physics subordinate to metaphysics, and also because, as he had said right from the start, that would go against the opinion of Aristotle, for whom there are three non-subordinated speculative habits (*habitudines*): metaphysics, physics and mathematics (f. 129r). On the other hand, affirming the autonomy of physics constituted a challenge to the autonomy and superiority of metaphysics, since it would allow for its primary subject matter, God as first being, to find definition in the realm of physics through the argument from motion, given that no science provides the definition of its own object of inquiry.

In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the topic of the object of the sciences, in particular that of metaphysics, was very much alive, as is apparent in the work of some of the philosophers Vernia discusses<sup>4</sup>. The topic was also discussed between Padua and Pavia, and it comes as no surprise that the *quaestio* should have drawn a reaction from Anselmo Meia<sup>5</sup>, as can be read in the prefatory letter from the *Quaestio perutilis de*

<sup>4</sup> A characterization of the discussions on the object or subject of metaphysics at the time of Gomes of Lisbon can be found in Ch. LOHR, « Metaphysics », in Ch. SCHMITT and Q. SKINNER (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, pp. 537-638.

<sup>5</sup> Anselmo Meia was a teacher of natural philosophy and mathematics at the University of Padua, where he was Dean of Arts until 1482. In 1488 he moved to Ferrara and in 1489 he applied to the University of Padua in a competition won by Pietro Pomponazzi.

*cuiuscumque scientie subiecto, pricipaliter tamen naturalis philosophiae* by Gomes of Lisbon, published with no date or indication of place but in all probability in Pavia around 1497<sup>6</sup>. Anselm Meia had asked Gomes of Lisbon to answer « the question concerning the subject matter of natural philosophy published by the most excellent man and illustrious philosopher » Nicoletto Vernia<sup>7</sup>. Anselm Meia feels that the positions maintained by Vernia deviate from Aristotle and so he asks Gomes to answer him laying out: (1) what he has gathered on the same issue « from Aristotle and Scotus »; and (2) whether Scotus agrees or disagrees with Aristotle on the subject matter of natural philosophy. As Gomes states right from the prologue of his work, the *Questio perutilis* is an answer to this request and a refutation of Vernia's positions, especially of Vernia's criticism of the Scotists, as well as a restatement of the validity of Scotist doctrines.

The Franciscan Gomes of Lisbon, Bachelor in Philosophy and Master in Theology, occupies an eminent place within Portuguese Scotism, even though all of his university career took place in Venice and Pavia, where he was Reader of Theology precisely between 1482 and 1511<sup>8</sup>. Despite Duns

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gomes of Lisbon, *Quaestio perutilis de cuiuscumque scientie subiecto, pricipaliter tamen naturalis philosophiae*, with no mention of date, publisher or place of publication, but which has been attributed to the workshop of Antonio de Carcano, Pavia. Although its dating remains disputed, it likely lies somewhere between 1485 and 1492 (n.b., there is no sign of the controversy concerning the Averroistic doctrine of the intellect which is at the source of Vernia's condemnation by the Bishop of Padua on 6 May 1489, so it is difficult to establish a connection between Gomes's *Quaestio* and these facts). There was a second edition of the question: *Impensa haeredum Octaviani Scoti Modoetiensis ac sociorum*, Venetiis, 1517. The first edition was reprinted, edited and translated into Portuguese in Frei Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil sobre o objecto de qualquer ciência e principalmente da filosofia natural (Quaestio perutilis de cuiuscumque scientie subiecto, pricipaliter tamen naturalis philosophiae)*, text established and translated by M. P. MENESES, Introd. by J. C. GONÇALVES, Instituto de Alta Cultura, Lisboa 1964; the introductory essay has been reprinted in J. C. GONÇALVES, « Frei Gomes de Lisboa », in P. CALAFATE (org.), *História do pensamento filosófico português*, vol. I: *Idade Média*, Círculo de Leitores, Lisboa 2002<sup>2</sup>, pp. 279-295. On the date and editions of the *Quaestio*, cfr. pp. 99-103 of the remarkable essay by A. D'ORS, « Gometius Hispanus Ulixbonensis O.F.M. Conv. (†1513) », *Análise* 24 (2003) 95-144, which includes a vast bibliography on pp. 125-133.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. prefatory letter, Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, cit., pp. 38-39.

<sup>8</sup> Gomes of Lisbon OFM – also Gometius Hispanus, Gometius Portugalensis, Gometius Ulixbonensis – was born in Lisbon c. 1440/1450. He may have studied at the Franciscan *studium* in Paris. Before 1478 he was Bachelor in Theology, while residing at the convent of the order in Florence; there he prepared with Bartholomaeus Feltre (de Bellato) the revised edition of the *Summa de Casibus* by Astesanus of Asti (ed. Veneza 1478). In 1482 he obtained the degree of Master in Theology, perhaps while still in Venice. Between 1482 and 1511 he was Reader of

Scotus's well known influence in Portugal since the 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>9</sup>, the first extant works by Portuguese Scotists are only from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and all by authors active in foreign universities: André do Prado at Bologna and Rome in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>, Gomes of Lisbon OFM at Pavia, and Pedro da Cruz OFM who, after his studies, taught Arts at convent schools in Venice, Milan, and Padua<sup>11</sup> (these last two in the last decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), and Pedro Margalho at Salamanca around 1520<sup>12</sup>.

Theology at Pavia. Probably between 1485 and 1492 (the date is uncertain), he published at the workshop of Antonio de Carcano in Pavia the *Questio perutilis de cuiuscumque scientie subiecto principaliter tamen naturalis philosophie*, reissued in 1517. In these two editions, the work is published together with the *Doctor Subtilis Scoti Questiones super libris De anima Aristotelis*. There is discussion on whether these works are by Duns Scotus, but it is certain that they are not by Gomes of Lisbon. In 1491 he writes the *Quaestio an licita sit institutio montis pietatis*, published in Venice between 1495 and 1498 (new edition in A. d'Ors, « Gometius Hispanus », op. cit., pp. 133-137). The commentary *Super quaestiones Metaphysicae Antonii Andreae* (ms. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Add. c. 73, ff. 157r-169r, by the hand of Thomas Murchius in 1493) comes from the 1493-1494 course, or even from an earlier one on the *Metaphysics* from 1483-1484. Some unknown *Quaestiones quodlibetales in via Scoti* have been attributed to him. Five prefatory letters published in different works are known (all republished in A. d'Ors, op. cit., pp. 137-140). In the course of his career, under the authority of Ludovico Sforza, the Franciscan Order, and the University of Pavia, Gomes of Lisbon took part in several administrative issues having to do with university life or with the affairs of his religious Order. He was Vicar general of the Order between 3 October 1511 and 14 May 1513. In 1512 he took part in the first sessions of the Fifth Lateran Council. In 1513 he may have been nominated Archbishop of Nazareth (by Pope Leo X, or perhaps Pope Julius II). He died in August of the same year. On the life and works of Gomes of Lisbon, cfr. A. D'ORS, « Gometius Hispanus Ulixbonensis O.F.M. Conv. (†1513) », op. cit., and the vast bibliography for supplementary information.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. M. C. FREITAS, « Escotismo em Portugal », *Logos. Enciclopédia Luso-Brasileira de Filosofia*, Ed. Verbo, Lisboa, 1990, vol. II, col. 184-189 and J. PINHARANDA GOMES, *Dicionário de filosofia portuguesa*, Dom Quixote, Lisboa 2004<sup>2</sup>, s. v. « Escotismo », pp. 116-122.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. in particular the yet unpublished *Spiraculum Francisci Maironis* or *Liber distinctionum*, written in Rome in 1416 (ms. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon. Script. Eccl. 398). On André do Prado and his works, cfr. M. S. CARVALHO, « Frei André do Prado », in P. CALAFATE (org.), *História do pensamento filosófico português*, vol. I, pp. 253-277.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. in particular his *Questio valde notabilis nusquam tot retro seculis visa, de ratione subiecti primi scientiae secundum Iohannem Scotum an ad entia rationis extendatur*, per magistrum Iohannem Hertzog de Landoia, Parisiis 1500, an opusculum which also carries the title *Utrum syllogismus simpliciter sit primum subiectum librum Summularum Petri Hispani*, which accompanies the edition by Pedro da Cruz of the commentary by Ioannes de Monte on the *Tractatus* by Petrus Hispanus. Cfr. A. D'ORS, « Petrus de Cruce Hispanus Portugalensis », *Análise* 22 (2001) 109-145, with a new edition of the *Questio* on pp. 133-145.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. in particular the *Logices utriusque scholia in divi Thomae subtilisque Duns doctrina ac nominalium*, Salamanca 1520 (ed. and trans. M. P. DE MENESES, Introd. W. RISSE, Lisboa 1965).

It may seem odd that Anselm Meia should have resorted to his colleague and friend Gomes of Lisbon to obtain a solution to a question intensely debated and generating as many solutions as this one, about the object of the main sciences, or of theoretical habits. Meia moreover sought a solution from Gomes that would, at once, discuss the work of Vernia, seek the explanation of Aristotle's position, and present a defense of Duns Scotus. From the words of his other contemporaries, we may understand why he was a master who was prepared to do this. Ioannes Vigerius states in a prefatory letter sent to the Pope Clement VII that not only was his master, Gomes of Lisbon, an excellent disciple of Duns Scotus, but he was also a remarkable interpreter and exponent of the views of doctors of different subjects, explaining them perhaps better than they themselves could<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. *Continentia virtualis in the Questio perutilis*

The *Very Useful Question Concerning the Subject of Any Science and Especially that of Natural Philosophy (Questio perutilis de cuiuscumque scientie subiecto principaliter tamen naturalis philosophie)*, which, its title notwithstanding, does not have the canonical form of the medieval *quaestio*, is a brief opusculum divided into three sections the author calls « articles », each one devoted to the resolution of one of the three problems listed in the introduction. It fills a total of 16 columns of written text (22 pages in its modern edition).

Gomes accepts Meia's challenge not just to contradict the positions of « the illustrious Vernia », as he so reverently calls him, but also to state the

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. Ioannes Vigerius, *Super primo libro sententiarum doctoris subtilis Ioannis Scoti*, Ioannes Tacuinus de Tridino impressit, Venetiis 1527, f. 1v.: « Occurrit mihi testis illa foelix memoria: solus mihi praeceptor reuerendus magister Gometius lusitanus, qui tum legendo, tum disputando caeterorum doctorum disciplinas solebat longius melius explanare et opiniones adinuicem conciliare, quod illi magis peculiare erat quam credendum sit: quod si ipsimet auctores praesentes extitissent facere fortasse non potuissent. A quo tamen saepe familiariter audiui quod nunquam nisi doctoris nostri Ioannis Scoti discipulus extiterit ». The prefatory letter by Vigerius is published in A. D'ORS, « Gometius Hispanus », op. cit., pp. 142-143. In the same work, in the prefatory letter to the reader (ed. ibidem, pp. 143-144), Vigerius expresses again his reverence towards the most acute science of Master Gomes of Lisbon, calling himself his disciple and auditor for more than twenty years. Other contemporary testimonies on the personality and wisdom of Gomes have been assembled by A. D'ORS, « Gometius Hispanus », op. cit., pp. 115-121.

truth, claiming that he shall write that which Nicoletto himself might have derived from the very « source of philosophy », that is, from Aristotle<sup>14</sup>. Gomes therefore leaves no doubt that he intends to answer the question by restating Aristotle's thought and turning away from the interpretation presented by Nicoletto Vernia. Throughout the opuscle, no direct encounter with this philosopher's arguments is to be found, and the discussion is always implicit rather than evoked. The *quaestio* is even restated in the following terms: « Whether according to the opinion [*sententiam*] of the Philosopher and his Commentator the *corpus mobile* is the first subject matter<sup>15</sup> of natural philosophy », thus positioning itself more in a confrontation with the then current exegesis of Aristotle and Averroes rather than with Vernia's work. Consequently, he will try to show where and how misinterpretations occur on the part of those who claim that the subject matter of natural philosophy or physics is the *corpus mobile*.

Gomes answers a question that places the problem in the domain of exegesis by resorting to the method of authority:

« To solve this question, I shall rigorously imitate the most subtle doctor Ioannes Scotus, the greatest of all the Aristotelians »<sup>16</sup>.

It is by means of the Scotist version of Aristotelianism that Gomes prepares himself to correct certain interpretations and positions. The general question announced in the title, concerning the way to determine the proper subject matter of each science and the way to multiply primary and secondary sciences (i.e., to establish a hierarchy and to organize sciences within genera and species) is only taken up after the determination of what the subject matter of a science is and which subject is the proper to physics. Only then, and very briefly at that, is metaphysics discussed as a science.

<sup>14</sup> Gomes even identifies the accepted positions of Aristotle and Averroes as being *philosophy itself*; cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, p. 50: « (...) natura ponitur a Philosopho et Commentatore (...), ideo ab ipsa philosophia, principium effectivum per se ipsius motus (...) ».

<sup>15</sup> Gomes always employs the term 'subjectum', where other authors (Scotus, for instance) sometimes also employ 'objectum'. Here, Gomes's terminology shall be followed as much as possible, but the word « object » will be employed in some cases too.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, p. 40: « Ad hanc quaestionem dissolvendam imitaturus ad unguem subtilissimum doctorem Ioahnem Schotum summum aristotellicum sic procedam ».

The resolution of the series of problems starts with a premise describing what the proper reason of the first subject matter of a science is:

« The proper and formal reason of the subject matter of a scientific habit is that it contains virtually first [*virtualiter primo*] all the truths of that habit whose subject matter it is »<sup>17</sup>.

In a later commentary Gomes will explain that « first » means « adequately » and that « virtually » means that its ‘quod quid est’ (essential definition) as such (which the first includes essentially) is the ‘propter quid’ manner for knowing such mediate truths as are knowable about it<sup>18</sup>.

The explanation of this *ratio* of Scotist extraction<sup>19</sup>, the real starting point of the whole argument, is based on another authority, the statement attributed to Aristotle and « admitted by all », to wit, that

« the subject matter, by its essential principles, is the total cause, in the being, of all the passions which derived from the essential principles of that subject matter »<sup>20</sup>.

Gomes then draws a first inference from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* II, Chapter 5, concerning the basis for the correspondence between knowledge and the known being: « the subject matter contains virtually [*virtute*] the passions in the known being, as it contains them in the entity »<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Id. *ibid.*: « (...) ratio propria et formalis subiecti habitus scientifici est continere virtualiter primo omnes veritates istius habitus cuius est subiectum ».

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* prolog. p. 3 q. 3 n. 142, ed. Vat., vol. I, Civitas Vaticana 1950, p. 96: « (...) dico quod ratio primi obiecti est continere in se primo virtualiter omnes veritates illius habitus. Quod probo sic: primo, quia obiectum primum continet propositiones immediatas, quia subiectum illarum continet praedicatum, et ita evidentiam propositionis totius; propositiones autem immediae continent conclusiones; ergo subiectum propositionum immediatarum continet omnes veritates illius habitus ».

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, p. 40: « (...) subiectum per sua principia essentialia est totalis causa in esse omnium passionum quae natae sunt efluere a principiis essentialibus ipsius subiecti ».

<sup>21</sup> Id. *ibid.*, p. 42.



This inference is explained by the knowledge of the concept in the intellect<sup>22</sup> which, because it is formed by means of abstraction, expresses the essence, in which all its « properties » (*passiones*) are virtually contained and which is the foundation for that self-evident and immediate knowledge of truth that characterizes all science:

« Any entity having passions causes, in any intellect, its own concept, proper, simple, and perfect, and that which is distinct and defined causes the non-complex and complex knowledge of all its passions. And thus the intellect, possessing the most perfect, abstract, and non-complex concept of an essence, which virtually includes all passions, has self-evident complex knowledge; first, of the definition, relative to what is defined, which is the truth known by itself and immediate; second, of the passions relative to the definition, which also is the self-evident and immediate truth; thirdly, of the passions themselves relative to what is defined, which is the mediate and known truth to which the intellect necessarily assents in the immediate principles as it assents to the principles themselves through the terms. Here one must observe that the terms of the principles known *by themselves* have such an identity that one includes the other evidently [*evidenter*], to wit: that which is defined, which is formally the same as the definition, actually and essentially [*actualiter et essentialiter*] includes the definition itself and does this self-evidently [*evidenter*], that is, immediately [*immediate*] »<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> On Scotus and the Scotist tradition, the main basis for Gomes' positions, I shall provide references to the less well known bibliography in Portuguese. On the theory of knowledge, cfr. for instance, M. B. C. FREITAS, « A causalidade do conhecimento em Duns Escoto », *Itinerarium* 22 (1958) 421-466; C. R. CEZAR, *O conhecimento abstrativo em Duns Escoto*, Edipucrs, Porto Alegre 1996; L. A. DE BONI, « Como alguém que vê à luz de vela », in L. A. DE BONI (ed.), *Finitude e transcendência. Festschrift em Homenagem a Ernildo Stein*, Editora Vozes, Petrópolis 1996, pp. 389-403.

<sup>23</sup> Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, cit., p. 40: « Quiditas quaecumque habens passiones in quocumque intellectu causat conceptum sui proprium, simplicem ac perfectum, et distinctum seu diffinitum causat notitiam incomplexam et complexam omnium suarum passionum. Ita quod intellectus, habens perfectissimum conceptum et abstractum et incomplexum quiditatis virtute includentis passiones, habet evidentem notitiam complexam: primo diffinitionis de diffinito, quae est veritas per se nota et immediata; secundo notitiam passionum de diffinitione quae etiam est per se evidens et immediata; tertio ipsarum passionum de diffinito, quae mediata et scibilis est, cui intellectus per immediata principia necessario assentit, sicut et ipsis principiis per terminos. Vbi notandum est quod termini principiorum per se notorum talem habent identitatem quod alter alterum evidenter includit, videlicet diffinitum, quod diffinitioni formaliter est idem, includit actualiter et essentialiter ipsam diffinitionem, et evidenter, hoc est, immediate ».

The intellect, naturally ordered towards the knowledge of all that is received by the senses by means of abstraction, is also ordered to possess, by means of the concept, the subject matter of all the sciences. Even though it is not innate, the concept is transparent to the intellect; « the intellect, possessing simple perfect knowledge of such terms, has in itself [*apud se*] the necessary cause of its immediate union »<sup>24</sup>. This complete adequacy between the structure of the intellect and of that which is knowable allows for the unfolding of the passions virtually contained in the subject matter of the knowledge by thought alone, and from that conformity arises truth itself: « And if it compounds them, it has the necessary and self-evident cause of the conformity between the act of compounding and the terms compounded, this self-evident conformity being the truth of the proposition, immediate and known by itself »<sup>25</sup>. It follows that by understanding such terms the intellect understands « the conformity and immediate truth included in the formal reasons of the terms »<sup>26</sup>. The intellect, therefore, acquires science « by means of the immediate principles as causes » as it necessarily understands « the union or inherence of the passions in the subject matter »<sup>27</sup>. Thus it is possible to build a science from the concept of its first subject matter.

From these elements of a theory of knowledge, Gomes wants to conclude that the subject matter so understood « contains first the immediate truths and, by means of these as a whole [*ut quod*], contains *virtually first* all the mediate truths that can be known about it ». And from this he concludes that « the *virtually first* inclusion is the formal and proper reason of the subject matter, in the knowable genus »<sup>28</sup>.

The formal reason of the subject matter, containing as a whole the truths inherent to it and its passions, thus provides a basis from which it is possible to determine the truths that are appropriate to each science and that make them distinct. On the other hand, those truths that are knowable in each science are so in virtue of the subject matter itself as a means, which is why the science can adequately cover the demonstrable passions of the subject matter, because they are contained in it. It is not necessary to create

<sup>24</sup> Id. *ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

a science for each truth, and a system of known truths is possible. But new problems arise, such as that of the passage from the first and main truths of each science and that of the possible relationship and hierarchy among the three main sciences that study reality.

Be that as it may, the intended conclusion is a return to the original premises: « the reason of the subject matter is that it contains virtually first all the truths that are knowable about it [*omnes scibiles veritates de ipso*] »<sup>29</sup>.

### 3. Metaphysics and the Subject Matter of Theoretical Sciences

Once this principle has been established, Gomes is ready to attack Vernia's theory concerning the eight conditions for determining the first subject matter of each science<sup>30</sup>. According to Gomes, Vernia's list « includes that which is superfluous and omits that which is simply necessary » because it lacks just the indispensable « virtual inclusion » (*continentia virtualis*): « *virtual first inclusion* itself includes all the conditions which are necessarily required for the reason of the subject matter ». So, once this principle is accepted, all the other principles proposed by Vernia can be either rejected or dismissed.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> The following are the eight conditions proposed by Vernia, together with Gomes's counterarguments; when determining the subject matter of each science, one must observe that: (1) it is a *real being or grounded on a real being* (Gomes objects that the *virtually first* includes that condition); (2) it is *one* (the *virtually first* includes not only unity in analogy but also unity in univocation, « the subject is logically and metaphysically univocal »); (3) it is *most universal* (but this is not the reason of the subject, it is added to the subject, as will be shown in article 2); (4) it is *adequate* (but it is not stated to what); (5) it is first known, *primo notum* (which is convenient for the subject, « because it contains all the immediate and mediate truths, which allows for the supposition of its simple knowledge to the complex knowledge of the *propter quid* principles which are reduced to the most perfect knowledge of the subject »); (6) it has *subjective parts* (which is, in fact, convenient, for the most part, to the subject matter of the sciences, though not necessary: Gomes adds, according to the accepted principle, that « when the subject matter has parts, the truths regarding those parts are known through the subject matter itself as a means which virtually first contains such truths »); (7) it has *properties* (this condition is superfluous because if it is a genus the subject matter of science necessarily has properties since a science deals with properties which can be demonstrated about the subject matter and which the subject matter itself *primo virtualiter* contains); (8) it contains the *known truths* (another superfluous condition because it is comprehended in the virtual inclusion). Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, pp. 44-47.

According to Gomes, and contrary to what had been proposed by Vernia, the *corpus mobile* cannot be the first subject matter of natural philosophy, neither can mobility be admitted as the first formal reason of the subject matter of natural philosophy, because mobility has a cause which is *per se* inherent to something first considered in that science. In other words, motion is secondary in relation to nature, because nature is the « effective principle *per se* of motion itself », as Gomes states in accordance with an argument from authority. It is so according to the Philosopher and to the Commentator, therefore, to philosophy itself. And this allows him to conclude that « motion enters the definition of nature not as an essential part of nature itself, but as an effect *per se* of the definition of its cause *per se*; nature is that which is simply first *per se* considered in natural science »<sup>31</sup>. The first subject matter of physics cannot be the Prime Mover either, because it is not natural and neither natural motion nor nature comes from it. Gomes offers a lengthy discussion of Aristotle's and Averroes's arguments concerning the subject matter of natural science, trying to show that, according to them, the first subject matter of natural science is neither the Prime Mover nor motion<sup>32</sup>, and that they have generally committed the mistake of thinking that the first subject matter of a science is that which is known first as to its sense, which would then be the beginning of knowledge in the acquisition of the theory. But this position is wrong, at least in the case of those sciences where there is a distinction between being known first in ourselves and being known first in nature, which is the case of natural and divine philosophy ('in naturali philosophia et divina')<sup>33</sup>.

Having destroyed the possibility of the *corpus mobile* as the subject matter of natural science, Gomes proposes in the constructive part of the second article that the first subject matter of natural philosophy « is natural substance as natural, just as nature or *naturalitas* is the first formal reason of the subject matter »<sup>34</sup>. In all of natural philosophy it is natural substance which better corresponds to the proper reason of the possible subject matter for that science, since it contains virtually all the

<sup>31</sup> Id. *ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-56.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*: « subiectum primum naturalis philosophiae est substantia naturalis in quantum naturalis, sic quod natura aut naturalitas sit prima ratio formalis ipsius subiecti ».

first truths or passions ('*primas veritates seu passiones*') of that science. Even though it does not contain them all, it is a means *propter quid* to know those first truths, and it also has « community of predication or primacy of community » with other lesser things which are included in its formal reason and is thus the adequate means to acquire such knowledge<sup>35</sup>.

Motion is nothing but the first physical passion, an effect *per se* of nature, since it is contained virtually first in nature, just as the effects that naturally follow from it are<sup>36</sup>. The conclusion forces Gomes into a detailed discussion of passages by Aristotle and Averroes<sup>37</sup> which aims to show that it is based on their doctrines. That discussion is followed by arguments showing that the first subject matter of natural philosophy is that which « contains virtually first the first physical truths, and which is *per se* included in any natural quiddity *per se* mobile, and in relation to which all the other *per se* things considered by their physical habit have essential attribution »<sup>38</sup>. By using these two procedures it is argued that nature is the formal reason of the subject matter of physics. Gomes goes so far as to affirm that one may « conceive nature in its essence, without conceiving either motion or its disposition to motion »<sup>39</sup>.

Once the subject matter of physics has been determined, Gomes addresses the other themes he proposed to deal with in this work: (1) to identify the subject matter of the other sciences and determine the way to identify the subject matter of each science, which he deals with at the end of the second article<sup>40</sup>; (2) the way to multiply the sciences according to genus and species, which is dealt with in the third article<sup>41</sup>. It is in this respect that physics will be confronted with First Philosophy or metaphysics<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., where argumentative steps from Aristotle and Averroes are brought forward to ground this claim.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-62.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 62-66.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-74.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-82.

<sup>42</sup> Cfr. Ch. LOHR, « Metaphysics », op. cit.

Gomes's first step towards the resolution of the first issue is to point out that when identifying the subject matter of any science, one must observe three things:

- [A] « what the first passions and truths belonging *per se* to that science are »;  
 [B] « (...) what one intends to prove in the first place »;  
 [C] « (...) what is the reason and *per se* cause through which [the scientific truths] are first contained [in the subject matter] and are demonstrated *propter quid* of it, a reason which simply is the first [*simpliciter prima*] in that science »<sup>43</sup>.

Since the subject matter of science has to be virtually first, it is presupposed (*praesupponitur in tota illa scientia*) and not obtained by demonstration. This also means that it has to be something common and above all essences, because the first object contains virtually at least the first passions which are inherent to it<sup>44</sup>. In metaphysics or First Philosophy, « whose first passions are transcendent and most common to all things [*transcendentes et communissimae omnibus rebus*] », only being in an absolute sense (*ens simpliciter*) is adequate as first subject matter. It is described as « the being according to the nature of the thing as a being, to wit, that which is common, univocal, by univocation of the analogy, to God and to the creature, to the substance and to the accident »<sup>45</sup>. First Philosophy is *scientia transcendens* and most common, that is, its subject matter is prior to all determination<sup>46</sup>.

Given this determination of the *ens simpliciter* or the *ens ex natura rei inquantum ens* as the subject matter of First Philosophy, Gomes rejects immediately two traditions: his first subject matter cannot be the

<sup>43</sup> Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, p. 66.

<sup>44</sup> Id. *ibid.* This description is close to what Duns Scotus calls « habits of science »; cfr. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* prol. p. 3 q. 1-3 n. 145 p. 98: « Ille habitus qui dicitur scientia est species intelligibilis primi obiecti; ille respicit veritates immediatas et mediatas, non formaliter sed ex consequenti, et suum obiectum adaequatum formaliter est quidditas cuius est species ».

<sup>45</sup> Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, p. 68: « in prima philosophia, cuius passiones primae sunt transcendentes et communissimae omnibus rebus, nihil potest adaequate eas continere virtualiter nisi communissimum; ac ideo ponitur subiectum primum ens simpliciter, id est, ens ex natura rei inquantum ens, quod scilicet est commune, univocum, univocatione analogiae, Deo et creaturae, substantiae et accidenti ».

<sup>46</sup> In the present volume, there are several interpretations and abundant bibliographical references on transcendentals and on the meaning of the Scotist definition of metaphysics as *scientia transcendens*; these are foundational for Gomes in this work, though given its brevity, references to this Scotist basis are laconic.

being common to the real being and to the being of reason (*ens commune ad ens reale et rationis*) because this is purely equivocal and that which is equivocal cannot be the subject matter of any science. Yet neither can it be finite being (*ens finitum*), that is, being as it can be described by the ten categories. In his effort not to deviate too much from Aristotle, however, Gomes argues that the determination of the *being as being* as the first subject matter of First Philosophy is in agreement with Aristotle's statement in *Metaphysics IV* that it « is the science that speculates on being as being and on what exists in it *secundum se* ». This argument from authority is then completed by an argument from reason:

« The same is proven by reason. In fact, the accidents proper to the being are the *unique passions*, such as one, true, good, and the *disjunctive passions*, such as being or non being, possible or necessary, and others like these, which are convenient to the first nature and to other abstract substances by the reason of the being alone. So, while the being includes them, it is common to all separate substances and to all things which can fall under a category »<sup>47</sup>.

Gomes thus rejects that metaphysics should occupy itself, in the first place, with being as it is circumscribed by the ten categories. And it is at this unique juncture that he enumerates some of the transcendentals as passions of being, which metaphysics concerns itself with, leaving aside pure perfections but including non-being as disjunctive from being.

There is a third thesis on the subject matter of First Philosophy that Gomes rejects or at least nuances: the one held by Averroes who, in Commentary 2 on Book VI of *Metaphysics*, states that the noblest science is the one pertaining to the noblest genus and so the divine science, because it deals with God, is the noblest. But First Philosophy does not treat of God as a first and complete subject matter; rather, it deals with God as the main part of the subject matter and « God is by Himself contained in the subject matter of First Philosophy, but He is not by

<sup>47</sup> Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, p. 68: « Ratione probatur idem. Nam accidentia propria entis sunt passiones unice, puta unum, verum, bonum, et disiunctae ut esse vel non esse possibile vel necessarium, et huiusmodi, quae primae naturae ac aliis substantiis abstractis conveniunt, et non nisi per rationem entis. Igitur ens ut illas includit est commune substantiis seperatis omnibus et rebus praedicamentalibus ».

Himself contained in predicative being (*sub ente predicamentali*) and therefore He is not the first subject matter of First Philosophy »<sup>48</sup>.

As to mathematics, its first subject matter is « quantity as quantity », which includes intelligible matter and confused concepts. It thus includes the first passions common both to size or quantity by itself contracted into size (which by itself is the first subject matter of geometry) and to number (which is the first subject matter of arithmetic). The subject matter of subordinate sciences is contracted, since it is no longer general and deals with specific passions, and so its extension is smaller.

#### 4. Theoretical Habits and the *multiplicatio scientiarum*

Gomes does not deviate from Aristotle's generally shared position according to which there are only three general theoretical habits: metaphysics, physics and mathematics<sup>49</sup>. Yet for some these do not seem to be enough to exhaust the totality of natural, real and speculative objects of knowledge. After he explicitly finishes describing the first subject matter of natural « theoretical habits »<sup>50</sup>, Gomes evokes the theory of the theologians who count Sacred Theology (*sacram Theologiam*) among the first sciences. This science deals « with God as God, under the reason of the deity Himself, a reason according to which

<sup>48</sup> Id. *ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>49</sup> Cfr. Aristoteles, *Metaphysica* VI 1, 1025b-1016a32. This passage provides the context for the discussion of this classification of the sciences. There is a clear identity in terminology and doctrine, but not in the sequence of the argument, with Duns Scotus in the *Opera philosophica III-IV – Quaestiones super libros metaphysicorum Aristotelis* The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure 1997 (transl. G. J. ETZKORN and A. B. WOLTER, *Questions on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by John Duns Scotus*, vol. II, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure 1997-1998, pp. 3-30). An unidentified Latin edition can be found at [http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/resources/scotus/In\\_Meta.txt](http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/resources/scotus/In_Meta.txt). There is no textual overlap with the *Expositio in duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, published as being by Scotus, but which is in fact by Antonius Andreas (ed. L. WADDING, Lyon 1639, pp. 1-462, cfr. pp. 205-210). On this, cfr. I. MIRALBELL, « La distinción entre Metafísica, Matemática y Física según Duns Escoto », in L. SILEO (ed.), *Via Scoti. Methodologica ad mentem Joannis Duns Scoti*, vol. I, PAA – Ed. Antonianum, Roma 1995, pp. 347-358.

<sup>50</sup> These are theoretical or scientific habits because their end is the knowledge of truth (knowledge in itself) and not appropriate action as in the case of a practical habit and practical science; cfr. Aristotle, *Ethica Nichomachea* I 1, 1094b27-1095a11; cfr. R. H. PICH, « As principais posições de Scotus na Primeira Parte do Prólogo à *Ordinatio* », in João Duns Scotus, Prólogo da *Ordinatio*, Edipucrs, Porto Alegre 2003, p. 48, note 127.



He has His own knowable principles and properties ». Gomes simply rejects this inclusion because « this proper reason constitutes another genus of the knowable, distinct from those mentioned before »<sup>51</sup> and he promises to return to this issue later. It is therefore a supernatural habit and the formulation indicates that there is no overlapping or concurrence of this science with theoretical habits<sup>52</sup>. After another discussion of the subordination<sup>53</sup> of sciences such as medicine, perspective, geometry, music and moral philosophy, Gomes takes on the third and last article or problem: how do the sciences multiply according to genus and species? He recovers a rule already exhibited: « there is but one science about the same essence according to the same formal reason », that is, « a science has one essential concept only, essentially adequate, virtually and ordinately containing proper passions, and that concept is the first subject matter of each science »<sup>54</sup>. For this reason, « to the science dealing with this subject matter belongs all truth whose resolution is ultimately reduced to the first adequate essential concept of that subject matter »<sup>55</sup>.

The principles which permit the multiplication of the sciences by *descensus* according to the species within the same genus are thus established. And there are two logical-semantic ways of multiplying the sciences according to the species within the same knowable genus:

- to descend from the subject matter *per se* in the first way, that is, « to the essences which by themselves and essentially include the first knowable subject »;
- to descend from the predicate, that is, « from the common passion to the passions which are proper to those essences, for the formal reason is preserved in them for considering the first subject matter ».

<sup>51</sup> Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, p. 72.

<sup>52</sup> On Duns Scotus's criticisms of Thomas Aquinas, who maintained the possibility of theology being able to demonstrate about being what metaphysics demonstrates by its own means, cfr. R. H. PICH, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

<sup>53</sup> The details of Gomes's discussion are here omitted. A substantial discussion of the problems of subordination in Duns Scotus can be found in the essays by R. H. PICH, « Subordinação das ciências e conhecimento experimental: um estudo sobre a recepção do método científico de Alhazen em Duns Scotus », in L. A. DE BONI e R. H. PICH (eds.), *A recepção do pensamento greco-romano, árabe e judaico pelo Ocidente medieval*, Edupucrs, Porto Alegre 2003, pp. 573-616; ID., « A crítica de Scotus à teoria tomasiana da subordinação das ciências », *Scintilla* 2 (2005) 11-66.

<sup>54</sup> Cfr. Gomes de Lisboa, *Questão muito útil*, p. 75.

<sup>55</sup> Id. *ibid.*

This principle guarantees generic unity to each of the main theoretical habits, and when they occur simultaneously, they allow for the multiplication of the sciences according to the scientific knowledge of essences and passions which are virtually contained in their first subject matter, thus becoming the subject matter of specific sciences but within the same genus. There may, then, be several (*plures*) metaphysical habits distinct in the species, and this variety is also possible in physics. When the descent occurs only in the first way, there is just a multiplication in number of knowledge as an explanation of already known conclusions, without there being a corresponding need for another specific science, since it consists of the demonstration of a superior's passion in respect of an inferior<sup>56</sup>. The principle of *descensus* functions here as the basis for a non-cumulative model of knowledge inside each science, because it can always grow in number of explanations of already known conclusions, although a multiplication of the objects of knowledge does not seem to be possible, since these are already given in the virtually first.

It still remains to make clear whether there is any relationship among the main theoretical habits, and Gomes will finish his work by addressing this topic as he discusses the distinction of the sciences according to genus<sup>57</sup>, a distinction which depends both on the formal reason of the first subject matter and on the formal reason to consider the first subject matter. This double aspect is underlined in the new definition of the subject matter of metaphysics:

« Metaphysics considers the most common *simpliciter* being as being, which, according to its formal reason, as it is the first subject matter of such a habit, abstracts from motion, from sensation, and from sensitive and intelligible matter »<sup>58</sup>.

The definition carries certain presuppositions that it is important to extract. It starts by affirming that metaphysics is different from any other science in that it does not abstract from any of those aspects (for instance, mathematics does not abstract from intelligible matter) and it gives it a

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 76-77.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 78-83.

<sup>58</sup> Id. *ibid.*, p. 78: « Methaphysica enim considerat ens simpliciter communissimum in quantum ens, quod secundum suam formalem rationem, ut est subiectum primum talis habitus, abstrahit a motu et sensu et a materia sensibili et intelligibili ».

conceptual distinction from the passions which does not occur in the other sciences. In metaphysics it is therefore possible to make the *descensus* from the being *per se* to all the essences which abstract from motion and sensation, preserving the unity of genus and without multiplication, so that « all the truths, in the essences considered according to such reason, are metaphysical ». The unity of metaphysics is thus ensured.

The definition carries yet another consequence, and this is a decisive one for the relationship among the sciences, for it establishes that all of them depend on metaphysics. It even contains a principle of generation and organization of the sciences by a purely formal and cognitive process starting from metaphysics.

With the *descensus* from being *per se* to something that is *per se* one and which determines being, or to something that is *per se* inferior, for example substance, which is the principle of motion, we do in fact cross over into a new kind of science, i.e., physics. We no longer stay within metaphysics, because the formal reason through which the subject matter is to be considered is not the same any more, and neither are the principles and the first passions<sup>59</sup>.

Still by descending from being *per se*, one arrives at quantity, which is distinct as to the concept and as to the passions included in it, and constitutes the third genus of science, formally considered<sup>60</sup>.

These are the three main speculative habits « because the formal reason of the first subject matter makes it *per se one* with the material subject matter or substratum, which is *per se* considered by the superior science »<sup>61</sup>. Gomes even denies that theology may be considered, as the theologians suggest, a fourth genus of theoretical science, « because it adds to the being *per se* a proper reason which goes beyond all kind of natural knowledge and thus constitutes a different genus from the threefold natural philosophy, that is, from that which can be known naturally ». Similarly, sciences such as perspective or geometry cannot be considered as theoretical sciences, because they add an accidental difference to natural philosophy or to mathematics (for instance, perspective, the science of visual size, adds visuality, an accidental difference, to size).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

Subordinate sciences have an accidental concept as their first subject matter, which includes the principles known *per se* and the proper passions. Just as in the case of traditional doctrine, the subordinate science is, therefore, less general as regards its subject matter than the subordinating one. But Gomes does not accept the other traditionally necessary condition for subordination: that the subordinate science should take its principles, or at least one of its premises, from the subordinating one, because if this were so that principle or premise would not then belong to that science *per se* but would be in another one. As we saw, for Gomes the distinction among the sciences consists in the fact that to each science always belongs some principle *per se*, which ultimately is resolved into that science's subject matter: « there is no science of a subject matter but as in it are contained the first principles and through them the proper conclusions *propter quid* »<sup>62</sup>. All he accepts is that knowledge of the principles of the subordinating science is the cause by inference of the knowledge of the principles of the subordinate one, but there is no containment.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Gomes's *quaestio* – in which one recognizes Scotist concepts and positions which already have a long history, and which had another more speculative and constructive formulation in the work of Duns Scotus himself<sup>63</sup>, and also in some of Scotus's followers – started with a very precise goal: to determine the subject matter of First Philosophy. Gomes identifies with the thought of Duns Scotus, so instead of just refuting Vernia and discussing the same issues of Vernia's opusculum, he sets out from the Scotist way of defining the subject matter of a science (inspired in the discussions on the subject matter of metaphysics) and then identifies *natural substance* as the first subject matter of physics. The greatest confrontation with Vernia comes from the inversion allowed by the definition of the subject matter of metaphysics. The Scotist theory of

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> On Duns Scotus's theory of science cfr. D. DEMANGE, « 'Objet premier d'inclusion virtuelle'. Introduction à la théorie de la science de Jean Duns Scotus », in O. BOULNOIS; E. KARGER; J.-L. SOLERE; G. SONDAĞ (eds.), *Duns Scot à Paris 1302-2002*, Brepols, Turnhout 2004, pp. 89-116.

virtual containment, together with the theory of inference, turn metaphysics into the first of all sciences, in the sense that all the other main theoretical sciences are nothing but a derivation from it, since they all study particular aspects of being. Consequently, not only is theology barred from the status of a theoretical science, metaphysics also proceeds without the contribution of physics to the definition of its primary subject matter, contrary to what Averroes had intended. The determination of the subject matter of metaphysics (the being as being and its transcendent passions) as the formal reason from which to consider all that is contained in its subject matter, allows for the reorganization of the relationship among the theoretical sciences. They are not separated by the intangibility of its subjects, but rather they organically and genetically depend on metaphysics, which takes on the role of first science in the ontological and epistemological orders.

Gomes's opusculum constitutes the reaction from a master of Pavia to « Paduan Averroist Aristotelianism » fought with « Scotist Aristotelianism ». More than a development of Scotus's positions on the subject matter of the theoretical sciences or the subordination of the sciences into new theories, Gomes's work takes up and applies some of Scotus's principles in the context of the debates among different schools of the Italian Renaissance.

In the confrontation opposing Gomes of Lisbon and Nicoletto Vernia, we find ourselves also steeped in the midst of a debate internal to Aristotelianism, concerning the subject matter of physics, those of the other theoretical sciences and, in particular, the relationship and hierarchy that obtain among them. It must not go unnoticed that each one of these authors considers himself to be following a more consistent form of Aristotelianism. Gomes constantly grounds his positions on authority, that is, on the texts of Aristotle and Averroes, just as Vernia had done, but he interprets them in the light of Duns Scotus, « the greatest of all the Aristotelians ».

