Richard Popkin gave the name “methodical doubt” to the philosophical method of Pierre Charron, linking his despair about the impossibility of knowledge with the traditions of skepticism and fideism. This was a problematic identification even for Popkin, because he had to admit that Charron—and he grouped Descartes and Gassendi with him—was not a skeptic. While I disagree with Popkin that Charron’s doubt and questioning of authority came out of the skeptical tradition, nevertheless, his observation that these three philosophers employed doubt to drive their search for knowledge is an important observation. This paper will suggest that Charron arose from quite a different tradition, one in which questioning and doubting were turned into a philosophical method that eliminated false dogmas and logic. This freed the philosopher from past errors and permitted him to construct his own interpretation of the text. I argue that the source of this method can be found in one of the sixteenth-century Aristotelian traditions.

Although this tradition is one not usually associated with doubt, there is substantial evidence that methodical doubt grew out one strand of sixteenth-century Aristotelian philosophy. One philosopher who used it we
will study here: Benito Pereira of the Collegio Romano. He published his *De communibus omnium rerum* first in 1577, while Charron’s *De la Sagesse* was first printed in 1601. The two, who are not usually grouped together, were contemporaries, Pereria (1535–1610) living in Rome and Charron, a friend of Montaigne, in France (1541–1603). I contend that each philosopher employed methodical doubt: Pereira employed it to deconstruct philosophical dogmas so that they could be examined individually and arguments judged, while Charron turned methodical doubt into the personal and intellectual method through which philosophy was transformed into an exercise for philosophical self-examination. He aimed to achieve a tranquility of mind that would enable him to freely select correct ways of thinking and feeling to achieve a *liberte d’esprit*. Pereira began the method for compiling critically accumulated information for the new genre—the history of philosophy—while Charron led the way for the person of the philosopher himself to become the method through which philosophy is viewed.

2. *A Short History of Aristotelian Doubt*

My recent research reveals that the methodical doubt developed in the sixteenth century grew out of commentaries on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 3, 1. As Vasilis Politis points out, it is here that Aristotle states that what directs metaphysical enquiry is the puzzlement (*aporia*). The importance of this text is suggested by its use as a statement of method in Benito Pereira’s *De communibus omnium rerum*. After reading the Latin transla-