Book reviews

Unveiling the Mechanisms of Propaganda

Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*,
(Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2015)

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In the last two decades the presence of propaganda in political life became more and more noticeable not only in the increasing success of radical and extremist political discourse, but also in its influence on the language of the media and, as a result, in our ordinary lives. However, if the presence and the efficiency of propaganda in contemporary political life turned into an obvious fact, it is much more difficult to describe its complex mechanisms in order to explain its success. But this is precisely the main objective of Jason Stanley's recent book *How Propaganda Works* published in 2015 at Princeton University Press.

I think it is important to point out that, since 2013, Jason Stanley is the Jacob Urowsky Professor of Philosophy at the prestigious University of Yale. He has previously been professor of philosophy at Rutgers University (2004-2013), at the University of Michigan (2000-2004) and at Cornell University (1995-2000), after having obtained his PhD at the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy at MIT in 1995. He is also the author of a series of books in the fields of epistemology and philosophy of language: *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford University Press, 2005), *Language in Context* (Oxford University Press, 2007), and *Know How* (Oxford University Press, 2011). In 2016 he received the PROSE award in the domain of philosophy[1].

In this book dedicated to propaganda, Stanley openly confronts the dominant conception according to which propaganda is a tool and a weapon used primarily by totalitarian and authoritarian states. He argues that propaganda is used on a large scale in liberal democracies, where it undermines dominant democratic ideals such as equality and deliberation. As he acknowledges in the *Preface* of the book, his main goal is "to explain how sincere well-meaning people, under the grips of flawed ideology, can unknowingly produce and

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[1] See http://campuspress.yale.edu/jasonstanley/, 20.12.2016. Jason Stanley is also a prominent and active analyst of the contemporary political life. He published a series of articles in journals like *The New York Times, The Washington Post, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on the subject of propaganda and racist discourse used in the United States presidential campaign. For more information regarding his papers and interviews see http://campuspress.yale.edu/jasonstanley/media/.

consume propaganda" (p. 8). Stanley believes that propaganda is made effective by flawed ideologies that support various types of inequalities and unjust differences between citizens, because in these societies there are "ways of rationalizing undeserved privilege" which develop into rigid and unchangeable beliefs that work as "barriers to rational thought and empathy" that propaganda exploits (p. 20). Hence, it contributes to concealing critical information regarding their actual interests from the underprivileged people and therefore it is an impediment to genuine democratic deliberation.

The book *How Propaganda Works* is structured in seven chapters preceded by an *Introduction* and followed by a section of *Conclusions*. In the *Introduction* he begins by declaring that he found inspiration for his book in the work of a German author of Jewish faith named Victor Klemperer that managed to survive the Nazi regime and wrote a book in 1947 dedicated to *The Language of the Third Reich*. Stanley focuses on the devious influence that the "Lingua Tertii Imperii" (as Klemperer called it) had on the young generation of children raised and educated in the years of the Nazi regime. He shows that the symbols associated with the terms of this language (for example, terms like "heroism") made those children practically unable to comprehend the political ideals of liberal democracy. In his view, this description of the effects of this language which, in the words of Klemperer, tends to "strip everyone of their individuality, to paralyze them as personalities and to make them into unthinking and docile cattle" is a paradigmatic illustration of the effects of propaganda not only in authoritarian states, but also in liberal democracies. Therefore, propaganda has an extremely negative effect on the character of any democratic society, an effect that is not relative to the specific conception of democracy that is defended: *economic theory* that underlines the freedom to pursue self-interest, *epistemic theory* that focuses on the superiority of collective reasoning or *deliberative theory* concerned with the democratic value of joint deliberation. By undermining rational thought and by restricting epistemic access to reliable information, propaganda affects "economic rationality" and bypasses rational deliberation. A form of deception that is harder to detect consists in the use of the vocabulary of democracy to mask an undemocratic reality. And, in his opinion, this is precisely what happened in the United States: an undemocratic reality was masked by democratic ideals. For example, in the 19th century "the racist reality was somehow masked by antiracist ideals" and in the 20th century the United States gradually became dominated by a "managerial culture" that has nothing to do with democratic ideals (p. 30).

The first chapter is dedicated to the subject of *Propaganda in the History of Political Thought* and focuses on the main argument defended by prominent critics of democracy such as Plato, Aristotle and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. According to this argument, democracy is an untenable and unstable regime because of its vulnerability to demagogic use of propaganda and manipulation that threaten to undermine its fundamental values. Democracy is especially vulnerable to demagoguery because it values freedom, including freedom of

speech, above all the other principles and, therefore, it prevents propagandistic and manipulative discourse from being banned (p. 40). One way of solving this problem is to differentiate between ideal political theory and applied political theory (or social theory) and to sustain that in ideal liberal democracy there is no propaganda. However, this is a solution that Stanley rejects: he states that political philosophy should not be done without social theory and that applicative problems are relevant from a theoretical point of view. Consequently, he sketches another answer to the problem of justifying a democratic ban on propaganda. Following the contributions of Jennifer Hornsby and Rae Langton, he affirms that "certain kinds of speech are silencing" because they have the effect of restricting the free speech of others. Therefore, banning this type of propaganda is a demand deriving from the negative liberty of others. Nevertheless, he admits that sometimes propaganda can have a positive effect in democracy: for example the emotional appeal of African American citizens to win the respect, empathy and understanding of the white population (pp. 48-49).

The second chapter, *Propaganda Defined* represents the most important theoretical part of the book in which Stanley presents his characterization of propaganda. He starts by rejecting two theses about the nature of propaganda: that propagandistic claims must be false (*the falsity condition*) and that propagandistic claims must be made insincerely (*the insincerity condition*) (pp. 51-52). Against the falsity condition he sustains that many typical examples of propaganda can involve the expression of truth and the communication of emotions (which are not true or false). Against the insincerity condition he argues that it fails to respect the deep connection between ideology and propaganda: "many paradigm demagogic claims are statements sincerely asserted by someone in the grip of a false belief caused by a flawed ideology" (p. 56). Next, he presents two conventional theories of propaganda: the "classical sense" according to which it propaganda consists in manipulation of the rational will in order to close debate; and the "biased speech" theory according to which propaganda is speech that irrationally closes off certain options that should be considered. In his opinion, both these theories fail to explain the occurrence of masked propaganda in liberal democracy. Therefore, he provides a personal explanation of propaganda by linking the essence of political propaganda with the act of either supporting or eroding political ideals and distinguishing between *supporting* and *undermining* propaganda, the latter being the focus of his analysis concerning the role played by propaganda in democratic societies. In his view, supporting propaganda represents "a contribution to public discourse that is presented as the embodiment of certain ideals, yet it is a kind that tends to increase the realization of those very ideals by either emotional or other nonrational means" (p. 61). Some types of supporting propaganda are necessary: for example the warnings on cigarette packs "cigarettes kill" play a positive role. Undermining propaganda is defined as "a contribution to public discourse that is presented as the embodiment of certain ideals, yet it is of a kind that tends to erode those very ideals" (p. 61). This type

of propaganda undermines political ideals because it uses an ideal to communicate something that is inconsistent with it. For example, corporate-funded anti-climate science movement conflicts with the ideal of scientific objectivity it pretends to support. While this type of propaganda has mainly negative effects, it can also be used to target a problematic ideal (for example obedience to an unjust state). Nevertheless, he believes that undermining propaganda in the form of demagoguery is the most threatening kind of propaganda for liberal democracy because it is presented as an embodiment of a worthy ideal, but in fact it is in the service of undermining it (pp.74-75).

The next chapter, *Propaganda in Liberal Democracy* focuses on the analysis of the democratic ideals that are used by various types of demagogic and nondemagogic propaganda illustrated by examples selected mainly from the American political life. The most important normative ideal he mentions is John Rawls's principles of "reasonableness" which contains the ideals of public reason, ideals playing a central role in public political forums because rules must be fairly decided upon by the entire public with the full participation of all the citizens (p.89). Therefore, the most dangerous form of propaganda is the one that presents itself as the embodiment of the ideals of public reason: impartiality, theoretical and practical rationality, equal respect, pluralism and so on. Propagandistic discourse alters the rationality of the debate. For example the "super-predator" theory used by some academics such as James S. Fox and John DiIulio Jr. to describe the criminal behavior of black adolescents had a very irrational effect on the public debate regarding this issue: it appealed to fear in order to cut off rational debate and therefore undermined theoretical rationality. In a similar manner, propaganda is sometimes used to undermine practical rationality (or practical rationality impartialism), meaning the ability to find the optimal way to achieve a goal that does not take into consideration one's specific social status and role (like in John Rawls's original position): for example the speech of a senator who wants to favor an oil company that contributed to his campaign. However, Stanley believes that there is also a form of necessary propaganda (like the "defending rhetoric" mentioned by Aristotle) that is used in order to support democratic ideals.

In the fourth chapter, *Language as a Mechanism of Control,* Stanley tries to demonstrate how language can be used as a mechanism that undermines the ideals of public reason. In his view, the truth-conditional cognitivist theory about what happens when the communication is functioning well also allows us to understand what happens when communication fails (pp. 122-123). The main idea he supports in this chapter is that some types of speech have the objective to silence or to subordinate targeted social groups. For example, pornographic material subordinates and silences women, while racist speech has a similar effect on black people. He believes that some expressions are used in order to support the idea that the perspective of certain groups is not worthy of inclusion, others could be applied both as a means to support reasonableness and as a mechanism of exclusion, while the mere use of other expressions would be

enough to undermine reasonableness (p.126). With the help of some contributions in formal semantics and pragmatics developed by authors like Robert Stalnaker (the theory of linguistic context as the common ground of a conversation), Craige Roberts (the theory of "questions under discussion"), Ishani Maitra (the theory that subordinating speech acts involve rankings), Frank Veltman (the theory that some statements make some situations seem more probable than others) and especially Christopher Potts (with his distinction between at-issue content and not-at-issue content), Jason Stanley argues that linguistic propaganda often "involves repeated association between words and social meanings" that are presented as a part of conventional meaning or of "not-at-issue content" that is not negotiable. For example, if media repeatedly connects images of black people with a term like "welfare", the term will come to have a non-negotiable content that Blacks are lazy (p. 133). This effect is enhanced by the epistemic and practical authority of the speaker and it erodes the empathy for the targeted group of people. And its efficiency in democracy depends on the reasonableness of the at-issue content that masks the not-at-issue content: "welfare" is not a slur word like "kraut", but it functions in the same way by discrediting the target group and by diminishing their self-respect.

Stanley's analysis continues with a chapter dedicated to the role played by ideology in the mechanisms that explain the success of propagandistic discourse. He states that the success of propaganda depends on people having beliefs that are resistant to available evidence because they are flawed ideological beliefs. In his opinion, they are flawed because they are based on social injustice embedded in the structure of our societies and they are supported by ideologies that reinforce and increase the level of inequality, social discrimination and oppression. Therefore, he argues that substantive and even material inequalities between citizens are democratically problematic: "inequalities tend to result in flawed ideology, which explains the effectiveness of propaganda" (p. 168). Ideological beliefs like those mentioned by Marx in his book "German Ideology" are very difficult to revise in the light of counterevidence because they are connected to social practices and social identities. For example, an American family that lived in the South before the Civil War would hold an ideology that justifies slavery and their privileged social status and will prevent them from properly understanding the social world they live in. The self-interest transforms them into "cherished beliefs" by creating an emotional attachment that makes them very hard to revise, and, as a consequence, epistemologically flawed: "ideological belief, since it is resistant to rational revision, is by its nature epistemologically defective" (p. 182). And he adds that its morals and political flaws are a consequence of the epistemological defects.

In the next chapter he analyses some flawed political ideologies that are problematic from a democratic point of view because they affect certain topics of contestation in democracies such as the distribution of goods. Following a classical conception dating back to Aristotle he differentiates between ideological beliefs of those with control of resources and ideological beliefs of

those without control. And he tries to demonstrate that substantial inequalities are democratically problematic no matter whether the first category of citizens *deserves* control of the resources and the latter category does not (pp. 203-204). Using the "self-affirmation theory" developed by Claude Steele, according to which every individual tends to maintain a self-conception as a good and appropriate person, Stanley claims that every dominant group will develop a "legitimizing myth" in order to justify and preserve its privileged social status. This is associated with the phenomenon of "motivated reasoning" that explains how self-interest and group loyalty influences reasoning in a negative manner, with the help of education, mass-media and other social systems and authority figures. Moreover, he believes that underprivileged groups tend to adopt the elite ideology of their inferiority. As a consequence, flawed ideology prevents them to properly understand their situation and to act in order to overcome the injustices they face (p. 225). And, this effect of flawed ideologies undermines democratic deliberation. Thus, in his opinion, the solution is to minimize social inequalities: "In this book, I argue that minimizing stark material inequalities is a precondition for democracy" (p. 238).

The final chapter of the book is a case study: he applies his theory about how the flawed ideology of the elites affects the values of democracy to a specific historical example: the reorganization of the secondary school system in the United States in the second decade of the twentieth century. One ideological belief that is disseminated by the school system is the incorrect distinction between practical skills and theoretical knowledge, the first category being associated with dominated groups (such as Black, women and so on) and the second category with dominating groups (wealthy white male citizens). And, in his opinion, the vacuity of this distinction is masked by flawed ideological narratives apparently supported by the authority of science and propagated by means of the educational system. Therefore, the system was restructured in such a manner that its main objective became to fit each person to the task they are suited, and to provide a different kind of education to the "natural leaders of society" from that projected for the "labor class" (p. 247). This type of ideology was promoted by very influential theoreticians of the educational system like Edward Alsworth Ross, David Snedden and others that influenced even future presidents like Woodrow Wilson and have practically drawn the blueprints of the secondary school system in twentieth-century America. In Stanley's view this process lead to a "redefinition" of democracy as "social control by elites for the purpose of efficiency" (p. 254). But, this definition has nothing to do with the authentic democratic values of equality and deliberation and it creates the flawed ideology that explains the efficacy of propaganda in democracy.

Stanley's book offers a very interesting analysis regarding the mechanisms that explain the success of propaganda discourse in liberal democracies. Nevertheless, I believe his theory has to face some serious objections. One objection has to do with his thesis according to which the moral and political flaws of ideological beliefs are only a consequence of their epistemological

defects. In my opinion, his argumentation is *circular* because when he explains why ideological beliefs are very difficult to revise, he insists on their relation with self-interest and also with the social practices and social identities that spur emotional attachment. Moreover, as was already mentioned, he argues that inequalities tend to result in flawed ideology. Furthermore, he explicitly affirms that structural features of a society constitute the flawed ideology (p.184). Hence, the epistemological problems seem to derive from an unjust social structure that allows the existence of all these inequalities and unjust social practices. But this entails that epistemological defects derive from moral and political flaws and not the other way around. Consequently, when he explains why ideological beliefs are epistemologically flawed, he mentions the moral and political flaws imbedded in our democratic social practices and when he tries to justify why these practices are morally and politically flawed, he points to the ideological beliefs generated by these practices. Therefore, if he wants to avoid the argumentative circle, I believe he must provide an independent explanation for the epistemologically defective nature of flawed beliefs that will have nothing to do with morally and politically problematic social practices. Otherwise, he would have to provide a very different case against propaganda that would insist not on its epistemological flaws, but on its moral and political defects (like injustice). But, in this scenario he would also have to explain why material and other types of inequalities should be considered unjust in the light of a theory of social injustice that won't beg the questions against the defenders of natural and social inequalities.

Another problem that is closely related to the first is the fact that his theory does not seem to offer a clear criterion for the distinction between useful and harmful propaganda and between good and bad ideology, other than the "tendency" to generate beliefs that are difficult to revise. But, presumably there are also beliefs that *should be difficult to revise*: for example beliefs that correspond to democratic values like rationality, equal respect, pluralism and so on. So, we need a principle that would justify such a distinction that would be independent on the "difficult-to-revise" condition. However, he does not provide any such principle and it is hard to conceive another epistemic criterion (other than the "difficult-to-revise" condition) that could do this job. If he had chosen to talk about "the tendency to promote truth" or another similar epistemic condition, it would have committed him to a problematic and difficult to sustain form of moral realism (according to which there are moral facts or moral truths). Additionally, such a reply would beg the question against the defender of an ideology he classifies as bad: his argument would essentially state that "Your ideology is bad because you are wrong and mine is good because I am right".

Finally, I wish to point out that his thesis according to which it does not matter if a category of citizens deserves to have the control of resources or not is not only intuitively implausible, but also has some consequences that are very hard to sustain. Because, if some category of citizens really deserves to have control on a greater amount of natural and social goods, then they will be

justified in holding and expressing the belief that they are entitled to own those resources. And, as a consequence, their beliefs should not be characterized as flawed and ideological and their discourse should not be perceived as propaganda. Stanley's reply may be that even if they deserve a greater amount of resources their self-legitimating beliefs are nevertheless flawed because they are resistant to revision and display the tendency to preserve that inequality. But, if they are really entitled to those resources, than the resistance to revision of their self-legitimizing belief *would be a good thing*, as would be their tendency to preserve the inequality: they are only defending what is rightfully their property. Hence, once more, I believe that Stanley is forced to offer a criterion for distinguishing between just and unjust social inequalities in the light of a theory of social justice and to concentrate his attack against unjust social inequalities that tend to generate flawed ideology and propaganda.

However, if we set aside the aforementioned objections that can be raised against Stanley's conception, it remains one of the most interesting and comprehensive theories concerning the mechanisms of propaganda. His argumentation uses and develops various contributions: from democratic theory to formal semantics and pragmatics, from epistemology to moral and political philosophy, from liberalism to feminism, from ancient and modern contributions to the most recent controversies, from theoretical perspectives to case studies. Therefore it represents, in my opinion, one of the most significant explanations of the success of propagandistic discourse in contemporary liberal democracies.

Mind the Gap − Between the Physical Screen and the Cognitive One

Benartzi SHLOMO (with Jonah LEHRER), *The Smarter Screen: Suprising Ways to Influence and Improve Online Behaviour*
(Penguin Books, 2015)

Ioana GRANCEA

The fact that most experiences online provide the human mind with considerably more information than it can process is not new. It has been said again and again in the past decade and confirmed by research: attention, understanding and memory are not the same when the data are presented on a screen, especially on a *connected* one. This connectedness of contemporary screens is usually seen as the major cognitive challenge. Internet users tend to become shallow, their cognitive forces are scattered, their capacity for immersive experiences vanishes. Most people no longer have the patience to engage in a slow process of deep thought. The illusion of accessing encyclopedic knowledge at the touch of a button, as well as the fear of missing out on the hottest news, stimulate people's hurried search for fast answers, for cognitive and affective stimulation, for fun, for friends – whatever they may come to mean in the digital age.

This book is a novel and important contribution in at least three respects. The first is that it touches on *solutions* to help people deal with the *attention deficit* online. These solutions include visual style, page layout, color saturation, recommended complexity of visual architecture, personalized videos and *apps* that may constrain users to pay attention to one thing at a time when it is necessary. Each solution set forth by the authors is preceded by relevant research in the field, extensively explained and exemplified.

Secondly, the book has an awakening effect because it shows how cognitive mistakes online may have serious financial implications. Thus, the attention deficit online is no longer presented as an abstract cultural issue; it is shown to have immediate consequences on people's budget. Choices of an insurance plan, of healthcare services, of coffee or shoes, exhibit different features when made online. Not paying attention and not being aware of visual biases can be quite costly for users, unless web-designers are willing to build websites that help people avoid falling into these traps.

Choosing something that does not really respond to one's needs happens frequently in online transactions, because one tends to ignore relevant data when it is mingled with other details that exceed one's capacity for attentive

processing. To exemplify this, the author performs a close analysis of a governmental website that was supposed to help people choose among the numerous health insurance plans available. He concludes that the display of options was too detailed – there were so many unnecessary specifications as well as creative naming schemes for each plan, that consumers were overwhelmed and eventually distracted from the most important variables that should have influenced their choice. The author invokes a study made by himself with other two researchers, Saurabh Bhargava and George Loewenstein, according to which most people who used this online platform made the wrong choice: they chose plans that costed around 800 dollars *more* than the plans they actually needed.

Other experiments show that the outcome of the deliberative process can be dramatically influenced by simple choices of visual display. Series of three to five elements displayed on a screen made people more likely to choose the option placed in the middle, although it did not fit their pre-declared preferences. Apparently, people have an unconscious orientation for the center of any series of elements and an aversion for the margins, at least when exposed to a screen. The tendency to ignore information displayed on the margins of the screen is invoked in another experiment narrated in the book: professional radiologists failed to spot a tiny gorilla placed at the margins of X-ray images they were analyzing in search for cancerous nodules. Although a clear symptom of inattentional blindness, Shlomo Benartzi believes this episode would not have occurred if the visual material they analyzed had not been delivered on a screen. Had they printed the image, they would have spotted the details on the margins. On a screen, all people tend to ignore the margins, more so radiologists in search for cancerous nodules.

Can web-designers help people avoid these mistakes? The author believes that a simple solution to avoid the center-bias is to replace a series of three or five options with a series of four options. With no central option, he predicts people will analyze all four options more attentively. As for the complexity problem, mentioned in the example above with the health insurance website, designers could create more categories that would help people navigate, step by step, through the myriad of available options. Although this approach would break the golden rule of online navigation that says that users should never be more than three clicks away from their destination, Shlomo insists that the usefulness of the clicks is actually more important in deriving user satisfaction online. Categories could bring increased clarity in domains where people have too many options. And clarity is priceless in attention deficit conditions.

Finally, the book is original in its emphasis on the *screen* as being part of the problem. Not the web per se, not the connectedness of the screen, but the screen itself, inviting another mode of engagement and style of cognitive processing on the part of the audience than printed text or images. Repeated research has confirmed beyond doubt that most people have an inferior performance when reading from a screen, compared to reading printed text. Shlomo believes that intentional *visual dissonance* is a tool to make people pay

more attention to what they read: unusual letter fonts or surprising visual configurations may help people slow down when reading from a screen – and slowing down means they give themselves more time to digest the information.

An understandable question about the book is whether such a visual-centered approach is not misdirected altogether. One might say that content and usability are actually responsible for shaping online behavior, and that choices of page layout or visual syntax are just embellishments with peripheral effects. Yet, the numerous experiments in the book confirm the fact that there is nothing trivial to visual eloquence in an age of screens. Visual features influence how we bridge the gap between the physical screen and the cognitive one. When they are well-built, they can lead users into thinking in an orderly manner and make smarter choices in their financial and cognitive transactions.

Francisco Suárez et les racines de la philosophie analytique

Ilaria Acquaviva, *Francisco Suàrez e la filosofia analitica*
(Milano, Ledizioni, 2016)

Florin CRÎŞMĂREANU[1]

L'étendue et la complexité des écrits de Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) représentent des raisons solides pour que cet œuvre monumental n'attire pas trop de chercheurs. Si l'on ne se rapportait qu'aux *Disputationes metaphysicae* (1597), qui ne représentent que deux volumes (25 et 26) sur les 29 de l'édition de référence : Louis Vivès (1856-1877), et ce serait assez décourageant, parce qu'il n'en existe aucune traduction intégrale dans une langue moderne (à une seule exception : l'édition critique de *DM*, parue à Madrid, aux Éditions Gredos, en 7 volumes (1960 - 1966), accompagnée d'une traduction espagnole proposée par S. Rabade Romeo, S. Caballera Sanchez et A. Puigcerver Zanon). Donc, outre la difficulté du texte, de solides connaissances de langue latine s'imposent aussi. Malgré tout, de temps à autre, on voit apparaître un exégète passionné par l'œuvre métaphysique du jésuite. C'est le cas de la jeune chercheuse Ilaria Acquaviva, qui a récemment publié son volume *Francisco Suàrez e la filosofia analitica* (Milano, Ledizioni, 2016, 325 p.).

L'auteure de cet ouvrage est à présent doctorante dans le cadre du Collège San Carlo de Modène. Elle a commencé sa formation philosophique à l'Université „Aldo Moro" de Bari, dont elle est la licenciée, avec une thèse sur l'opuscule de Saint Thomas d'Aquin, *De ente et essentia* ; à Bari, elle a eu le privilège de travailler avec deux réputés exégètes de la période médiévale – Pasquale Porro et Constantino Esposito.

Du point de vue structural, après l'Introduction, l'étude *Francisco Suàrez e la filosofia analitica* est divisée en deux grandes parties, à leur tour sous-divisées en plusieurs chapitres, suivies par les Conclusions et la Bibliographie. Dans la première partie, on analyse les thèses suareziennes en parallèle avec celles de W.V.O. Quine (1908-2000), tandis que dans la seconde partie on met en miroir quelques thèmes métaphysiques du jésuite et ceux de Gottlob Frege (1848-1925). Si l'on entend par philosophie analytique la philosophie des logiciens, il n'est que trop juste de considérer Frege comme l'un des fondateurs de cette direction philosophique (Hans Sluga, Michael Dummett).

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Il convient de remarquer d'emblée que l'analyse des thèses suareziennes en parallèle avec celles formulées ultérieurement par Frege, Quine *et alii* indique le fait qu'à l'auteure lui sont bien familiers tant la tradition de la métaphysique scolastique que le paradigme analytique de la philosophie. Évidemment, des tentatives, plus ou moins timides, de rapprocher les deux traditions – la métaphysique scolastique et la philosophie analytique – ont été déjà faites par Antonio Corsano, Enrico Berti, John P. Doyle, Constantino Esposito *et alii*, auteurs que Ilaria Acquaviva cite dans le volume discuté.

Quelle serait la possible liaison entre la « méta-ontologie » (P. Van Inwagen) de Quine et la métaphysique générale (l'ontologie) de Suárez ? « Se Quine, perciò istituisce una meta-ontologia fondazionale nel quadro della più ampia logica formale e della semantica linguistica, similmente, lo stesso valore "architettonico" assume, per Suárez, la metafisica dell'*ens ut sic* nel quadro, si badi bene, istituzionale della dottrina teologica e delle altre scienze speculative (matematica e filosofia naturale) » (p. 130). Autrement dit, tout comme Suárez dans ses *DM* (notamment I, IV, 10), Quine lui aussi traite du caractère normatif de l'ontologie, la science première dont dérivent les principes de toutes les autres sciences (p. 87, 93). La « philosophie de l'ontologie » implique, chez les deux auteurs, le caractère métathéorique de l'ontologie, à l'aide de laquelle on peut évaluer les autres sciences.

Dans la seconde partie du volume auquel nous nous référons, Ilaria Acquaviva affirme que « in particolare la distinzione in Frege tra concetto e oggetto è letta in analogia con la distinzione suàreziana tra concetto oggettivo e concetto formale » (p. 19); dans ce sens, je considère comme extrêmement intéressant le sous-chapitre « Precedenze suáreziane: la significazione dell'oggetto e il luogo del vero nella convenienza tra conceptus objectivus e conceptus formalis » (pp. 154-193). Dans une perspective différente, et visant des objectifs plus modestes, j'avais moi aussi anticipé en quelque mesure les similarités entre la métaphysique scolastique et les thèses de G. Frege, en montrant dans un article (« Gottlob Frege et la distinction entre *conceptus formalis* et *conceptus obiectivus* », paru dans *Hermeneia. Journal of Hermeneutics, Art Theory and Criticism*, 14, 2014, 71-80) que la sémantique de Frege apparaît comme très proche par rapport à celle des scolastiques, ce qui signifie que la distinction frégéenne entre *sens* (Sinn) et *dénotation* (Bedeutung) n'est rien d'autre qu'un « prolongement » de la distinction scolastique entre *concept formel* et *concept objectif*, qui est pour Suárez une *vulgaris distinctio* : « Supponenda imprimis est *vulgaris distinctio* conceptus formalis et obiectivi » (*DM*, II, 1, § 1). Bref, pour Frege, *le concept objectuel* serait *le dénoté*, qui ne doit pas avoir nécessairement une existence concrète ; et le *concept formel* serait *le sens*, qui peut être multiple, tout comme les actes par lesquels nous saisissons les objets.

Quelque nombreuses que soient les similitudes entre les écrits des différents penseurs, il est quand même difficile de dire en quelle mesure ces auteurs fondamentaux pour la direction analytique de la philosophie (dans ce cas, Frege et Quine) ont connu de manière directe les textes des scolastiques ou

s'ils en ont été influencés indirectement. Dans ce contexte, de l'époque dans laquelle Frege écrit, il ne faudrait pas négliger l'ainsi dite théorie des objets (*Gegenstandstheorie*) que propose le contemporain de Frege, Alexius Meinong (1853-1920), cité par notre auteure à la p. 96, qui dans *Über Gegenstandstherie* (*La théorie de l'objet*), paru en 1904, soutient que la métaphysique est la science qui étudie *ce qui existe*. Dans ce contexte, apparaît comme très importante la distinction suarezienne entre *entia rationis* et *entia realis*. L'être réel (*ens reale*) est finalement déterminé par référence à la fiction ou à la chimère: *esse verum ens reale nullum alium conceptum dicit, quam esse ens reale, id est non fictum, nec chymericum* (*DM,* VIII, 7, § 2). Il est possible que le philosophe autrichien ait pris connaissance des thèses suareziennes, scolastiques en général, par l'intermédiaire de son maître Franz Brentano (1838 - 1917). Entre Suárez et Meinong se place Clemens Timpler (1563 - 1624), qui affirme que l'objet de la métaphysique est le *ens cogitabile*, ce qui ouvre la voie vers une « objectité sans objet » (J.-F. Courtine). La position adoptée par Meinong ne fait pas qu'inverser la situation de la métaphysique traditionnelle, qui pense la question de l'objet non-existant comme une privation, une espèce parasite, marginale en tout cas.

A son tour, Kazimierz Twardowski (1866 - 1938) impose le fameux syntagme « les représentations sans objet » (*Gegenstandlose vorstellung*), qui est emprunté à B. Bolzano. Cette direction de la philosophie (*la théorie de l'objet*) est plus facilement à associer à la métaphysique scolastique, et à celle suarezienne en particulier, puisque Twardowski, dans son célèbre article – *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen* (1894) –, critique la conception de Suárez, et considère que ce serait limiter indûment le nom « ens » seulement à *essentia realis*, au détriment d'*essentia ficta* ou *chymerica* (le fragment suarezien visé par K. Twardowski se retrouve dans *DM*, II, 4, § 5 ; sur Meinong et Twardowski, les continuateurs des docteurs scolastiques, j'ai discuté dans ma thèse de doctorat « Le concept de la métaphysique chez Francisco Suárez. De l'*analogia entis* à l'univocité de l'être »).

L'auteure affirme que « riducendo l'ente a quel "qualcosa" la cui possibilità risiede nel pensiero logico transcendentale, Suàrez inaugura l'ontologia formale e rationalista moderna » (p. 12). Sans doute, pour le jésuite, avant d'être actualisée, l'essence ne possède rien de réel, elle n'est rien (*purum nihil – DM* XXXI, II, § 1). Pour *Doctor eximius*, l'existence c'est le fait d'être en acte, en réalité (*ibid*., IV, § 4). F. Suárez établit une identité sémantique entre l'essence et l'existence, puisque l'essence en acte devient l'équivalent de l'existence. Par conséquent, « l'existence n'ajoute rien à l'essence en acte : elles sont une seule et même chose » (J.-P. Coujou, *La distinction de l'étant fini et de son être, Dispute métaphysique XXXI*, Paris, Vrin, 1999, 34). Le jésuite continue le raisonnement, en concluant qu'il n'y a pas entre l'essence et l'existence qu'une distinction de raison, et dans un fameux passage de *DM* il rejette la distinction réelle entre l'essence et l'existence : « existentiam et essentiam non distingui in re ipsa » (*DM* XXXI, I, § 13).

Pour la tradition aristotélique il n'y a que deux types de distinctions : réelles ou de raison. Entre ces deux, *tertium non datur* (A. de Muralt, *L'enjeu de la philosophie médiévale* : *études thomistes, scotistes, occamiennes et grégoriennes*, Leiden, Brill, 1991, 64-70). Duns Scot, dans le Prologue à *Ordinatio*, allait introduire une troisième (*tertia*) distinction, intermédiaire (*media*) entre la réelle et celle de raison, la fameuse distinction formelle *ex natura rei* (à partir de la nature des choses), ou la non-identité formelle, qui se propose d'assurer la correspondance parfaite entre les formes conceptuelles élaborées par l'intellect et les formes existant en réalité : *omni entitati formali correspondet adæquate aliquod ens* (de Muralt, *op. cit.*, 65). Ou la distinction modale, puisqu'elle s'établit entre une chose et l'un de ses modes (Kim Sang Ong-Van-Cung, « Substance et distinctions chez Descartes, Suárez et leurs prédécesseurs médiévaux », dans J. Biard et R. Rashed (éds.). *Descartes et le Moyen Âge*, Paris, Vrin, 1997, 217-218). Il est vrai que la distinction modale apparaît également dans les écrits de Suárez (*DM* VII, I, § 16 : « distinctio modalis »; XXX, 17, § 10 *et passim*.), mais il prend cette question surtout de la tradition franciscaine, plus précisément des textes de Duns Scotus, Ockham *et alii*.

Outre les thèmes déjà mentionnés, l'auteure traite dans ce volume, entre autres, de la distinction entre *la théologie des philosophes* et *la théologie révélée* (p. 63 *sqq*.); de la différence entre *analogie* et *univocité*, p. 157 *sqq*., 184-189.

L'ouvrage *Francisco Suàrez e la filosofia analitica* est écrit dans un style clair et très soigné, sur un sujet extrêmement complexe et difficile, qui présuppose une connaissance approfondie des sources, ainsi que de la littérature secondaire, exégétique. Sans recourir excessivement à des notes de bas de page, l'auteure démontre qu'elle connaît bien la bibliographie de référence pour les deux traditions qu'elle analyse : la métaphysique scolastique et la philosophie analytique.

La jeunesse n'est pas une vertu en soi, mais celui qui parie sur un jeune se trouve dans la situation heureuse de ne rien perdre. Tout comme dans le pari de Pascal. J'ai la conviction ferme qu'Ilaria Acquaviva va publier, dans les années à venir, des textes d'une valeur au moins égale à celle de l'ouvrage sur lequel je me suis attardé ci-dessus.