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AFFAIRThe Controversy over the
Immortality of the Soul*Leen Spruit*

The issue of the immortality of the soul involves several disciplinary fields, including natural philosophy (psychology as a part of natural science), theology (afterlife), and ethics (individual responsibility of human actors). Although different and contradictory answers have been given to this question in the Western tradition, four doctrinal strands can be traced.

First, materialists affirm that man, inasmuch as his body is an organized aggregate of purely material elements, disappears completely when the elements that compose him are dissolved. This is the answer of some Presocratics, Epicurus, the Stoics, and, in the early modern period, Thomas Hobbes, who reduced mental acts to organic functions or to epiphenomena of matter.

Second, for Plato, the soul is a substance in itself that exists prior to being joined to the body, which it moves. It dwells in the body for a certain time but departs at death to take up residence in other bodies, until, thoroughly purified, it is able to return to the world of the ideas. Some of Plato's later followers viewed the human soul as a particular expression of the cosmic Soul, or as a particle of the World Soul. These authors admit the immortality of the soul, but this immortality is not seen as specifically personal. The substantiality of the soul and its separability of the body were also emphasized by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Neoplatonics, and then by Descartes and his followers.

Third, Aristotle defined the soul as the first act of an organic body, but he also made a distinction between an intellect that makes everything and one that becomes everything, suggesting that only the former was "separate" and "eternal." As is well known, his wordings triggered a host of, often divergent, interpretations (see the next section).

Finally, the Christian tradition affirms, with few exceptions,¹ the personal immortality of the human soul. Some of the early Fathers, including Justin Martyr and Arnobius, rejected the doctrine of natural immortality and made it contingent upon God's grace, but the majority of the later Fathers viewed immortality as rationally provable. For example,

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Augustine demonstrated the immortality of the soul by showing that it possesses truth. Truth is immortal, because it can never be untrue; therefore the soul, in which truth dwells, cannot die.²

From Augustine, through the Middle Ages, and until the rise of early modern Aristotelian philosophy, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was more or less taken for granted and only rarely challenged.³ As a rule, immortality was defended with theological (afterlife, resurrection), ontological (substantiality of the soul), and ethical (dignity of man, morality) arguments.⁴ At the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this situation changed radically. In 1492, the Bishop of Padua issued an edict against discussion on the unity of the intellect. This disciplinary event had surprising consequences, as it pushed the Paduan Aristotelians Nicoletto Vernia (d. 1499) and Agostino Nifo (c. 1469–1538) to a remarkable shift in their thought. Initially, they were defenders of Averroes's theory of the unity of the intellect, but, from loyal followers of Averroes as a guide to Aristotle, they became careful students of the Greek commentators and, in their late thought, both Vernia and Nifo attacked Averroes as a misleading interpreter of Aristotle, believing that personal immortality could be philosophically demonstrated.

Then, in 1513, at the Fifth Lateran Council, the papal bull *Apostolici regiminis* was issued that decreed that the immortality of the soul could and should be proved philosophically; this bull therefore obliged all philosophers to produce the appropriate demonstrations. And finally, in 1516, Pietro Pomponazzi published his *Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul*, which provoked a host of attacks and deeply influenced all later disputes and treatises.

In his *Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul*, Pomponazzi rejected the view that the immortality of the soul was provable with philosophical arguments. He did not accept that the intellect, defined as the substantial form of the body, could also be considered as a self-subsisting entity. Arguing from the Aristotelian text, Pomponazzi maintained that proof of the intellect's ability to survive the death of the body must be found in an activity of the intellect that functions without any dependence on the body. In his view, although the intellect does not need any bodily organ as an instrument, it nevertheless needs the body indirectly, because it needs phantasms, and therefore it cannot be separated from the body. Indeed, even the highest activity of the intellect, the attainment of universals in cognition, is always mediated by sense impression. Therefore, based solely on philosophical premises and Aristotelian principles, the conclusion is that the entire soul dies with the body.

Pomponazzi's *On the Immortality of the Soul* aroused violent opposition and led to a spate of books being written against him. After a summary view of the preliminaries and a succinct analysis of Pomponazzi's treatise (in this and the next sections), relevant replies are discussed (the following two sections). A caveat is due here. During the sixteenth century, a host of treatises on the immortality of the soul were written and published. Here, not all of these works are taken into consideration, but only those works and authors that can be connected in a significant way to Pomponazzi's treatise and the ensuing polemics.

The debate following the publication of Pomponazzi's treatise led some authors to a more profound reconsideration of the intrinsic value of Aristotle's philosophy. Crisostomo Javelli, for example, although certainly not adhering to any form of anti-Aristotelianism, came to the conclusion that Aristotle and philosophy were no longer the same. The sixteenth-century Italian controversy over the immortality of the soul influenced later discussions, both in Italy and abroad, on the corporeality and mortality of the soul.⁵ Pomponazzi's position

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even had echoes in the seventeenth century, because Marin Mersenne attacked Vanini and his naturalism as based on the writings of Pomponazzi.⁶

Historical and Doctrinal Background: Aristotle to Pomponazzi

In *De Anima*, Aristotle defined the soul as the first actuality of a natural body potentially possessing life. The soul is the form of the body, and both constitute the living being. This apparently implies that, when the body dies, the soul too ceases to exist, just as an impression made on a wax tablet perishes when the wax melts.⁷ And yet, notwithstanding his commitment to a biological view of man, Aristotle suggested, on several occasions, that the intellect or rational soul, unlike the vegetative and sensitive souls, might be “separable,” that it might survive the body. His statements are, however, never developed into a consistent argument. He hinted that, “the intellect seems to be an independent substance engendered in us, and to be imperishable,” or “something more divine.”⁸ And, in Book III, he clearly qualified the active part of the intellect as immortal and eternal.⁹ By contrast, at the outset of this work, Aristotle stated that, if we consider the majority of the soul’s functions, “there seems to be no case in which the soul can act or be acted upon without involving the body.” Thinking seems the most probable exception, but “if this proves to be a form of imagination or to be impossible without imagination, it too requires a body as a condition of its existence.”¹⁰

For Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. 200 AD), probably Aristotle’s most authoritative ancient interpreter, the agent intellect was the First Cause, and he identified the “potential” or “material intellect” as “only a disposition” in the human organism. Thus, the individual rational soul is material and, hence, mortal. Alexander’s view became known in the Middle Ages through a translation of his *De intellectu*¹¹ and the quotes in Averroes. He was severely criticized by William of Auvergne, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas, but his views influenced later authors, including John Buridan, Marsilius of Inghen, and Biagio Pelacani.¹² The impact of Alexander’s position on the sixteenth-century debates owes much to the Latin translation of his *De Anima* by Girolamo Donato (1495) and to Pomponazzi’s presentation of his opinion as the genuine Aristotelian position.

Many of the Neoplatonists undertook to explain or to paraphrase the writings of Aristotle and attempted to show that Plato and Aristotle were in harmony with each other, including on psychological issues. Cases in point are Themistius (c. 317–c. 388), Simplicius (c. 490–c. 560) and John Philoponus (490–570). Their views deeply influenced the Arabic interpretations of Peripatetic psychology.

The Arab commentators on Aristotle, including Alfarabi (c. 872–950), Avicenna (980–1037), and Averroes (1126–1198), interpreted Aristotle’s doctrine of the active intellect and the potential intellect in a broader cosmological context, that is, in the hierarchical order of intelligences that move the celestial spheres. All three philosophers locate the human potential intellect immediately after the active intellect in the descending order of existence.¹³ Averroes’s position on the material or potential intellect is essentially different from those of earlier commentators, however. Alfarabi and Avicenna entertained the idea of a multiplicity of individual human potential intellects, whereas Averroes, in his Long Commentary on the *De Anima*,¹⁴ argued that the material intellect is an eternal, unique

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substance that joins man from without. This view entailed that personal immortality was seriously jeopardized. In consequence, it was attacked by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) in *On the Uniqueness of the Intellect against the Averroists*, and it was condemned in 1270 and in 1277 by the bishop of Paris, again in 1492 by the bishop of Padua, and then in 1513 by the Fifth Lateran Council.

The rediscovery and rapid spread of Aristotle's works in the thirteenth century triggered new discussions, because Latin theologians and philosophers had to reconcile the traditional idea of the soul as an independent substance with the Aristotelian view of the soul as form of the body. Early thirteenth-century psychology was heavily influenced by Avicenna, whose views strengthened the prevailing spiritualistic tendency in psychology, in addition to furnishing it with a robust philosophical foundation. Several medieval authors wrote treatises on the immortality of the soul, and others devoted portions of their works to the issue and defended immortality with philosophical arguments. As a rule, the proof for immortality was based on two main grounds: The soul has an operation that is independent from the body, and it has a natural desire for eternal bliss.¹⁵

In the second half of the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas provided a new synthesis of Augustinian and Aristotelian views. He explained how to account for the unity of man and how to save, at the same time, the substantial nature of the soul. Thomas argued that the immortality of the soul is "personal," in the sense that, after the dissolution of the body, the soul of each person continues to subsist in its own personal individuality. It is "natural," in the sense that the immortality of the soul depends on its own nature and not on a free gift from God. It is "rationally demonstrable," in the sense that there are rationally convincing arguments with which it is possible to prove the soul's immortality.¹⁶

In this way, Thomas's view is opposed to those who admit the immortality of the soul, not for rational motives, but through faith. For example, John Duns Scotus (1265–1308) rejected the traditional arguments for the immortality of the soul as weak and inconclusive, maintaining that belief in resurrection and eternal life should be based on faith alone. In Duns' view, immortality was a neutral problem that could not be conclusively resolved in terms of Aristotelian philosophy.¹⁷ Subsequently, William of Ockham (1285–1347) definitely abandoned the harmonizing approach of Thomas and argued that, with Aristotle's texts, one could prove the mortality as well as the immortality of the soul.¹⁸

Aristotle's conflicting statements on the immortality of the soul entailed that his medieval and early modern followers were readily able to find textual support for their own interpretation, whether they accepted Alexander, Averroes, or Thomas Aquinas. One point Aristotle was clear about in *De Anima* was that the study of the soul belonged to the science of nature.¹⁹ Accordingly, in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, psychology was regarded as part of natural philosophy. In Italy, where philosophy, as a rule, was studied as a preparation for taking a degree in medicine, and where, unlike in Northern Europe, universities did not have powerful faculties of theology, natural philosophers tended to take a secular and independent approach to their discipline. Conflicts did arise, but they were relatively few in number and usually quickly resolved.

One such conflict involved Biagio Pelacani (c. 1355–1416), a professor of natural philosophy from Parma, who argued that the rational soul was merely the form of the body and, therefore, perished along with it, as it was educed from matter.²⁰ This was the doctrine of Alexander, although he was not mentioned by Biagio. This view led to his being stripped of his professorship and hauled up before the bishop of Pavia in 1396, accused of making

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remarks against the Catholic faith and the Holy Mother Church. However, after recanting his heretical views, he was reinstated to his university chair by the bishop.²¹

The Renaissance debate on immortality started with Georgius Gemistus, later called Pletho (c. 1355–1452), who, at the Council of Florence in 1439, accused Aristotle of inconsistency, because, in *De Anima*, he taught that the human soul is eternal, whereas, in his *Ethics*, he did not endorse the same doctrine. According to Pletho, this ambiguity prompted Alexander of Aphrodisias to maintain the mortality of the soul.²²

Subsequently, in the second half of the fifteenth century, philosophers active at north-Italian universities came to highlight the differences between Aristotelian philosophy of mind and theological psychology, and this led to the controversy about the immortality of human soul that developed at the University of Padua. This time, the controversial theory was not the Alexandrist interpretation of Aristotle, but Averroes's. The widespread acceptance of this view among natural philosophers led Pietro Barozzi, bishop of Padua, to issue a decree, on May 4, 1489, forbidding any public disputations on the Averroist doctrine of the uniqueness of the intellect. Barozzi warned the university professors that, while remembering they were philosophers, they should not forget that they also lived as Christians.

Although Barozzi mentioned no philosopher by name, it is very likely that he aimed at Nicoletto Vernia (ca. 1420–1499), the leading Averroist at the University of Padua. Barozzi's edict forced him to change his interpretation of Aristotle. Vernia confessed that, after studying the Greek and Arab commentators, he discovered that the opinion of Averroes was contrary, not only to faith, but also to Aristotle's writings. He not only accepted the Christian dogma on immortality as a matter of faith, but he also argued, in *Against the Perverse Opinion of Averroes on the Unicity of the Intellect* (written in 1492 and posthumously published in 1504), that the doctrine put forward by Thomas Aquinas was the most valid stance on purely philosophical grounds.²³ He thus reinterpreted Alexander: The mortal intellect is not the possible intellect (as in Averroes's interpretation of Alexander) but the *cogitativa*, that is, the most prominent among the inner senses.²⁴ In support of the orthodox position, Vernia collected a wide range of ancient and medieval philosophers, including Plato, Cicero, Macrobius, and Albert the Great, thus implicitly demoting Aristotle from his privileged position as 'the Philosopher.' The distance Vernia had moved from his commitment to Aristotelian natural philosophy can be gleaned also from his reference to "*divus Plato*." This epithet reveals the change of the intellectual climate in the course of the fifteenth century.²⁵

From the beginning of the fifteenth century, Italian humanists started to produce Latin versions of Plato's dialogues, culminating in Marsilio Ficino's translation of all Plato's dialogues and Plotinus's *Enneads* (finished c. 1470 and published in 1484). Ficino (1433–1499) also wrote a *Platonic Theology on the Immortality of the Souls*, which offered rational arguments, mostly taken from Plato and his followers, in support of the Christian doctrine of the immortality of individual souls. Ficino's work was anticipated by other treatises on the immortality, but they did not attain his level of philosophical sophistication.²⁶ Ficino believed that there were large areas of agreement between Plato's doctrines and those of the Church, thus introducing the idea of a "pious philosophy" that allows one to be a good philosopher and a good Christian at the same time. After citing the view of the ancient Greek commentator Themistius that Plato, Aristotle, and Aristotle's student Theophrastus all held the same opinion concerning the rational soul, Ficino

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suggested that, by taking from Averroes the doctrine that the intellect is immortal and combining it with Alexander's belief that each person has such an intellect, one can conclude that individual souls are immortal.²⁷

Ficino's idea that the immortality of the soul could be proved in philosophical terms, provided that one endorsed a "pious philosophy," was very influential, including among Aristotelian philosophers. In 1510, Tommaso de Vio, better known as Cardinal Cajetan (1469–1534), argued in his commentary on the *De Anima* that, if thinking is impossible without imagination, then it is impossible without the body, and, hence, the intellect is not separable. In consequence, he stated that the immortality of the soul cannot be demonstrated with philosophical arguments derived from Aristotle. He proposed instead a demonstration based on Platonic views.²⁸ Remarkably, Cajetan took as a discriminating feature for the independent operation of the intellect, not the absence of a bodily organ (as did Thomas), but the need for phantasms, that is, the question of whether the intellect is able to operate without phantasms. Now, as there is no thinking without phantasms, the separability of the intellect seems impossible. This is the interpretation of Alexander.²⁹ Indeed, like Pomponazzi, he maintained that the soul itself is "in part bound to the body and in part separate from it." By consequence, this position was later condemned by the Dominican Bartolomeo Spina, as it clearly anticipated that of Pomponazzi.³⁰

Then, on December 19, 1513, the papal bull *Apostolici regiminis* was issued to the eighth session of the Fifth Lateran Council. The bull denounced some pernicious errors concerning the rational soul, namely that it was mortal, or that it was immortal but there was only one such soul for all mankind, doctrines that certain reckless philosophers asserted were true, "at least according to philosophy." The first part of the bull confirmed, as a dogma of faith, the canon adopted at the Council of Vienna in 1312, which stated that the soul was the form of the body, and that each individual human body had its own individual rational soul, which was created by God and immortal. The bull *Apostolici regiminis* imposed on all university professors of philosophy the obligation to explain the principles of Christian doctrine and to make it clear, supporting it with persuasive arguments and refuting the arguments to the contrary. Thus, when lecturing on doctrines that deviated from these dogmatic pronouncements, such as the view that the rational soul is mortal or that there is only one eternal soul for all mankind, they should make every effort to demonstrate the truth of the Christian position to their students and to refute any philosophical arguments that challenged it.³¹

One of the two delegates to the Lateran Council who voted against the decree was Tommaso de Vio, the future cardinal Cajetan. Although a Thomist, he thought that it was the job of theologians, not philosophers, to defend faith. The task of philosophers was instead to search for the truth, which they should be allowed to do free from external constraints.³² Cajetan's position was defeated by the Council, and it was left to his former colleague at the University of Padua, Pietro Pomponazzi, to compose the most famous treatise challenging the Christian orthodoxy expressed by the Lateran decree.

Pomponazzi's Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul

In his early lectures at Padua (held in 1504), Pomponazzi considered Averroes to be the most accurate interpreter of Aristotle's psychology, and yet he did not regard the uniqueness

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of the intellect as a tenable theory. Following reason and experience, he accepted the view that the individual soul was immaterial and immortal.³³ By the late 1510s, he had changed his mind, both about Aristotle's views and about the philosophical truth concerning the soul. In the *Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul* (1516), he now maintained that, because in Aristotle's view human thought could not take place without sensible images (*phantasmata*), the body and its sense organs were essential to the soul's mental capabilities. Thus, on philosophical premises and Aristotelian principles, the rational soul was essentially mortal.

At the beginning and at the end of his treatise, Pomponazzi maintained that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul must be accepted as revealed truth. In the philosophical core of the treatise, however, he dealt with the immortality of the soul in philosophical terms. In the preface, he stated that his investigation had two aims: first, to assess (previous) arguments for the immortality of the soul, leaving revelation and miracles aside; and, second, the correct interpretation of Aristotle's opinion on the issue under scrutiny.

Pomponazzi's *Treatise* is the result of a meditation on the question of the soul that puzzled him for almost 20 years. Initially approached as a problem of exegetical nature, the issue of the immortality of the soul was eventually opened to a wider philosophical dimension, that of the relationship between faith and reason, between Christian doctrine and Aristotelian philosophy. The time was not favorable to approach the subject from radical positions such as that of Pomponazzi. The rational provability of immortality was a key point of the new Christian apologetics formulated by Marsilio Ficino, but also institutionally defined during the Fifth Lateran Council in 1513. In those circumstances, the publication of the *Treatise* was an act of courage, or a clamorous error of assessment, in any case an inappropriate initiative. The interpretation given by Pomponazzi and the systematic demolition of the Thomistic doctrine caught the attention of the religious authorities and involved him in a long and bitter controversy. Subsequently, Pomponazzi intentionally left only manuscript versions of *De incantationibus* and *De fato*, where he returned to examine from different points of view the problem of a rational foundation to Christianity, again denying the possibility of a compromise between philosophy and faith.³⁴

The problem of the soul in the writings of Aristotle comes down to the contrast of two points of view: From the biological point of view, the soul is the form of an organic body, but, from the epistemological point of view, the soul has an immaterial activity, namely thought. A further complication is due to the obscure relationships between possible and agent intellect, because it is not clear how much the activity of the agent intellect belongs to the soul that ensures the biological and sensitive life of the individual. To these questions, there are no clear answers in Aristotle's works. On the contrary, what he said about it, for the most part elliptically and darkly, instead of solving it, often complicates the problem.

Introducing the issue of immortality in the first chapters of the *Treatise*, Pomponazzi openly referred to the central position of the soul in reality: Man is of a twofold nature and a mean between mortal and immortal beings. Making a concession to the setting dear to the Platonics,³⁵ he recognized the broadly cosmological importance of the argument: Speaking of the soul means to question its place in the order of the world. This apparent concession is functional to Pomponazzi's argument, however. The identification of the soul as a *copula mundi* had allowed Ficino to give a metaphysical foundation to immortality, but the same location, interpreted in the opposite direction, enables Pomponazzi to support the alternative of mortality. As to his activity of thought, man seems to belong to the immaterial realm;

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as to his vegetative and sensitive activities, however, man apparently belongs to the world of materiality. But, for Pomponazzi, the central position of man does not mean a free passing down and up the steps of the ladder of being, but its precise location in the cosmos.

The presence of the mortal and immortal in man can be theorized in six different models, two of which are only logical possibilities: (1) every man possesses an individual intellectual soul and participates in a unique vegetative–sensitive soul; (2) the soul is, in a certain sense, immortal and, in a certain respect, mortal. The remaining four options discussed in any detail are: (3) In Averroes’s view, every man has an individual mortal soul and a common immortal soul (chs. III–IV). (4) Plato held that every man has a mortal and an immortal soul (chs. V–VI). (5) The third option is ascribed to Thomas: The mortal and immortal soul are the same in man, and yet the soul is essentially (*simpliciter*) immortal, whereas, in a certain respect (*secundum quid*), it is mortal (chs. VII–VIII). (6) Pomponazzi’s own view is represented as a reversal of Thomas’s view: The soul is of itself mortal and only relatively immortal (chs. IX–XII).

Pomponazzi organized the refutation of the immortalist positions, as well the proof of the mortalist thesis around three Aristotelian propositions: (1) the definition of the soul as the perfection of an organic physical body, understood as a universal definition; (2) the disjunctive hypothesis regarding the soul’s operations: either the soul is an act of the body, and then it has a mortal nature, or else the intellect is not something of the soul, and thus it is immortal and separated;³⁶ (3) the dependence of thought upon sensitive images. Actually, Pomponazzi’s intent is not to trace an operation that takes place without an organ, but to identify an activity that the soul may fulfill without any communication with the body. Human thought satisfies the first condition, but not the second one. According to Pomponazzi, the immortalist thesis requires interpretative efforts and arbitrary assumptions that are all exegetically and philosophically unsustainable.

Pomponazzi challenged Thomas Aquinas’s conciliation of the Aristotelian definition of the soul as form with the notion of the soul as substance. Thomas ignored or distorted statements of Aristotle in order to construct a theologico-philosophical compromise, in which the needs of faith prevail over reason and the Aristotelian text. Pomponazzi delegitimized this interpretation as a philosophical doctrine, because immortality is only a certainty of faith. There is no option for a compromise. Thomas’s attempt to found Christian dogmas on Aristotelian philosophy is illegitimate and undermines the very premises of the Aristotelian system. A soul that comes to be but is incorruptible is in blatant contradiction to the reciprocal couple ungenerated–incorruptible and to that of the symmetric pair generated–corruptible.

The demonstration of the essential mortality of the soul and its corollary of immortality *secundum quid* depends essentially on the soul’s position in the ordered chain of being. As being and operating refer to each other, the three levels of epistemological activity detectable in the cosmos are three levels of ontological separation: namely intelligences, human souls, and sensitive souls. The relationship of the intellectual soul with the sensory image “*ut obiecto*” makes it impossible to consider thought as a proper operation of the soul and proves its essential inseparability from the body, that is, its natural mortality and its being part of the realm of material forms. Thus, the *secundum quid* proviso refers to a participation of the human soul in the perfect abstraction of the intelligences, but, at the same time, it guarantees the ‘middle’ position of the human soul and establishes its precise limits. With the antithesis “*simpliciter mortalis/immortalis secundum quid*,” Pomponazzi explains the double-edged nature

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of man and the prevalence of one component over the other. The intellectual function, as well as being a function of a material form, has a relative immateriality that is sufficient to ensure the reception of the material form, without hampering it.

In the following chapters (XIII–XIV), Pomponazzi answered a series of moral and cosmological objections and, in his final chapter, he declared the issue of the immortality of the soul to be, in technical terms, a “neutral” problem, insoluble and irrelevant to religious faith. He then emphasized that his treatment was incomplete in advocating only one side, leaving the defense of immortality to others. However, such proofs will use revelation and the Bible as premises that are valid only in matters of faith. To be sure, with this conclusion, Pomponazzi technically violated the key motivation of the Fifth Lateran Council of prohibiting the teachings of arguments for the mortality of the soul. However, this does not necessarily mean that he ambiguously embraced the theory of double truth, disguised as a sceptical or fideist move. Until Chapter XIV, Pomponazzi spoke as a philosopher and, addressing the discourse of religion, he drew conclusions that have value for that area, whereas, in Chapter XV, he spoke as a believer.

The mortalist position appears consistent with the text of Aristotle, in harmony with experience and compatible with morality, but, above all, philosophically sustainable, even more so than the immortalist hypothesis. By contrast, the Thomistic attempt to reconcile faith and philosophy is unwarranted. Faith and reason are two distinct areas that do not meet from a methodological point of view, because each proceeds with its own and different instruments.

First Reactions to Pomponazzi

In the preface to his work, Pomponazzi presented his treatise as a narrative to the Venetian patrician Marcantonio Contarini, in which a former student is said to have asked the author to elaborate on the issue. He thus detached his book from standard university lecturing and downplayed his own authority, and, in the final chapter, he openly submitted to the authority of the Catholic Church. But, despite these strategies, his book was seen as undermining the immortality of the soul. His treatise was publicly burnt in Venice; he was denounced by the suffragan bishop of Mantua, his home town; and a stream of attacks on him and his work issued from the printing presses.³⁷ Pietro Bembo, secretary to Pope Leo X, barely prevented Pomponazzi from being removed from his university chair in Bologna. Pomponazzi’s treatise attracted refutations, not only from the pens of theologians, including Ambrogio Flandino, Bartolomeo Spina, and Crisostomo Javelli, but also from physicians and philosophers, including Gaspare Contarini, Agostino Nifo, Girolamo Cardano, Francesco Vimercati, and Marcantonio Genua.³⁸

Pomponazzi replied to the attacks with *Apologia* (1518) and *Defensorium* (1519), which are more elaborate than his 1516 treatise but do not alter his basic position. He restated that immortality was not rationally demonstrable, as it was contrary to the principles of Aristotelian natural philosophy. As an article of faith, it should be founded solely on divine revelation. As a matter of fact, in spite of all the criticism that he received from both clerical authorities and other Aristotelians, Pomponazzi did not substantially change his mind in the period from 1516 to his death. Let us now briefly examine the chronology of the principal works involved in the controversy.

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The first reaction to Pomponazzi's treatise was written by the Venetian nobleman Gaspare Contarini. Lippomano, bishop of Bergamo, sent it to Pomponazzi, who qualified Contarini's work as "*acutissimus et gravissimus*" and replied to it with an *Apologia* (finished on December 21, 1517). These works were published in a joint edition in 1518.³⁹ Then, Contarini replied with a second treatise on the immortality of the soul, and he informed Pomponazzi that Agostino Nifo was also working on a treatise. On April 13, 1518, the servite Girolamo Amadei finished his *Apologia pro animae immortalitate in Petrum Pomponatium*,⁴⁰ and, on October 27, 1518, Agostino Nifo's *De immortalitate animae libellus* was published in Venice. Pomponazzi replied to Nifo's book with the *Defensorium*, finished on January 5, 1519, and published on May 18, 1519. Four months elapsed because the Inquisitor of Bologna did not give permission for printing without a "solution" to Pomponazzi's arguments for the mortality of the soul. This solution was worked out by Javelli.⁴¹ In the meantime, on March 30, 1519, Ambrogio Flandino published his *De animorum immortalitate* in Mantua,⁴² and, on September 10 of the same year, Bartolomeo Spina's *Opuscula*, which contained the *Propugnaculum Aristotelis de immortalitate animae* against Cajetan and the *Tutela veritatis de immortalitate animae* against Pomponazzi.⁴³

Subsequently, on November 15, 1521, Luca Prasiccio published his *Quaestio de animae immortalitate* attacking Pomponazzi, Nifo, and Flandino, and defending a Peripatetic psychology in an Averroistic key. In a similar vein, Marcantonio Zimara (1475/76–ante 1537) attacked Pomponazzi in *Tabula dilucidationum* (published after his death, in 1537), because Pomponazzi in his "book on the mortality of the soul" abandoned the "*via Peripateticorum*."⁴⁴ On November 15, 1524, Battista Fiera published his *Opusculum de animae immortalitate* against Pomponazzi, emphasizing that the soul's dependence upon phantasms holds for intellect in this state of union with the body, not for the intellect as such.⁴⁵

Shortly afterwards, in 1525, Pier Niccolò Castellani published a treatise on the immortality of the soul based on Plato and Aristotle. Castellani openly professed obedience to the prescript of the Fifth Lateran Council, and he presented a detailed analysis of arguments inferred from the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions. However, he eventually embraced a fairly traditional position, and he did not explicitly discuss or attack Pomponazzi's position in any detail.⁴⁶

Gaspare Contarini and Bartolomeo Spina

Gaspare Contarini (1483–1542), a former student of Pietro Pomponazzi, was among the first scholars who reacted to the publication of his treatise, and the teacher included Contarini's critique in his *Apologia* (1518), anonymously but approvingly, which was his own response.⁴⁷ Contarini claimed that some doctrines are articles of faith, such as the Trinity and the resurrection of the dead, whereas other doctrines, including the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, are matters of faith incidentally (*per accidens*) and may be proven by reason. Contarini formulated four arguments to prove that the human intellect is an immaterial form: (1.) it knows universals; (2.) it knows and scrutinizes the nature of corporeal beings; (3.) it knows itself and its operations; and (4.) it knows all material forms. Thus, this faculty transcends matter both structurally (it is not matter) and functionally (it does not depend upon a material organ).

Contarini defined the ontological status of the soul as a substance that has activity of itself. And he referred to Plato, who had argued that the soul is immortal because it moves

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itself. Now, with respect to the host of traditional arguments regarding the freedom of will and choice, Contarini argued that self-motivation and immateriality are evident to personal experience, and he proclaimed that this argument is the strongest possible. In sum, the operation of the soul is self-movement, and that entails immateriality and thus immortality.⁴⁸

In the *Apologia* replying to Contarini, Pomponazzi insisted that, in our earthly life, intellectual knowledge does not occur without the use of phantasms. Thus, for him, the role of reason remains within the bounds of sense, the human intellect being “*vix umbra intellectus*” (“hardly a shadow of the intellect”). Then Contarini challenged Pomponazzi’s apology, arguing that Pomponazzi, in the course of time, had changed his mind on the ontology of the material forms and the intellect. In his 1516 treatise, so Contarini argued, Pomponazzi qualified the former as indivisible, whereas he now viewed both the material forms and the intellect as extended forms. Contarini, by contrast, held that the intellect is not only the act of the body, but also a form that has its own being *per se*. Furthermore, he agreed with Pomponazzi that faith and reason both have their own domain, but in his view reason should not invade the realm of faith.⁴⁹

Three theologians produced published works against Pomponazzi, including Girolamo Amidei, Ambrogio Fiandino, and Bartolomeo Spina (1468–1546), the future master of the Sacred Palace. The latter wrote three works that can be significantly connected to the controversy: one book against Cajetan, that is *Flagellum*, and two books against Pomponazzi, the most important being his *Tutela veritatis de immortalitate animae contra Petrum Pomponatium Mantovanum* (1519). Pomponazzi did not reply to Spina, nor to the other theologians.

In *Tutela*, Bartolomeo Spina defended Thomas Aquinas, because he offered a philosophical demonstration of immortality, and because his interpretation of Aristotle is correct. Spina argued that the intellect uses phantasms, but that it transcends this level in elaborating the universals. It starts with phantasms, but it is not chained to this level. Thus, he drew a distinction between the image as a single object of the imagination and the universal, mental word formed by the intellect. However, in this way, he circumvented Pomponazzi’s notion of the soul as a mean, rather than answering it. Spina defined man as a complex of body and soul, as a mean between the spiritual and terrestrial realms, assigning immortality to the soul only. In Spina’s view, Pomponazzi did not question the arguments in favor of the immortality of the soul: He destroyed the foundations of faith. Spina’s position became an issue in the Order because he detected that Tommaso de Vio (see above) had paved the way for Pomponazzi’s errors in his commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima*.⁵⁰

Agostino Nifo

As said above, Pomponazzi was violently attacked by the preacher Ambrogio Fiandino. Pomponazzi invited him to write down his criticisms, but Fiandino first asked Agostino Nifo (1469/70–1538) to do this job.⁵¹ Nifo, a former Paduan philosopher and rival of Pomponazzi, contributed to the discussion with a full-blown treatise on the immortality of the soul. Nifo’s polemic is based on two fundamental ideas. First, Pomponazzi is not a legitimate Aristotelian, because his reading of Aristotle is superficial, inaccurate, or deliberately misleading. Furthermore, he is not a good Aristotelian because he misinterprets the great authorities of the Peripatetic tradition, confounding Themistius, Averroes, and John of Jandun, major representative of the Latin Averroist movement. Second, Pomponazzi

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correctly argued that the discourse on the immortality of the soul develops on two levels: the physical and Aristotelian level, on the one hand, and that of the true discourse, which refers ultimately to faith, on the other. But Nifo demonstrated that there is no contradiction between the two levels, nor is there any necessity for the formulation of two different truths. And the existence of two levels does not entail at all that the discourse of faith lacks rational, physical, and Aristotelian support. This strategy eventually leads to a reestablishment of the Thomistic doctrine of immortality. Nifo indeed tries to delegitimize Pomponazzi in the very foundation of his argumentation, that is, the correct interpretation of Aristotle.

In his *De intellectu*, Nifo had already argued that Aristotle's texts about immortality are not ambiguous. After a detailed discussion of the Platonic and Peripatetic definitions of the human soul, Nifo presented the true definition of soul. The latter is eternal, not "*parte ante*," but only "*parte post*," and the goodness of the first mover and the work of nature cooperate in the creation and infusion of the rational soul in the body. Then, he pointed out that the rational soul originates from within as well as from without: The essence of the soul is generated by the first cause, whereas its specific application and determination to the body depend upon secondary causes (celestial bodies) operating on the body.⁵²

In the first 14 chapters of his work, Nifo closely followed the first six chapters of Pomponazzi's treatise. Then, he focused on the possibility of an operation by the intellect separated from the body. According to Nifo, a distinction should be made as to the being of the intellect, because the latter should be seen either as in itself or as bound to the body. The essential nature of the intellect is the former state. Having analyzed Pomponazzi's criticisms of Plato and Averroes, Nifo argued that the immortality of the soul is rationally and Peripatetically sustainable. This argument was clearly circular, because it presupposed what was in question, namely the separateness of the intellect.⁵³

The battle over Aristotle's texts is central in Nifo's argumentation against Pomponazzi. For the famous passage in *De Anima*, 403a8–10,⁵⁴ Nifo proposed three different interpretations. The first is that of Averroes, which he rejected. The second view is presented "*pro veritate*" and is attributed to Simplicius: The soul survives, but, strictly speaking, what survives is no longer a soul, as it no longer informs the body; thus, it is only an intellect. In other words, the soul that remains after death is not the soul as soul, but the substance of the soul. Third, Nifo presents his personal view that the soul detached from the body is able to think without images, provided that it has been previously affected by them.⁵⁵

All these interpretations would be systematically destroyed by Pomponazzi in his *Defensorium*. Nifo argued that the "subjective independence" of the activities of intellect and will is sufficient to affirm separability.⁵⁶ For Pomponazzi, this overwhelms the text of *De Anima*, because an identical essence cannot be equipped with two distinct ways of being.⁵⁷ Thus, the second view is senseless, and Nifo's own view raises a serious issue for the souls of those who died before leaving the uterus.⁵⁸

Crisostomo Javelli

On the basis of the bull issued by the Fifth Lateran Council, Pomponazzi, in his *Defensorium*, should have opposed *solutiones* to his *rationes*, that is, with a kind of psychological violence, he should have dissolved his own arguments. This was the condition imposed by the Inquisitor of Bologna to authorize publication. Pomponazzi resorted to a theologian, and

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the choice fell on the Dominican Crisostomo Javelli (1470–1538), professor of theology of the Dominican studies in Bologna. Javelli's *solutiones* were printed in the 1525 edition of Pomponazzi's *Tractatus acutissimi*.

Javelli emphasized that, in Aristotle, the problem of the soul is obscure. Moreover, Javelli differentiated Aristotle's philosophy from philosophy as knowledge of the truth given as an innate gift of God.⁵⁹ This was convenient for Pomponazzi, as it implicitly acknowledges the autonomy of the philosophical level. In consequence, a defense of immortality could not be built on Aristotle. In fact, in the *Tractatus acutissimi*, Pomponazzi changed the title of Javelli's intervention from *solutiones* to *approbationes*.

Javelli responded to Pomponazzi's philosophical arguments from a theological perspective and produced a series of counterarguments to Pomponazzi's defense against Nifo. In his attempt to justify immortality using various methods, Javelli separated the Aristotelian and the Platonic discourses from the theological arguments. At the same time, he stressed that the ultimate reasons for the integrity of the soul are not of the scholastic type, but rather of the Neoplatonic type. Actually, Javelli did not move himself within the limits of faith, but within those of natural philosophy in a Thomistic key.⁶⁰

Further Developments

After 1525, several works on the immortality of the soul appeared that can be significantly connected to the Pomponazzi affair, as the authors explicitly referred to Pomponazzi's views. Girolamo Cardano and, later, Italian Aristotelians, including some followers of Alexander of Aphrodisias, are cases in point. The spread of Alexander's position also alarmed the ecclesiastical bodies of doctrinal control, as emerged from the extensive investigations of Cesare Cremonini by the Roman Holy Office (see below).

Girolamo Cardano

The Pomponazzi affair was still in the minds of scholars at the time Cardano was writing his treatise on the immortality of the soul. Written in 1543 and published in 1545, this book precedes the encyclopedic works he produced in the 1550s, that is, *De subtilitate* and *De rerum varietate*.⁶¹ The argumentative structure of this treatise is conceived as a response to Pomponazzi in the fields that he had set as the limits of his investigation: Aristotelian philosophy and natural reason.

Cardano's *De immortalitate* is a most peculiar work.⁶² It is difficult to find, in the entire history of philosophy, another work that presents such an exhaustive list of proofs against the immortality of the soul, set out in such great detail and depth, with so great a deployment of rational arguments. This is why Cardano's catalogue attracted the curiosity and attention of all those seventeenth-century thinkers who denied the immortality of soul.⁶³

The type of individual immortality defended by Cardano obliterates the survival after death of memories, experiences accumulated throughout one's own life, and even acquired knowledge. All this vanishes, together with the passive intellect. What remains—the active intellect—is a pure and impassive principle that does not preserve any sign of its stay in the body during an individual's mortal life.⁶⁴ Chapter XI represents the kernel of Cardano's treatise, and it is worth running through the main points.

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First, Cardano believed that, from the perspective of human reason, the Aristotelian arguments in favor of the immortality of the soul are logically superior to those of Plato (which Cardano has already refuted in Chapter III). Second, Cardano's demonstrative strategy is based on the assumption that Aristotle's works contain all we need in order to assess his position concerning the immortality of the soul, and that a close and accurate reading of these texts provides the interpreter with convincing arguments in favor of immortality. As a consequence, Cardano must assess the alternative readings by Alexander of Aphrodisias, Averroes, and Pomponazzi. More specifically, the crux of the matter becomes the correct interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of the active intellect. In particular, Cardano rejected Averroes's theory, both of the immortality of the passive intellect and of the uniqueness of the active intellect. For Cardano, the passive intellect is mortal, whereas the active intellect is immortal but nevertheless constitutive of the individual thinking subject. Moreover, adopting the Aristotelian position as the best interpretative framework demands the acceptance of the eternity of the world (along with the ensuing eternal succession of the members of any given species) and the rejection of the existence of the infinite in actuality. Given these premises, the only tenable stance, for Cardano, is to assume the existence of a infinite number of active or agent intellects that are constantly reincarnated in human bodies.⁶⁵ Consequently, the core of Cardano's position is that there is an active intellect inside each one of us, constantly developing as an intrinsic principle of intellectual activity, but without either the personal memories and individual awareness that are retained by the passive intellect or its liaisons with the body and the external world. Unlike Averroes's single intellect, Cardano's intellect is individuated, finite in number, and separable; on the death of an individual human being, the agent intellect transmigrates to another. Thus, the kind of immortality of the soul that can be accepted on Aristotelian grounds, simply relying on his writings (and we have no other option if we wish to follow the path of reason), is one that presupposes the individual survival of impersonal minds that have lost any connection with the material universe.⁶⁶

Although Cardano's strategy for tackling the issue, by first expounding arguments against immortality and then refuting them, is reminiscent of the scholastic dialectical method, there are several features in *De immortalitate* that lend it an air of ambiguity. First, even though the arguments are expounded in the first two chapters of the work, they are not refuted until the end of the treatise, in Chapter XII. Therefore, the two initial chapters can be readily detached from the rest and used independently. Second, the reader of *De immortalitate* comes to realize that Cardano was more interested in expounding the arguments against immortality than in refuting them. Chapter XII (containing all the refutations) does not make a very strong impression: It is quite dense, often confused, and in general difficult to read. Cardano, furthermore, does not give any explicit indication of the specific arguments that he is refuting, though these are carefully enumerated in the first two chapters, which are clearer and more rhetorical in style. Finally, although Cardano devotes an entire chapter to refuting these arguments, some are not discussed, others are tacitly accepted, and many are simply used in favor of his theory of the active intellect's reincarnation. And Cardano does not usually remain within the limits of orthodoxy when discussing these arguments.⁶⁷

Despite the powerful series of objections that he sets out, Cardano defended, at least indirectly, a certain type of immortality, but he demonstrated that the only type of immortality founded on natural reason and on Aristotle's writings is that which Averroes had

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put forward: the depersonalized immortality of the unique intellect. Yet Cardano, as is well known, always rejected this view. For example, in *De immortalitate*, he devotes an entire chapter to pointing out the contradictions that underlie this account, as well as highlighting its lack of Aristotelian rigor.⁶⁸ Valverde has convincingly argued that contemporary readers of Cardano's treatise, who without doubt were familiar with Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae*, would know that, by including in his objections most of the arguments that Pomponazzi had expressly directed at Averroes, Cardano was implicitly endorsing them.

In *De subtilitate*, written about seven years later, Cardano's approach in matters psychological is quite different, as he mainly dwelled on the faculties and operations of the mind.⁶⁹ In his critique of this work, Julius Caesar Scaliger attacked the distinction between the immaterial and material parts of the soul. For Scaliger, it is the soul, not the agent intellect, that is the individuating principle of the hylemorphic human being. And the soul, which is located in all parts of man, is immortal in all of its faculties, whereas Cardano makes the inferior soul mortal.⁷⁰ In 1559, Cardano published a reply to Scaliger's attack, in which he set out to dismiss his criticisms, but he did not dwell on the immortality issue.⁷¹

Later Aristotelians: Simone Porzio to Jacopo Zabarella

Pomponazzi's interpretation was essentially confirmed by later sixteenth-century Alexandrists, including Simone Porzio and Giulio Castellani.

In *De humana mente* (1551), Porzio showed that he had a mastery of the *De Anima* commentaries by Alexander, Themistius, Philoponus, and Simplicius, because he learned Greek. It is precisely because of the knowledge of ancient Greek and, in consequence, of the terminology that Aristotle used to define the soul that the mortalist position of Porzio diverges from that of Pomponazzi. For the latter, the need our intellectual faculty has for sense images to carry out its own activity gradually emerged as the main argument to deny the separation of the intellectual soul, whereas, for Porzio, this argument is only one among the corollaries that can be derived from something much more radical: the definition of the soul as perfection of an organic body, that is, as a substantial *entelechia* that can be only conceptually separated from the body. The soul is not immortal, because it should be created, and this is not possible in the framework of Aristotelian philosophy.⁷² Thus, Porzio admitted immortality merely as an effort to immortality.⁷³

Giulio Castellani openly admired Alexander's interpretation of Aristotle. He regarded Porzio as his forerunner, but he followed him only in some basic assumptions. He emphasized that the soul is the first act and perfection of the body and cannot be separated from the body. And he separated the agent from the possible intellect: the first being God, and the latter being part of the form of the human body.⁷⁴ Castellani argued that the soul arises in the body, and that, in the case of the intellectual soul, it is caused by the celestial bodies. Thus, the intellectual soul is not separable.⁷⁵

Antonio Gratarolo wrote a treatise on the immortality of the soul in open polemics with Pomponazzi's view.⁷⁶ On the interpretation of Aristotle, he agrees with Averroes, against Alexander, Thomas, and Pomponazzi, but, on philosophy, he endorses Thomas's position: The intellect is an immaterial reality, because it has no organ.⁷⁷ In the generation of intellectual knowledge, the phantasm does not move the intellectual soul, but is a mere instrument of the agent intellect in producing the intelligible species.⁷⁸ Like Javelli, he held that the soul has a "*proprium esse.*"

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Pomponazzi was attacked from the point of view of Simplician Averroism by Marcantonio Genua, who, in his 1565 *Disputation on the immortality of the soul*, explicitly attacked Pomponazzi and Alexander for misunderstanding Aristotle and his main commentators, including Themistius, Simplicius, and Averroes. On the basis of Aristotle's texts and referring to the famous Platonic metaphor, he argued that the material intellect is not the act of the body, but an assisting form, similar to the helmsman on a ship.⁷⁹ Genua also rejected the Thomistic view of one human soul exercising vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual functions.⁸⁰ Then, he argued that, in the case of intellectual knowledge, the proviso "*non sine phantasmate*" only held for the passive, corruptible intellect, not for the material or "progressive" intellect.⁸¹ Finally, man is a rational animal by virtue of the *cogitativa* or the particular intellect, which is educed from matter and provides man with being.⁸² The immortality of the intellect is based on the following arguments: (1.) the intellect receives the forms of material beings and, by consequence, it is immaterial; (2.) the intellect has intrinsic intelligibility; (3.) man would be deprived of abstract knowledge; and (4.) there is the possibility of intellectual beatitude.⁸³

Jacopo Zabarella argued that, in Aristotle's view, the soul, including the possible intellect, cannot survive the death of the body. He thus endorsed the Alexandrist interpretation of Aristotelian psychology: Every "*forma dans esse corpori*" is material and not separable; soul is "subjectively" (as form) and "objectively" (as to its objects) bound to the body. The psychological essays in *De rebus naturalibus* mainly set out Zabarella's views on the functioning of the human soul according to Aristotle, whereas, in his incomplete *De Anima* commentary,⁸⁴ published after his death in 1605, he discussed the (im)mortality of the soul. Zabarella argued that the intellect in its operation is not mixed with the body, but it cannot perform any operation without the body. Unlike Pomponazzi, who concentrated on proving that the soul was mortal, Zabarella's main effort was to refute the arguments sustaining immortality. He focused on the following passages: The soul is an informing form and the first actuality of the body (412a6);⁸⁵ the soul is not linked to the body as a sailor to a ship (413a4);⁸⁶ the impassivity of the soul (429a15) means that it does not possess intelligibles but must receive them;⁸⁷ that the intellect is unmixed (429a18 and 24) entails, again, that the intellect does not contain the objects it receives.⁸⁸

In his *De Anima* commentary, Zabarella reconstructed Aristotle's view, arguing for mortalism. What his own view was is much harder to say. Like Cajetan and many others, Zabarella drew a distinction between Aristotle and the truth. Thus, in *De humana mente*, he defended the Christian view of a created and immortal soul. And, when he discussed the argument that the intellect is perishable because it depends upon phantasms, in his *De Anima* commentary, Zabarella underlined that any form depends for its being on the body. But, according to true philosophy, taught by the theologians, he reminds us, there can exist a form that gives being to matter without taking its being from matter.⁸⁹ Thus, he left the question of the immortality of the soul to the theologians, because it did not belong to natural philosophy, and because Aristotle, as a natural philosopher, had not been explicit about it.⁹⁰

Roman Censorship and the Immortality Issue

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were several attempts to impose the Lateran decree on natural philosophers in relation to the immortality of the soul. Cesare

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Cremonini is a significant case in point. Cremonini's interpretation of Aristotelian psychology and cosmology triggered lifelong proceedings by the Roman Inquisition. An Inquisition decree of 1598 attests the start of the proceedings against the Paduan professor, focusing on his heterodox interpretation of Aristotle's psychological texts "*ad mentem Alexandri Afrodisei*."⁹¹ In 1604, Cremonini was again investigated because of his "philosophical" interpretation of Aristotle's psychology.⁹² And, a couple of years later, the Inquisition discovered that Cremonini's students were spreading his views in other Italian towns also.⁹³ In 1614, he was accused of entertaining the mortality of the soul by Paolo Andrea d'Auria from Genua, who, for this very reason, was condemned to a formal abjuration on May 22 of this year.⁹⁴ Cremonini promised again and again to correct his views, but the cardinals of the Holy Office slowly became aware that, in effect, he was mocking them. Cremonini repeatedly claimed a free interpretation of Aristotle, stressing the fact that he was not a theologian, but a philosopher. In a letter to the Inquisitor of Padua written in 1619, he even explicitly stated that he was *paid* to provide faithful interpretations of the Stagirite.⁹⁵

Notes

- 1 Immortality was denied by some Protestant authors, among whom Luther and radical Anabaptists, who held that the human soul is not naturally immortal, theorizing a 'soul-sleep' during the time between bodily death and the Day of Judgment. See Burns 1972.
- 2 Soliloquia, II, 19, 33; De immortalitate animae, I.1.4–5.
- 3 See, however, section 1.
- 4 Many sixteenth-century treatises on the immortality of the soul emphasized the moral imperative of an afterlife that obliges man to avoid evil. The works by Juan Luis Vives and Philip Melanchthon on the soul are cases in point; see Vives 1555 and Melanchthon 1548.
- 5 See Ricuperati 1980.
- 6 See his *Quaestiones celeberrimae in Genesim* (1623).
- 7 *De anima*, II.1, 412a28–29; 412b6–8.
- 8 *De anima*, I.4, 408b19–20, 29–30.
- 9 *De anima*, III.5, 430b23–30.
- 10 *De anima*, I.1, 403a5–10.
- 11 Théry 1926.
- 12 Pluta 1986, pp. 11–15, 37–49; Kessler 2012, p. 18.
- 13 See Davidson 1992, p. 4.
- 14 A modern edition of the surviving Latin text is in Averroes 1953.
- 15 Domenicus Gundissalinus (fl. 1150) and William of Auvergne are cases in point; see Pluta 1986, p. 9.
- 16 Pluta 1986, pp. 16–19.
- 17 *In IV Sententiarum librum*, IV, dist. 43, q. 1, in Iohannes Duns Scotus 1617: IV, pp. 891–907; cf. Pluta 1986, pp. 19–21.
- 18 Pluta 1986, p. 25–36.
- 19 *De anima*, I.1, 403a19–30.
- 20 Pelacani 1974, p. 79.
- 21 Di Napoli, 1963, p. 68, note 56. Cf. Pluta 1986, pp. 48–49.
- 22 Blum 2007, p. 213.
- 23 Vernia 1516 (first edition 1504).
- 24 Vernia 1516, fols. 4rv, 5v.
- 25 Krays 2000, pp. 7–8.

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- 26 Cases in point are the works written by Antonio degli Agli, Agostino Dati, Giovanni da Ferrara, Jacopo Campora, Leonardo Nogarola, and Pier Candido Decembrio. Di Napoli 1963, pp. 105–14; Casini 2007, p. 135.
- 27 *Theologia platonica*, book XV, in Ficino 1576: I, pp. 327–367. See for discussion, Kraye 2000, p. 12, and Blum 2007, pp. 213–17.
- 28 De Vio 1965, pp. 60–65; for discussion, see Gilson 1961, pp. 41–42; Pluta 1986, p. 5. See also Cajetan’s commentary on Ecclesiast; in De Vio 1542, p. 117: “Nullus enim philosophus hactenus demonstravit animam hominis esse immortalem, nulla apparet demonstrativa ratio, sed fide hoc credimus, et rationibus probabilibus consonat.”
- 29 Di Napoli 1963, pp. 217–18.
- 30 Blum 2007, pp. 224–25; see also below, section 3.
- 31 Mansi, 32, cols. 842–43.
- 32 Kraye 2000, p. 13.
- 33 Pomponazzi 1955, p. 93, quoted in Kraye 2000, p. 23.
- 34 V. Perrone Compagni, “Introduction”, in Pomponazzi 1999, p. v–vii.
- 35 The famous adagio in confinio aeternitatis et temporis, known from the *Liber de causis*, and from the works of Thomas Aquinas, Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.
- 36 See *De anima*, I.1, 403a2–11.
- 37 See Blum 2007, pp. 219, 223–24.
- 38 For an overview, see Di Napoli 1963, pp. 269–70.
- 39 Pomponazzi 1518.
- 40 Amadei 1518.
- 41 See below.
- 42 Flandino 1519.
- 43 Spina 1519.
- 44 Zimara 1543, f. 3v.
- 45 Fiera 1524.
- 46 Castellani 1525.
- 47 Contarini’s reply to the apology appeared together with the first critique as books I and II of his *De immortalitate animae* in the posthumous edition of his works. See Contarini 1571.
- 48 Contarini 1571, fol. fol. 193C: “Ecce ergo quod ex electione libera voluntatis, sequitur humanum animum per se esse sine corpore: quare et absolute immortalem.”
- 49 Di Napoli 1963, p. 295.
- 50 Di Napoli 1963, pp. 302–308.
- 51 Di Napoli 1963, pp. 267–68.
- 52 For a summary view, see Nifo 2011, pp. 35–47.
- 53 See Blum 2007, p. 226.
- 54 See above, section 1.
- 55 Nifo 1518, fols. 5b–6a.
- 56 Nifo 1518, f. 5a.
- 57 Pomponazzi 1525, f. 84vb.
- 58 Pomponazzi 1525, f. 85ra.
- 59 Javelli, “Solutiones”, in Pomponazzi 1525, f. 108v: “Philosophia Aristotelis et philosophia ut philosophia non convertuntur.” Cf. Gilson 1961, pp. 51–52.
- 60 Di Napoli 1963, pp. 328–29; Blum 2007, p. 226.
- 61 See Cardano 1545. There is a recent critical edition Cardano 2006, which is here referred to.
- 62 For a modern edition, see Cardano 2006, and for a thorough analysis, see Valverde 2007.
- 63 See Valverde 2007, p. 58: “From Mersenne’s *L’impiété*, we can make up that the two initial chapters of *De immortalitate animorum*, containing an extensive list of objections against the immortality of the individual soul, have been taken as a clear expression of Cardano’s own opinion on the topic. This misunderstanding applies not only to Mersenne. In *Theophrastus Redivivus*, Cardano is placed in the company of the libertines of the seventeenth century as an opponent of the immortality of the soul. In this work, an exemplary document of libertinism, there are numerous references to *De immortalitate*, drawn, with only a few exceptions, from the first two chapters. The anonymous author extracts many arguments against immortality and attributes them to

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- Cardano himself. He does not, however, mention Cardano's entrenched opposition to Alexander of Aphrodisias and to Pomponazzi regarding the interpretation of Aristotelian texts, nor does he refer to Cardano's criticism of the Averroists or to the theory of the reincarnation of the active intellect championed by him."
- 64 See Valverde 2007, pp. 58–59; Maclean 2008, pp. 396–403.
- 65 In Cardano's opinion, this Pythagorean doctrine, purged of all the inappropriate overlapping between animal and human souls, is an original and integral part of the Aristotelian theory of the soul.
- 66 See Valverde 2007, p. 59.
- 67 Valverde 2007, pp. 60–61; for a detailed analysis of the arguments, see pp. 62–72.
- 68 Cardano explicitly accepts the criticisms of Averroism made by both Thomas Aquinas and by Pomponazzi.
- 69 Cardano 1550, bk. XIV.
- 70 Scaliger 1576, ex. 307, section 17, 14 and 20.
- 71 Cardano 1559.
- 72 Porzio 1551, pp. 15, 16, 34, and 38.
- 73 Porzio 1551, pp. 96–97. Di Napoli 1963, pp. 354–57.
- 74 Castellani 1568, fols. 26r–33r.
- 75 Castellani 1568, fols. 67v–68r. Di Napoli 1963, pp. 358–61.
- 76 Gratarolo 1554.
- 77 Gratarolo 1554, p. 90.
- 78 Gratarolo 1554, p. 30.
- 79 Genua 1565, pp. 9 and 21–27.
- 80 Genua 1565, pp. 31–32.
- 81 Genua 1565, pp. 37–38.
- 82 Genua 1565, pp. 43–44.
- 83 Genua 1565, pp. 48–52. For discussion, see Di Napoli 1963, pp. 348–49.
- 84 Zabarella discussed the first chapter of book I, the first seven of book II, and chapter 4–5 of book III.
- 85 Zabarella 1606, cols. 114–15, 134, 141.
- 86 Zabarella 1606, cols. 167–72.
- 87 Zabarella 1606, cols. 685–86.
- 88 Zabarella 1606, cols. 692–94.
- 89 Zabarella 1606, col. 73.
- 90 See Mitrovic 2009.
- 91 Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, Sanctum Officium, *Decreta*, 1598, f. 296v: "Caesaris Cremonini lectoris publici Paduae, qui legit de Anima ad mentem Alexandri Afrodisei lectis literis Inquisitoris Veneti datis 12 superioris mensis Ill.^{mi} etc decreverunt et ordinaverunt quod scribatur episcopo et Inquisitori Paduae, ut se informet, et provideant."
- 92 ACDF, SO, *Decreta*, 1604–1605, f. 112rv.
- 93 ACDF, SO, *Decreta*, 1608, p. 93.
- 94 ACDF, SO, *Decreta*, 1614, p. 254.
- 95 The letter is published in Renan 1925, at p. 479: "Non posso né voglio retrattare le esposizioni d'Aristotile, poiché l'intendo così, e son pagato per dichiarlo quanto l'intendo, e nol facendo sarei obligato alla restituzione della mercede." See also Di Napoli 1963, pp. 382–84.

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