

Conference:
Renaissance Aristotelianism in Southeast Europe
Zagreb, 22 – 23 September 2022
A Report

Within the research project *Croatian Renaissance Aristotelianism – A New Era in Thinking the Past*, led by Dr. Pavel Gregorić from the Institute of Philosophy in Zagreb and funded by the Croatian Science Foundation, the conference *Renaissance Aristotelianism in Southeast Europe* was held in Zagreb on 22 and 23 September 2022. Keynote speakers at the conference were Paul Richard Blum (Loyola University / Palcký University Olomouc) and Craig Martin (University of Venice). Other speakers were Luka Boršić (Institute of Philosophy in Zagreb), Eva Del Soldato (University of Pennsylvania), Maiko Favaro (University of Rome – Sapienza), Pavel Gregorić (Institute of Philosophy in Zagreb), Tomáš Nejeschleba (Palcký University Olomouc), Giovanni Rossi (University of Verona) and Marco Sgarbi (University of Venice).

The morning session on the first day of the conference began with the presentation “From Humanist Knowledge to Encyclopedic Science: Antonio Zara’s *Anatomia ingeniorum et scientiarum*” by Paul Richard Blum. Antonio Zara was born in Aquileia in 1574 and then served as the bishop of the ancient diocese of Pedana (Pićan in central Istria) from 1601 to 1621. In that period he wrote his *Anatomia*, an encyclopedia of all sciences and talents, organized systematically according to the anatomical picture of the human brain. Every chapter abounds with citations and references to all authorities available, from the Presocratics to contemporary natural philosophers and Jesuits. The book is intended to be comprehensive, but more importantly, it presents a framework of all learning that is plausible, accessible and realistic: all fields of objective knowledge are located in the structure of the human mind. Blum compared Zara’s project to Juan Huarte’s *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias*, Antonio Possevino’s *Bibliotheca selecta*, Tommaso Campanella’s *Realis philosophia epilogistica*, and Francesco Patrizi’s *Nova de universis philosophia*.

The second speaker was Marco Sgarbi. The title of his presentation was “Vernacular Metaphysics in Renaissance Ragusa”. The Renaissance saw a progressive marginalization and reduction of metaphysics, as its parts were taken up by theology and logic. Although metaphysical studies were still pursued in universities and religious circles, marginalization of metaphysics is more

visible in the works produced in the vernacular. The reason lies in the fact that the readers of vernacular works were mostly disinterested in metaphysical themes, preferring practical or natural philosophy topics. In his presentation, Sgarbi's focus was on Miho Monaldi (1540–1592) and his curious little dialogue on metaphysics, *Dialogho della metafisica*, published for the first time together with *Irene overo della Bellezza* (1590), and for the second time together with *Dialogo dell' avere* (1599).

Eva Del Soldato was the third and the last speaker of the morning session. In her presentation, entitled “Matija Frkić and His Enemies”, she presented several polemical debates in which Matija Frkić (1583–1669) was involved in his career. The struggles with his fellow Franciscans Bartolomeo Mastri and Bonaventura Belluto show the nature of Frkić's Aristotelianism, according to Del Soldato, whereas the clash with Liceti highlighted the limits of his allegiance to Aristotle. Liceti was fanatical in his support of Aristotle, and he even dared to claim the salvation of the soul of the Philosopher taking advantage, among other things, of a biographical legend originated in the Jewish milieu. For Frkić, and for other Paduan professors, this was too much. While offering additional evidence of the fragmented and varied nature of early modern Aristotelianism, Frkić's case is also enticing for presenting a Franciscan dealing with a complex negotiation between philosophy and theology, while experimenting with an ambitious exegetical program.

The afternoon session began with Giovanni Rossi's presentation “A Renaissance Rereading of Aristotelian Political Theories: Gučetić's treatise *Dello stato delle repubbliche* (1591)”. The Croatian philosopher Nikola Vitov Gučetić (1549–1610) from Dubrovnik provides a superb example of the widespread circulation of Aristotelian political theories in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century. His treatise *Dello stato delle repubbliche* completes the discourse that begun in his book *Governo della vita familiare*, published two years earlier, in 1589. In both mentioned works, he follows Aristotle's philosophy. Thanks to his works, Gučetić contributed to the restoration of the Aristotelian and classical heritage in general. It is noteworthy that in his works he often cites contemporary authors and makes references to.

The last presentation on the first day was “Aristotelianism and Platonism in Nikola Vitov Gučetić's *Dialogo della bellezza* and *Dialogo d'amore*” held by Maiko Favro. Favro stated his thesis that Gučetić's two dialogues are clearly based on Plato's thought, but the two characters in the dialogue, Gučetić's wife and the first Croatian women philosopher Maruša Gundulić, and her friend, the famous beauty Cvijeta Zuzorić, frequently referred to Aristotle and Aristotelian philosophers such as Averroes and Agostino Nifo. The aim of Favro's

presentation was to investigate the relationship between Aristotelianism and Platonism in Gučetić's two dialogues on beauty and love.

On the second day of conference, the first speaker was Craig Martin, with the presentation entitled "Daniel Furlanus, on the margins of the Aristotelianism". Daniel Furlanus (c. 1550 – 1592), the author largely unknown to most of the audience, edited and commented Theophrastus' work *On Winds, On Fire*, the Pseudo-Aristotelian work *On Breath*, and other writings concerning natural topics. In his presentation, Martin analyzed Furlanus' understanding of the relation between Aristotle's and Theophrastus' natural philosophy, but the focus was on physical problems surrounding the elements and the Renaissance conceptions of the boundaries of Aristotelianism and the Aristotelian corpus.

This was followed by the presentation by Pavel Gregorić, entitled "The Organistic Cosmological Theory of Antonius Medus". Antonius Medus (c. 1540–1603) was a Ragusan merchant who taught himself Latin and, towards the end of his life, dedicated himself to studying Aristotle. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII, Medus presents his own cosmological theory. The theory features 31 celestial orbs, organized in 9 distinct spheres and moved by the total of 24 unmoved movers. Gregorić discussed the structure and the principles of Medus' theory and showed how it was meant to explain various astronomical facts. He concluded that Medus' theory addressed some problems in the cosmology of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII and offered an interesting way of fixing them. Notably, Medo argued that the celestial orbs were genuine self-movers, some of them moved by thinking and desiring two or more unmoved movers of the higher spheres, without postulating any mechanical impulse among them, thus rendering Aristotle's rewinding spheres unnecessary. Gregorić also listed the shortcomings of Medo's theory, both with regard to astronomy and with regard to Aristotle's philosophy.

The third presentation, "Francesco Patrizi's *Discussiones peripateticae* as a Possible Source of Valeriano Magni's *Synopsis* and Critique of Aristotle's Philosophy", was given by Tomáš Nejeschleba. The church politician, theologian, and philosopher Valeriano Magni (1586–1661) created his philosophy as an alternative to the Second Scholasticism. A critique of Aristotelian philosophy was a significant part of his own philosophical method. The question that Nejeschleba raised in his presentation was the extent to which Valeriano Magni follows the late Renaissance critique of Aristotelianism in Francesco Patrizi's work *Discussiones peripateticae*. Nejeschleba's research on Magni found no explicit references to Patrizi, but the similarities between Magni's and Patrizi's critique of Aristotelian philosophy are strong enough to suggest at least an indirect influence.

The last presentation on the conference was held by Luka Boršić under the title “Patrizi’s Nemesis: Aristotle or Scholasticism?”. In the secondary literature on Francesco Patrizi (1529–1597) his greatest contribution to the philosophy is considered to be the detailed refutation of entire Aristotle’s philosophy. In his presentation Boršić explored the distinction between being an anti-Aristotelian as opposed to being an anti-scholastic philosopher. Boršić’s intention was to show that Patrizi was both an anti-Aristotelian and anti-scholastic philosopher. However, Patrizi still preserved some esteem for Aristotle, whereas the scholastic philosophy was, in Patrizi’s eyes, a mindless imitation of already highly questionable original.

This conference brought together some of the leading researchers of Renaissance philosophy and put focus largely on Croatian Renaissance Aristotelians. Presentations were accompanied by many questions that often lead to fruitful discussions. It is of great significance for the Croatian philosophical community that this conference was held in Zagreb, where scholars and students could hear the results of the cutting edge of research on Renaissance philosophy.

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