

СЕРЕДНЬОВІЧНА ФІЛОСОФІЯ

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A SYSTEM OF METHODOLOGICAL COORDINATES FOR A HISTORIOGRAPHER OF MEDIEVAL PHILO- SOPHY: A PROPOSAL OF AN EXPLANATORY TOOL

Introduction

The progress of the historical-philosophical and historical-theological studies of western medieval thought has been rather considerable in the last decades of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. So was the multiplication of the methods employed in the field. The *geistesgeschichtliche*, neo-scholastic, strictly confessional, or blatantly rationalistic approaches of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries gave way to newer techniques of looking at medieval thought, with more attention given to not so well-known personalities, misunderstood or underestimated ideas, social and intellectual contexts, and complexities of the medievals' intellectual habits. Furthermore, the last thirty years of scholarship, roughly from 1990 through 2020, have produced not only a number of new approaches to the history of medieval philosophy and theology but also several reflections on the ways—both old and new—of dealing with this historical material.

Not so long ago, such scholars as John Inglis, Marcia Colish, Timothy Noone, Catherine König-Pralong, and Trent Pomplun have reflected on and analyzed the major methodological *paradigms, trends, and “storylines”* within the medieval intellectual historiography of the last hundred years [Colish 2000; Inglis 1998; König-Pralong 2009; Noone 2001; Pomplun 2016]. Others, like Norman Cantor, and numerous authors of various collective works devoted to major academic figures of the recent past highlighted these giants' *personal stories and contributions* to medieval scholarship [Aurell & Crosas 2005; Aurell & Pavón Benito 2009; Cantor 1991; Damico 2000]. Similarly, such researchers as Jean Jolivet, Alain de Libera, David Luscombe, Albert Zimmermann, Luca Bianchi, Robert Wielockx, Claude Panaccio, and others concentrated on and assessed the *collective contributions* made by representatives of “national” historiographical traditions [Aurell 2009; Bianchi 2000; Jolivet 1991; Libera 1991; Luscombe 1991; Zimmermann 1991] and semi-institutional “schools” of research [Bose 2006; Panaccio 2000; te Velde 2013, esp. chaps. 17-21; Wielockx 1991]. Still, others, like Philipp Rosemann, John Marenbon, and same Alain de Libera have tried to rethink the nature and methods of the medieval philosophical-theological historiography against the backdrop of and in connection with the broader discipline of philosophy, which encompasses both its history and its current state [Libera 1999, 2014; Marenbon 1998, 2011,

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2018; Rosemann 1999]. Similar, although more general, attempts at classification and creative rethinking have also been made in the discipline of church history and historical theology, with some references to medieval theological historiography. Among the most notable are the publications of James Bradley and Richard Muller, Justo González, Jay Green, and a volume prepared by A. Chapman, J. Coffey, and their colleagues [Bradley & Muller 1995, 2016; Chapman et al. 2009; González 2002; Green 2015].

Overall, one cannot fail to see a range of various methods and attitudes. There are probably as many approaches to Abelard, Aquinas, Bonaventure, and their scholastic colleagues' legacy as their authentic works, and the just-mentioned publications show well what these approaches are and where one spots them. There is no need to duplicate the explanatory schemes and observations made in the informative studies of Inglis, Marenbon, or Pomplun, nor one should disapprove of the sophisticated typologies drawn by Colish and König-Pralong. Still, I think it is useful to continue their work and supplement it with a possibly helpful explanatory tool.

As a contribution to this ongoing assessment of the existing methods of studies in medieval philosophy, I would like to offer a description of an imaginary map or, better, a system of methodological coordinates that allows one to see how current approaches and methods form a panoply of axes which belong together in one complex grid. In my view, the methodological frame of references that currently exists in the field of medieval philosophical-theological historiography may be grasped and described as a complex system of coordinates with three axes. Every axis corresponds to a certain aspect of the historical and systematic research and symbolizes a possible movement between two extremes representing opposite methodological values and directions. Three axes together constitute a three-dimensional grid which helps to visualize the tapestry of approaches, and within which a particular study in medieval thought might be located.¹ This three-dimensional system of coordinates does not pretend to be exhaustive but can help to chart the existing methodological tendencies and, then, locate one's approach on this imaginary map. In what follows, I explain this methodological framework and give a few examples of scholarly publications that are to be "located" on the axes of this imaginary scheme.

Axis 1

The first methodological axis is "argumentational." It corresponds to the fact that historians of theology and philosophy always work with and analyze the *statements and arguments* the medieval thinkers produced. In particular, researchers study, translate, reconstruct, and try to explicate those arguments. The key term here is "reconstruct," for it is precisely upon the quality and validity of reconstruction that the quality and validity of the researcher's point about a medieval argument hinge.

The spectrum of ways in which the historians of thought treat these arguments runs along the axis from more historical to more philosophical or "rational" reconstructions.² The latter means conscious and rationally rigorous redressing and reinterpretation of the medievals'—or any past thinkers'—arguments in *our* terms, in the terms of contemporary philosophy or theology, whereas the former suggests an attempt to understand and reconstruct their

¹ Basically, I borrow the metaphor of a system of coordinates that is applied to philosophical and theological processes from Cyril Hovorun's book. There, he uses his two-dimensional system of axes to analyze the evolution of "the 'self' of the church" and "to trace and evaluate the trajectories of the church's self-awareness" [Hovorun 2015: 150-152] For my part, I adapt and further expand this image by turning it into a three-dimensional grid of three axes and applying it to the analysis of methodological tendencies in the area of medieval philosophical and theological historiography.

² For the notions of historical and rational reconstructions, see [Libera 2014: 43ff; Rorty 1984].

thoughts in *their* own terms, that is, the conceptual framework of their own time and their own literary corpus. These are the two extremes of an imaginary argumentational axis whose diverging arrows correspond to two existing trends, with many variations in between.

The historical reconstructionist trend is often associated with the proponents of the “historical” or neo-historicist approaches to the philosophy and theology of the past,³ and with the followers of Quentin Skinner’s method who “plead for a more historically-minded approach to the history of ideas,” and do their best to “see things their way.”⁴ The opposite, the rational reconstructionist trend, instead, seeks to “impose enough of our problems and vocabulary on the dead to make them conversational partners” [Rorty 1984: 49], and believes that their arguments, restated in contemporary parlance, would “contribute usefully to contemporary discussions” [Marenbon 2011: 67]. It is considered to represent the analytic or “philosophical” approach to the history of philosophy, intimately connected with analytic philosophy, the new philosophy of religion, and, to a certain extent, “New Medievalism,” all of which were born in the Anglo-Saxon intellectual world but have had their repercussions on the European continent, as well.⁵

The research of, for example, M. Colish, D. Perler, P. Porro, R. Southern, F. van Steenberghe, and J. Wippel would fall closer to the historical reconstructionist pole of this argumentational axis [Colish 1994; Perler 2004, 2012; Porro 2012, 2015; Southern 1990; Van Steenberghe 1991; Wippel 2000, 2007]. On the other hand, N. Kretzmann, W. Lane Craig, A. McIntyre, and J. Milbank, with some of their major publications, would be situated closer to the rational reconstructionist end [Craig 1988, 1991; Kretzmann 1997, 1998; McIntyre 1990 (esp. McIntyre’s version of “Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition” of moral inquiry), 2007 (esp. his exposition of “The Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition of the virtues” in Prologue and chaps. 13 and 14); Milbank 2019; Milbank & Pickstock 2001].

At the same time, many figures would be located somewhere in between the two extremes but at different loci. Probably, A. de Libera with his attempts to both connect and disconnect the medieval past and our present holds the pride of place in the center of the argumentational pole [Libera 1991, 2016, 2019]. Similar approaches that try to build bridges between the medievals’ arguments and contemporary thinking, doing justice *equally* to both sides, are found, for instance, in the research of P. DeHart, N. den Bok, and D. Turner [DeHart 2012; den Bok 1996; Turner 2004]. These people, and those who share their perspective, aspire to combine the truly historical reading of the arguments with current discussions in systematic theology and philosophy, giving exclusive priority to neither option.

Still, many other scholars combine historical reconstruction with a rational adaptation of the medieval philosophers’ reasoning but with an emphasis on a particular side of the argumentational axis. O. Boulnois, L. Honnefelder, S. Knuuttila, J. Marenbon, A. Vos, and many others, with their historical reading of medieval arguments coupled with the intention to explicate those with references to later philosophy and contemporary parlance and by means of some newer tools, stand on the historical-reconstructionist side of the pole, somewhere between the middle and the extreme [Boulnois 1999, 2007, 2014; Honnefelder 1990, 1998,

³ For the notions of “historicism,” “neo-historicism,” and “historical approach” to the history of philosophy, see [Beiser 2007; D’Amico 2008; Flasch 2008; König-Pralong 2009: 143-146; Marenbon 2011: 68-69; Oexle 2001].

⁴ For Skinner’s position, see [Skinner 2002: 3, 6, *passim*]. For further application of and additions to his method, especially in the field of theology and religious studies, see [Chapman et al. 2009].

⁵ On analytic philosophy, philosophy of religion, and the studies in medieval philosophy and theology, see [Colish 2000: 15-18; König-Pralong 2009: 148-149]. On New Medievalism, see [Aurell 2005; Bloch et al. 2014; Brownlee et al. 1991].

2008; Knuuttila 1993, 2017; Marenbon 1997, 2003, 2013; Vos 2006, 2018]. R. Campbell, K. Rogers, D. Smith, E. Stump, and others, with their interpretation of the medievals' arguments being significantly influenced by the agenda of contemporary philosophy, would take their position between the center and the rational-reconstructionist extreme [Campbell 2018; Eder & Ramharter 2015; Rogers 2007, 2008, 2015; Smith 2014; Stump 2001, 2003, 2014]. Thus, one's research can be located anywhere on this axis, depending on the emphasis either on the historical form and meaning or on the contemporary meaning and significance of the medieval thinker's *rationes* that the researcher makes.

It seems likely that the fluctuations and variations of approaches within this "rational" versus "historical" scheme will abide in the future as they do now because the tension itself is rooted in the very nature of the discipline. [On this issue, see: König-Pralong 2009: 143-146, 167-169; Marenbon 2018; Plourde 2019.] Philosophy and theology have both historical and rational aspects. Both ask perennial questions and try to solve them with the help of reason (at least, in part) but do so in historical circumstances, through the ages, year after year. In other words, philosophy and theology use reason within history, and both have a history of their reasoning. Hence, the debate between historical and rational reconstructionists is hard to resolve. Yet, it is possible to take a justifiable position within this discussion and use the insights of other interpreters.

Axis 2

The second methodological axis is "focal" or "objectival" in that it is based on the possible answer to the question: what is the *focus or particular object* of the research in medieval thought? In other words, who are the real human objects of the medieval intellectual historiography, and the real human subjects of medieval intellectual history? Is it mostly about individuals or groups and traditions? The method used will be either adapted to the focus on the individual or to the focus on the collective, something that can be called a conversational community or tradition.⁶

One tendency has it that the discipline of medieval philosophical (or theological) historiography should study the most prominent medieval thinkers, concentrating on *individuals* and implying that it is these individuals that created and shaped medieval thought as such. They constitute the locus of meaning for the historiographer. In a sense, these great minds *are* medieval philosophy and theology. Thus, the historian's zoom is set on the individual(s): if he comes from a philosophy department, he is interested in "the mind of some great philosopher of the past" [Kenny 1993: 9], and, if he belongs to the community of theologians, his work deals almost exclusively with "great Christian thinkers" [Küng 1994]. The volumes, written by W. Craig, J. Frame, A. Kenny, H. Küng, and R. Southern, exemplify this approach on a macro-level, where several individuals are separately treated in one book through some kind of topical or chronological lens [Craig 1988; Frame 2015; Kenny 1993, 2005; Küng 1994; Southern 2001]. This is why Marenbon calls it "The Great Philosophers

⁶ Here I partly adapt Gelber's terminology. In his monograph on Oxford Dominicans, he looks "at intellectual history as the history of a kind of conversation," in which individual thinkers usually belong to bigger "conversational communities." This means the following: "Either in person or in print, members of such a community respond to the arguments and assertions of past and present authors, while their contemporaries and those who succeed them respond to them in turn." Thus, the conversation goes on and on in a circle of people. For example, for Gelber, the Dominicans of the fourteenth-century Oxford University "constituted an identifiable conversational community because they lived together, discussed issues together, had a more or less defined canon of authorities, and participated in various educational activities. See [Gelber 2004: 12-14, 23ff].

approach,” Bradley and Muller christen it the “Great Thinker Model,” and Rorty totally dismisses it as “doxography” in an utterly negative sense [Bradley & Muller 2016: 27-29; Marenbon 2011: 69-70; Rorty 1984: 61-67].

Still, it is crucial to make a distinction between various types of individualist studies. In addition to macro-level works that embrace a host of great minds from the medieval past, a whole range of books, dedicated to one particular thinker, proliferate on a micro-level, where one book deals with one thinker’s teachings. Some of these recent monographs are of excellent quality and written with great attention to the broader context of the thinker studied [e.g., Colish 1994; Coolman 2010, 2017; Porro 2015; Rosemann 2004; Sweeney 2012; Wippel 2000], while others tend to present somewhat atomistic intellectual portraits [e.g., Brock 2015; Kenny 1993; Kretzmann 1997, 1998; Milbank & Pickstock 2001; Visser & Williams 2009].

The opposite tendency places the meaning and formative significance in *groups of individuals*, synchronically, and in *continuous traditions*, diachronically. From this perspective, the history of thought is made by and unfolds inside the institutionalized or, at least, stable religious, educational, and intellectual conversational communities which forge, defend, and, then, transfer ideas, arguments, texts, and iconic images of their leaders to new disciples through time and across different places. It is not Aquinas alone that is important, but the Dominican tradition of theology on a bigger scale, and it is not just Duns Scotus who revolutionizes metaphysics but a number of Franciscans who precede and follow his lead. After all, followers make leaders, as the saying goes. The approach is best to be defined as tradition-historical, with elements of reception history (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*), and “history of effect” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). Nevertheless, the notion of tradition that is central to this approach is replete with meaning and multifaceted. It can be identified with the religious order (Cluniac, Cistercian, Dominican, Franciscan, etc.), philosophical preference for and influence of a certain teacher (the Porretani, Albertists, Thomists, Scotists, the Avicennan, Augustinian, and Aristotelian traditions, etc.), an educational institution (urban schools, *studia* of religious orders, Universities of Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Louvain, Prague, etc.), or a certain practice that fosters continuity (for example, the tradition of commenting on the Bible, the *corpus aristotelicum* and the *Book of Sentences* in medieval schools, or participating in required disputations with the fixed procedure).

Now, research goes in all these directions. For instance, J. Aertsen, R. Friedman, H. Gelber, F.-X. Putallaz, L. Schumacher, the representatives of the Utrecht-Leuven School, and other scholars spend their energies studying the Franciscan and Dominican intellectual traditions, and their interferences [Friedman 2013; Gelber 2004; Osborne 2007; Putallaz 1997; Schumacher 2019, 2020b, 2020a; Vos 2001, 2010; Vos et al. 1994]. The mendicant educational traditions have been studied in detail in the works of M. Mulchahey, B. Roest, and other researchers [Emery et al. 2012; Mulchahey 1998; Pacheco 1999; Roest 2000, 2015].

In their turn, W. Courtenay, N. Gorochov, A. Maierù, J. Verger, O. Weijers, S. Young, and their colleagues investigate urban schools and universities of the classic and later Middle Ages and, partly, the life, career, and opinions of masters of arts (that is, philosophy) and theology [e.g., Courtenay et al. 2000; de Ridder-Symoens 1992; Gorochov 2012; Hoenen et al. 1995; Maierù 1994; Marenbon 2020; Marmursztejn 2007; Teeuwen 2003; Verger 1995, 1998; Wei 2012; Weijers 2015; Weijers & Verger 2013; Young 2014]. Other sites of knowledge and intellectual activity, which gave birth to, or were the headquarters of, some significant philosophical and spiritual movements, such as specific medieval monasteries and cathedral schools, have received due consideration, too [e.g., Feiss & Mousseau 2017; Pohl & Gathagan 2017].

Also, a whole group of scholars with G. R. Evans, R. Friedman, G. Galluzzo, Ph. Rosemann, C. Schabel, and O. Weijers at their lead, in well-organized collective efforts, dig out and explicate the intricacies of the medieval tradition of commentaries and disputations

which constituted the means by which theology and philosophy were studied and “made” at that time [del Punta 1998; Evans & Rosemann 2002; Friedman 2002; Galluzzo & Amerini 2014; Newton 2008; Rosemann 2007; Schabel 2006, 2007; Weijers 2002, 2009, 2013].

Finally, important individual and collective research projects have studied tracks and continuities of various reception histories. There are major publications on the reception of Augustine and other church fathers in medieval thought [e.g., Backus 1997; Boiadzhiev et al. 2000; Elders 2018; Gasper 2004; Otten & Pollmann 2013], of the Aristotelian corpus [e.g., Bradshaw 2006; Emery & Levering 2015; Galluzzo 2013; Honnefelder et al. 2005], of the Arabic tradition [e.g., Benevich 2018; Butterworth & Kessel 1994; Lagerlund 2008], and of a number of significant medieval figures—Anselm, Aquinas, Boethius, Duns Scotus, Peter Lombard, *et alii*—and their teachings [e.g., Catalani & De Filippis 2018; Courtenay 2008; Friedman & Nielsen 2010; Hoenen & Nauta 1997; Kaylor & Phillips 2012; Levering & Plested 2021; Rosemann 2007; Schumacher 2020]. These reception-historical and tradition-historical studies modify the existing methodologies and significantly deepen the picture of medieval philosophy by highlighting the sources and the later transformations of individual ideas, theories, and texts.

As a result of these diverse and numerous tradition-oriented studies which continue to come out of the press, the medieval philosophical-theological historiography seems to stop favoring atomic treatments of “great medieval minds,” while the tradition-historical research is thriving and informing the studies of individual thinkers. Now, even the volumes dedicated to major individuals tend to take a wider context into account and place their heroes in the larger traditions they belong to (that is, literary, intellectual, religious traditions).⁷ Thus, the two extremes of the “objective” axis are not very populated now, as the scholars try to combine the focus on the individual with the attention on the collective and the tradition-historical.

In other words, the medieval philosophers are now read more and more in terms of their respective institutional and intellectual traditions (and not just in terms of their personalities and selected texts), while medieval traditions as such are carefully studied as consisting of and being influenced by a large number of individuals, both “major” and “minor” (and not just as collective “spirits,” artificial “isms,” and a handful of selected “great minds”). Thus, it is stimulating to conclude that the tension between the two extremes of the “focal” axis starts to produce a fruitful methodological tendency that combines the study of individual thinkers and texts with their proper “traditional” and institutional contexts. Undoubtedly, this is the road that researchers need to tread further.

Axis 3

Finally, the third axis of my imaginary methodological frame of reference is “(con)textual.” It implies that medieval thinkers produced their works in a certain social, political, religious, and cultural climate, and the scholar examining these *texts* will have to pay some attention to its historical *context*. But he has a choice: either to concentrate on the “transhistoricity” and “atemporality” (or “transtemporality”) of his research object⁸—that is, the medievals’ texts with thoughts and arguments therein—peeling off the “unnecessary” external

⁷ Note, for example, the attention to Bonaventure’s Franciscan identity, ministry, and practices in [Hammond et al. 2014], how the authors of a recent volume on Aquinas’ *magnum opus* relate his work to the Dominican spirituality and discuss its reception in Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Reformed, and even non-Abrahamic traditions in [McCosker & Turner, 2016], and how other scholars place individuals in the lines of the historical and intellectual continuities (traditions) they are part of as well as highlight the disruptions (innovations) they contribute to: [e.g., Brun 2005; Friedman 2013; Hoenen 1993; Kitanov 2014; McCord Adams 2010; Posti 2020; Smith 2013; Vos 2006, 2010, 2018]

⁸ The terminology is borrowed from [König-Pralong 2009: 147; Panaccio 1998: 360, 366-367].

dimensions, or, on the contrary, to read the text against the backdrop of its social and intellectual milieu, highlighting the sources, discussions, events, and other extratextual issues. The first tendency, characterized by the acontextual abstraction of philosophical and theological points, is one extreme of the (con)textual axis, while the second one, with its accentuated “contextualism,” is the other. Alain de Libera identifies the tension between the poles as “textualism” versus “contextualism” [in, e.g., Libera 2014: 43] and Claude Panaccio reads it as a struggle between “continuism” and “discontinuism” [in Panaccio 2019: 11ff]. Many publications in the history of theology and philosophy—including that of medieval theology and philosophy—take a place somewhere between the opposite ends, but still, the tension exists, and various researchers approach the legacy of the (medieval) past differently.

The acontextual and transhistorical tendency finds its defenders in the ranks of those who want to “extract” the medievals’ arguments⁹ and fulfill “the natural desire to talk to people some of whose ideas are quite like our own, in the hope of getting them to admit that we have gotten those ideas clearer, or in the hope of getting them clearer still in the course of the conversation” [Rorty 1984: 52]. They do not see any significant intellectual value in the historical, contextual side of the issue, and focus their attention, instead, on a few major texts—hence, *textualism* as an emphasis on canonical texts—and the transhistorically understood ideas and arguments, which are believed to have continuity with contemporary discussions—hence, *continuism* as an emphasis on the continuity in the history of ideas [Panaccio 1998: 360ff; 2000: 341-342; 2019; Plourde 2019; Zarka 2001, 2005].

This is, for example, the tactic some scholars of analytic leanings apply to their readings of Aquinas’ metaphysical and ethical doctrines [e.g., Dewan 2006; Kretzmann 1998; MacDonald 1993] and Anselmian arguments [e.g., Campbell 2018; Kenny 2005: 292-95; Oppy 1995: 7-20; Smith 2014]. This is also how a few thinkers of continental predilections analyze Aquinas’ “onto-theological” doctrine [Hemming 2002; Marion 1982, cf. 2002], and how the proponents or opponents of “radical orthodoxy” interpret various Aquinas’ and Duns Scotus’ teachings [e.g., Milbank 2006 (esp. “Preface to the Second Edition” and ch. 10), 2019; Milbank & Pickstock 2001]. Likewise, this is the direction that one sees in the history of ideas

⁹ This term and notion appears in Étienne Gilson’s works, when he speaks of the “extraction” of philosophical ideas and arguments, which he identifies with the Christian philosophy (*la philosophie chrétienne*), from their original medieval theological contexts. In his Gifford Lectures, he states more generally that the scholar “has to extract the most profound of those [views] from the theological context in which they have been imbedded, because it is there, in the realm of theological problems, that they were actually born” (“il faudra extraire les plus profondes d’entre elles [ces vues] de contextes théologiques où elles sont engagées, parce que c’est au sein de problèmes théologiques qu’effectivement elles sont nées”) [Gilson 1969: 34, translation mine]. In his later *History*, he specifies his position with regard to Aquinas’ thought: “in the particular case of Thomas Aquinas, we are meeting a theologian so careful to distinguish between faith and reason that the philosophical elements included in his theology can be extracted from it and considered apart without undergoing any modification in nature or content” [Gilson 1955: 366].

More recently, this notion of extraction was positively used by, for instance, Arthur McGrade who explains the rationale of *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy* in terms of “accommodation of medieval philosophy to a ‘reason alone’ view of the discipline.” It means that he and his co-authors “attempt to extract material of independent philosophical interest from Augustinian faith-based thought” and “extract elements of independent philosophical interest from texts inspired by faith seeking understanding,” yet “without prejudice to the religious projects in which the medieval authors of our texts were engaged” [McGrade 2003: 6-7]. Another example would be Scott MacDonald who aspires to “extract” the theory of knowledge from Aquinas’ works despite the stipulation that he did not have one. He writes: “To examine what we can recognize as a distinct and systematic theory of knowledge, then, we need to extract his strictly epistemological claims from the metaphysical and psychological discussions in which they are embedded” [MacDonald 1993: 160]. This approach was severely criticized by John Inglis in [Inglis 1998: 207, 237-242, 260, 269].

of the Lovejoy type that hunts for the ever-recurrent “unit-ideas” within individual philosophical systems and in the history of theology and history of philosophy handbooks which follow the thematic or doctrinal method of exposition [e.g., Allison 2011; Wickberg 2014].¹⁰ A similar direction is also found in older and newer monographs and articles dedicated to specific “transhistorical” problems, issues, or philosophical “systems” [e.g., Archambault 2014; Schweitzer 2007; Van Steenberghe 1992]. These are examples of mostly *acontextual textualism* whose proponents take their positions near one end of the (con)textual axis.

The treatment the medieval heritage receives in this kind of works is detailed and thought-provoking but lacking interaction with the actual medieval historical setting. This is, in J. Rée’s words, an “attempt to exclude history from philosophy, and philosophy from history.” Notably, Rée regards this methodological decision as not only “impractical” but also “theoretically impossible” [Rée 1978: 30]. Furthermore, according to Marenbon’s observation, it prompts the “Division of Labor Approach” to the studies of medieval thought defended, for instance, by C. Normore [Marenbon 2011: 69; Normore 1990]: a historian of philosophy should analyze philosophical texts and ideas of the Middle Ages, and a historian of theology is better off to explore theological matters, whereas the historical context must be left to “ordinary” historians.

A more moderate version of textualism is practiced by specialists who give the maximum of their scholarly efforts to medieval texts, but their research is actually informed by historical considerations. They do not believe in the ahistoricity of ideas or systems and, instead, take into account the idiosyncrasies of the pre-scholastic and scholastic intellectual cultures of the Middle Ages. As a result, they concentrate on texts and ideas but study them with the maximal sensitivity to their original meaning, significance, and repercussions in all their historical specificity. Notable publications by, for instance, P. Adamson, J. Aertsen, F. Benevich, G. Kapriev, J. Marenbon, A. Oliva, D. Reisman, and E. Sweeney exemplify this approach well [Adamson 2007, 2017; Aertsen 1996; Benevich 2018; Kapriev 1998; Marenbon 1997, 2003; Oliva 2006; Reisman 2002; Sweeney 2012]. This is what I would call *contextualized textualism*, and this methodological trend is to be located on the (con)textual axis between the middle and the textual extreme. It mitigates the radicality of *acontextual textualism* and offers a more appropriate treatment of medieval philosophical texts, by incorporating some elements of more contextualist studies.

On the other half of the axis, the contextualists’ flag flutters over various practitioners of intellectual history,¹¹ including both those with “a functionalist conception of ideas as epiphenomenal” and those who are interested in ideas as crucial phenomena themselves. Riccardo Bavaj, admitting the ambiguity of his generalization, identifies this difference as that between “the ‘external’ contextualist approach of ‘intellectual history’ and the ‘internal’ approach of ‘the history of ideas’” [Bavaj 2010]. Still, in the area of philosophical and theological historiography, it is almost impossible to differentiate between something like *atextual contextualism* (which would practically correspond to miscellaneous types of social history, people’s history, cultural studies, etc., but would have nothing to do with philosophy and theology) and more moderate *textual contextualism* (which would mean the study of a philosophical text’s context, properly speaking). Thus, it does not make sense to mirror the situation with the textualist half of the (con)textual axis and divide the contextualist part into radical and moderate wings. Even if one could find the groups (and publications) of more

¹⁰ See a similar organization of material in a philosophical handbook (with exception of a couple of chapters): [McGrade 2003b].

¹¹ This is precisely how Collini defines intellectual history: not as a discipline but as “above all a form of practice, or a cluster of related practices” [Collini 2016: 11]. On intellectual history, see [Whatmore 2016; Whatmore & Young 2006, 2016].

radical and more moderate contextualist methodology among historiographers of medieval thought, it would be safe to conclude that the differences between them are rather formal and superfluous. In short, both camps—Bavaj’s hypothetical “external” and “internal” contextualists or my improbable “atextual contextualists” and “textual contextualists”—belong to the same army of intellectual historians. The intellectual history is “the close study of written expressions of thought, especially those crafted at a fairly sophisticated or reflective level [coupled with] the attempt to recover the assumptions and contexts which contributed to the fullness of meaning that such writings potentially possessed for their original publics,” according to Stefan Collini’s apt definition [Collini 2016: 11]. Put more succinctly, in John Burrow’s words, it is “the process of recovering ‘what people in the past meant by the things they said and what these things “meant” to them”” [Whatmore 2016: 13].

One contextualist approach in philosophical and cultural historiography—first of all, of late medieval and early modern thought—is rooted in, and gained in popularity because of, the achievements of the Cambridge School of Intellectual History as a type of British “linguistic contextualism” but is not limited to this group.¹² After the initial formulation of the School’s methodological paradigm by J. Dunn, J. Pocock, and Q. Skinner mainly in the context of political and cultural studies, other scholars further expanded and adjusted this paradigm to their needs—religious, philosophical, theological, and so on. For example, in an important volume, A. Chapman, J. Coffey, B. Gregory, and D. Bebbington have analyzed the applicability of Skinner’s methodology to religious history, while R. Muller, C. Trueman, and W. van Asselt have practically employed some of the Cambridge School’s intuitions in their studies of late medieval and post-Reformation protestant scholasticism [Chapman et al. 2009]. Other examples of context-oriented studies of medieval intellectual culture in the Anglo-Saxon world, rather independent of Dunn and his mates, include works by A. Novikoff, R. Southern, I. Wei, and others [Novikoff 2013; Southern 1990, 1995; Wei 2012].

However, the contextualist ranks have also been populated by scholars who had not experienced the British influence. In German historiography of medieval (and early modern) philosophy, this realm was once occupied by older Thomists, like F. Ehrle and M. Grabmann, and the proponents of *Begriffsgeschichte*.¹³ Now, the pride of place probably belongs to K. Flasch and his *Realgeschichte* which favors the study of philosophical ideas in close connection with the geographical, social, economic, political, and cultural situation in which those ideas were born (*die kulturellen Regionen; ein ökonomischer, sozialer und politischer Organisation*) [Flasch 1987, 2013]. As for the francophone academia, the tendency to embrace larger contexts of medieval philosophy has been shared by the representatives of the Annales School and their later “dialogue partners”, institutional historians, and other intellectual historians, most notably by R. Imbach, J. Le Goff, A. de Libera, and J. Verger [Gilli et al. 2007; Imbach 1996; Imbach & König-Pralong 2013; Le Goff 1985; Libera 1991, 2019; Verger 1998].

Lately, a number of historical-conceptual and linguistic-contextual studies that have some affinity with the British trends have been undertaken on the continent. Probably, the most important are the series published in Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands, respectively: “CIV-ICIMA: Études sur le vocabulaire intellectuel du Moyen Âge,” “Lessico intellettuale europeo,” and “Education and society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.” These series of publications seek to shed light on the medieval intellectual vocabulary, conceptual worlds, and institutional

¹² On the Cambridge School of Intellectual (or Political) History, see [Alexander 2016; James 2018; Whatmore 2015]. On linguistic contextualism, see [Koikkalainen 2011; Silva 2010; Whatmore 2016: 21-22, 38-44]. Also, note some recent critique of this approach in, for example, [Bevir 1992; Lamb 2009].

¹³ For the complex history of the *Begriffsgeschichte* school and their ambiguous connection with the Cambridge School of Intellectual History, see [Richter 2003; Tribe 2016; Whatmore 2016: 30-33].

structures to improve our understanding of the setting in which medieval thought emerged and evolved [e.g., Bubert 2019; Maierù & Valente 2004; Marenbon 2020; Teeuwen 2003].

All these quite different approaches and methods belong to the contextualist side of the (con)textual axis of my system of coordinates. What they have in common is the emphasis on the background, social world, and circumstances in which medieval philosophical texts and theories emerged. The texts do play a crucial role in these studies, but the main focus shifts from the text as a simple “container” of important theories and beautiful abstractions to the text as both a contingent outcome and a reflection of the biographical, social, economic, linguistic, and cultural realities of a particular author and his times.

The overall impression as regards the contextual axis is that the tension between its two ends is slowly being relieved as the studies of medieval thought become more context-sensitive. Since the mid-twentieth century, the number of full-fledged acontextual works decreases, and the context of each significant medieval discussion receives more scholarly attention. Whether a volume dedicated to a single thinker or medieval philosophy as a whole, many recent publications tend to read their materials more contextually, although this tactic is not predominant yet.¹⁴

The center

Now, the proposed methodological frame of reference for the medieval philosophical-theological historiography of the last decades has been laid out, and its overall configuration must be clear. The three-dimensional system of coordinates comprises three axes each of which corresponds to a gamut of ways to treat the arguments, the context, and the human subjects of medieval thought. Recent studies in medieval philosophy and theology might be conveniently located inside this general system of argumentational, focal (or objectival), and (con)textual axes as I described them.

But so far, I have been describing three distinct axes, each having its opposite ends or directions and a middle part. Now, if this is a three-dimensional system of coordinates that has the shape of a 3D cross, there must be a *center* where all axes intersect. Can we then speak of a center of this system that would translate into a “converging” and “integrative” methodological trend that would have a connection to the central areas of different axes?

The question can legitimately receive a positive answer. Bradley and Muller, when analyzing “methods in the history of doctrine,” have detected what they call the “integral,” “organic,” or developmental model of the organization of the historical-theological material which corresponds to a more or less integral research method [Bradley & Muller 2016: 23-24, 29-30]. There have probably been a few historians of theology who adopted this model which is believed to be sensitive to both content and context, personal contributions and general discussions, theologians of the past’s arguments and their original historical setting. According to Bradley and Muller’s definition, the model “attempts a synchronous understanding of the development of the central ideas of Christianity,” and recognizes that “it is the matrix of ideas in a particular period that controls the exposition of the history of doctrine” [Bradley & Muller 2016: 29]. Among its chief exponents, one should count A. von Harnack, R. Seeberg (Bradley and Muller’s choice), U. Leinsle, J. Marenbon, and K. Flasch (my addition), all of which try to survey medieval theology with its doctrines and arguments “integratively,” within its proper situations and discussions [Flasch 2013; Leinsle 1995, 2010; Marenbon 2007].

¹⁴ For example, note the sections dealing with “backgrounds,” “contexts,” “conditions,” and “traditions” in the following books: [Léchoat 2018 (esp. relevant sections in ch. I, III, IV); Marenbon 2007; Porro 2015; Vos 2006 (esp. parts I and III)].

I think one can find a rather integral model of studying medieval thought in the field of philosophical historiography, as well. One sees the same attention to multiple aspects—and, thus, the juncture of all three axes of the imaginary system of methodological coordinates—in a number of synchronic studies wherein the emphasis falls on a particular, relatively brief episode of bigger diachronic discussions understood in its intimate connection with its various backgrounds and traditions. It seems impossible for a single author to embrace large diachronic sections of intellectual history in a full-fledged integral study (although some collective monographs do have a larger scale), and, therefore, this approach tends to favor shorter time spans, the emphasis on the synchronic aspect, and attention to particular episodes in the history of philosophy: for example, a unique period or a significant event such as the condemnations of 1277. Monographs and a few densely annotated editions of primary texts by W. Duba, L. Bianchi, H. Gelber, C. Lafleur, R. Smith, and S. Young, as well as some other publications, are appropriate examples of this approach [e.g., Aertsen et al. 2001; Aertsen & Speer 1998; Bianchi 1999; Duba 2017; Gelber 2004; Lafleur & Carrier 1997; Schumacher 2020b, 2020a; Young 2014].

This more synchronic and wholistic in its orientation approach should be identified with a center where three axes of the imaginary system conjoin. It provides something of a middle ground between the dichotomies created by opposite directions of the axes: historical vs. rational reconstruction of the medievals' arguments, the focus on the individual (thinker) vs. the collective (tradition), and emphasis on the text vs. context. It is not necessary to prefer the center of the methodological system of references over its distinct parts, for each of them has its own characteristics and implies particular methods of study. Overall, the frame I propose here does not prescribe anything, trying instead to describe the existing methodological tendencies in medieval philosophical historiography by means of a simple classification and a metaphor of a system of coordinates. In this sense, it is designed to help one to trace the existing methodological trajectories and lay one's own course. But charting one's way is easier within a system of methodological references.

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Rostislav Tkachenko

A system of methodological coordinates for a historiographer of medieval philosophy: a proposal of an explanatory tool

The last thirty years of scholarship in western medieval philosophical historiography have seen a number of reflections on the methodological paradigms, schools, trends, and dominant approaches in the field. As a contribution to this ongoing assessment of the existing methods of studies in medieval philosophy and theology and a supplement to classifications offered by M. Colish, J. Inglis, C. König-Pralong, J. Marenbon, A. de Libera, and others, the article offers another explanatory tool.

Here is a description of an imaginary system of methodological coordinates that systematizes the current tendencies by placing them in a three-dimensional system of axes. Every axis corresponds to a

certain aspect of the historical and systematic research in medieval thought and symbolizes a possible movement between two extremes representing opposite methodological values and directions. The methods and approaches practiced in recent studies in medieval philosophy and theology might be schematically located inside this general system of argumentational, focal (or objectival), and (con)textual axes with their intersection identified with what some scholars call the “integral” model of study.

This explanatory tool allows one to see how current approaches and methods form a panoply of axes that belong together in one complex grid and helps to visualize the tapestry of existing approaches in medieval philosophical historiography.

Ростислав Ткаченко

Система методологічних координат для історіографа середньовічної філософії: пропозиція щодо тлумачного інструменту

Останні тридцять років досліджень у філософській історіографії західноєвропейських Середніх віків ознаменувалися появою низки роздумів про методологічні парадигми, школи, тенденції й панівні підходи в цій галузі. Стаття описує новий пояснювальний інструмент, що може виявитися корисним у процесі постійної оцінки наявних методів вивчення середньовічної філософії й теології та доповнити класифікації, запропоновані свого часу М. Коліш, Дж. Інглісом, К. Кьоніг-Пралонг, Дж. Маренбоном, А. де Лібера та іншими.

У статті представлено опис уявної системи методологічних координат, яка систематизує поточні тенденції, поміщаючи їх у тривимірну систему осей. Кожна вісь відповідає певному аспектові історичного й систематичного дослідження середньовічної думки та символізує можливий рух між двома крайнощами, що представляють протилежні методологічні цінності й напрямки. Методи й підходи, що практикуються в останніх дослідженнях середньовічної філософії й теології, можуть бути схематично розміщені всередині цієї загальної системи, яка складається з аргументативної, фокусної (або «об’єктної») і (кон)текстуальної осей, перетин яких ототожнюється з тим, що деякі вчені називають «інтегральною» моделлю студій.

Цей пояснювальний інструмент дозволяє побачити, як сучасні підходи й методи утворюють кілька осей, що складаються в одну складну сітку, і допомагає наочно відобразити спектр підходів, наявних у філософській історіографії Середніх віків.

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