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JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF GREEK AND LATIN PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS

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DEAR READERS,

—— I have the honour of presenting you the new international issue of our journal. As you may notice, with this third international issue our journal has undergone some changes – most apparently in its visual look. They are meant to make the journal more attractive and readable. All the changes could be accomplished thanks to the collaboration of the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences with the Faculty of Arts Palacký University Olomouc. The Publisher of Aither newly became the Faculty of Arts Palacký University, and the Institute of Philosophy of CAS, that had been its sole publisher so far, remained the co-publisher. We hope that the collaboration of both institutions in publishing Aither proves to be stable and fruitful.

Pavel Hobza

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Oratorical Stylistics according to Hermogenes of Tarsus

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ABSTRACT

Hermogenes of Tarsus (2nd century A.D.) is considered to be one of the most prominent figures of the theory of rhetoric, because of the categories, types or canons of literary style he introduced in the literary critique of oratorical texts. In the third book of his treatise *On the Art of Rhetoric*, bearing the title *On the Ideas*, he reconstructed the threefold arrangement of oratorical style (high, middle, low) developed previously during the Roman era. The seven-fold clarification of style he introduced directly engaged his theory to the philosophy of the Neo-Platonists. The types of oratorical style he proposed could be regarded as *aesthetic functions*, since they suggest both the function of processing thoughts, namely the *significata* concealed within the reason, and the meta-linguistic function, in the sense of reasoned speech employed in commenting on speech acts. In this sense, *On the Ideas* is a study not of the oratorical style –something equivalent to a survey on personal patterns of modifying the oratorical language, a subject formulated by the preceding rhetoricians under the title *Peri Characteron* – but a survey of oratorical *stylistics*, namely, a study of the systematic relations and strategies of oratorical deliverance.*

*A primary form of the speculations presented here was presented during the procedures of the 11th International Conference on Greek Philosophy, 20-27 of August 1999, Mithymna, Greece.

— Hermogenes of Tarsus lived during the 2nd century A.D. He is considered to be one of the most prominent figures of the theory of rhetoric, because of the categories, types or canons of literary style he introduced in the literary critique of oratorical texts. The third book of his treatise *On the Art of Rhetoric*, bearing the title *On the Ideas*,¹ is a work quite distinct from any other reference book on oratory, as it proposes an advanced categorization of oratorical style. In this book he reconstructed the threefold arrangement of oratorical style (high, middle, low) developed previously during the Roman era. The categories he suggested derived from the Ciceronian idea of the perfect orator, the forerunner of which was Plato's theory of forms. Additionally, as the aim of

his book *On the Ideas* was an inquiry upon the essential nature of style, the seven-fold clarification of style he introduced directly engaged his theory to the philosophy of the Neo-Platonists. Within this framework of Neo-Platonic thought, his treatise proved mostly influential during the times of late Antiquity and during the Byzantine era; Sopater,² Troilos,³ Phoebammon,⁴ and many other authors wrote commentary works on his treatise, which influenced oratorical theory up to the 18th century, both in the printed and in the manuscript tradition.⁵

2 Sopater 1833.

3 Troilos 1834.

4 Phoebammon 1931.

5 On the influence of Hermogenes' theory upon the Byzantine rhetoric, cf. Kustas 1970, pp. 55-73; Kustas 1973; Sevchenko 1981; Walker 2001. For a contemporary appreciation of Hermogenes' contribution to the theory of oratorical style, cf. Kennedy 1994; Hagedorn 1964; Lindberg

1 All the references in this paper are assigned to the modern edition of the text, in Rabe 1913, pp. 213-413.

Seven fundamental categories of style (ιδέαι) subsist, according to Hermogenes, in the delivery and the critical study of oratorical speech, aiming at the effectiveness (δύναμις) of it: (a) *clarity*, (b) *magnitude*, (c) *beauty*, (d) *rapidity*, (e) *character*, (f) *truth*, and (g) *expertness*. From these categories, *clarity*, *magnitude* and *character* derive from, or are further resolved into sets, while *beauty*, *rapidity*, *truth* and *expertness* are considered to be self-sufficient. Clarity is resolved into the types of *clear* and *well-determined* speech; *magnitude* is resolved into *decency*, *vehemence*, *vigour*, *roughness*, *splendor* and the *encompassing* type of speech; *character* is resolved into *gravity*, *acrimony*, *mildness*, *leniency* and *naivety*. By reason of this, the histogram of the seven main categories of style becomes a chart of up to seventeenth different classes of oratorical style (1st diagram): (a) *clarity* (σαφήνεια) analyzed in (a¹) *clear speech* (καθαρότης) and (a²) *well-determined speech* (εὐκρίνεια), (b) *magnitude* (μέγεθος) analyzed in (b¹) *decency* (σεμνότης), (b²) *vehemence* (σφοδρότης), (b³) *vigour* (ἀκμὴ), (b⁴) *roughness* (τραχύτης), (b⁵) *splendor* (λαμπρότης), (b⁶) *encompassing* (περιβολή), (c) *character* (ἦθος) analyzed in (c¹) *gravity* (βαρύτης),

(c²) *acrimony* (δριμύτης), (c³) *mildness* (γλυκύτης), (c⁴) *leniency* (ἐπιεικία) and (c⁵) *naivety* (ἀφέλεια), (d) *beauty* (κάλλος), (e) *rapidity* (γοργότης), (f) *truth* (ἀλήθεια), (g) *expertness* (δεινότης). At the same time, up to eight parameters (ιδιότητες) subsist for each one of the above categories and subcategories (2nd diagram): (i) *notion* (ἔννοια), (ii) *method* (μέθοδος), (iii) *figure* (σχῆμα), (iv) *convention* (συνθήκη), (v) *diction* (λέξις), (vi) *cadence* (ἀνάπαισις), (vii) *clause* (κῶλον), and (viii) *composition* (σύνθεσις).

In this categorization of oratorical style, there are two things that need to be examined: one is the nature of the categories and sub-sets of style, and the other refers to the organization of the parameters of these categories and sets. As for the first subject in question in the Hermogenic text and in relation to the diverse function of the above categories, it is appropriate to acknowledge: (a) that beauty, rapidity, truth and expertness are self-determined and self-substantiated types; (b) that clarity and magnitude seem to stand rather as comprehensive essential natures of their resolved types, and (c) that the resolved categories, like those of clear and well-determined speech, are selfsubstantiated, but not utterly self-determinants, since in the arrangement of style they seem to act rather as differentiated material forms of expression, by the application of which clarity or magnitude may be asserted and determined in speech.

This leads us to the conclusion that in the Hermogenic system we deal with

1977. On the influence of the text *On Ideas* upon the oratorical theory from the Renaissance and thereafter, cf. Peterson 1970; Conley 1994; Wilson 1943. On the influence of Hermogenes' theory of ideas to early modern Greek thought, cf. Athanasios 1795, pp. 397 and thereafter. On modern interpretations of Hermogenes' text, cf. Wooten 1987; Patillon 1988; Rutherford 1992.

two different types of stylistic formation: (a) the self-determining type of beauty, rapidity and truth (in respect of this, Hermogenes calls only the singular categories as genus,¹ and not all seven), and (b) the representational or referential type, namely the type of relation between clarity on the one hand and clear and well-determined speech on the other. For Hermogenes, all seven categories are considered prone to be conceived as of an elementary nature (οἰονεῖ στοιχεῖα), as they subsist during either the arrangement or the delivery of speech “as if they were the anew *out of which* elements of it”.² This statement is probably inferred rather as a simile, than a depiction of a reality. Literally, what Hermogenes means is that the nature of all seven categories is not genuinely, but quasi elementary.

Elementary (στοιχειώδης) nature should unquestionably be attributed only to the resolved sets of style, and in an extended way, to the self-determined ones. Hermogenes states additionally, that non-resolvable categories blend not with their resolvable associates directly, but with employing their resolved subtypes³. The aim of Hermogenes at this point is to differentiate between the three different types of categories: the resolved, the resolvable and the non-resolvable. Resolvable and non-resolvable categories are classified

together in the Hermogenic text as the seven categories of style;⁴ the true reason for this is that both are of a formal character. But this formal character is different for each case: clarity and magnitude constitute absolutely intimate and theoretical entities, while the formal model of rapidity, truth, beauty and expertness is material. On philosophical terms, the resolvable categories of clarity and magnitude should be accordingly identified as *artificial forms* of style; rapidity, truth, beauty and expertness should be conceived as *material forms* of it, while the clear, the well-determined, vigour naivety and the rest resolved types are purely *material elements* of style. Such a differentiation may be in accordance with the facts that:

(a) resolvable and non-resolvable types of style share a formal character;

(b) this character may be termed as artificial and material in their respective cases;

(c) both resolved and non-resolvable types of style share a material character, and

(d) this material character may be termed as being of a formal quality in the case of the non-resolvable, and of an elementary nature in the case of the resolved types of style.

As for the parameters of style, these are stated by Hermogenes⁵ in a straightforward aligned order: notion, method, figure, convention, diction, cadence, clause and composition. If we are to focus on their contribution to

1 The self-sufficient categories while “constituted on their own and through themselves”, in their blending with the other ideas of style “they participate not as simple ideas or species of them, but as genus of ideas”, Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 114.

2 Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 275.

3 Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 115.

4 Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 105 and thereafter.

5 Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 125.

the different categories of style, we see that their activity, namely the way they coalesce with the categories, varies from case to case, and that the congruence of one with the other is different in every category, not only in terms of its constituting characteristics, but mainly in terms of the dynamic manner in which they are combined. For example, if we are to compare the diagrams of the clear and the well-determined speech, we see that well-determined speech is primarily dealt with as a methodological issue, while the constitution of clear speech is mainly a matter of the notions involved (3rd diagram). Thus we may boost our analysis with the following observations:

(a) the performance of the parameters is not actually in the form of juxtaposition;

(b) their relation with the category they itemize in each case is not of the type relating something 'included' to its 'inclusive' state, and

(c) their interrelation progresses in the form of a dynamic complexity, different for each category, (1st diagram).

If we are to further analyze this dynamic employment of the parameters and try to form a conclusive schema of them, we are led in classifying them into three major groups: one notional, concerned with the notions conceived, one methodological, and one depicting the style of discourse as enunciated, identified as the convention of diction. From them, method becomes actualized in two forms, the method of thought, contributing to speech its figures of

thought, and the method of diction, providing it with its figures of diction. From these two types, figures of thought act as the intermediate link between the methodological and the notional species of the parameters, while figures of diction act as a link between the methodological and the enunciated part of style and speech.

According to Hermogenes, two of the parameters of style are considered as essential in every speech: notion, namely the conceptual core of the content of a speech, and method, namely the manner in which both the intellectual and the settled as expressed content of a speech are arranged. Figure, clause, composition (namely, the manner in which the simplest parts of a clause are composed) and cadence, are ordered as properties or parameters of diction, while composition and cadence, conceived rather as tropes, constitute in the same time the *rhythm* of the oratorical delivery. This differentiation between parameters themselves and their properties leads us to admit that parameters progress actually on three different levels, which we may call parametrical levels: one practical and explicit, one mediating methodological, and one rather general and comprehensive. Thus,

(a) notion, method and convention constitute the more general state or sense of a specific style;

(b) method of thought, method of diction and diction as a whole formulate the special character of a style, and

(c) figures of thought, figures of diction, clause and rhythm (or

composition plus the cadence) constitute the particular expressed forms of a specific style.

These parametrical levels are actually constituent stylistic realizations of the procession leading from the particular style to the special and the general state of speech; and this, of course, works also the other way round: namely, in a descending order from the general to the particular.

Let us proceed now in investigating the puzzling term *idea*. In the Hermogenic text, *idea* is termed indifferently either the specific stylistic model of wording an established rhetorician follows (i.e. the *Platonic* or the *Demosthenic idea* of speech),¹ or the resolved forms and types of the oratorical style as stated above². When referred to the style of Demosthenic oratory, Hermogenes notes: "... [Demosthenes] did not use one idea more than another, but portionally he employed [every] one, employing rather a special idea, that of encompassing, than a single one, [...] since this is rather a trivial portion of an idea than a special idea".³ Elsewhere in the Hermogenic text the awareness of ideas is substantiated as cognizance of their developing progress, an awareness of "the place *in what* and the manner *in which* they become formulated".⁴ This is rather a vague and technically imprecise statement, on which Syrianus the

Athenian established his perception that the creation of ideas resulted from the formation of particular oratorical *topoi*.⁵ Elsewhere in the Hermogenic text,⁶ it is stated that the critical analysis of an approved style of oratorical delivery includes: (a) the inquiry on *whence* and *of which* a style is constituted; (b) the inquiry on what kind a style is and by what means it is of a specific kind, namely the constituent ideas of style and the mode *in which* they coincide with each other; (c) the determination not just sufficiently but precisely of the elements and principles partaking of an idea of style, and (d) the determination of the modes in which the combination of these ideas creates the basic types of oratorical statement (poetic, epideictic, etc.).

It is apparent that the above are stated in reference to the Aristotle's causal determination of a concept: the critical conduct of an oratorical style may be thus respectively determined: (a) in relation with its afar off and its adjoining efficient subject; (b) as a special quality; (c) in relation with its afar off and its adjoining material subject, and (d) in relation with its final cause, which coincides with the type of the formation produced. Commenting on the above, Syrianus notes: "*whence* means the species of rhetoric out of which the style is advanced; *of which* means which ideas are mingling with some other, while the *kind* of ideas may be moral, practical or indifferent".⁷

1 Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 37-38.

2 Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 87.

3 Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 96-119.

4 Rabe 1913, l, 1, 3.

5 Rabe 1892, v. I., 23,20, 57,16, 93,4.

6 Rabe 1913, 1, 1, 49-54.

7 Rabe 1892, 9, 26-10,2.

Syrianus determines the entire framework of categories in relation to the differentiation between the divisibility and the non-divisibility of the major categories of style,¹ an exceptional observation in comparison with those made by the rest Greek commentators of the Hermogenic text, and close to the dynamic approach we previously attempted. The condition of differentiating between divisible and non-divisible ideas corresponds to the Hermogenic differentiation between subordinate and subsequent ideas; but such a depiction contrasts the formative aptitude of the resolved ideas. Additionally, Syrianus identifies the Hermogenic term *part* (μέρος) with the eight parameters of style;² according to him, “an idea is a quality of speech appropriate to the subject persons and objects in relation to the *notion*, the *diction*, and the harmonious interlace of the whole;³ [...] *species* is different from *idea* in the same way *genus* differs from *species*, and *whole* from *part*; since *species* is inclusive of *ideas*, and *ideas* are elevated under the *species*, as it is impossible to constitute a judicial, an epideictic, or a deliberative species of oratory without mixing more than one idea”.⁴

Syrianus points out the coalescence in the Hermogenic text between the terms *idea* and *species* and considers this to be a cause of confusion.⁵ In the same

mood, an anonymous commentator of the *Peri Ideon* states: “we admit of meaning attributed to names either as pertaining to the formation of opinion or according to scientific knowledge”.⁶ In this wording “pertaining to the formation of opinion” is constituted upon the necessity and utility of our awareness of ideas, while the *scientific* approach is associated with the manifestation of objectives and the arrangement of ideas within their subsequent categories (e.g. *clarity*). What we view here is another example of confusion caused by the coalescence between the terms *idea* and *species*.

This complication results in the texts from the coalesce between the terms *genus* and *species*: oratorical speech, either when resolving one of its given structures, or when combining one from the beginning, should yield to a complete technical government; because of this, it must be delivered in a form, the rigidity of which would be quite prevalent upon the unrestrained rudiments of poetic expression. Moreover, the distinction between that which is subjected to *opinion* and that which is termed as *scientific*, and, even more, the cooperation between them, reflects the difference and, respectively, the harmony of the *ideas* conceived as empirically traceable and most likely legitimate *characters*⁷, as also their conception as undoubtedly established

1 Rabe 1892, 14, 6.

2 Rabe 1892, 14, 11.

3 Rabe 1892, 2, 16-19.

4 Rabe 1892, 2, 19-3.3.

5 Rabe 1892, 7, 15.

6 Walz 1834, pp. 862, 19-24.

7 I refer here to the well-known type of treatises on oratorical theory, bearing the title *On the Characters*; cf. Phoebammon 1931, 385,17, 386,16, 388,2. Johannes Siceliota 1931, p. 405,3; 405, 14.

objects of knowledge, in the manner in which Isocrates admitted of oratory as being a science and an issue concerning mainly the philosophers.¹ The pattern of the objectives set by the Hermogenic text, with the reversal between pertinence and targets' arrangement in the role of the factor establishing the necessity for our awareness of ideas, leads to the conception of *idea* and *species* as issues found in a state of analogy. In their Hermogenic layout, *ideas* seem semantically uncertain – something ascribed to the deficiencies of the technical orderliness of oratory Hermogenes attempted. Of course, this is not bizarre, if we consider that *stylistics* resists any attempt to become scientifically scrutinized;² nevertheless, we cannot expect Hermogenes to induce his classification of style into a structural type of charts.

The book *On the Ideas* is a work, which can be studied in relation not only to the traditional oratorical theory, but also within the framework of *descriptive stylistics*, as it accommodates the *functional* influence of an oratorical work to its reader, in the sense of employing its apparatus as commissioned to carry out a task. If the *character* of the Demosthenic style is the physically detectable substance of signs when delivered in the form of a speech, the comprehensive charts of style, compiled by the entirety of the examples set in the Hermogenic

text, consist the abstract part of the semantic analysis.

An attempt to give a structural interpretation of the Hermogenic text may further advance the clarification of the term *idea*. On structuralistic grounds, the Hermogenic *synthesis* corresponds to a *syntax* of oratorical *modules*; it embodies syntax, but it does this within the framework of the poetic residues which were inherited to oratory through the practice of *imitation* (μίμησις). The references of Hermogenes to the semantic type of imitation are actually evidences of the semantic coalescence between the *On the Ideas* and the other treatises on rhetoric theory, as also of its incorporation within the arts. The poetic-artistic derivation of the imitative model is nevertheless feeble, something favoring the distinction between the *referential-scientific* and the *poetic function* of speech, where the last one is a phenomenological dimension and thus here a shortcoming of the functional effectiveness of oratorical delivery. But on the other hand, the anti-scientific dimension introduced by the imitative model of speech is amplified by the pure phenomenological implementation of the category of *truth* as *quasi credibility*. The implementation by Hermogenes of *true reason* as a reason likely to be true, as an expression precisely intended to be imprecise, coincides of course with the literary hypostasis of rhetoric and its activation within the frameworks of social life. The oratorical engagement of reason obliges Hermogenes to consider *truth* not as the conceptual tool of oratorical delivery of reason

1 Sextus Empiricus. *Contra mathematicos*, II, 62,5-63,1.

2 Mounin 1984, p. 154.

but as a methodological problem: the subject matter of oratory does not involve true reason, but reason which is likely to be true. Moreover, the feebleness of the mannerism disclosed by the Hermogenic typology of style is traceable in the fact that the *creative imagination* and the *originality* of the artist-orator are excluded from the instruction in oratorical delivery, something coordinating with the conventional character of the semantic perspective of the work. However, the question entailed by this, on psychoanalytic terms, is traced in the contrariety, within the limits of oratorical theory, between the *extraordinary Demosthenic character* and the *criterion of reality* set by the diagrams of the Hermogenic stylistic parameters and properties.

If we are to accept the depiction of the Hermogenic *ideas* as *modules* and *levels of style*, we admit of a notional character, common between the traditional grammatical-linguistic and the Hermogenic model, which is identified with the *universal* realm of the traditional model, in the sense in which Jespersen defines universals as applicable in every language.¹ The Hermogenic perception of oratorical style may be termed structuralistic, especially if we take into consideration the conceivment of the resolved, or submitted, ideas as *vis-a-vis* elements, and the deliberate relativism or difficulty with which Hermogenes attempted to define the nature of relations between the two levels of ideas: *clarity* and the

rest ideas of the overriding realm are actually *totalities* of elements yielding to specific principles of composition, neither by accident, nor lastingly and permanently, but within the potential framework of a predictable transmutation; the resolved ideas are direct stylistic *micro-contexts* of their overlaid ones, which can be regarded also as *stylistic environment*. The Hermogenic stylistic typology is structuralistic (the *vis-a-vis* simply corresponds to the historical context of the issue) in the sense attributed to structuralism by Jean Piaget: “neither the element nor the whole is that which prevails upon the final result (as these two do not portray the manner), but the relations between the elements”.² In the implementation of Hermogenes’ stylistics of speech, the typology of charts as those of the clear and the well-determined speech is executed as a text delivered alongside the primary one; up to the point where this typology is tangible, as in the case of *clarity*, it is clear that we are dealing with a formalistic theory of oratorical style, where ideas may be termed as the *forms* and *types* of style.

Undoubtedly, the Hermogenic employment of the term *idea* is not symbolic, since the principle of *non-intentionality* does not subsist as a criterion of selection; the term is typically semantic, because of the conventional character of the meaning attributed to it; it is identified with the semantic types of the Ogden-Richards

1 Jespersen 1992, p. 48.

2 Piaget 1968, p. 5.

taxonomy¹ of the term *meaning* since:

(a) it is related to the platonic term *idea* in the apparent relation of the effect to its cause (definition XII),

(b) it constitutes a procedure of reflecting aforementioned imprints and it creates coherent associations and respective correspondences (definition XIII),

(c) it constitutes an act of idealization of those implied by the Hermogenic *idea*, (definition XIV),

(d) it employs the Platonic *idea* as a prospective point of reference, (definition XV) and

(e) it makes the receiver believe that the term refers to the platonic idea, whether the last is or is not really the point of reference (definition XVI).

The intertextuality of the Hermogenic sign *idea*, namely the general comprehension of the term in its Hermogenic version, seems to be denoted by the employment of it by the foregoing rhetoricians.² The ideas which Hermogenes acknowledges in oratorical speech and organizes in patterns are for the orator a language within the language, a structure within the structure of oratorical form: in the progression of the Hermogenic text the Demosthenic model (*Demosthenic idea*) succumbs in advance of the formation and systematization of stylistics, so that the chance for *selection* and *deviation* from the prototype model may subsist. In other words, the Demosthenic style yields from the position of the prototype model to that of the *norm*

and the *general macro-context*.³

Is the Hermogenic employment of the term *idea* metonymic or metaphorical? The *connotation* attributed by the employment of the term species (εἶδος) promotes the metonymic engagement of it; but the Hermogenic *idea* embodies in the transmission of its meaning an additional *temperament*, for which its employment may be thought as clearly metaphorical. On the basis of the tradition interpreting the Hermogenic text, we have to admit of the language of philosophy as the field from which the term originates, as the language of rhetoric is the field of its destination. As the oratorical deliverance of speech is a part of literature, the analogical nature of the metaphorical use of the term becomes apparent, since the coalescence of oratorical ideas with their philosophical subjects is inferred as a *similitude in operation*. The term *idea* is semantically traced in a rank superior when compared to the term *character*, normally applied by most of the rhetoricians; consequently, this terminological substitution intensifies the regularity which stylistics tends to impose on oratory, and, generally, on literary expression. The metaphorical engagement of the term *idea* has an exemplary function, especially if we agree with the principle that every stylistic theory leads to its oratorical systematization.⁴

The possibility of the Hermogenic *idea* to be homonymous to its Platonic

1 Ogden, Richards 1949, pp. 186-187.

2 Cf. Cramer 1963, vol. III(4), 126,4-5; Rabe 1892, 13,1-4.

3 For the application and the meaning of the term, cf. Enkvist 1973; Riffaterre 1959, p. 60.

4 Mounin 1984, p. 156.

and Neo-Platonic correlative, is an option incorporated within the metaphorical employment of language; this would add effectiveness to the theory of ideas by means of attributing the thing signified by the term to the bizarre, the *extra ordinary* (ξενίζον) of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.¹ But such a case would include both the abusive and the sophistically deceiving dimension of homonymy. If we were to follow Porphyry's interpretation of Aristotle's treatment of homonyms in the *Categories*,² we would notice that Hermogenes seems to render only the utterance of the term *idea* without giving the definition of the content denoted, or its description. In the same frame of mind, the relation of the Hermogenic *idea* with its Neo-Platonic correlative may seem as homonymic. But if it is legitimate to correlate the Hermogenic with the Platonic employment of the term, it is also legitimate, and thus preferable, to accept a correlation of the Hermogenic employment of the term and that of the oratorical tradition, depicting it as *literary form*, in the sense of *mode* or, better, *relation*, quite as Aristotle refers in his *Poetics* to the *iambic idea*.

If we would like to render the term *idea* as *category of style*, it would be evident that we would discharge any kind of metaphysical hypostasis; and indeed, the technical character and the material essence of the Hermogenic codification makes the whole enterprise

lacking of any metaphysical autonomy. But in such case, we endanger to coincide with the Neo-Platonic criticism over the Aristotle's *Categories*; if this is the case, it would be accepted to include in our interpretation the Iamblichian dimension of *intellective theory*, according to which we would be allowed to depict the seven central ideas as *loci* (τόποι), something promoted by Syrianus. But this would create further implications regarding the employment of the term *loci* or *loci communes* of Aristotle's rhetoric tradition; thus, it would be better to interpret the Hermogenic *ideas* as reason and principles, having in mind the Greek terms λόγοι and ρηαί, bringing into a compromise the Aristotelian ancestry of the term *idea* and the Neo-Platonic eclectic view on it of Ammonius, son of Hermias.³ It would be insufficient to designate these classes as *categories* or *sub-categories* of oratorical style. It would be preferable either to regard them as *codes* and *sub-codes* of an aesthetic structure, relating to the oratorical deliverance of speech, or to consider the resolved ideas as *codes of signs* or as *stylistic figures*, since they elevate the stylistic forms signified from the linguistic to the aesthetic level, and to regard the seven major ideas as constructed *systems of signs*.

Conclusively, both the major and the resolved types could be treated as *aesthetic functions*, since, as they are of a twin texture, they introduce both the function of processing thoughts,

1 Aristotle 1964, 1404 b 35.

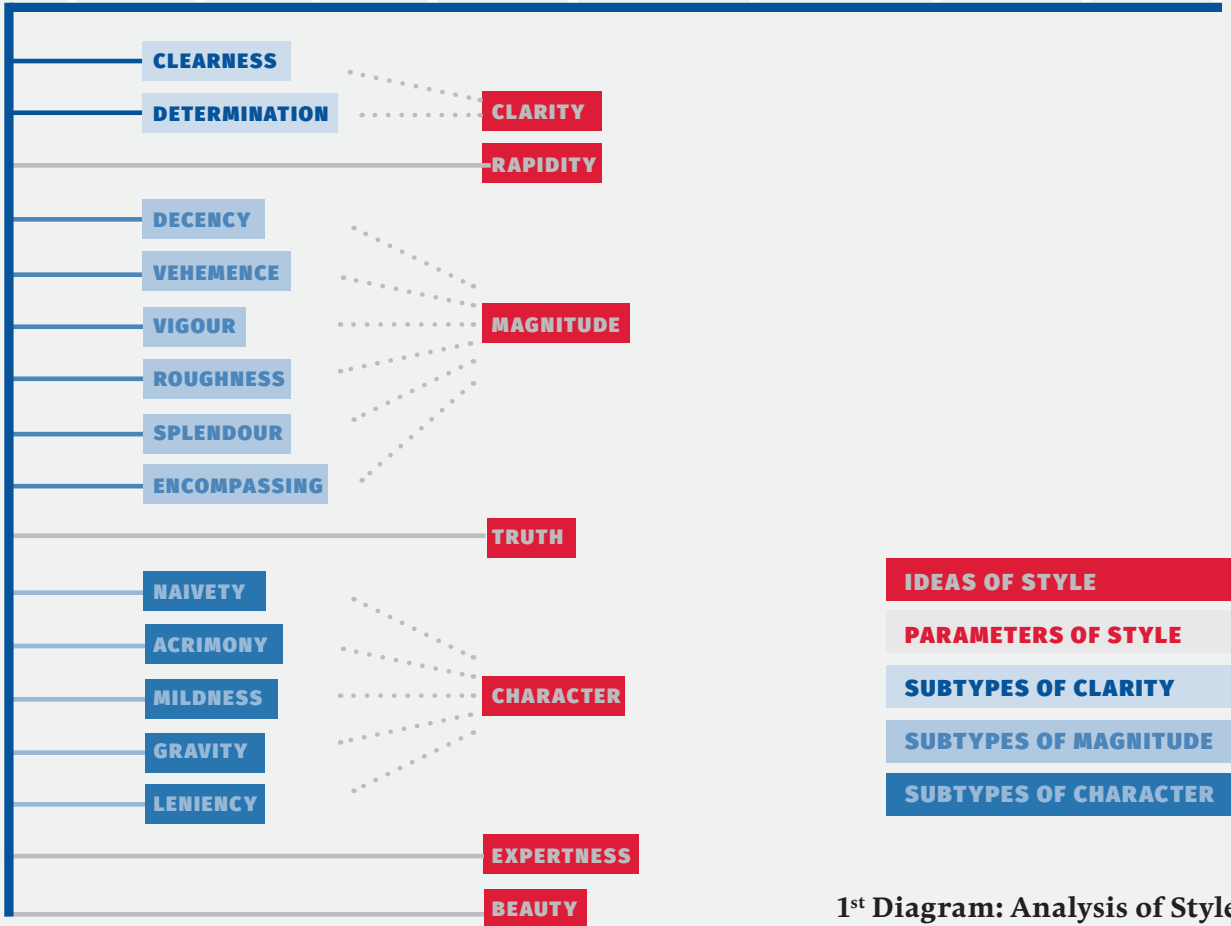
2 Porphyry 1887, vol. IV.I, 59,34 and thereafter; Simplicius 1907, vol. IIX, 21,1 and thereafter.

3 Sorabji 1990, pp. 2-4.

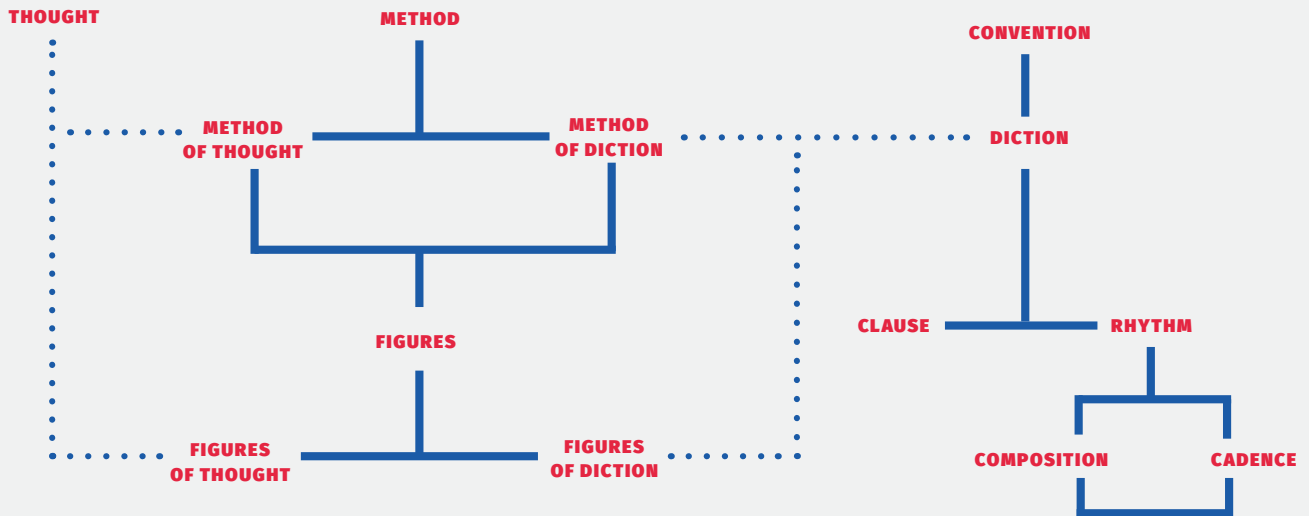
namely the *significata* concealed within the reason, and the meta-linguistic function, in the sense of reasoned speech employed in commenting on speech acts. In this sense, the *Peri Ideon* is a study not of the oratorical style –something equivalent to a survey on personal patterns of modifying the oratorical language, a subject formulated by the preceding rhetoricians under the title *Peri Characteron*¹ – but a survey of oratorical *stylistics*, namely, a study of the systematic relations and strategies of oratorical deliverance. —————

1 Cf. Ioannis Doxapatris 1931, p. 420,19.

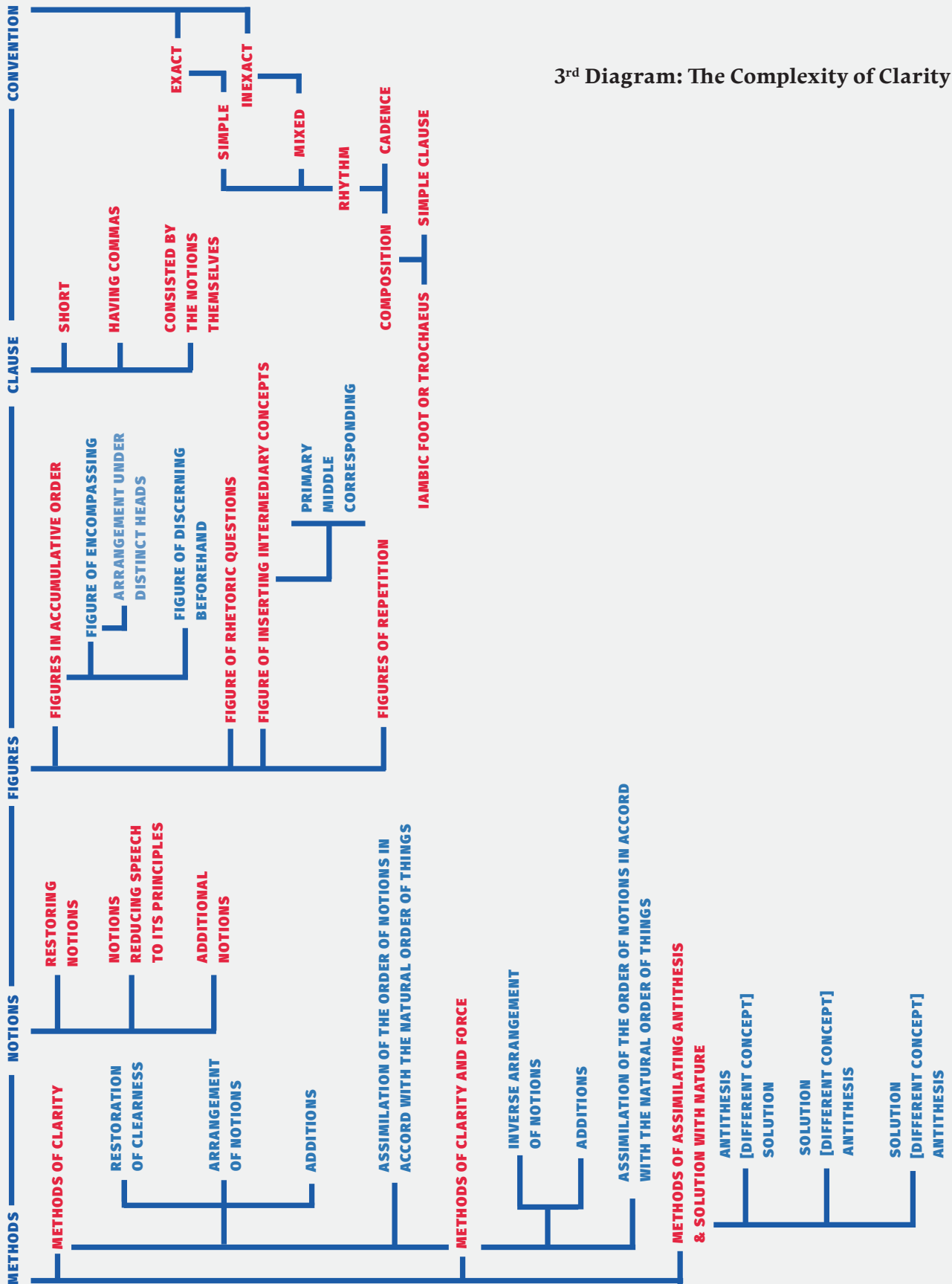
NOTION METHOD FIGURE CLAUSE CONVENTION COMPOSITION COMPOSITION CADENCE RHYTHM



1st Diagram: Analysis of Style



2nd Diagram: Parameters of Style



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Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) and Renaissance Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) played a key role in the making of modern thought. He extended the humanist critique of medieval pessimism into an exaltation of the agency of humans. He advocated universal knowledge as liberation, suggested philosophical syncretism and concordance between philosophy and biblical wisdom based on the understanding that knowledge is what makes a human being human.

A presentation on Giovanni Pico della Mirandola should have at least nine hundred chapters – but I will reduce it to four or five.*

* Presented at Istituto Italiano di Cultura, New York, on 11 November 2014. Since Sheila Rabin was talking on Pico's stance on astrology, this topic was left out. Only references to primary sources are given. For Pico's biography and philosophy see, among others, Dougherty 2008; Toussaint 2010. - This study is a result of research funded by the Czech Science Foundation as the project GA ČR 14-37038G "Between Renaissance and Baroque: Philosophy and Knowledge in the Czech Lands within the Wider European Context".

—— 1 PICO CONTRIBUTED TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE HUMAN BEING AS THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

Let me start with a quotation about philosophy: “Philosophy is man’s knowledge of himself. ... Man, if he acquires a true knowledge of himself, viz. of his own spirituality and corporeality, comprises the knowledge of everything...”¹

If I had let you guess the author, you certainly would have come up with Pico or some other Renaissance thinker. For it makes philosophizing a feature of humanity that expands on everything there is. However, it is from Isaac Israeli in the early Middle Ages. Closer to our expectations of medieval

pessimism is this famous saying of Pope Innocent III (1161–1216):

“Indeed man is shaped like an upside down tree. His hair forms the roots; his head and neck the trunk; the breast and stomach the stock; the arms and legs the branches. Man is a plant tossed to and fro by the wind and, like straw, dried out by the sun.”²

It was the humanist Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459) who opposed this view by saying:

“...the fruits proper to man are not those shameful and incidental kinds of filthiness ... mentioned above; rather our human fruits are to be deemed the many operations of intelligence and will.”

1 Isaac Israeli [ca. 832-ca. 932], Book of definitions, in: Altmann, Stern 2009, p. 27.

2 Murchland 1966.

To the humanists, man is man in action. And Pico will elaborate on that and drive it to near exhaustion. In order to show that, I simply quote one of his most famous statements in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*:

“[God] ... took man, ... set him in the middle of the world, and said to him: ‘We have given you, Adam, no fixed seat or form of your own, no talent peculiar to you alone. ... Once defined, the nature of all **other** beings is constrained within the laws We have prescribed for them. But you, constrained by no limits, may determine your nature for yourself, according to your own free will ... We have set you at the centre of the world so that from there you may ... easily gaze upon whatever it contains. ... you may, as the free and extraordinary shaper of yourself, fashion yourself in whatever form you prefer. It will be in your power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Alternatively, you shall have the power ... to be reborn into the higher orders, those that are divine.’ ...”¹

Here we see the specific humanist take on humanity: after the medieval thinkers and theologians had realized that the essence of human beings and of being human consists in reflecting upon oneself and thus experience life as misery, the humanists say: to be miserable does not exclude thinking about it, and human awareness of filthiness is the mother of invention. Now in a giant leap, Pico concludes that the status of being human utterly depends on the spiritual powers of the

individual. He clothes it in this speech of God to Adam saying that humans have no predetermined position in the hierarchy of things. A human being can ascend to the level of angels or degrade to the baseness of beasts, depending on how one uses one’s mind.

The progress from the image of man as an uprooted tree to that of the individual intellect as the center of the world was life-changing. Giordano Bruno, about 100 years later, would extend it to the theory of the cosmos, claiming that the center of the world is, wherever one happens to stand. And yet, when Descartes would say, another 50 years after that, the “I think” is the only thing that is certain, he is still banking on Pico’s discovery: Man is man in action, and the world is the place where man is at the center.

— 2 PICO WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST ENCYCLOPEDIST, THAT IS, HE BELIEVED IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW TOO MUCH, AND ALL THERE IS TO KNOW IS WORTH KNOWING

The quotation from the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* is the most popular. But in this speech that apparently elevated the appreciation of humanity there followed a second part, in which Pico calls for a universal system of knowledge that includes all disciplines and traditions. Since no place in the chain of being is assigned to him, man is a Divine afterthought after the completion of the universe, a being meant to oversee, and thus to appreciate, the perfection of God’s masterwork; and that requires

1 Pico della Mirandola 2012.

appropriate skills. Therefore he called upon the world of learning to embrace all intellectual achievements of the ancients and of his contemporaries. Truth is contained in all sciences, and it is the call for humanity to find and unfold it. Pico's syncretism is condensed in the formula: "I am not sworn into the words of any one."

I should now mention that this famous *Oration* was intended as the opening speech of a mammoth disputation to be held in Rome in 1487.¹ Pico invited the entire world of learning and even promised to pay the expenses for those who attended. For this disputation Pico had prepared no less than nine hundred theses, which he promised to be able to defend.

Within parentheses, it should be stated that such publication of theses for public discussion was academic practice and as an event nothing out of the ordinary. We might also remember the famous 95 theses that Martin Luther nailed at the church gate in Wittenberg, merely 30 years later in 1517. Again, he did not intend to start a religious war, but just posted his program inviting everyone to challenge his ideas.

Still, the number 900 sounds somewhat exaggerated. Even more, Pico said, he could easily have expanded the number by elaborating even more on details. Those 900 theses were grouped by schools of thought, including scholasticism, Platonism, Cabala, and many others. The message is this: human thought is one for all and it evolves and diversifies indefinitely.

If man is at the center of the world, the world is worth knowing as far as possible.

Pico was in agreement with Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) who discovered the coincidence of contraries in the power of the human mind.² Nicholas died one year after Pico was born. Actually, Pico planned to pay a visit to the Cardinal's legendary library in Germany. But more importantly, Pico's project of an all-encompassing debate triggered the projects of producing an encyclopedia of all that can be known. Most of these projects were pursued in the 17th and 18th centuries and came to a completion with the Encyclopedia Britannica and present day's Wikipedia.

— 3 AS A SYNCRETIST (THAT IS ONE WHO COMBINES VIRTUALLY ALL SCHOOLS OF THINKING), PICO WAS AGAINST DOGMATISM, INCLUDING THAT OF THE RENAISSANCE PLATONISTS

To pay every branch of learning its due comes with a price: Does it mean that everyone has his or her own mind and everyone is right? In a way yes, but also no. First of all, not to be sworn into any one's school is the necessary condition for intellectual curiosity. On the flip side, it means that understanding a school of knowledge does not entail endorsing it. Therefore, Pico was able to present theses of some scholastics that he did not endorse; and to 'defend' them in the great disputation would

1 Farmer 1998.

2 Nicholas of Cusa 1981.

have meant explaining their validity without proclaiming them.

Most importantly, intellectual curiosity – to be a polymath or an intellectual omnivore, as Anthony Grafton had it – is the opposite of dogmatism. Pico wanted to know all dogmas of the world without being dogmatic. And here was his enemy: the meanwhile popular Platonism of the Renaissance.

Frequently, Giovanni Pico was associated with Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499)¹ as one of the Florentine Platonists. But the story is more complicated.

In 1438-39 a council was held in Florence, sponsored by the Medici trust, which was to reconcile the Byzantine and the Roman Christian Churches. For some obscure reason, a neo-pagan scholar, who called himself Plethon (c. 1355-1452/54), so as to sound like “Platon”, was part of the Greek delegation.² And during his stay in Florence he published a book in which he attacked the Western Christians for being Aristotelians. He advocated a return to Platonism. Of course Platonism had dominated Christian thought from St. Paul on; but lately, thanks to the rediscovery of Aristotle, theology was basically Aristotelian. Plethon now blamed Aristotelianism to be heretic and – shrewdly – suggested returning to Platonism, which in his own agenda, was paramount to ancient wisdom. This idea was picked up by the banker and

ruler of Florence, Cosimo de’Medici, who appointed Ficino to translate works by Plato and the Neo-Platonists from Greek into Latin. Ficino also commented on all those works, among others on Plato’s *Symposium*.³ In doing so, Ficino denounced Aristotelian scholasticism as un-Christian and created his own system that should reconcile dogmatics with ancient wisdom.

This Renaissance Platonism vexed the young friend Pico. He got interested in Plato while he stayed with Ficino in Florence, but he saw in Plato only the advocate of the reconciliation of all philosophies rather than a dogmatic system. For Pico, the major danger, in very few words, is this:

First: every interpretation of Christian thought in terms of pagan Greek philosophy runs the risk of making Christian revelation superfluous.

Second: Ficino aligned Plato’s theory of Forms or Ideas with the notion of God; and this interpretation disturbs the balance between rational philosophy and revelation. One important example is the notion of God as the one that transcends every being. Ficino elevated God to a level that detached God from His Creation. Against this theory Pico protested fiercely in his *De ente et uno*.⁴ He did the same in a comment on a love poem written by a friend in the footsteps of Ficino’s *Commentary*

1 Ficino 2001-2006.

2 Woodhouse 1986.

3 Ficino 1985.

4 Pico della Mirandola 1943.

on Plato's *Symposion*.¹ On the same occasion he criticized the Byzantine scholar Plethon for his misinterpretation of Greek mythology.

4 IN HIS SEARCH FOR UNITY OF KNOWLEDGE, PICO EXPLORED NEW METHODS OF INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

One anecdote from his life needs to be told. Pico as a man of action worked simultaneously on his *900 Theses* and the introduction, the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, and on this commentary on the love poem. On his way to Rome in early May 1486, he found time and energy to kidnap Margherita, the wife of Giuliano Mariotto dei Medici. However, after a fight and his humiliating arrest that ensued, he seems to have had a conversion and concentrated all his vigor on studies of Hebrew, the Qur'an, and other reading. While preparing his great event in Rome, he met for further briefings with his teacher of Averroist Aristotelianism, Elia del Medigo (1458-ca. 1493). From their exchange of letters we learn that Pico paid Elia with a horse, but also infected him with scabies. More importantly, Elia was one of the sources for Pico to learn about Cabala.²

Here is, how Elia del Medigo explained this system of Jewish mysticism:

"[The cabalists] believe that in this world there are beings of a lower degree than the degree of the glorious God, who is called the Infinite, and these flow –

that is: they are not made nor produced – from Him, who is named the Infinite. ... The order in which the produced beings are produced and maintained within the order is this, namely by the [ten] Sephiroth, i.e. numberings. Thus they call these 'flowed from the Infinite'. ...According to [the cabalists], the order we find in the world is that of the Sephiroth."³

We should notice that Elia does not endorse this theory, being an Aristotelian. But Pico kept learning and had texts of Jewish mysticism translated for him.

Now, following his idea that as a human being one is invited, if not urged and obliged, to get to know as much of the world as possible, and in doing so to elevate oneself above the realm of the beasts, Pico understood, as Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida in the 20th century did, that being human means interpreting the world, reading the world like a book. We all know that famous adage of Galileo Galilei that the book of the world is written in the language of mathematics. On hearing that we see Einstein writing formulas on the black board. This notion, that the world can be read in the language of numbers, was actually an old idea. In Greece it was formulated by Pythagoras. And among the Jews of the Middle Ages it was expressed in their reading of the Holy Writ. As in other languages, in Hebrew every letter also represents a numerical value. Therefore it offered itself to wise people

1 Pico della Mirandola 1984.

2 On Cabala [Kabbalah] see Busi, Ebgi 2014.

3 Elia's letter to Pico in: Pico della Mirandola 1942, pp. 68-71.

that God's creation is achieved through that flow, mentioned by Elia del Medigo, that proceeds in 10 Sephirot and from there structures the world according to occult numbers. Now, as for the Christians, so even more for the Jews, the Bible is the primary text that helps reading the book of the world. Consequently, Jewish sages started discovering numerical hidden messages in the word of God.

This was what interested the young scholar. For Pico, Cabala gives access to the secret of divine creation through the alphabet. The letters of the Bible are nothing but a numerical reconfiguration of God's word and work. This he elaborated in his commentary on *Genesis*, under the title *Heptaplus - Sevenfold*.¹

His method of interpretation of the Creation story in the Bible is as follows. First Pico establishes these two assumptions:

(1) Moses must have spoken adequately and in a learned manner, even though he addressed an uneducated audience;

(2) Moses cannot have said anything "alien to the nature of things" since the Holy Spirit speaks through him.

Therefore, the nature of things must necessarily be the very message of the story of *Genesis*. For all those whom we now term literalists: it is not so that the Bible is a source of a scientific interpretation of the world; rather, the other way round: for Pico, the world is the expression

of God's power and plans; therefore the structure of the world is necessary for an understanding of the Word of God. Both have the language and their hidden meaning in common.

As an example we may see Pico's cabalistic interpretation of the first word of the Bible, "In the beginning" (in Hebrew *bresit* or *bereshit*): After describing a series of dissections and re-compositions of its letters, Pico discloses the meaning that was implied in this single word:

"The Father, in the Son and through the Son, the beginning and end or rest, created the head, the fire, and the foundation of the great man with a good pact."

If that sounds mysterious – it is. The point is that by way of numerical relations, the name of Jesus is implied in the very beginning of the world.

— 5 PICO RECONCILED THE HUMANIST, THEOLOGICAL, AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRENDS OF RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHY

In searching for new methods of interpreting texts, and specifically the Bible, Pico continued the efforts of humanists like Giovanni Boccaccio and Giannozzo Manetti; and he bestowed on the history of ideas what can be called Christian Cabala; a reconciliation of Jewish and Christian piety. That attempt at reconciliation did not remain uncontested: Giordano Bruno ridiculed it,² others mixed it up with magic and astrology; eventually,

1 Pico della Mirandola 1977.

2 Bruno 2002.

a version of it appeared in Baruch Spinoza in the 17th century, who then was accused of atheism.

But reconciliation was Pico's long term project. By his family estate, he had the title Prince of Concordia, and he planned to write a book on the concord of Plato and Aristotle from a higher point of view. His aim was syncretism, as we heard, that is, the freedom to apply various methods depending on the matter at hand. Therefore he defended the scholastic style of argumentation after having studied not only with Ficino but also in Paris, the most important scholastic university.¹

This came handy in his most ambitious project, that great disputation in Rome. The great event was cancelled, because censors had found 13 out of the 900 propositions to be suspicious of heresy. Pico defended himself with a long *Apology*, in which he argued like a scholastic theologian. However he points out that there are various schools, and he refers to the history of theology, which is a typical humanist move. Another humanist argument Pico applied was to say that all dogmas are expressed in language, and language is always open for interpretation – even the words of God, as we saw.

In conclusion we may observe that Pico absorbed all trends of humanism and philosophy. Some people think that humanism has nothing to do

with philosophy and that in the Renaissance philosophy took shape only with Ficino's new Platonism. Pico, who was 30 years younger than Ficino but died 5 years earlier, proves to the contrary: Renaissance philosophy was as much indebted to Aristotle as to Plato and all their medieval Christian interpretations; and the new turn was made possible through the humanist emphasis on the central perspective of man on the world and the role of language in it. Pico achieved much less, personally, than his ambition pursued, but he handed over to the following generations the insight that knowledge is hard to come by but worth having.

1 Breen 1952; Barbaro, Pico della Mirandola 1998.

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Reading

Aquinas in the

Renaissance:

Dominic of

Flanders on the

Imagination

and Phantasm

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes up the 15th century thinker, Dominic of Flanders, as a reader of Thomas Aquinas and indeed a representative of Renaissance Thomism. The topic at hand is Dominic's presentation of phantasia, or imagination, and the phantasma. The phantasm, of course, plays a prominent role in the Aristotelian model of intellectual cognition, yet seems to remain a somewhat vague concept. We will show some of Dominic's peculiar characterizations of the phantasm. In the background of our analysis is a broader reflection concerning methodology. It is suggested that in order to judge better Dominic as a reader of Thomas, a static understanding of the latter must be avoided, and rather that his doctrine be problematized. By drawing attention to certain ambiguities in Thomas' characterizations of the phantasm and the role of the imagination, we can better situate Dominic's interpretation.*

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the third book of his *De Anima*, Aristotle announces his famous and influential dictum that there is no thinking without phantasms.¹ In this paper, I would like to draw attention to the ontological status of the phantasm, since it seems to be a question that often goes unasked in the various contexts wherein the notion of the phantasm arises in the commentary tradition. In contemporary discussions—employing very broad strokes here—problems concerning the theme of the phantasm (or, better to say problems concerning the ‘imagination’ more broadly construed) are consigned to topics relating specifically to epistemological matters, or within the frames of discourse typical to the philosophy

of mind. This evaluation holds good for those contemporary trends of Aristotelian or Thomistic philosophy that take up the theories of intellect or knowledge as they are found in either Aristotle or Thomas—trends which have been recognized as ‘analytic’ in their methods. That there might be a problem concerning the understanding of the phantasm within such treatments is brushed over by the common translation of *phantasma* variously as ‘image,’ ‘sensible-image,’ ‘mental-image,’ and the like. For the most part, these remarks are of course with specific consideration to the English-speaking analytic literature; however, some similar trends in European treatments of these topics should not be regarded as immune to such difficulties, treatments which attempt to uncover, e.g., theories

1 Aristotle, *De Anima* III, 431a15–17.

of intentionality in the Middle Ages, or argue whether or not Thomas puts forth a ‘representational’ account of intellectual cognition. Further, a lingering difficulty lies in the task of thinking as the medievals did, that is, thinking our way back into a framework of Aristotelian physics in order not to impose the commonplace modern habits of mind-body dualism. Such a rigid dualism might present difficulties in understanding medieval conceptions of materiality and immateriality, corporeality and spirituality. Notable scholars have gone so far as to question, in discussions concerning Thomas on the imagination, whether a phantasm is really necessary for ‘higher orders’ of understanding.¹ We do not intend to enter into the discussions of specific contemporary variations of a theme here; we simply indicate that these topics indeed continue to give rise to debate.

Despite this contemporary discourse, which may or may not engage in a kind of anachronistic engagement with Thomas and other thinkers, earlier in the 20th century we find more nuanced treatments concerning the relation between the sensitive and intellective part of the soul, the reliance upon the phantasm, and the account of the imagination within the medieval classifications of the internal senses. On the Neo-scholastic, Thomistic front, we can point to Cornelio Fabro, who will offer a more sympathetic account of the apparent problem concerning the cogitative power; Fabro claims

that the intellect is able to overflow and impregnate the higher sensitive powers—namely, the *cogitativa*—with a share of reason.² Further, Bernard Lonergan insists upon the ‘insight into phantasm,’ and goes so far as to claim that the phantasm is the object of the intellect—indeed, the proper object of the intellect in its embodied state.³ Here we only signal a thinker of the 20th century, careful reader of Thomas as he was, who perceived the great importance of the phantasm in human understanding.

In the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, the theme of the imagination and phantasm arose in very different contexts. It is perhaps anachronistic to treat thinkers from these periods as putting forth a ‘philosophy of mind’ or even an ‘epistemology,’ abstracted as it were from their fertile ground of discourse in order to meet the needs of our philosophical concerns as well as our terminology. Or, at least such an analysis must be carefully carried out. In the first place, such discussions occurred almost always within the commentary-tradition of scholasticism, taking the Aristotelian framework as the ambit within which debate and variation took place—and such a context implied also the question of the correct understanding or interpretation of Aristotle himself. The problem of the necessity of the phantasm arose

1 For example, see Frede 2001.

2 For example, see Fabro 1938.

3 Lonergan 1997; see, eg., “Insight into Phantasm,” pp. 38–46. Also, Lonergan 1992; the epigraph that prefaces the entire work is Aristotle, *De anima* III, 431b2.

not simply in matters related to the problem of knowledge—and here I do not intend to mean that it did not arise in this context—but rather within the broader discussions concerning the soul’s relation to body, the unity or multiplicity of the intellect, the state of the soul after death, and consequently, the immortality of the soul. These topics, of course, have bearings upon spheres theological. Perhaps a clear sign of this is Pietro Pomponazzi’s discussion in *De Immortalitate Animae*,¹ in which the necessity of the phantasm plays an integral role throughout; we can also point to Marsilio Ficino’s refutation of the Averroistic position in his *Theologia Platonica*.²

These prefatory remarks so far attempt to place the theme of this paper within what might be competing philosophical and historical trends that take up these seemingly familiar problems in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition: namely—and working backwards from the way they have just been presented—(1) the commentary tradition of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, (2) the 20th century impetus of Neo-scholasticism, and then (3) the more or less contemporary, ‘analytic’ bend typical of Aristotle and Thomas studies. I would like to turn now to our problem as we find it in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, namely, in the writings of the renowned theologian Thomas Aquinas—indeed, an authority for the subsequent generations—and

then Dominic of Flanders, a Dominican philosopher only scantily known.

First, we will offer a very brief sketch of what might be a conventional ‘Thomistic’ account of the imagination. After this, we will then *problematize* the issue of phantasm in Thomas, by drawing special attention to possible problems or contradictions that might arise in trying to determine the ontological status of the phantasm in his writings. This step is necessary on a methodological level in order to evaluate better our findings concerning the treatment put forth by Dominic of Flanders. Dominic of Flanders (*1479) was a product of both mid-15th century University of Paris as well as the Dominican *studium* at Bologna. He was a prominent Thomist during his own lifetime, and well-known as such at least into the 17th century. In order to evaluate Dominic and our findings concerning what he has to say about the internal senses, the intellectual soul, and the very workings of the intellect—all matters that somehow shed light on the phantasm—it is perhaps best not to judge such a figure against a static and definitive understanding of Thomas’ own articulations, since such an understanding might without notice rely upon some Neo-scholastic projections of the 20th century, or upon those tendencies I have pointed out above typical of the contemporary treatments of Thomas. So, this current paper has no hopes to offer a coherent and complete account of Thomas, but rather will try to problematize his theory of the phantasm in order to see the

1 See the discussion of the intellectual soul and imagination already in: Pomponazzi 1948, p. 286ff (ch. 4).

2 E.g., Ficino 2005, p. 109ff (bk. 15, ch. 10).

possible pieces with which Dominic will offer his own reading of Thomas, and whether his understanding contains any novelty or innovation. Dominic was no humanist; rather, he was a rigorous scholastic working in the tradition of his esteemed confrère. As such, the task of identifying and ranking novelty in his thinking is not without difficulty, and for this reason we must attempt to press upon potential problems within Thomas' own articulations.

— 2 AQUINAS ON PHANTASIA AND PHANTASMA

Firstly, for Thomas, as for many of the medievals, phantasia is found within an elaboration of the internal senses. The internal senses are posited as potencies distinct from the proper external senses. Thomas posits a fourfold classification of the internal senses: viz., the common sense, phantasia, an estimative power, and memory. (The numeration of the interior senses will vary throughout the Middle Ages: Avicenna, for example, famously posits five internal senses; Averroes proposes a fourfold model; while Henry of Ghent posits only three.) The common sense, for Thomas, is both the root and *terminus* of sensitivity as such, and also of each individual proper sense. It is by the common sense that we have a kind of primitive unified appearance of things, such that the proper objects of sense are not confused with one another—at least in the case of those with proper functioning organs. Phantasia is posited as that which is retentive of the sensible forms

apprehended in sensation; so, sensible forms are stored by phantasia, which is also called a treasury of sensible forms. In the *ST Ia*, q. 78, Thomas indicates that *phantasia* and *imaginatio* are synonymous. Next is the estimative power, which apprehends intentions that are not properly sensed. By these 'un-sensed' intentions of convenience or harm, the typical example given is of a sheep perceiving the wolf as an enemy—these intentions are not sensed through the external senses *per se*, but are nonetheless received, and cannot be said to be understood in a rational way, in the case of brute animals. In man, the estimative power is elevated and is called the cogitative power, or alternatively, the particular reason. Memory is posited as the storehouse precisely for these intentions that are not grasped by the external senses.

Here, for our current purposes, we will follow the lead of Norman Kretzmann in order to give a brief and comprehensive picture of the entire process of cognition. Bodily things existing in the world make impressions upon the external sense-organs; the impressions give rise to the sensible species in the receiver, which are given over to the internal senses, where then they are either stored or somehow prepared or processed. Here, it is phantasia that preserves and/or produces the sensory data that, we will learn, are indispensable for the operation of the intellect—namely, the phantasms. Phantasms thus are essentially sense-data. Aquinas distinguishes between two intellectual

powers: the agent intellect, which acts on the phantasms in a way that produces the intelligible species—these intelligible species are the primary contents of the mind—and these then are stored in the possible intellect. It is through a process of abstraction that the intellect is able to grasp the universal represented in the phantasm. We have here moved from external sensation to intellection. Kretzmann offers this further description of the phantasm: “Phantasms are likenesses of particular material things re-realized in physical configurations of the organ of phantasia, which Aquinas located in the brain. Although the forms presented in phantasms have been stripped of their original matter, the phantasm-likeness is particularized by its details, the external object’s original individuating matter being ‘represented’ by features of the phantasm. Phantasms themselves, then, are not proper objects of intellectual cognition, although they are indispensable to it.”¹ To sum up: phantasia is one of the internal senses, whose proper function is to store the sensible species received from sensation; phantasms are either themselves received from sensation or produced by phantasia; phantasms are likenesses of particular material things, and the intellect needs phantasms both to abstract intelligible species from phantasms, and, reversely, to consider the natures of things universally in the phantasms. Let this suffice for our conventional sketch.

1 Kretzmann 1993, p. 140.

3 PROBLEMATIZING THE PHANTASM IN THOMAS AQUINAS

Now, let us problematize these themes in Thomas, by surveying a catalogue of meanings attached first to *phantasia*, and then to the *phantasma*. The problems running in the background here are: (1) whether phantasm is an object of phantasia (either as received, or somehow produced by phantasia), or whether the phantasm might be an object of the intellect; (2) more generally, whether the phantasm is something material or spiritual. What would it mean to say that a phantasm is a likeness of a particular material thing stripped of its matter, and then maintain that the phantasm is nonetheless material, so far as it exists in the organs of sensation? Surely it must have a spiritual or intentional mode of existence. If we skip ahead to such a thinker as Francisco Suárez, we find that he repeatedly characterizes the phantasm as material (*phantasma autem materiale est*), and indeed often employs the term ‘material phantasm’ (*phantasma materialis*) precisely in his rejections of Thomas and the Thomists.² So, we would be right to wonder whether a Thomist such as Dominic might have understood Thomas to have conceived of such a material phantasm.

2 Suárez 1861. See, for example, lib. 4, cap. 2 (utrum ad productionem specierum intelligibilium admittentem oporteat intellectum agentem): “nam intellectus non movetur nisi ab objecto interius in phantasmate repraesentato, phantasma autem materiale est” (p. 716); “[...] nam ipsum materiale est, lumen autem intellectus agentis est spirituale: non poterat ergo formaliter inhaerere materiali phantasmati” (p. 717).

Regarding *phantasia*, here are six characterizations or descriptions in Thomas' writings:

1: The particular senses and the common sense are for the *reception* of sensible forms. Phantasia, then, is directed at the *retention* and preservation of sensible forms: phantasia is a sort of store-house for (sensible) forms grasped through the (external) senses. Phantasia is synonymous with imagination.¹

2: Phantasia is a certain *movement* of the sensitive part, caused by the senses in their act of sensing, and cannot exist without sensation. This

movement produced by sensation must somehow resemble sensation (following the principle that every agent causes something similar to itself—*omne agens agit sibi simile*).² This of course is Aristotle's classic definition of phantasia from the *De Anima*.

3: Phantasia is a kind of appearance or capacity for appearance, in which things appear both to sense and intellect in the absence of sensible objects. It is important to stress here that phantasia seems to have its own operation. We infer that phantasia is a capacity (*potentia*) that has its own operation *distinct* from both sense and intellect.³

4: Phantasia is in our power, and somehow has the capacity to form apparitions (*idola*) at will (for example, we can freely produce an image of golden mountains as if before our eyes).⁴ This

1 "Sic ergo ad receptionem formarum sensibilium ordinatur sensus proprius et communis [...] ad harum autem formarum retentionem aut conservationem ordinatur phantasia, sive imaginatio, quae idem sunt: est enim phantasia sive imaginatio quasi thesaurus quidam formarum per sensum acceptarum" (*ST Ia 78,4 c. [256]*). All text from Thomas Aquinas will be taken from the Leonine Editions, using the standard abbreviations in the citation of questions and articles, or books and chapters; specific page numbers are given in brackets. Text from the Summa is from: *Opera omnia, vol. 5: Pars Prima Summae Theologiae, a quaestione L ad quaestionem CXIX* (Romae ex Typographia Polyglotta, 1889). Text from Thomas' *De Anima* commentary is taken from: *Opera omnia, vol. 45,1: Sententia libri de Anima* (Roma: Commissio Leonina, 1984). When referring to this text, we will also provide the older division of the commentary as it is found in, e.g., the Marietti edition, when there is a discrepancy between Books 2 and 3, for the convenience of the reader: In *Aristotelis Librum de Anima Commentarium*, 5th ed., ed. by A. M. Pirotta (Torino: Marietti, 1959). We should note that Dominic's reference to Thomas' *De Anima* commentary naturally follows the older division into lectiones, thus the inclusion of the alternative citations proves helpful.

2 "phantasia autem nihil aliud est quam motus factus a sensu secundum actum" (*Sent. de Anima* II, cap. 4); "ex quo etiam manifestum est quod motus causatus ab actu sensus necesse est quod sit similis sensui, quia omne agens agit simile sibi [...] phantasia sit quidam motus causatus a sensu secundum actum, qui quidem motus non est sine sensu neque potest inesse hiis quae non sentiunt" (*Sent. de Anima* [Leon.] II, cap. 30; [Mar.] lib. III, lect. 6).

3 "nam phantasia apparitio quaedam est: apparet autem aliquid et secundum sensum et secundum rationem. Phantasia etiam habet suam operationem in absentia sensibilium, ut ratio et intellectus" (*Sent. de Anima* [Leon.] III, cap. 10; [Mar.] lib. III, lect. 16).

4 "passio phantasiae est in nobis cum volumus, quia in potestate nostra est formare aliquid, quasi apparens ante oculos nostros, ut montes aureos vel quicquid volumus, sicut patet de illis qui recordantur et formant sibi idola eorum quae sibi videntur ad votum" (*Sent. de Anima* [Leon.] II, cap. 28; [Mar.] lib. III,

is interesting, since it already departs from the characterization of phantasia as simply retentive of sensible forms received from external sensation. This phantasia is something in our power, and has more in common with what might be our common and colloquial conception of phantasia precisely as fantasy.

5: Again, following Aristotle, the senses cannot err concerning their proper objects; falsity and error are thus somehow proper to phantasia.¹

6: This last characterization will not be pressed upon in this study, but we nonetheless mention that phantasia is intimately connected with the appetite, insofar as the appetite is moved by the images of the phantasia.²

Phantasia, once we isolate these aspects as objects of our attention, is quite elusive. It has a passive character insofar as it is a 'store-house' for sensible forms, while somehow providing us with the independent capacity to conjure up apparitions (that is, it is in our power); it originates from sensation (and is related to the appetite), but also somehow allows for the occasion of error. It should be noted that only the first description was taken from the *Summa Theologiae*; the cases that exhibit a more active

lect. 4).

- 1 "falsitas non est propria sensui, sed phantasiae" (*Sent. de Anima* [Leon.] II, cap. 29; [Mar.] lib. III, lect. 5).
- 2 "et quod dicitur de intellectu, intelligendum est etiam de phantasia; quia cum phantasia movet, non movet sine appetitu. Non enim movet, nisi in quantum repraesentat appetibile, sicut nec intellectus" (*Sent. de Anima* [Leon.] III, cap. 9; [Mar.] lib. III, lect. 15).

character of phantasia were taken from the *Sent. de Anima*. At the very least, perhaps Thomas presents a concise treatment in his *ST Ia*, q. 78, while he is willing to go into more detailed consideration of phantasia as it arises in Aristotle's own text. It seems there might be two different interpretations or uses of *phantasia* in Aquinas: one simply passive and retentive, the other having a more complicated operation which is sometimes in our power.

Now, we move to look at a brief inventory of the uses of *phantasma*:

1: The phantasm is a *likeness* (*similitudo*) of a particular thing.³ This is probably the best known 'definition' of the phantasm.

2: The agent intellect, a higher and more noble capacity, makes the phantasms received from the senses actually intelligible by a process of abstraction.⁴ This is a rare moment where Thomas actually says, explicitly, that phantasms are *received* from the senses.

3: Just as someone who is sensing is moved by sensible objects, so too is one phantasizing moved by these appearances which are called phantasms.⁵ This is a curious and

3 "ipsum phantasma est similitudo rei particularis" (*ST Ia* 84,7 ad. 2 [325]); "phantasmata, cum sint similitudines individuorum" (*ST Ia* 85,1 ad. 3 [332]).

4 "sed illud superius et nobilius agens quod vocat intellectum agentem, de quo jam supra diximus, facit phantasmata a sensibus accepta intelligibilia in actu, per modum abstractionis cuiusdam" (*ST Ia* 84,6 c. [324]).

5 "sicut enim sentiens movetur sensibilibus, ita in phantasiando movetur a quibus apparentibus, quae dicuntur

telling passage. The translation of *phantasiando* as simply ‘imagining’ or ‘imaging’ ought to be avoided. This use of *phantasiando* furnishes some support to the idea that phantasm is related to phantasia as object, and thus this phantasizing would then be the correlative act.

4: Phantasms are to the intellect just as colors are to sight: just as the species of color are in sight, species of phantasms are in the possible intellect.¹ This is an important analogy, and will come up in Dominic’s treatment, but here, we are perfectly right to infer the conclusion that the phantasms stand to the possible intellect as objects, indeed, proper objects.

5: It is impossible for our intellect (in its current embodied state) actually to understand without turning towards phantasms.² This is the famous Aristotelian phantasm-dictum.

6: Phantasms have a relation to the intellective part of the soul just as sensible objects have a relation to sense. Hence, just as sense is moved by sensibles, so too is intellect moved by phantasms. Just as sense is not able to complete its act of sensation

without the sensible objects, so too is the soul not able to understand without phantasms. The intellect is the terminus of all phantasms³—this final point is worth emphasizing.

To sum up: a phantasm is a likeness of a particular material thing; it is apparently received from sensation; it moves the perceiver just as sensible objects move sensation; the phantasm is necessary for actual intellectual understanding; phantasms seem to be the objects of the intellect, and phantasms have their term in the intellect. It is our hope that, at least superficially, these brief inventories reveal some possible problems or challenges for a coherent interpretation.

4 DOMINIC OF FLANDERS ON THE INTERNAL SENSES

Concerning the recent attention given to Dominic (that is to say, scholarship in the last century), his short commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima* has been rather neglected. This work takes the form of a super-commentary insofar as it is an exegesis or summary of Thomas’ own commentary on Aristotle’s great work in natural philosophy. Dominic’s *Expositio*

phantasmata” (*Sent. de Anima* [Leon.] II, cap. 30; [Mar.] lib. III, lect. 6).

- 1 “Sic enim se habent phantasmata ad intellectum, ut dicitur in III de Anima, sicut colores ad visum. Sicut ergo species colorum sunt in visu, ita species phantasmatum sunt in intellectu possibili” (*ST* Ia 76,1 c. [209]).
- 2 “respondeo dicendum quod impossibile est intellectum nostrum, secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori coniungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata” (*ST* Ia 84,7 c. [325]).

- 3 “Dicit ergo primo, quod phantasmata se habent ad intellectivam partem animae, sicut sensibilia ad sensum. Unde sicut sensus movetur a sensibilibus, ita intellectus a phantasmatis. [...] quod si phantasmata se habent ad animam intellectivam sicut sensibile ad sensum; sicut sensus non potest sentire sine sensibilibus, ita anima non potest intelligere sine phantasmate [...] intellectus est terminus omnium phantasmatum” (*Sent. de Anima* [Leon.] III, cap. 6; [Mar.] lib. III, lect. 12)

*super libros De Anima*¹ enjoyed a wide circulation, owing to its being appended to many printed editions of Thomas' own commentary of the work, as a kind of compendium.²

Let us first look at a complete elaboration of the internal senses found in the commentary:

"It must be said that besides the exterior senses, four interior senses are posited, which are the common sense, the imaginative power (which is called phantasia in brute animals), the estimative power (which is called the cogitative power, or particular reason, in man), and memory. Regarding these matters a sufficient account may be put forth: for sense is perceptive of sensible objects, thus it is either perceptive of the species of sensed things or of the intentions of those things that are not perceived by the exterior senses. If the first, this then is twofold: either (1)

such a sense is ordered to receive those sensible species, and this is the *common sense*; or (2) a sense is ordered to retain and preserve those species, and this is the *imaginative power*, which is called a treasury of the species of sensed things. If the second, this then is twofold: either (3) that sense is ordered for the receiving of such intentions, and this is the *estimative power* in brute animals, and the *cogitative power*, or *particular reason*, in man; or (4) it is ordered to retain and preserve those intentions, and this is the *sensitive memory*. And while to receive and to retain does not pertain to diverse potencies in spiritual beings, in corporeal beings, however, to receive belongs to one kind of potency and to retain belongs to another. For we see that that which receives well contains poorly, and that which receives poorly retains well."³

1 There are four surviving manuscripts of this work: see Kaeppli 1970, p. 317. For the purposes of this paper, we will cite from the following edition: Divi Thomae Aquinatis in tres libros *de Anima* [...] Accedunt adhaec acutissime Quaestiones Magistri Dominici de Flandria [...] (Venetiis: Hieronymum Scotum, 1550); henceforth, we will cite as De Flandria, *De Anima*, followed by book, treatise, chapter, and then folio and column. This edition is readily available through some online resources, such as the SIEPM virtual library for Medieval Philosophy: <capricorn.bc.edu/siepm/books.html>. I do not necessarily respect the punctuation of this edition; some very minor corrections to the text have been introduced; a more detailed study of Dominic's commentary, taking into account the manuscripts, is underway by the present author.

2 Gauthier 1984, p. 19*-28*, 34* in Aquinas, *Sent. de Anima*.

3 "Dicendum quod praeter sensus exteriores ponuntur quatuor sensus interiores qui sunt sensus communis, vis imaginativa, quae dicitur phantasia in brutis, et aestimativa, quae dicitur vis cogitativa, vel ratio particularis in homine, et memoria. Quorum sic potest formari sufficientia. Nam sensus est perceptivus sensibilium, aut ergo est perceptivus specierum sensatarum aut intentionum quae non percipiuntur a sensu exteriori. Si primum, hoc est dupliciter, aut talis sensus ordinatur ad accipiendum illas species, et sic est sensus communis, vel ad retinendum et conservandum eas, et sic est vis imaginativa, quae dicitur thesaurus specierum sensatarum. Si secundum, hoc est dupliciter, vel ordinatur ad recipiendum illas intentiones, et sic est aestimativa in brutis, et cogitativa sive ratio particularis in hominibus, vel ordinatur ad retinendum et conservandum illas intentiones, et sic est memoria sensitiva. Et licet accipere et retinere in spiritualibus non pertineant ad diversas potencias, tamen in corporalibus ad

Concerning the classification of the internal senses, Dominic follows Thomas in his four-fold elaboration. The above-passage is both concise and clear, and is reminiscent of Thomas' treatment in the *Summa (Ia 78.4)*. The only small detail to note here is that Dominic explicitly claims that the imaginative power is called 'phantasia' in brute animals. This is a distinction that Thomas does not explicitly make, however, gives support to the interpretation that Thomas gives the term 'imagination' (or, the 'imaginative power') a wider range of operation than phantasia proper, which retains the sensible species, at least with respect to man. Dominic does not observe this distinction later, towards the end of the third book of the *De Anima*, when he claims that phantasia can be understood two ways. Earlier, in Book II, he had divided phantasia into indeterminate and determinate phantasia, belonging in the former instances to imperfect animals, and the latter to perfect animals.¹ Later in Book III, determinate phantasia is further divided into sensible determinate phantasia, which is without deliberation, and rational determinate phantasia, which provides for a kind of discursive deliberation, and is found only in man. Also in Book III, Dominic indicates that phantasia can

be taken as properly and in itself, and distinguished against the intellective part; however, it can also be taken so far as it extends to the understanding, insofar as phantasible matter (*materia phantasialis*) is called intelligible matter (*materia intelligibilis*). Here of course, Dominic is trying to resolve the matter at hand as it appears in Aristotle's text, but again we run into an ambiguity concerning the apparent synonymy of *phantasia* and *imaginatio*. And it does seem especially odd that intelligible matter be explicitly equated with what he calls 'phantasible matter.' We will look more carefully at this passage below.

What we have so far seen is found in the *Expositio de Anima*. Beyond this, we must briefly note that Dominic makes an especially interesting elaboration of the internal senses in his better-known work, *Summa Divinae Philosophiae*, an extensive commentary on the *Metaphysics*. One point to notice is that while Dominic reiterates Thomas' distinction between the sensible forms or species received from sensation, and the intentions which are not properly sensed, he nonetheless offers a remark that the internal senses are related to each other according to their act of cognition: the exterior senses give rise to the common sense, the common sense gives rise to the phantasia (or *imaginativa*), the phantasia gives rise to the *estimativa*, and the *estimativa* or *cogitativa* gives rise to memory.²

aliam potentiam pertinet recipere, et ad aliam retinere. Videmus enim quod illae quae bene recipiunt male retinent, et illae quae male recipiunt bene retinent," *De Flandria, De Anima* III, tr. 1, cap. 3, 79r, col. 1-2 (emphases in the translation, naturally, are my own).

1 See, e.g., *De Flandria, De Anima* II, tr. 1, cap. 4, 69r, col. 1.

2 *Dominicus de Flandria, In duodecim libros Metaphysicae Aristotelis, secundum expositionem [...] Angelici Doctoris, lucidissimae atque utilissimae Quaestiones*

The relation between phantasia and the estimative power is especially notable, given the common distinction between powers that are retentive and those which are receptive; phantasia is for the retention of forms received via sense, and the *estimativa* is for the reception precisely of intentions unsensed, following Thomas' elaboration of these capacities. Dominic seems to betray this distinction here. Beyond this, Dominic makes a particularly interesting claim concerning the reliance of the intellectual operations upon the sensitive capacities in the same article. Dominic claims that the cognition of the interior senses relies upon external sensory cognition, and that higher forms of cognition in turn rely upon internal sensory cognition. In order to cognize logical conclusions, the cognition of premises is required; and such cognition depends upon the cognition of terms or words, which relies upon the cognition of the interior senses. Dominic thus posits four kinds of cognition of the soul: sensitive, memorative, experiential, and intellective. To sensitive cognition pertain the exterior senses, while memorative and experiential cognition both belong to the interior senses, and intellective cognition belongs to the understanding. Dominic emphasizes that each latter kind of cognition

depends upon the lower at every level.¹ These are notable interpretations and elaborations Dominic has put forth concerning the internal senses: (1) the distinction between phantasia of brutes and the imagination of man—imagination then being the more perfect, 'determinate' and deliberative phantasia; (2) the causal relation between external and interior senses, and then among the internal senses (but especially between phantasia and estimation); (3) the reliance of the intellectual cognition upon the internal sense capacities in general; and then (4) the four kinds of cognition, adding memorative and experiential cognition attributed to the inner senses to the more obvious types of cognition, viz., sensitive and intellective.

— 5 DOMINIC OF FLANDERS ON THE PHANTASM

Let us return to Dominic's *Expositio de Anima*, to draw attention to important passages concerning the phantasm. In the *proemium* of the commentary the methodological questions are treated, such as the status of the science of the soul and its place within natural philosophy. Already in the *proemium* we find the theme of the phantasm-dictum present in some of the arguments put forth, so we might assume that, for Dominic, the notion of the phantasm indeed plays an important role in establishing the status of the science of the soul. Within the discussion of the first conclusion—viz., that the science

(Cologne, 1621) [reprint: Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag 2010. Préface de Jean École, Leinen Series: Christian Wolff Gesammelte Werke, III. Abt.: Materialien und Dokumente, Bd. 120], Bk. I, Q. 4, a. 4, p. 27, cols. 1-2.

1 De Flandria, In *Meta*. Bk. I, Q. 4, a. 4, p. 27. cols. 1-2.

of the soul is more noble than the other parts of natural philosophy—a doubt arises whether the science of the soul is in fact one in number. An argument to the negative posits: one single impression is not able to arise from a variety of phantasms, just as from a variety of colors a single colored thing is not able to be made, but of those things taken up in the science of the soul there are many phantasms, thus this science will not be one in number.¹ This is an interesting argument. In response to this objection, Dominic argues that the analogy between the relation of colors to sight and the relation between phantasms to the intellect is not made with respect to impression, since phantasms are not the object of the intellect as colors are the object of sight. Hence while from many colors there are diverse impressions, a single science is nonetheless possible from a variety of phantasms.² So already in the opening considerations concerning the status of the science of the soul, Dominic has understood that the familiar analogy between color and sight on the one

hand, and phantasm and intellect on the other, might be insufficient if not carefully considered. The phantasm makes a second appearance within the context of the fourth conclusion in the *proemium*, towards the end of a long discussion concerning the many difficulties related to the science of the soul. The third doubt addressed asks whether there is some operation of the soul without the body (*utrum sit aliqua operatio animae sine corpore*). *Et videtur quod non*: firstly, so the argument runs, if there were to be some operation of the soul without the body, it would be first and foremost the understanding (*intelligere*), but to say that the soul understands is as if to say that it builds or weaves—this argument comes from Aristotle’s text; secondly, the argument continues, to understand is never without phantasms, but phantasms are not without the body, therefore to understand is not without the body.³ This argument seems to be a strong one, stressing a clear relation or dependence of the phantasms upon the body. In response, Dominic says, following Thomas, that the soul requires the body can be understood in two ways: either as an object or an instrument, or as an object alone. Every operation of the compounded soul requires the body in one of these ways. The operations of the sensitive and vegetative soul require the body in both ways, as instrument and object, while the operations of the

1 “Ex diversis phantasmatis non potest fieri una impressio numero, sicut ex diversis coloribus non potest fieri una coloratio in numero, sed eorum quae traduntur in scientia *de anima* sunt diversa phantasmata, ergo idem quod prius,” *De Flandria, De Anima*, proem., 60r, col. 1.

2 “Ad secundum dicendum quod non est similitudo de phantasmatis ad intellectum, et de coloribus per respectum ad visum quantum ad impressionem, quia phantasmata non sunt obiectum intellectus, sicut colores sunt obiectum visus. Unde licet ex diversis coloribus sint diversae impressiones, tamen ex diversis phantasmatis potest esse una scientia numero,” *ibid.*

3 “Item secundo, quia intelligere non sine phantasmatis, ut patet in tertio huius, sed phantasmata non sunt sine corpore, ergo intelligere non est sine corpore,” *De Flandria, De Anima*, proem., 60v, col. 2.

intellective soul require the body only in one way—namely only as an object and not as an organic instrument.¹

A final point of attention to be noted in the *proemium* is found in the seventh and final conclusion that is posited—viz., that the definition of natural forms and the properties of those forms necessitates that the material component be posited within the definition. A distinction is made between a definition that grasps the form alone, and a natural definition, which in turn is twofold: an imperfect natural definition that grasps only matter, and the perfect natural definition that grasps both form and matter. The following passage looks at the classification of the sciences:

“For the natural philosopher considers sensible objects as they are united to sensible matter. The mathematician, on the other hand, considers sensible objects as they are abstracted from sensible matter according to reason, though such objects are united to sensible matter in their actual existence; and while

the substance that the mathematician considers is sensible in its actual existence, he does not however consider it under this aspect. The metaphysician, then, considers sensible objects insofar as they are abstracted from both sensible matter and intelligible matter, understanding the term *intelligibile* as *phantasiabile*—namely, according to what the Philosopher has named *phantasia*.²

The classification of the sciences is of course common, being based upon the object of a science in relation to the levels of abstraction. Three modes of abstraction in turn produce a certain kind of definition, which demarcate the speculative sciences based upon their proper subject (*obiectum*), so that the parts of science are distinguished according to their differences—i.e., specific differences of the theoretical or speculative objects insofar as they are theoretical. Herein follows the distinction between different types of matter: (1) signate or determined sensible matter, (2) universal or common sensible matter, and lastly (3)

1 “Dicendum quod operatio animae potest dupliciter indigere corpore, ut dicit hic Doctor Sanctus, vel tanquam obiecto et instrumento simul, sicut videre, audire, et huiusmodi, vel tanquam obiecto tantum. Omnes operationes animae coniunctae (quia non loquitur de separata) indigent corpore aliquo illorum modorum, non tamen indigent eo omnes utroque modo quia operationes sensitivae animae, et vegetativae indigent eo utroque modo, operationes vero animae intellectivae indigent eo altero modo tantum, videlicet tanquam obiecto et non tanquam instrumento organica. Et per hoc patet solutio ad argumenta dubii,” De Flandria, *De Anima*, proem., 61r, col. 1.

2 “Nam physicus considerat de sensibilibus secundum quod sunt coniuncta materiae sensibili. Mathematicus vero secundum quod sunt abstracta a materia sensibili secundum rationem, coniuncta tamen eis secundum esse, et licet substantia quanta, de qua considerat mathematicus, sit sensibilis secundum esse, non tamen considerat eam secundum quod huiusmodi. Metaphysicus vero considerat de praedictis secundum quod sunt abstracta tam a materia sensibili quam a materia intelligibili, accipiendo ly intelligibile, id est phantasiabile, id est secundum quod Philosophus intellectum phantasiam nominat,” De Flandria, *De Anima*, proem., 61r, col. 2.

intelligible matter. What is noticeable in Dominic's presentation is that he has here identified the intelligible matter of mathematics with what he calls '*materia phantasiabilis*'—this seems difficult to translate. The most idiomatic expression would be something akin to 'imaginable matter,' though this might miss the significance. Although Thomas has famously written, *phantasia sive imagination idem sunt*, it could be argued that he does not use the two terms carelessly. In Dominic's text, we should understand that the significance is not simply that the objects of mathematics are somehow imaginable, or able to be conjured up—perhaps fantastically—but rather that the objects of mathematics are somehow related to *phantasia*, that such intelligible matter is related to *phantasia*. Thus, here Dominic does not say explicitly that the intelligible matter of mathematics is a phantasm, but rather that there is some relation to *phantasia*. Since *phantasia* proper seems intimately united to external sensation, there is but a small step to take to identify the mathematical objects with something like intelligible phantasms.

Thus already in the *proemium* we notice that there is much to consider concerning the imagination and the phantasm. We have learned that (1) the phantasms are not exactly related to the intellect as proper objects, in the way that colors are said to be the proper objects of sight; (2) that phantasms are required for understanding does not necessarily entail that the intellect requires the body for its operation

(insofar as the body stands not as an object and instrument, but only as an object); and (3) there is some relation between *phantasia* and the intelligible matter particular to mathematics and that appropriate mode of abstraction—or rather, that the objects of mathematics are 'phantasible.'

We now skip to the third book of the commentary. The final short chapter of the second treatise affirms Aristotle's well-known definition concerning *phantasia*: *phantasia est quidam motus factus a sensu secundum actum*. Attention must be drawn to one of the final points of this treatise: Dominic indicates that, according to Aristotle, *phantasia* sometimes contains falsity—the reason for this is that while sensation is deceived concerning the *per se* sensibles in very few instances, concerning the incidental objects of sense (*per accidens*) sensation errs often, and even moreso concerning the common sensibles; thus, Dominic continues, a fortiori *phantasia* is deceived concerning phantasms, since *phantasia* withdraws farther from the root of the cognitive power.¹ It is interesting that, in this elaboration, the *per accidens* sensibles seem to

1 "Considerandum est hic secundum Philosophum quod *phantasia* est aliquando falsorum, cuius ratio est quia sensus, licet circa proprium sensibile ut in paucioribus decipiatur, tamen circa sensibilia per accidens decipitur, non ut in paucioribus sed ut saepe, et magis circa sensibilia communia, ergo a fortiori *phantasia* circa phantasmata decipitur cum magis recedat a radice virtutis cognoscitivae," *De Flandria, De Anima* III, tr. 2, cap. 3, 79v, col. 2.

occupy a middle ground here between proper sense objects and the common sensibles, since both are, for Dominic as for Thomas, two kinds of *per se* objects of sense. That the sensitive power would have a tendency to err more concerning common sensibles rather than the incidental objects of sense seems to run inconsistent with what he had previously articulated. However, the point we would rather like to emphasize is the arrangement between phantasia and phantasms implied by Dominic's conclusion—*phantasia circa phantasmata*. Proper and common sensibles are both *per se* objects of sensation so far as they make an impression upon the senses,¹ so the conclusion implies that phantasms are related to the phantasia as proper objects. This is significant. *Prima facie* it would seem that phantasms would indeed be the objects of the imagination (and this may very well be the case for Aristotle); however, if we are concerned to treat Dominic as a reader of Thomas, then we should note that—so far as we are aware—Thomas never explicitly states that phantasms are the objects (and certainly not the proper objects) of phantasia.

1 Cf. *ST* Ia, 78, 3, ad. 2; Dominic follows Thomas on this point: “differentia sensibilium sumenda est secundum differentiam immutationis. Vel ergo tale sensibile nihil facit ad immutationem sensus, vel aliquid facit. Si primum, sic est sensibile per se, et hoc est dupliciter, vel quia immutatio attenditur quantum ad speciem agentem, sic est sensibile per se proprium, vel quantum ad modum actionis, sic est sensibile per se commune,” *De Flandria, De Anima* II, tr. 2, cap. 7, 74v, col. 1-2.

If we continue, we find a threefold elaboration of the agent intellect in Book III. The operation of the agent intellect is threefold insofar as: first, the agent intellect illuminates phantasms; second, it abstracts intelligible species from those illuminated phantasms; third, it gives determination to the possible intellect with an abstracted intelligible species, the possible intellect itself being indeterminate. It might be argued, Dominic offers, that the agent intellect does not impress something in the phantasms, therefore it does not illuminate. Dominic responds that the agent intellect does not illuminate phantasms by impressing something upon phantasms, but rather by a process of abstraction, and by strengthening the intellect for the reception of intelligible species.² Regarding the reliance of the intellect on the phantasms, Dominic affirms Aristotle's claim: the intellect is not able to understand except through phantasms. This is proved since just as sense has a relation to the sensible object as sight to color, so in this way does the intellect have a relation to phantasms; but sensation is not able

2 “intellectus agentis triplex est operatio. Prima est illustrare phantasmata. Secunda est ex phantasmatis illustratis speciem intelligibilem abstrahere. Tertia est per speciem intelligibilem abstractam intellectum possibilem determinare, qui est secundum se indeterminatus. Et dum dicebatur, intellectus agens non imprimit aliquid in phantasmatis, ergo non illuminat. Dicendum quod non illuminat phantasmata aliquid imprimendo phantasmatis, sed magis abstrahendo et confortando intellectum possibilem ad susceptionem specierum intelligibilium,” *De Flandria, De Anima* III, tr. 3, cap. 4, 81v, col. 2.

to sense without sensible objects (sight is unable to see without color), therefore the intellect is not able to understand without phantasms, namely by turning itself towards phantasms. It is inferred then that it is necessary for understanding to behold phantasms.¹ Dominic does concede, however, that thinking through phantasms is the proper operation of the intellect in its current, embodied state, and not the proper operation of the intellect in an absolute consideration.²

Dominic presents the following objection: the intellect understands the mathematical objects, which are abstracted from matter; therefore the intellect does not always require the phantasms. In response to this objection, Dominic answers that although the mathematical objects are abstracted from sensible matter (from both common or universal sensible matter as well as individuated matter), the mathematical objects are not however abstracted from intelligible matter—that is, again, *materia phantasiabilis*. We recall that we have

1 “Intellectus non potest intelligere nisi per phantasmata. Haec conclusio probatur tali ratione. Nam sicut se habet sensus ad sensibile et visus ad colorem, ita se habet intellectus ad phantasmata, sed sensus non potest sentire sine sensibili, neque visus potest videre sine colore, ergo intellectus non potest intelligere sine phantasmatis, videlicet convertendo se ad phantasmata. Ex quo infertur quod necesse est intelligentem phantasmata speculari,” *De Flandria, De Anima* III, tr. 3, cap. 6, 82v, col. 1.

2 “intelligere per phantasmata est propria operatio intellectus coniuncti secundum quod huiusmodi, non autem ipsius intellectus absolute considerati,” *De Flandria, De Anima* III, tr. 3, cap. 4, 82r, col. 1.

already seen this in the *proemium*. While Thomas does often refer to the mathematical objects in his *De Anima* commentary, he himself does not make this claim regarding the intelligible matter as *phantasiabilis*.

Regarding the necessity of the phantasm, Dominic later offers an equally important objection: it is doubted whether the intellect understands by abstracting from phantasms. Four objections are given, which we will treat individually with their corresponding responses. First, and interestingly, it is argued that the intellect does not understand by abstracting from phantasms since, in understanding, the intellect converts or turns itself towards phantasms. It is answered that the intellect indeed always understands by converting or turning itself towards phantasms, and also by abstracting—it turns towards phantasms insofar as it understands the universal which has existence in singulars, and it abstracts insofar as it understands the universal while not considering the singular.³ Secondly: it appears as if the intellect does not need to turn towards phantasms since just as

3 “Dubitatur secundo, utrum intellectus intelligat per abstractionem a phantasmatis, et videtur quod non. Nam intellectus intelligendo convertit se ad phantasmata, ergo intellectus non intelligit abstrahendo a phantasmatis [...] Ad primum dicendum quod intellectus intelligit semper convertendo se ad phantasmata, et etiam abstrahendo, convertendo quidem in quantum intelligit universale, quod habet esse in singularibus, abstrahendo vero in quantum intelligit universale non intelligendo singulare,” *De Flandria, De Anima* III, tr. 3, cap. 6, 83r, col. 1.

sight has a relation to color, so too does intellect have a relation to phantasms, but sight is not able to see color by abstracting from color, therefore the intellect is not able to understand by abstracting from phantasms. So here again arises the analogy between color and sight on the one hand and phantasm and the intellect, and the objection again presses on the way in which the analogy limps. In response, Dominic claims precisely that the likeness or similitude between the relation of color and sight and the phantasms with respect to the intellect does not hold in every respect, for color according to its nature is visible, but the phantasms in themselves (*secundum se*) are not intelligible objects (*non sunt intelligibilia*), and therefore they require the power of the agent intellect, and hence those relations are not exactly similar.¹

The third objection holds that nothing is able to be understood without that which belongs to the definition of the thing, but matter precisely falls under the definition of a natural thing, therefore the intellect will not be able

to understand natural things without matter, therefore it follows that the intellect cannot understand without the individual conditions of matter, and thus does not abstract from phantasms. In response to this, Dominic makes the distinction between determinate or signate matter and common or universal matter: signate matter is indeed the principle of individuation, however common matter is not, and it is common matter that is placed in the definition of natural things. This of course recalls the division of the sciences, with physics having its corresponding object in those forms separated from their individuated signate matter, but nevertheless including common matter.² The fourth and final objection argues that if we are to hold that the intellect in understanding abstracts from phantasms, either that abstraction belongs to the possible intellect or to the agent intellect; it cannot belong to the possible intellect, since it is receptive and passive, but neither can it belong to the agent intellect, since the agent intellect illuminates phantasms, and consequently it belongs to something that makes an impression rather than something that abstracts. The response affirms that to abstract from phantasms

1 “Sicut se habet visus ad colorem, ita se habet intellectus ad phantasmata, ut concessum est: sed visus non potest videre colorem abstrahendo a colore, ergo intellectus non potest intelligere abstrahendo a phantasmatis [...]. Ad secundum dicendum quod non est omnimoda similitudo inter colorem per respectum ad visum et inter phantasmata per respectum ad intellectum. Nam color secundum sui naturam est per se visibilis, sed phantasmata secundum se non sunt intelligibilia, et propterea requiritur virtus intellectus agentis, ut supra declaratum est, unde non est simile,” *De Flandria, De Anima* III, tr. 3, cap. 6, 83r, col. 1.

2 “Nihil potest intelligi sine illo quod cadit in definitione rei, sed materia cadit in definitione rei naturalis, ergo intellectus non potest intelligere res naturales sine materia. Sed materia est principium individuationis, ergo sequitur quod intellectus non potest intelligere absque conditionibus individuans, et sic non abstrahit se a phantasmatis [...]. Ad tertium dicendum quod materia signata est principium individuationis, non autem materia communis, quae ponitur in diffinitione rei naturalis,” *ibid.*

belongs to the agent intellect, insofar as phantasms are made more suitable—on account of the proximity they have to the agent intellect—since from them the agent intellect is able to abstract the intelligible species to be presented to the possible intellect.¹

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this study we have tried to focus upon the theme of the imagination and phantasm, which provides a useful angle of analysis, a window through which we can take up the issues related to sensitive and intellectual cognition—and, more broadly, topics concerning the human soul—as we find them in Medieval and Renaissance scholastic thinkers. We have taken up Dominic of Flanders as a 15th century reader of Thomas Aquinas. In order to judge Dominic’s claims—and in order to pass a judgment on his fidelity to his confrère—however, we have claimed that it is helpful to refrain from a static understanding of Thomas, and rather to exaggerate potential difficulties in

order to create a suitable contrast. Dominic’s *Expositio super libros De Anima* demonstrates a spirit of fidelity to ‘Holy Thomas,’ his preferred epithet. This commentary over the *De Anima* was meant to distill Aquinas’ teaching into summary form, and, whatever Dominic’s intentions concerning its posterity, the work was indeed employed by printers of the following centuries as a kind of compendium to Thomas’ own commentary. This work, then, should be seen as a Thomistic commentary on the *De Anima*, and should serve as a valuable gauge to measure the character of the Thomism of the 15th century. While Dominic would claim no originality, and neither explicitly corrects Thomas nor highlights tenuous points, Dominic nonetheless elaborates a unique interpretation of the phantasm. If modern-day readers tend to veer to the side of materiality in conceiving of the phantasm, understanding the phantasm as a sense-image or sense-data and the like, then Dominic, recalling the degrees of ‘materiality,’ would veer to the side of intelligibility in his conception of the phantasm, claiming the intelligible matter of mathematics to be something like ‘phantasmal matter.’ He is more explicit about distinguishing between a phantasia proper to brute animals, and a more perfect, determinate imagination that he even labels as ‘rational.’ Dominic’s attempt to render lucid Thomas’ discussion over these concepts has allowed for something of an intellectualizing of the phantasm, and an elevation of phantasia over and beyond the task of retaining sensible

1 “Praeterea. Si intellectus intelligendo abstraheret a phantasmatibus, vel ergo abstrahere pertinet ad intellectum possibilem, vel ad intellectum agentem. Non ad intellectum possibilem, cum eius sit recipere, nec ad intellectum agentem, cum eius sit phantasmata illustrare. Et per consequens magis in eis aliquid imprimere quam abstrahere [...] Ad quartum dicendum quod abstrahere a phantasmatibus pertinet ad intellectum agentem, in quantum ipsa (propter propinquitatem quam habent ad ipsum) efficiuntur habilia ut ab ipsis possit abstrahi species intelligibilis praesentanda intellectui possibili,” *De Flandria, De Anima* III, tr. 3, cap. 6, 83r, col. 1.

forms. In order to offer a fuller picture of Dominic, more detailed research is required concerning his intermediate sources. Dominic's citations in this commentary are rather sparse; however, notably absent is any explicit mention of his former teacher at Paris, Jean Letourneur (Versoris), upon whose commentary over the *De Anima* Dominic relies heavily.

One final methodological caveat must be pointed out: the problem pressed upon here—viz., the ontological status of the phantasm—seems to be neither a Medieval nor a Renaissance problem. What do we mean by this? We mean, more specifically, that it was not an explicit problem for Thomas, and does not arise for Dominic in the form of a question or precise problem. That is, nowhere in Thomas' writings—so far as the present author is aware—do we find a question dedicated specifically to the phantasm qua phantasm. The treatments of such topics, especially as they are found in the *Summa*, occur as preambles to a consideration of the intellect. “A theologian,” Thomas says of his proper task, “must be concerned specifically only with the intellective and appetitive potencies, in which the virtues are found. But since the understanding of these capacities depends in a way upon the others, [...] those powers that come before the intellect must be taken up first”—that is to say, the sensitive powers.¹ So it is that for someone like

Thomas, treatment of the sensitive potencies, of the imagination, is rather incidental and not for its own sake, especially as found in his *Summa*. While Dominic might offer peculiar and interesting elaborations concerning the *phantasma*, it does not arise as a problem in and of itself. Thus it may be that the attention given to this problem here reflects a fundamental difficulty in understanding such a theoretical concept, and may very well import foreign concerns; a further difficulty is added when we notice that such terms—*phantasma*, *imago*, *similitudo*—though intended with technical precision in such accounts of the soul and intellect, cannot but remain vague, and not only for us, but in the common parlance of the Middle Ages and Renaissance as well. Thus, this current study perhaps serves as a broader reflection of the difficulty we constantly face in trying to understand these notions removed from us by centuries, and then in reformulating them in our own philosophical language. ▬

1 “Ad considerationem autem theologi pertinet inquirere specialiter solum de potentiis intellectis et appetitivis, in quibus virtutes inveniuntur. Sed quia cognitio harum potentiarum quodammodo

dependet ex aliis, ideo nostra consideratio de potentiis animae in speciali erit tripartita, primo namque considerandum est de his quae sunt praeambula ad intellectum; secundo, de potentiis intellectivis; tertio, de potentiis appetitivis.” *ST Ia*, 78, pro. [250].

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Veritas Rerum

vs Mens

Philosophorum?

THE DEBATE ON THE IMMORTALITY

OF THE SOUL IN ITALY AFTER

THE PUBLICATION OF THE BULL

APOSTOLICI REGIMINIS (1513):

CAJETAN, POMPONAZZI, SPINA,

PRIERIAS, JAVELLI

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ABSTRACT

The paper shows a comparison between five Renaissance authors – four Thomists (Cajetan, Spina, Prierias, Javelli) and a secular Aristotelian (Pomponazzi) – on the issue of the interpretation of the Aristotelian psychology, that is, whether it is in favor or against the possibility of providing a demonstration of the immortality of the human soul, in the light of the ecclesiastical sanction on this topic. With the papal bull *Apostolici regiminis* (19 December 1513), the Church had dogmatized the Aristotelian-Thomistic formulation of the ontological status of the human soul (the soul is essentially the form of the body, immortal, infused by God, multiplied for the number of men), thus endorsing the immortalistic reading of Aristotle's statements handed down by Thomas Aquinas. The present investigation seeks to develop the arguments of each of the authors and to elaborate their compatibility and distinctness. On the one hand, there are Cajetan and Pomponazzi, supporters of a mortalistic exegesis of Aristotle and of the inability to provide proof of the immortality of the soul on the basis of the Peripatetic philosophy. On the other hand, there are Spina, Prierias and Javelli, supporters of the classical Thomistic interpretation of Aristotle, albeit with some significant differences. Spina exposes the difficulty to save the agreement between reason and Revelation without the authority of the Stagirite; Prierias especially emphasizes the need to preserve the truth of faith regardless of what is considered to be the opinion of the great philosophers of the past; Javelli expressly acknowledges the limitations of the Aristotelian philosophy when there is no supervision of the Christian exegete.*

*This paper is based upon a speech read at the Palacký University at Olomouc (Czech Republic) in May 2013.

— I would like to begin by giving a brief explanation of the title of this paper: *veritas rerum vs mens philosophorum*. The opposition examined here is that between the dogma of the immortality of the human soul – as it is sanctioned by the papal bull *Apostolici regiminis* of 19 December 1513 – and the philosophical interpretations of this theme. The choice of this title comes from reading a passage by Silvestro Mazzolini da Prierio, or Prierias, a Dominican theologian, Master of the Sacred Palace from 1515.¹ The book in question, published in 1521, is entitled *De strigimagarum daemonumque mirandis* and is basically an inquisitorial text, on the model of the *Malleus maleficarum*, concerning the procedures to be followed in cases

of suspected witchcraft. In a short chapter, however, the author engages the question of the immortality of the soul, and at one point he makes a consideration on a prevailing trend in his own time:

“Sed haec est temporis nostri superba malignitas, qua multi putant se inter praeclaros philosophos non censendos, nisi contra veram fidem & christianam pietatem aliquid astruanti non quasi verum, sed quasi de mente Averrois, aut certe Aristotelis, vel eiusmodi, adeo ut pene nihil in gymnasijs de rerum veritate disputetur, sed de mente philosophorum, maxime Averrois...”²

Many philosophers, Prierias says, seem to have the bad habit of wanting to be famous not for dealing with the truth of things (“de rerum veritate”) – that is, precisely, defending the

1 For some bibliographical indication on Prierias, see below n. 38. p. 66, pozn. 2.

2 Prierias 1575, p. 30.

immortality of the human soul – but for dealing with the interpretations of other philosophers, like Averroes and Aristotle (“de mente Averrois, aut certe Aristotelis”), especially if these interpretations appear to be contrary to the Catholic faith.

Yet, first things first. The present historical reconstruction begins a few years before the publication of Prierias’s book and the enactment of the *Apostolici regiminis*. Its main protagonists are three Thomistic philosophers and theologians – Tommaso de Vio called “Cajetan” (lat. “Caietanum”), Bartolomeo Spina and Crisostomo Javelli – who were involved in different ways in the controversy sparked by the publication of Pietro Pomponazzi’s *De immortalitate animae* (1516).¹

As is known, in this treatise Pomponazzi focused mainly on the analysis of three aspects: the correct interpretation of Aristotle’s statements relating to the immortality of the human soul; the possibility of giving a demonstration of this topic that remains within the natural limits and that excludes the revealed data; the cogency of the Thomistic thesis, according to which the human soul is both the form of the body and the intellectual substance which is able to survive the corruption of the body.²

Certainly it was a matter of debate on exegetical grounds, but not only that. Pomponazzi’s treatise is not a commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima*, but a text in which placed against one another is the Christian (and Thomistic) doctrine of the immortality of the soul and what is lawful to infer about the human soul on the basis of Aristotelian claims, the reason and the experience (that is, without Revelation). And from this latter point of view, Pomponazzi undertook to demonstrate the legitimacy of the mortalistic thesis – actually, the greater legitimacy of the mortalistic thesis over the immortalistic – without questioning, however, his personal adhesion to the truth of faith. According to the author’s statements, the purpose of the work was not to give support to one opinion rather than another, but to consider, as an outside observer, both opinions, in order to conclude – in addition to the incompatibility of Thomas Aquinas’s position with Aristotle’s – the impossibility of solving the issue, at least in strictly philosophical terms: if one ignores the faith, both arguments can be adduced, in support of the immortality of the soul and in support of the mortality of the soul. Actually, there are more arguments that can be adduced in support of the mortalistic thesis, for Only Revelation and Holy Scripture can give us the assurance of the immortality of our soul – but in so saying Pomponazzi delineated the risk of an irreconcilable conflict between the truths of faith and the results of the rational inquiry.³

1 On the Pomponazzi affair, see Gilson 1961, pp. 163-279; and idem, Gilson 1963, pp. 31-61; Di Napoli 1963, pp. 277-338; Pine 1986.

2 See V. Perrone Compagni, Introduction to her Italian translation of Pomponazzi’s book, Pomponazzi 1999, pp. V-CI.

3 See in particular chapter XV of Pomponazzi’s *De immortalitate*. For a good and recent critical edition of

Many people, after the publication of the book, took against Pomponazzi. To some of these opponents he answered in two works: the *Apologia* and the *Defensorium*, published in Bologna in 1518 and 1519, respectively. One of the most aggressive among those who came into dispute with him (but whom Pomponazzi never answered) was the Dominican friar Bartholomeo Spina, author of three treatises published jointly in Venice in 1519, in a collection entitled *Opuscula*¹. Aside from the violence of the tone, what distinguishes this intervention from the others is the stated purpose of a twofold attack. Spina, actually, criticizes not only Pomponazzi, but also one of his brothers who, in Spina's view, had been the main inspiration for Pomponazzi. The brother was Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, who was elected general master of the Order of Preachers in 1508 and cardinal of San Sisto in 1517. Now known for the delicate task entrusted to him by Pope Leo X to induce Luther to retract his thesis, and also as the most eminent among the interpreters of St. Thomas – Cajetan was actually the author of a commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, published in Rome in 1510, in which he had come to a surprising conclusion, in stark contrast to what had been taught by Thomas Aquinas: from a closer reading of the text of *De anima* it is manifest that Aristotle held that the

human soul was mortal.² For Spina it was a big exegetical mistake, which had the worrying collateral effect of paving the way to the denial of the immortality by Pomponazzi.³ Hence the requirement of a double refutation to remove the risk of other “infections”: therefore, the first of the three contributions by Spina, entitled *Propugnaculum Aristotelis de immortalitate anime contra Thomam Caietanum*, is dedicated to amending the philological conclusions of Cajetan; the second and the third treatises, entitled respectively *Tutela veritatis de immortalitate animae contra Petrum Pomponatium mantuanum cognominatum Perettum* and *Flagellum in tres libros Apologiae Peretti* are respectively dedicated to a rebuttal of the “scandalous” arguments of Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae* and *Apologia*.

For Spina, therefore, Pomponazzi was stirred up from the mortalistic interpretation of the Aristotelian psychology provided by Cajetan. Wanting briefly to give an account of the affinity between Cajetan's work and Pomponazzi's, we can say that, by comparing Cajetan's commentary and Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae*, we find a correlation on three aspects in particular, concerning the interpretation of Aristotle's statements in *De anima*. These three aspects – which both Cajetan and Pomponazzi

the treatise, see Pomponazzi 2014, pp. 922-1104.

1 For a biography of Spina, see Amann 1939-41, pp. 2479-2480; Duni 2010, pp. 1471-1472.

2 For the life and the scientific activity of Cajetan, see Cossio 1902; Congar 1934-35, pp. 3-49; Stöve 1991, pp. 567-578; Arnold 2010, pp. 471-473; on the main topics of his studies, see Giacon 2001.

3 See in particular Spina 1519.

focus on, in opposition to the classic Thomistic interpretation of the Aristotelian psychology – are: whether it is possible or not to conclude that thinking is a soul’s proper operation and not common to the soul and the body; the ontological status of the possible intellect; the ontological status of the agent intellect.

The first argument is based on some conditions laid down by Aristotle himself in book I of *De anima*¹. Here, raising the question of the affections of the soul – if they are all affections of the complex of body and soul, or if there is any one among them peculiar to the soul itself – Aristotle says that considering the majority of them, there seems to be no case in which the soul can act or be acted upon without involving the body, as in the case of anger, courage, appetite and sensation generally. Only thinking seems the most probable exception, that is, it seems to be a soul’s proper operation. Nevertheless, if thinking proves to be a form of imagination or to be impossible without imagination, it also requires a body as a condition of its existence. What does it mean to be a form of imagination or to be impossible without imagination? It means that thinking, to be considered independent of the body, must prove not to be a faculty which uses the senses, such as imagination, and need not have an object of the sensitive knowledge, that is, an object produced by a sensitive faculty as the imagination. Thus, concludes Aristotle, if thinking is to be

considered a soul’s proper operation, we can say that the soul is able to have a separate existence; but if thinking is not to be considered a soul’s proper operation, we should say that the soul is not separable from the body. Now, both Cajetan and Pomponazzi track down the solution to this problem in the text of the *De anima*. In book III, Aristotle says openly that our soul never thinks without the sensitive images from which it abstracts its concepts.² For this reason, both Cajetan and Pomponazzi conclude that thinking is not peculiar to the soul, but is an operation of the complex of body and soul, because, although it does not use sense organs to happen, it needs to employ a product of the senses – the images, to be precise. The soul, then, according to this first argument, is not separable and cannot survive the corruption of the body.³ Conversely, the classic Thomistic exposition adopts a weak meaning of the expression “soul’s proper operation”. For St. Thomas it is true that the soul never thinks without images, but what matters most is that it does not avail itself of the sense organs to think. Thinking is not an organic operation, so it is peculiar to the soul. This is enough, according to St. Thomas, to say that the soul is separable from the body and to assume that the soul, in a state of separation, can just as well exist without the body, in the same way

1 See Aristotle, *De anima*, A1 403a3-13.

2 See Aristotle, *De anima*, Γ7 431a18-19, Γ8 432a9.

3 For Cajetan, see Caietanus 1938, §31, 33; for Pomponazzi, see chapter IV of *De immortalitate*, in Pomponazzi 2014, p. 936.

that it will have a mode of knowledge that does not employ sensitive images.¹

The second and third arguments of Cajetan's and Pomponazzi's interpretations take into consideration the ontological status of the possible intellect and of the agent intellect, which are for Aristotle the two main principles of the intellection: the passive principle and the active principle respectively. In the Aristotelian psychology, the task of the agent intellect is to abstract the intelligible species from the sensitive images, removing the material and individual conditions which characterize the sensitive images. In short: the agent intellect abstracts the universal from the particular. Once abstracted from the sensible images, the intelligible species can thus act upon the possible intellect, by passing it from the potency to the act, and in this way the possible intellect is made capable of thinking. The possible intellect is therefore the intellect with which we think properly. Aristotle says that this intellect is not blended with the body and does not use any organ, unlike the sensitive faculties which are organic faculties.² But is this sufficient to say that the possible intellect is separable from the body? For Cajetan and Pomponazzi it is not. It is true that it is not mixed with the material and that it is not organic, but it is also true, as we have seen, that to perform its operation – thinking – it always needs to use an object of the bodily

knowledge: the images. Cajetan's and Pomponazzi's conclusions, then, are that the possible intellect is separable from the body only in theory – that is, as intellect, it is distinguished from the simple organic faculties – but it is not separable from the body in practice, because it is always the intellect of a human body and it always needs this body to think.³ Conversely, Cajetan and Pomponazzi believe that we can speak of a real separation for the agent intellect, but only because they do not recognize it as a faculty of the human soul, but as a separate substance, which is the motor of the intellection.⁴ Even in the definition of the status of the agent intellect and the possible intellect, then, Cajetan and Pomponazzi turn away from Thomas Aquinas, because for St. Thomas the possible intellect and the agent intellect are both two intrinsic faculties of our soul, and both are effectively separate from the body.⁵

On the other hand, while being compatible in the interpretation of Aristotle's words in *De anima*, Cajetan's commentary and Pomponazzi's treatise differ for the purposes of the two authors. Pomponazzi, with a mortalistic interpretation of Aristotle's words,

1 See Aquino 1984, pp. 9-10, ll. 46-81.

2 See Aristotle, *De anima*, Γ4 429a24-27.

3 For Cajetan, see Caietanus 1965, §114, 69; for Pomponazzi, see chapter IX of the *De immortalitate*, in Pomponazzi 2014, p. 1004.

4 For Cajetan's conclusion, see Caietanus 1749, §§93-97, 61-63; for Pomponazzi's, see chapter X of the *De immortalitate*, in Pomponazzi 2014, pp. 1024-26. Their interpretations are based on Aristotle, *De anima*, Γ5 430a23-25.

5 See Aquino 1984, pp. 220-221, ll. 89-166.

wants to show that, when human reason does not rely on faith and proceeds only through its own means, this not only fails to prove the immortality of the soul, but even contributes more evidence in support of the mortality. Human reason, in other words, comes into conflict with faith. This is because, according to Pomponazzi, the immortality of the soul is not a philosophical problem, but an article of faith. Therefore, those who deal with this issue should not use the tools of philosophy but those of theology. Cajetan, instead, does not want to show that the question of the immortality is an article of faith, but wants to deal with a direct reading of *De anima* – that is, a reading not mediated by the interpretation given to it by Thomas Aquinas. For this reason, Cajetan obtains a new Latin translation of the Greek text and engages himself in a serious philological analysis.¹ As he explains in the prefatory dedication to the cardinal Oliviero Carafa, his aim is to follow as closely as possible to Aristotle’s statements, although this choice forces him to refute the exegesis produced by other famous commentators – that is, precisely, that of St. Thomas.² In other words, Cajetan, as exegete, wants to break free from Thomas. At the end of his analysis, Cajetan presents a new explanation to the reader:

“...scito quod non est intentionis meae dicere aut sustinere velle

intellectum possibilem esse generabilem et corruptibilem secundum philosophiae principia: quoniam haec positio est falsissima. Quoniam ex principiis philosophiae utpote veris non deducitur recte nisi verum. Hoc autem constat ex fide esse falsum. Igitur non potest ex principiis philosophiae sequi. Unde neque ut verum, neque ut consonum, neque ut probabile philosophiae haec scripserim; sed tantum ut exponens opinionem istius Graeci [sc. Aristotelis], quam conabor ostendere esse falsam secundum philosophiae principia.”³

In other words, although Aristotle considered that the human soul was perishable, we cannot accept this opinion as philosophically correct, because it is quite false. Cajetan thus distinguishes his exegetical position from his philosophical position: as an exegete of Aristotle, he is forced to say that the human soul is corruptible, while, as philosopher, he continues to believe that the soul is immortal. The principles of philosophy – asserts Cajetan – as true, can only arrive at true conclusions, and we really know for certain by faith that the soul is immortal. So, at this point, Cajetan must renounce Aristotle’s authority and resort to Thomistic evidence – actually, weak evidence – which concerns the metaphysical placement of the human soul as “rationabile medium”: the human soul is a medium element that connects the totally material forms with the totally immaterial forms, and, as such, it shares some characteristics with the material forms and some

1 See the important essay of Laurent 1938, in the critical edition of Cajetan’s commentary on 1st book of *De anima*, *Scripta Philosophica*, VII-LII.

2 See Cajetanus 1749, p. 13.

3 Cajetanus 1749, §§102, 65.

characteristics with the immaterial forms. As the material forms, the soul is the form of a human body and is located in matter; as the immaterial forms, the soul is separable from matter and is therefore able to survive the corruption of the body.¹

Although in the end he tried to reconcile his view with St. Thomas', Cajetan showed with his commentary that it was conceptually possible, from inside the same Thomistic school, to provide an interpretation of Aristotle's words antithetical to that of St. Thomas, and in this way, according to Spina, he authorized the anti-Thomistic interpretation of Aristotle's words provided by a secular philosopher like Pomponazzi.

Cajetan's commentary, however, is not the only work in which it is possible to recognize the well-spring of this controversy, because of its affinity with Pomponazzi's treatise, but also a central text in the chronology of Cajetan's works. Actually, if we try to recreate his position on the question of the immortality of the soul in the course of his scientific activity, we can see that he passed from a phase – prior to his commentary – in which he argues without reservation that the truth of faith is supported by human reason, to a phase – subsequent to his commentary – in which he instead argues that the truth of faith is only guaranteed by faith, but cannot be proved by human reason.

As an illustration of the first phase,

we can mention the oration entitled *De immortalitate animorum*, delivered in the presence of Pope Julius II and of the cardinals during the first Sunday of Advent in 1503:

“Verum maximam de immortalitate animorum difficultatem, et eam penitus explicatam (si tamen ita dici sine arrogantia licet) maiestati tuae offerendam attuli. [...] Quas ob res si animi nostri (de quo agimus) facultas certi aliquid comperire potest, et veritatis quippiam de seipso perspicere, si fortissimis argumentis fides ulla adhibenda est, si ratione investigata et ad sensum usque explorationem deducta humanae sententiae quietem tribuunt, ineruditi, indocilis, tardi, ebeti, stupidique est immortalitatem animorum in problema revocare neutrum.”²

Cajetan begins by claiming to be fully able to give a complete demonstration of the immortality of our soul, in spite of the difficulty of the subject, and, after showing a range of evidence obtained both from Aristotle and St. Thomas, concludes that it is foolish to consider the question of immortality as a neutral problem (referring here to the traditional position of Scotus) – namely as an unsolvable problem by human reason. On the contrary, he claims to have demonstrated this truth without showing any theological argument. In this case, Cajetan basically employs three pieces of evidences: the first is that based on the possibility of considering thinking as the soul's proper operation (but here

1 Caietanus 1749, §§122, 74. On the weakness of this evidence, see Gilson 1961, pp. 180-183; Di Napoli 1963, p. 219.

2 Caietanus 1580, fol. 98r, col. I - 98v, col. II.

Cajetan employs a weak meaning, that is Thomistic, of the expression “soul’s proper operation”: thinking is the soul’s proper operation because it is not organic); the second piece of evidence is based on the desire of the rational soul to live forever; the third piece of evidence is the same metaphysic evidence that he will use in his commentary on *De anima*: the human soul, as a linking element between the material and immaterial forms, shares characteristics of both of them.

Cajetan’s second phase concerns some hints that he makes to the problem of the immortality of the soul in his commentary to the Holy Scriptures. We can mention an exemplar passage from his commentary on the *Letter of St. Paul to the Romans* (completed in 1528), in which Cajetan considers the difficulty of rationally reconciling predestination with free will:

“Et cum obiicies, coniuge haec verba [sc. praedestinationem et liberum arbitrium] simul, respondeo me scire quod verum vero non est contrarium, sed nescire haec iungere, sicut nescio mysterium Trinitatis, sicut nescio animam immortalem, sicut nescio Verbum caro factum est, & similia, quae tamen omnia credo. Et sicut credo reliqua fidei mysteria, ita credo & haec mysteria predestinationis et reprobationis. Meum est tenere quod mihi certum est (scilicet uti libero arbitrio & reliquis bonis mihi a Deo concessis omni studio ad consequendam vitam aeternam) & expectare ut videam, in

patria mysterium divinae electionis mihi modo ignotum, sicut & reliqua fidei mysteria. Haec ignorantia quietat intellectum meum.”¹

The difficulty, Cajetan says, forces us to classify this problem as a mystery of faith, like the Incarnation, the Trinity and, surprisingly, the immortality of the soul. In other words, he recognizes his own ignorance in the face of similar issues – a kind of ignorance that quiets the mind and its claims. At a distance of about twenty years from his commentary on *De anima*, the question of the immortality of the soul is no longer a philosophical problem for Cajetan, but a mystery of faith.

Among the hypotheses that can be made concerning Cajetan’s change of mind, one of the most compelling seems to be that which focuses on the commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima* as the turning point. It is entirely plausible that precisely the conclusions that he had obtained in his commentary produced in him a kind of inner conflict that later led him to a frank agnostic position. But in truth, already before this point, we can almost see an early repercussion of this crisis in a singular episode in which he was involved only a few years after the publication of the commentary. The episode concerns his participation as general master of his Order in the eighth session of the V Lateran Council, during which he was a member of the Committee for the drafting of the papal bull *Apostolici regiminis* and took part in its vote of approval.²

1 [Cajetanus 1639, fol. 58, col. II.](#)

2 [For the list of the members of the](#)

The decree firstly established the dogma of the immortality of the soul¹: the human soul not only truly exists of itself and essentially as the form of the human body, but it is also immortal; and further, it is multiplied for the number of the bodies into which it is infused individually. In addition, “cum verum vero minime contradicat” – that is, since (philosophical) truth cannot contradict (theological) truth – the bull condemned as heretical – precisely, as the work of the Devil, the sower of weed (“zizaniae seminator”) in the Lord’s field – all those philosophical doctrines asserting that the rational soul is mortal or that it is only one soul for all mankind, and those who doubted this topic.² These deviations being thus censored, the bull secondly imposed on the philosophy professors the teaching strategy to prevent the spread of these errors: it enjoined on each and every philosopher who taught publicly in the universities or elsewhere that when they explained or addressed to their audience the principles or conclusions of the philosophers, where these were known to deviate from the truth of the faith – as in the assertion of the soul’s mortality or of there being only one soul –, they are obliged to devote their every effort to clarify for their listeners the truth of the Christian religion (“veritatem religionis christianae omni conatu manifestam

facere”), to teach it convincingly, so far as this is possible (“persuadendo pro posse docere”), and to apply themselves to the full extent of their energies to refuting and disposing of the philosophers’ opposing arguments, since all the solutions are available (“ac omni studio huiusmodi philosophorum argumenta, cum omnia solubilia existant, pro viribus excludere atque resolvere”).³

As we can read from the acts of the Council, Cajetan was the only one, along with the Bishop of Bergamo, to disapprove of the second part of the bull: for him, the philosophy professors should not be forced to prove the truths of faith.⁴ It is a strange position, if we think that he himself, a few years before, despite having given a mortalistic interpretation of the *De anima*, was quick to say that this thesis was philosophically untenable and that Aristotle was wrong. We can then assume that, because of the loss of Aristotle’s support, Cajetan then began to doubt the possibility of demonstrating philosophically the immortality of the soul.⁵

But let’s return to Spina. It is noteworthy that he accused his brother, especially because, if we look at his biography, we see that his relations with

Committee for the drafting of the bull, see Mansi 1902, col. 797; for the list of the participants in its vote of approval, see *idem*, colls. 827-831.

1 The full text of the bull is in Mansi 1902, cols. 842-843.

2 Mansi 1902, vol. 32, col. 842.

3 Mansi 1902, vol. 32, col. 842. On the bull *Apostolici regiminis*, see Monfasani 1993, pp. 247-276; Constant 2002, pp. 353-378; Bianchi 2008, in particular chapter IV, pp. 117-156; Cappiello, Lamanna 2014, pp. 325-352.

4 See Mansi 1902, vol. 32, col. 843.

5 See Verga 1935, pp. 41-46; Gilson 1955, p. 131, 134; Offelli 1955, p. 13; Di Napoli 1963, p. 224.

Cajetan were more than good up to that point. Only a short time before, actually, as the curator of Cajetan's critical edition of the *Pars Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa theologiae*, Spina voluntarily drew up a preface in which he exalted to such a degree Cajetan's qualities to see in him the living image of Thomas Aquinas ("quasi vivens Aquinatis imago").¹ Spina himself provides us with the reason for this sudden change:² he says that he wanted to intervene in the defense of the truth from the moment of the publication of Cajetan's commentary, but that he hesitated in awe of Cajetan – who was one of his superiors, while at that time Spina was just a simple friar. This hesitation, however, lasted until Spina noticed that Cajetan's position was becoming dangerously contagious, which was realized with the publication of Pomponazzi's treatise.

It is also necessary to point out that Spina's attack not only reveals a disagreement within the Thomistic school on the topic of the immortality of the soul, but also allows us to suppose that he did not even approve of Cajetan's vote against the second part of the papal bull. There is in Spina's works more than one reference that permits us to reconstruct what his opinion was about the recent provisions of the Church. Even with a cursory reading, we can see that in his treatises Spina adopts a register very close to that of the *Apostolici regiminis*, a register that we can define

at one time as clinical and apocalyptic: the spread of the errors concerning the truth of the soul is actually described by Spina as an infection, and this infection is interpreted as the work of the Devil. Pomponazzi, for example, is explicitly accused of being an emissary of the Devil, of infesting the world with pestiferous weeds and of wanting to sow poison in the hearts of his students.³ But going deeper into the reading of the *Opuscula*, it's possible to say that Spina intercepts the strongest instance of the *Apostolici regiminis*, that is, the important apologetic role attributed to philosophy: philosophy must be at the service of faith.

In the preface of the *Propugnaculum* – the treatise written against Cajetan – Spina says that the question of immortality cannot be evaluated as an object of special investigation of theology, but should be seen in all its pure philosophical dimensions:

“Et quum salus omnis atque felicitas nostra ex ea oriatur atque in ipsa finiatur, per quam omnis perfectio obtinetur, et sine qua nullam vel sperare possumus, id nobis eius inquisitionem ac scrutandi inevitabilem necessitatem imponit. Hinc factum est ut omnes qui philosophie (ut Theologos nunc obmictam) se dederunt, circa cognitionem anime non minimam operam consumpserint [...]. Solatium etenim non mediocre fidelibus affert tam celebrati philosophi [sc. Aristotelis] testimonium in re tanta, infirmis inter christianos extreme

1 For Spina's preface see Laurent 1934-35, pp. 448-454 (cit. 449).

2 See Spina 1519, Prefatory Letter to *Propugnaculum*, in *Opuscula*.

3 See Spina 1519, *Flagellum in tres libros Apologiae Peretti*, in *Opuscula*, fol. K4r.

ruine clauditur praecipitium, infidelibus autem ex veritate hac facilis ad fidem praeparatur via.”¹

In knowledge of the soul, Spina says, our happiness and our salvation are at stake, and this is why all those who dedicated themselves to philosophy grappled with this issue. In addition, against Cajetan’s claim to provide only a “harmless” interpretation of Aristotle’s words without questioning the truth of faith, Spina insists that Aristotle’s testimony on this issue is not a worthless thing, because knowing that Aristotle supported the immortality of the soul means giving stability to those Christians who are wavering in their faith and paving the way towards faith for the non-believers. For this reason, although Spina intervened against Cajetan only after the publication of Pomponazzi’s treatise, he was busy from the moment of the publication of Cajetan’s commentary providing his students with a correct (immortalistic) interpretation of Aristotle, which he had done with all his energies – “pro viribus” – , precisely as prescribed by the papal bull.²

On the basis of these observations, we can conclude that Spina had probably not even approved of Cajetan’s vote in the Council, which aimed at a distinction between philosophy and theology. Spina therefore approved neither of Cajetan’s attitude towards the psychology of Thomas Aquinas, nor of the idea that we should safeguard

the mutual autonomy of philosophy and theology, especially for issues like that of the immortality of the soul in which these two disciplines are both necessarily involved: fixed by the certainty of faith, a Christian philosopher can only provide reasons in support of this truth.

This latter is a point on which Spina also challenges Pomponazzi, judging it to be unacceptable that a Christian philosopher should put to the test the truth of the soul, and reaffirming the importance of producing rational evidence to corroborate faith and faithful people. Spina is insistent on these topics both in the *Tutela* – the treatise written against the *De immortalitate animae* – and especially in the *Flagellum* – the treatise directed against Pomponazzi’s *Apologia*, the work in which Pomponazzi defended himself against the accusations of heresy.³ To ensure his innocence, in this book Pomponazzi says that both Pietro Bembo, the secretary of Pope Leo X, and the Master of the Sacred Palace, Prierias, had nothing to say on his treatise;⁴ and indeed, concerning Prierias, Pomponazzi adds that, according to some rumors, the Master of the Sacred Palace had rather intended to write a treatise against one of his brothers, who had given a mortalistic interpretation of Aristotle’s words.⁵

1 Spina 1519, Prefatory Letter to *Propugnaculum*, in *Opuscula*.

2 See Spina 1519, Prefatory Letter to *Propugnaculum*, in *Opuscula*.

3 See, for example Spina 1519, in *Opuscula*, fol. H7v-H8r; and *Flagellum*, in *Opuscula*, fol. K4r-K4v.

4 Pomponazzi, book III, chapter II of the *Apologia*, in Pomponazzi 2014, p. 1494.

5 Pomponazzi, book II, chapter II of the *Apologia*, in Pomponazzi 2014, p. 1394.

Pomponazzi clearly alludes to Cajetan. Actually, Prierias despised Pomponazzi's treatise: Prierias himself tells us this in the *De strigimagarum*, but also Spina – who was one of the favorite disciples of Prierias – tells us this in the *Flagellum*.¹ Nevertheless, Pomponazzi was right. Prierias despised Cajetan's commentary too, and actually, in the *De strigimagarum*, Prierias heavily criticizes Cajetan, but without ever naming him.² Prierias had exactly the same idea as Spina. Pomponazzi's allusion to Cajetan was then a provocation, a way to say that the Master of the Sacred Palace was in no position to attack him, because a well-known Thomist like Cajetan, at least from the exegetical point of view, had endorsed the mortalistic thesis too.³ And perhaps it's thanks to Cajetan's precedent if the *De immortalitate animae* had no repercussions on Pomponazzi's career.

Let's come then to the third main character of this reconstruction,

1 For Prierias, see Prierias 1575, fol.19; for Spina 1519, see *Flagellum*, in *Opuscula*, fol. K4v.

2 Almost all chapter 5 of book I in Prierias 1575, fol.19-42 is devoted to contradict Cajetan's point of view on the Aristotelian psychology; and even if the name of Cajetan is never mentioned, Prierias quotes several pieces from Cajetan's commentary on the *De anima*. On Prierias, his friendship with Spina and his antagonism to Cajetan, see Tavuzzi 1995, who suggest a sort of agreement between Prierias and his beloved disciple Spina, according to which, for reasons of decorum, would have been the simple friar Spina instead of the powerful Master of the Sacred Palace to attack openly Cajetan; see also Tavuzzi 1997.

3 See Tavuzzi 1995, p. 101.

Crisostomo Javelli, who is known for a completely different role, and for a very specific reason.⁴ As we have seen, in accordance with the provisions of the *Apostolici regiminis*, the philosophy professors were required to confute the arguments against the faith. But Pomponazzi, in his third treatise published after the *De immortalitate animae*, namely the *Defensorium* (in which he responded to Augustine Nifo's criticisms) had not obeyed the requirements of the papal bull. He actually had not confuted the philosophical arguments adduced by him in support of the mortality of the soul. For this reason the book was censored. Pomponazzi, however, refused to write these confutations in his own hand, and asked for help from a theologian, Javelli, at that time regent of the Studium of the Dominican Order in Bologna, so that Javelli did it in his place. By an exchange of letters between Pomponazzi and Javelli, we know that Javelli accepted the task and wrote the *Solutiones rationum animi mortalitatem probantium quae in Defensorio contra Niphum excellentissimi domini Petri Pomponatii formantur*.⁵ Javelli's *Solutiones* were attached to the text of the *Defensorium*, and in this way Pomponazzi obtained the approval for its printing.

However, beyond this episode, at

4 On life, career and works of Javelli, see Chenu 1925, cols. 535-537; Tavuzzi 1990, pp. 457-482; Tavuzzi 1991, pp. 107-121; and Tavuzzi 1992, cols. 563-566.

5 The correspondence between Pomponazzi and Javelli is printed in Pomponazzi 1525, see Pomponazzi 2014, pp. 2064-2070.

a distance of about fifteen years from the writing of these theological solutions, Javelli also produced two original works on the philosophical question of the immortality of the human soul, in which was expressed his opinion on the thesis of both Cajetan and Pomponazzi: the *Super tres libros Aristotelis de anima quaestiones subtilissimae*, published in 1534, and the *Tractatus de animae humanae indeficientia*, published in 1536.

In Javelli's philosophical intervention we can identify two important new elements compared with Spina's: Javelli mitigates Pomponazzi's position by considering it as a simple exegetical position; Javelli justifies the possibility of interpreting Aristotle's words in a mortalistic sense on the basis of the partiality of the same Aristotelian point of view.

The first point is evident in several places; firstly in the letter which Javelli wrote to Pomponazzi when he accepted the task for the *Defensorium*:

“Mirabantur et dolent quamplures tibi obsequentissimi, qui te ut patrem diligunt et optimum philosophum ac praeceptorem colunt et venerantur, quod in hanc veneris diffinitivam Aristotelis sententiam, Aristotelem prorsus sensisse humanum animum mortalem simpliciter esse, secundum quid vero immortalem. Mirantur et magis quod fidissimo duce tuo et meo Thome terga dederis, qui insequens dicta ac ipsa formaliter verba Aristotelis deducit et concludit oppositum sententiae tuae.”¹

1 Pomponazzi 2014, p. 2066.

Rebuilding the controversy aroused by the *De immortalitate animae*, Javelli says that many people were disappointed about the mortalistic interpretation that Pomponazzi had given of Aristotle and especially because Pomponazzi had turned his back on Thomas Aquinas – who Javelli, talking to Pomponazzi, defines surprisingly as “our common master”.

In the *Quaestiones subtilissimae*, the name of Pomponazzi is closely associated with that of Cajetan:

“Et quoniam Petrus Pomponatius Mantuanus nihil novi dicit quod non fuerit tactum a Thoma Caietano ideo simul improbabimur.”²

Pomponazzi is considered to be Cajetan's follower. Javelli believes that in the *De animae immortalitate* Pomponazzi did not say anything new compared to Cajetan, and that for this reason there is no need to refute Pomponazzi's position separately. Shortly after, Javelli associates the name of Pomponazzi also to that of Scotus, saying that almost all of the arguments raised by Pomponazzi against an immortalistic interpretation of Aristotle had already been raised both by Cajetan and Scotus.³ For these reasons in the *Quaestiones subtilissimae* Javelli devotes little space to the criticism of Pomponazzi's position.

In the *Tractatus de animae humanae indeficientia*, instead, Cajetan and Pomponazzi each receive their own space.⁴ In this book Javelli makes a clear

2 Javellus 1552, fol. 131v.

3 See Javellus 1552, fol. 139r.

4 Javelli devotes to de Vio and Pomponazzi,

distinction between the two authors:

“Thomas quoque Caietanus, licet diffinite posuerit Aristotelem pro certo tenuisse animae deficientiam, tamen in processu suo prudenter se habuit, eo quod ad hoc comprobandum, non nisi ex textu philosophi rationes suas, suaque motiva assumpsit [...]. Petrus autem Pomponatius magis importune et onerosius se habuit, qui non solum ex apparentibus verbis Aristotelis de paucis rationibus in superficie littere Aristotelis fundatis, sed ex omni etiam levissimo argumento erexit se contra propositum nostrum [...]. Est enim perfacile videre quod ad id quod firma ratione persuadere diffidebat, multiplicatis argutiis auditorum animos, et moderni temporis philosophos allicere studuit.”¹

Cajetan based his mortalistic arguments on Aristotle’s text only; Pomponazzi worked hard to fascinate the philosophers of his own time.

This judgment is made clear by Javelli in the chapter of the *Tractatus de animae humanae indeficientia* monographically dedicated to Pomponazzi:

“...Petrus Pomponacius Mantuanum duos edidit libros de hac materia, in primo quidem conatur omni via ostendere Aristotelem tenuisse animae nostrae deficientiam. In secundo autem, quem composuit contra Augustinum Nifum Suessanum tenentem oppositum, adeo multiplicat rationes ad astruendam mortalitatem animae, quod videt non solum hoc tenere de

mente Aristotelis, sed et simpliciter...”²

Here Javelli says that Pomponazzi wrote two books on the subject of the immortality of the human soul: the *De immortalitate animae* and the *Defensorium* (not counting the *Apologia*). Javelli adds that it is only in the *Defensorium* that Pomponazzi exaggerates in producing arguments in support of the mortality of the soul. In the *De immortalitate animae*, according to Javelli, Pomponazzi defends the mortalistic thesis merely from Aristotle’s point of view. In short, for the *Tractatus de animae humanae indeficientia* too, Pomponazzi’s thesis is a purely exegetical thesis, just like that of Cajetan.

This opinion of Javelli seems to find a further confirmation in the *Tractatus de animae humanae indeficientia*. In chapter IV of part III of the treatise, Javelli presents a kind of anthropological classification of those, among the ancients and the modern, who have supported the mortality of the soul. And here, after the unholy, the slothful, the delinquents, the insane and the melancholic people, those who have Saturn and Mercury retrograde and those who are agitated by fervor of youth, appear to be those who supported the mortalistic thesis although they were not of this opinion:

“Qui autem eorum sententiam defensare contendunt etiam qui non sint illius mentis, aut nimis curiosi sunt aut singularis nominis cupidi [...]. Nimis autem curiosus est qui in nulla ratione quiescit, qui proposito

respectively, chapter IV and chapter V of part I of the treatise.

1 Javellus 1536, fol. 44v-45r.

2 Javellus 1536, fol. 24r.

decrevit nil acceptare, nisi quod proprio metitus fuerit ingenio. Sunt et alii, qui ut se supra alios famosos reddant, videanturque novi aliquid invenisse, probatas conclusiones et a bonis ac eruditissimis viris defensatas impugnare aut infirmare decernunt, non quia firmiores habeant rationes, sed ut [...] extimentur ab aliis se solos sapientissimos evasisse atque advertisse neque in rebus neque in rationibus esse sanum aliquid aut firmum.”¹

This category is further divided into two types: the first comprises of those who are too curious and restless, who are not satisfied by any argument, and that do not stop to look – a description that seems to perfectly frame Cajetan’s attitude, because Cajetan, moving away from the classic exposition of Thomas Aquinas, had wanted personally to compete with the text of the *De anima*. The second type comprises of those who are desirous of fame, that is, those who, because of a spirit of competition, take position against those wise men who defended the immortalistic thesis, but without having stronger arguments – a description that seems to repeat Javelli’s reproach to Pomponazzi, namely that he wanted to fascinate the philosophers of his own time.

The second aspect that characterizes Javelli’s intervention is to consider Aristotle’s point of view as partial. This aspect is highlighted by Javelli in his letter to Pomponazzi. Here, expressing his position on Pomponazzi’s mortalistic exegesis, Javelli says he’s not at all

surprised by this result, for Pomponazzi knew very well the difference between Aristotle’s “ascending” way and Plato’s “descending” way:

“...Aristoteles elevans se per gradus (ut ita dixerim) sensatos, quantum a sensu elevatus tantum determinate et constanter philosophari potuit, at quamprimum manuductio ex sensu defecit, caligavit eius intellectus, ita quod vel illic gradum sistit, vel anceps, obnubilosus et abstrusus adeo loquitur quod dicta sua oppositos sensus videntur posse recipere. Inter haec iudicio tuo connumerandam censes humani animi considerationem, eo quod tibi persuades ex nullo suo opere apud Aristotelem posse comprehendi esse incorruptibilem, sed oppositum...”²

The method used by Aristotle is to start from the senses in order to rise from the most known things to the lesser known, and, gradually that as he ascends to the more intangible realities, his words become more and more obscure and lend themselves to different readings. This does not mean for Javelli that Aristotle considered our soul to be mortal, but only that Aristotle’s words sometimes can be misinterpreted, because of the limits and the partiality of his method. The problem of the Aristotelian point of view, however, is now shelved in the letter, because at this time Javelli had pledged to resolve the *Defensorium*’s mortalistic arguments by using the principles of the sacred theology and those of the true philosophy. But here Javelli tells us another interesting thing:

1 Javellus 1536, fol. 61r-66r.

2 Pomponazzi 2014, p. 2066.

“Solvam igitur quascumque rationes formasti mortalitatem probantes, principiis quidem non Aristotelis pronunc sed sacrae theologiae et verissimae philosophiae quam arbitramur nostrae catholicae fidei subministrare. Neque enim philosophia et Aristotelis philosophia convertuntur. Philosophia siquidem in se est scientia merae veritatis, quae est divina possessio nobis a patre luminum demissa.”¹

The true philosophy does not coincide with the Peripatetic philosophy, because the true philosophy is the science of the mere truth and its job is to give reinforcement to the Catholic faith.

This point is recalled in the *Tractatus de animae humanae indeficientia*. After challenging Pomponazzi’s mortalistic position and rehabilitating in its place the classic Thomistic and immortalistic position, Javelli says that in the *Defensorium* Pomponazzi lashed out against Augustine Nifo because the latter claimed to quibble about the condition of the soul in state of separation, for example about its way of knowing without using the senses, the premiums it receives for its virtues and the penalties that it suffers for its vices. All things that obviously have no place in the Aristotelian doctrine. But here is Javelli’s position:

“Nos autem dicimus quod et si haec expresse non habeantur in philosophia Aristotelis, quoniam ex sensu, a quo semper incepit philosophari, deprehendere non potuit ista [...] si

quis docuisset eum in solutionibus, quas adducemus, ut consonans vere philosophie, non negasse eas.”²

Javelli agrees with Pomponazzi on the fact that these arguments have no place in Aristotle, but this, once again, only because of the limits of Aristotle’s own method; if someone had shown these things to Aristotle, Javelli says, Aristotle would not have denied them. The problem is that Aristotle had not seen them. And for this reason Javelli underlines once again:

“...philosophia Aristotelis et philosophia ut philosophia non convertuntur. Nam philosophia in se est scientia mere veritatis et perfecta, philosophia autem Aristotelis non est perfecta nec in omnibus approbatur, et ideo posito quod ex philosophia Aristotelis non posset reddi certa ratio supradictorum, tamen ex ipsa philosophia reddetur, quia ut dixi Aristoteles audiens non negaret, licet sensu ad talem altitudinem ascendere non potuerit.”³

The Peripatetic philosophy is imperfect and incomplete, because Aristotle was not able to attain so high a level; which means that the Peripatetic philosophy is not the true philosophy.

In conclusion, with regard to the match between truth and interpretation, Spina and Javelli seem to hold two quite different positions. In Javelli’s it seems to be possible to find a greater tolerance for Cajetan’s and Pomponazzi’s interpretations; not because Javelli considers them

1 Pomponazzi 2014, p. 2068.

2 Javellus 1536, fol. 41v.

3 Javellus 1536, fol. 41v.

correct or plausible, but because, as mere exegetical positions, for the partiality of their point of view, these interpretations do not scratch the truth of things. For Spina, conversely, those of Cajetan and Pomponazzi are not “innocuous” exegetical positions; for him, one cannot advance a moralistic interpretation of Aristotle’s psychology without endangering the agreement between human reason and Revelation. Actually, if we have to judge the results of Cajetan’s and Pomponazzi’s research, we must say that Spina was right and that Javelli was wrong: Cajetan’s and Pomponazzi’s theses were not mere exegetical positions. For Pomponazzi, we know that he came to radicalize his position arriving at the theory of divisibility of the soul in *De nutritione et augmentatione* of the 1521 and, more generally, that he continued his “anti-theological” battle with the *De incantationibus* and the *De fato*. Cajetan, as we have seen, after giving up Aristotle’s basis, came to definitively giving up the possibility of proving the immortality of the soul, and facing of this issue, as in confronting an article of faith, to confess his ignorance. ▬

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Johannes Jessenius on the Immortality of the Soul

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ABSTRACT

Johannes Jessenius (1565-1621) published in 1618 a treatise *On the Immortality of the Soul*, which he, in his own words, defended as a dissertation at the university in Leipzig in 1587. The place and the time of its origin made some of the interpreters include this early work of Jessenius under the tradition of Lutheran Aristotelianism or, more precisely, Aristotelianism as presented by Melanchthon. This article puts this early work of Jessenius into a historical context and analyses the content of the treatise. It seems that with respect both to the context of Aristotelianism at Lutheran universities in the 1580s and to the way of Jessenius' argumentation the treatise was at least complemented and reworked later after Jessenius' studies in Padua and cannot be assumed as Melanchthonian Aristotelianism.*

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— Johannes Jessenius (1565-1621) is known above all as a physician who made the first public dissection in Prague in 1600¹ and who was executed on the Old Town Square on June 21, 1621, due to his political engagement during the so-called Bohemian estates' revolt against the Habsburgs.² Less attention is paid to his philosophical writings, which reflect philosophical discussions of the Late Renaissance period.³ This article deals with Jessenius' treatise *On the immortality of the soul*, which he, in his own words, defended as a dissertation at the university in Leipzig in 1587 but which

was printed only in the year 1618.⁴ The place and the time of its origin made some of the interpreters include this early work of Jessenius' under the tradition of Lutheran Aristotelianism or, more precisely, Aristotelianism as presented by Melanchthon. This dissertation is then viewed as a work that "falls within the usual limits of scholarly philosophy, of an Aristotelian and scholastic nature, albeit with modern protestant elements".⁵ Certain historians suppose that Jessenius in his work "escaped neither the influence of Melanchthon's Aristotelianism nor the religious tendencies of the reformation doctrine"⁶ and that Jessenius' theories reflect Melanchthon's beliefs.⁷

The aim of this article is to consider this interpretation, for there could rise

1 Jessenius 1601. Cfr. facsimile with Czech translation, Jessenius 2004.

2 Pick 1926; Polišíenský 1965; Sousedík 1995. To Jessenius' biography cfr. Röhrich 1974.

3 A systematical description of Jessenius' philosophical works is presented by the article of Král 1923, pp. 129 – 141, 211 – 222; and a chapter in a book of Sousedík 2009, pp. 68-75.

4 Jessenius 1618.

5 Král 1923, p. 132.

6 Várossová 1987, p. 76.

7 Várossová 2001, p. 1355. Cfr. Mudroch 2001, p. 347.

doubts about its correctness. Jessenius was born and studied surely in Lutheran area. In his native town Breslau (Wroclaw) he completed the municipal school *Elisabethanum*, a grammar school that offered a complete course in Greek and Latin in concord with Melanchthon's educational reform. Subsequently he enrolled at Lutheran university first in Wittenberg (1583) and then later in Leipzig (1585) before he studied in Padua (1588–1591). Nevertheless, it seems that with respect to both historical circumstances and to the contents of his "first fruit", this treatise cannot be put into the context of Melanchthon's Aristotelianism as it is usually done.

— 1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When referring to Melanchthonianism as an independent system of thought characteristic for Philipp Melanchthon three different levels may be identified. The first level is the reform of the education system which stemmed from the humanist motto *ad fontes*; in other words, it was the requirement of access to the original ancient text that was, at that time in the 16th century, the Bible (subsequently, we refer to it as biblical humanism). The study of the Bible is based on the prerequisite of a solid knowledge of Latin and Greek grammar starting at the lower educational levels. A second level of Melanchthonianism, somewhat separated from biblical humanism, is represented by individual textbooks on ethics and natural philosophy. The third level of Melanchthonianism can

be seen as pertaining to the field of theology.

However, the reception of Melanchthon's thought occurred on the aforementioned three levels in various ways. While his reform of the educational system, especially with regards to the support of the study of biblical languages and biblical hermeneutics using rhetoric and dialectic, took a firm root at Lutheran schools, his theological opinions provoked a backlash on the part of Lutheran orthodoxy culminating in the creation of the so-called Formula of Concord in 1577 where, among other things, Melanchthon's transgressions against Luther's theology were explicitly rejected. The Formula of Concord was recognised by many of the Lutheran states and their rulers began to put its findings into practice at universities. One example of such a development is the university in Wittenberg.¹ The Saxonian prince-electors August (1553–1586), although initially positively-inclined towards Melanchthonians, was eventually influenced by the Lutheran orthodoxy and set out on a crusade against the Crypto-Calvinists at the university as early as in 1574 and after the proclamation of the Formula of Concord, he also targeted the Faculty of Arts, forcing the remaining Melanchthonians to leave Wittenberg. Even Caspar Peucer (1525–1602), Melanchthon's son-in-law and the most prominent figure in the Wittenberg academic context at the time, fell

1 [Kathe 2002, pp. 135–136.](#)

victim to this persecution. This respected thinker and close relative to one of the founders of reformation was kept in jail for 12 years.¹ The dismantling of key figures within the Faculty of Arts, which had now lost its leading Melanchthonians, greatly affected the quality of education. Although the faculty continued to promote the Aristotelian doctrine² and Melanchthon's textbooks on natural philosophy were still published in Wittenberg,³ the ban on Melanchthon's theological works manifested itself as a certain public distrust towards his other philosophical textbooks.

The primary study of Aristotelian works and their interpretation made way to an education based on compendia, as is apparent from a report by the duke's visitor from 1577. The visitors demanded a remedy for the situation, which likely never occurred, since ten years later the professors in Wittenberg claimed that readings of Aristotle's works would have to be

introduced in order to enhance the level of Aristotelianism at the Faculty. This articulate report draws on another visitation (1587) that took place already under the reign of August's son, Christian I (1586–1591). The new Saxonian prince-elector managed to free himself from the influence of orthodox Lutheranism and cancelled the obligation to profess the Formula of Concordance. At the Faculty of Arts, he made numerous personal changes in favour of the Melanchthonians. In his university statutes from 1588, Christian I ordered the establishment of a whole department that would teach Aristotelianism and demanded that Aristotle's teachings were to be combined with Melanchthon's theories.

The return of the faculty to Aristotelianism and Melanchthonianism is simultaneously marked with the growing influence of the anti-Aristotelian logic of Petrus Ramus (1515–1572) which attracted an increasing number of followers at the faculty. Although the prince-elector was not fond of the advocates of this Calvinist thinker, he allowed Ramism to be taught privately. Following this brief intermezzo, Lutheran orthodoxy established itself fully under the rule of Christian's successor Friedrich Wilhelm (1591–1601). A similar situation was found at the University of Leipzig, also falling within the jurisdiction of the Saxonian prince-elector. The Formula of Concord was ordered in 1580, cancelled in 1588 (marked by a reintroduction of

1 See Kolb 1976.

2 Peter Petersen, the author of the still-influential treatise on Aristotelian philosophy in protestant Germany, claims that the University in Wittenberg remained Aristotelian even after Melanchthon's death. See Petersen 1921, p. 118. He draws on the history of the University in Wittenberg published by Friedensburg 1917. Although this dogmatic dispute is addressed in these publications, its influence on the events at the Faculty of Arts in 1670s and 1680s is not taken into consideration, unlike in a later publication written by Kathe 2002.

3 See a list of prints of Melanchthon's textbook *Liber de anima* in Schüling 1967, pp. 184–185.

Melanchthon's works), and reinstated in 1592.¹ However, Aristotelianism in Leipzig in the 1580s retained a considerably firmer position than in Wittenberg; one professor was supposed to focus on the interpretation of Aristotelian logic, another on Aristotelian physics, and yet another on Aristotelian ethics and politics.² The abandonment of Melanchthonianism and Melanchthonian Aristotelianism was completed at the turn of the 16th century when Melanchthon's textbooks in Leipzig and Wittenberg and in the Lutheran environment lost their importance and ceased being read.³

This historical introduction brings us to the question of the extent to which Melanchthonian Aristotelianism affected Jessenius' years as a student and his philosophical debut. If Jessenius' biography is put into the context of history pertaining to both universities and given what was previously stated about the consequences of the Formula of Concord, it becomes apparent that Johannes Jessenius studied at these institutions during a time when the influence of Melanchthonianism was suppressed and the teaching of Aristotelian philosophy (at least as far as the Wittenberg University was concerned) was reduced to only reading extracts from Aristotle's works. In Leipzig, lecturing on Aristotle's work was much more extensively supported

than in Wittenberg, but the restoration of Melanchthonianism did not occur before Jessenius' departure. The question of whether this historical and contextual frame of Jessenius' philosophical debut – the Leipzig dissertation on the immortality of the human soul – is correctly defined, is the subject of a following historical-philosophical analysis of this work.

— 2 MELANCHTHON AND THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

As is well-documented, Philipp Melanchthon, despite Luther's rejection of Aristotle's teachings, made Aristotelianism the cornerstone of Lutheran doctrine regarding the human soul. Unlike at Catholic universities, this doctrine remained fully subordinated to the orthodoxy. Melanchthon thus viewed it as philosophy's task to prove that the soul is able to achieve knowledge of God, justify its immortality and even the resurrection of the dead.⁴ And yet, did Melanchthon's proof of the immortality of the human soul really draw on the work of Aristotle, a thinker who, as Luther believed, declared that the soul was mortal?

Melanchthon's works offer several arguments in favour of the immortality of the soul found primarily in his treatise *On the Soul*.⁵ Although

1 Helbig 1953, pp. 131–133. See Vartenberg 1984, p. 69. This work also provides a basis for the publication by Kraus 2003, pp. 60–65.

2 See Kathe 2002, pp. 135–136.

3 See Sparn 2001, p. 502.

4 See Kessler 1988, pp. 516–517.

5 Melanchthon dedicated a separate chapter in *Liber de anima*, in: *Corpus reformatorum* (Melanchthon 1846, pp.172–178), to the issue of immortality of the soul. Melanchthon first touches upon the problem in the preamble to his edition of the astronomy textbook

Melanchthon adopts the foundations of the doctrine on human reason from Aristotle's thought as well as from metaphysics, he also rejects the connection between anthropology and the ontological background refusing, for example, to relate cognitive processes to the metaphysical dialectic binary pair of "potentiality" and "actuality" which gave rise to the distinction between active and passive intellect in the Aristotelian tradition. Hence, the immortality of the human soul needs to be based on different grounds – primarily in the realm of theology and referring to the testimony of the Holy Bible.

Later on, however, space was also given to philosophical arguments based on the belief that the soul is of a heavenly nature which reasoned that since it is not composed of elements, it cannot be mortal. Platonic exemplarism (the relation of a pattern and an image) provides a backdrop to Melanchthon's individual arguments advocating the immortality of the human soul. Melanchthon, the reformer, combines them with his teachings on natural knowledge (*notitiae naturales*) available to humans (knowledge of God, numbers, and the distinction between good and bad) which, however, cannot

derive from the world of elements, but is innate to the human soul through the eternal art of the Divine Architect.

Notitiae naturales (natural knowledge) represents the noblest part of the human soul, means of cognition, and provides a basis for true knowledge. Its presence in the human soul attests to the fact that the soul itself is not affiliated with the elemental world and that – being of a heavenly nature – it is immortal. The following two arguments pertain to the sphere of ethics.

First, Melanchthon reproduces Cicero's justification of immortality which draws on the fact that there are many people who suffer under despotic tyrants who remain unpunished; therefore a trial must follow to separate the good from the evil. Second, he refers to Xenophon's description of a criminal's torment as coming as a consequence of his evil deed. This, however, assumes a distinction between the just and the unjust which cannot be arbitrary, but is rooted in the Divine. This is where the concept of natural knowledge again comes into play. It may therefore be concluded that Melanchthon's argument in favour of the immortality of the human soul reveals its theological underpinnings and does not bear resemblance to Aristotelian solutions to the problem, instead featuring more Platonist elements and reflecting the humanist tradition of working with ancient literary texts.

by Johannes de Sacrobosco *Liber de sphaera*, where he refers to the tradition of Platonist exemplarism and the concept of man as a microcosm, i.e. the image of macrocosm. In his *De anima*, he first develops his anthropological theories in which this exemplarism is enshrined. Melanchthon's position was thoroughly analysed by Günter Frank, see Frank 1993, pp. 354–356.

3 JESSENIUS ON THE IMMORTALITY

At this point, it is finally possible to determine to what extent Jessenius' Leipzig dissertation is in accord with what has been mentioned already. Jessenius dates his dissertation to the year 1587 yet it was not published until 1618 as an appendix to the consolatory speech entitled *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* (*On the Resurrection of the Dead*) delivered by the Sopron pastor Stephan Fuchsjäger over the grave of Jessenius' wife Marie Felsa in May of 1612.¹

In the opening of his dissertation Jessenius, among other things, praised man as a creation that is particularly worthy of admiration: "Man is a great miracle, a sheer wonder of nature, an animal endowed with inventiveness and intellect over which there is no creation more divine in the universe;

he is even equal to God or only a little less than angels."² In doing this, the tradition of Renaissance Platonism was referenced, basically paraphrasing the opening sections of the famous speech by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*.³ Similarly to Pico, who was strongly influenced by the dialogue *Asclepius* included in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Jessenius also followed up on this aspect of Renaissance philosophy by claiming that the hymn to man as a being rising above the heavens springs out when exploring human mind and studying hidden mysteries.

The allusion to Renaissance Hermetism represents a rhetorical introduction to the dissertation and is intended to point to the author's erudition and knowledge of relevant literature rather than to create the material foundation for the argument itself. Jessenius argued that if we want to prove the immortality of the human soul, we first must approve of the assertion that the "rational soul is not an accidental form, as in the case of what is induced from the potency of the matter and what comes from the body, but it is a substantial form that exists by itself and possesses absolute existence".⁴ According to Jessenius, this thesis needs to be supported by arguments. This statement reveals a dependency on the Aristotelian-

1 Jessenius 1518, *De resurrectione mortuorum absolutissima Concio...unaque Dissertatio: Quod Animae humanae immortales sint, adnexa*. Pragae 1518. The title on the title page of the dissertation differs from the one on the frontispiece, i.e.: *De animae immortalitate dissertatio*. Jessenius translated the original German speech into Latin and, along with the dissertation from Leipzig, added his own university speech delivered in Wittenberg in 1598 on Easter Sunday, i.e. again addressing the topic of the resurrection of the dead. Jessenius dedicated the whole print to the Hungarian politician Peter Révai (Rewa), the administrator of the Turiec district whom he met in 1608 (see Polišenský 1965, p. 37). The print is deposited in the Roudnice collections of the Lobkowitz Library in Nelahozeves under the registration mark LK IV Gf. 32, suppl. 1. The author hereby extends his thanks to the owners of the Lobkowitz collections and their curators for kindly allowing the study of this work.

2 Jessenius 1518, *De animae immortalitate dissertatio*, F4r.

3 Pico della Mirandola 2005, p. 53: "A great miracle, *Asclepius*, is man".

4 J. Jessenius 1518, *De animae immortalitate dissertatio*, F5r.

Scholastic ontology, thus stemming from anthropology, rejected by Melanchthon.

Beginning with this statement, Jessenius' treatise follows the line of thought which searches for the solution to the problem of the immortality of the human soul in the Aristotelian tradition. At the same time, Jessenius explicitly dissociates himself from the Alexandrian interpretation of the relationship of the human soul and the body as described by Johannes Buridan which stated that the soul is *forma educta de potentia materiae* – a form extracted from the potency of the matter.¹ By defining the problem and conceiving the soul as the substantial form of the body, he suggested that his solution would be in line with Thomism.

And indeed, Jessenius reiterated arguments typical for the Thomist tradition. He started with the syllogism: Each form that manifests activities independent of the body possesses being in itself; the human soul demonstrates such activities – thus possessing being in itself. For Pietro Pomponazzi and in terms of the dispute of whether it is possible to discuss the immortality of the human soul from the Aristotelian perspective, the key to the interpretation lies in analysing whether the human soul is capable of activities independent of the body.

Jessenius, too, immediately proceeded to addressing this issue. He referred to Aristotle, according to whom sensory cognition could not exist independent of the body however he added that intellectual activity (*intellectus*) does not require a body, unlike sensory cognition which relies on external senses. As each form that does not require a body to conduct its activities is independent of the body, this then applies to the rational soul. Jessenius claimed that sensory perception also works with singular objects whereas intellect deals with general terms so that it disregards all particulars. This implies that intellect is not bound to bodily organs in its activities. Moreover, any ability that relies on the body has a somehow limited subject of its cognition. However, this does not apply to the rational soul which may take on the form of anything, thus being elevated above all bodily nature, which it disregards. The rational soul is thus able to know itself as well as the first principles of cognition, which cannot be negated, consequently knowing the spiritual substances which are immortal and eternal, and eventually even God himself.

Nevertheless, Aristotle's followers may not find this conclusion convincing since, as Jessenius continues, Aristotle himself said that rational cognition relies on sensory images – phantasmata – and the imagination (*phantasia*), as an ability to create phantasmata, has to work with sensory material. This would imply that reason is dependent

1 The terminology (*eductio formarum*) used by Jan Buridan to introduce the position of Alexander of Aphrodisias was most presumably loaned from the Latin Averroist tradition, see Pluta 2001, p. 154.

on bodily organs. Jessenius replied to this Aristotelian objection using Aristotle's own words: "In this life, intellect requires imagination not as an organ but as an object. However this need does not, in any way, obtrude the subsistence of the intellect."¹ The distinction between the dependency of reason held to the body as the subject (i.e. the organ that performs the activity) and as the object itself (i.e. the objects of sensory perception which arise in relation to the activity of bodily organs) again comes from Buridan's tradition and was fully employed by Pietro Pomponazzi in his treatise forming his pivotal argument.²

The passage above reflects the dispute regarding Pomponazzi's interpretation of the Aristotelian approach towards the immortality of the soul. This finding is somewhat surprising, since Pomponazzi's theories were not usually considered well-received in Lutheran Germany.³ However, Jessenius did not arrive at the same conclusion as Pomponazzi. Pomponazzi first used the distinction between the dependence on the subject and the dependence on the object as part of his critique of Averroist monopsychism – the reliance of the intellect on the body as an object

proves that the intellect cannot be considered an independent entity, contrary to Averroist theories. Yet he immediately took this distinction as evidence supporting the justifiability of Alexander's interpretation of Aristotle's work: human reason cannot operate without sensory ideas, thus being mortal in absolute terms.⁴

If, according to Jessenius, the above-specified distinction proves the immortality of the human soul, the author should substantiate his conclusion. Nevertheless, Jessenius did not delve deeper into the distinction between the dependence on the body as the subject and as an object, but he added an entirely different differentiation in which he refers to Apostle Paul. A difference must be made between the soul (*anima*) and the spirit (*spiritus*), although both appear to be one. The soul was addressed to the extent to which it animates the body and spirit; on the other hand, it was mentioned as transcending the laws of nature; knowing itself and the substances separated from bodies; and being able to achieve perfect knowledge. At this moment, Jessenius abandoned the existing Aristotelian-Thomist interpretation and turned to anthropology typical for Melanchthon. While Aristotle viewed the soul in line with hylomorphism as the perfection of organic bodies, or *entelecheia*, Melanchthon employed Cicero's term *endelecheia*, meaning a life principle and a principle of motion, which followed the Platonic

1 Jessenius 1518, F8v.

2 Pomponazzi adopted this distinction from the late-medieval nominalist, Marsilius of Inghen, see Pluta 2000.

3 Pomponazzi was a known figure in the Calvinist regions of Germany where his works were published (the first edition of his collected works was published in Basel in 1567), but where he was also much criticised, see Wollgast 1993, p. 142.

4 Pomponazzi 1990, p. 24.

concept against which Aristotle was opposed.¹

After this brief excursion to Melanchthon's theories, Jessenius' dissertation did not continue to follow this style of reasoning, but added new arguments that were in stark contrast to both Melanchthon's philosophical thinking and the previous Lutheran tradition of defining the competences of philosophy and theology. Jessenius mentioned Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle claimed that all humans naturally strived for well-being or happiness and continued that man is thus infused with the desire for the real good which is his ultimate goal. Happiness, as referred to by Aristotle, has the character of the ultimate human goal and since man is a rational being his goal has to be the highest and noblest of goals, making it a perfect and eternal goal. Jessenius concluded his argument by applying the principle typical of Ficino's reasoning on the immortality of the human soul: during his earthly life, man is unable to achieve perfect happiness; if he was a mortal being, his goal would have never been fulfilled and he would have been deprived of the honour he is entitled to.²

This argumentation method,

1 To a certain extent, this distinction between the soul and the spirit served as a substitute of the traditional Aristotelian distinction between the passive and active intellect and allowed Melanchthon to use the Averroist theory of superindividual intellect (as he himself viewed it) in his own teachings on the immortality of the human soul. See Frank 1993, p. 359; Frank 1996, p. 322.

2 Jessenius 1518, G4r–v.

which, to a certain extent, employs Aristotelian ethics complemented by Platonic moments, was not an inherent feature of Lutheranism or Melanchthon's philosophy whose ethics avoided the issue of human happiness and on contrary considered it a subject of theology. Therefore, Lutheranism was also alien to Ficino's approach to the immortality of the human soul as employed by Jessenius.

Nevertheless, Jessenius' other arguments go back to purely Aristotelian-Thomist reasoning. He reiterated that in its activities, the human soul is not bound to the body as the subject; it is a form of the body and cannot cease to exist, neither by itself, nor accidentally, nor through the perishing of the body, as documented by an extensive list of causes which induce death and do not apply to the human soul. Jessenius moves even further away from Melanchthon's position when considering the immortality of the soul or the ability of the spirit to achieve perfect knowledge as the foundation of metaphysics. Metaphysics is then characterised as a discipline dealing with the form separated from the body and as a doctrine that does not proceed from effects to causes, but stems from an initial insight. In his words, metaphysics becomes a discipline that greatly outstrips all other disciplines.³

This line of reasoning is made entirely clear in the last part of the dissertation where Jessenius

3 Jessenius 1518, G3r.

enumerated thinkers who, in opposition to Epicurus, advocated the immortality of the soul. Greatest attention was, again, paid to Aristotle, who, as Jessenius believed, adopted the theories on immortality from Plato's *Phaedo*, but who was misunderstood and misinterpreted by Gregory of Nyssa. Although Gregory believed that Aristotle rejected the theory of immortality, he did not realise that the Philosopher distinguished between two types of forms. The forms which perform their activities through matter do not exist by themselves, and Aristotle did not call them beings, but "forms of being".

It is also necessary to discuss forms, the activity of which stems from themselves without being limited to matter. These forms do not owe their existence to the composition of the form and the matter; on the contrary, this composition possesses its existence through them. Hence, these forms do not cease to exist together with the cessation of the compound, but they are separate and immortal, which is also the case of man or the human soul.¹ Jessenius again emphasised that it is within the realm of metaphysics that these immortal forms are addressed as separate and not bound to matter, whereas the subject of physics are forms in their ability to shape the matter (body).

1 Jessenius 1518, G6r. This very reasoning was primarily analysed by Stanislav Sousedík, who consequently considers Jessenius' dissertation to be "conceived in the Thomist spirit". See Sousedík 1997, pp. 86–87 (Cf. Sousedík 2009, p. 72).

Hence, Jessenius' dissertation on the immortality of the soul is in no case unconditionally dependent on Melanchthon's Aristotelianism, a doctrine that refused metaphysical theories. In addition, the dissertation cannot be considered a purely Thomist work. It is rather a sum of arguments in support of the immortality of the human soul collected from various strands of philosophical thought in the Renaissance period, although the Aristotelian-Thomist method of reasoning is most-frequently represented. Aside from this argumentation method, the dissertation also employs Platonic reasoning reminiscent of the theories of Marsilio Ficino (the author is also well-familiar with Hermetism and the issues related to Pomponazzi, partly including some elements of Melanchthon's Aristotelianism, albeit as a mere relic of this philosophical tradition, without further elaborating thereon).

— 4 HYPOTHESIS ON JESSENIUS' SOURCES

The eclectic character of the entire work raises several questions. The absence of the basic principles of Melanchthon's philosophy (except for the above-provided hints) is not surprising when taking into consideration the historical context in which the dissertation was written. After all, Melanchthonianism at the universities in Wittenberg and Leipzig was suppressed during Jessenius' studies. However, the source of Jessenius' knowledge regarding the

Aristotelian-Thomist solution of the problem remains unclear. He presumably did not draw directly on Pomponazzi's treatise, better known in Calvinist circles than in Lutheran ones. The hypothesis that Jessenius drew on the works of the Italian Dominican Chrystostomus Javelli (1470–1538) has also proven wrong. Javelli is considered to be a thinker who alleviated the tensions between the conflicting parties in the Pomponazzi affair when he tried to deduce that Pomponazzi's position in no way threatened the Christian faith; however, at the same time, he reproduced Thomist philosophical arguments in the belief that St. Thomas Aquinas (not Aristotle) constructed a valid proof for the immortality of the human soul.¹ His works were well received in the Protestant environment. However, Jessenius' dissertation does not contain any sections that would be in clear agreement therewith.

Not even the potential continuation of Javelli's theories could explain why Jessenius attributed such a sovereign status to metaphysics, a philosophical discipline that was rejected in the Lutheran environment and that was not taught at Lutheran universities. Protestant metaphysics did not begin to develop until the end of the 16th century in conjunction with Jesuit metaphysics as a response to the Ramist refusal of Aristotle. Although Nicolaus Taurellus (1547–1606), the first representative of Lutheran metaphysics, published his treatise

in which he advocated philosophy as a metaphysical method (*Philosophiae Triumphus*) as early as in 1573, it was published in Basel, and his following works on metaphysics were not written until the 1590s while he was serving as a lecturer at the University of Altdorf.² At the same time and approximately ten years after Jessenius' dissertation was presumably written, the first harbingers of Protestant scholastic metaphysics appeared at the University of Wittenberg. Professor of Logic, Daniel Cramer (1568–1637), published his introduction to Aristotle's metaphysics (*Isagoge in Metaphysicam Aristotelis*, Hanau 1594), which had the form of a humanist textbook, that is a systematic collection of Aristotle's principal ideas.³ Thereafter, his *Isagoge* was shortly replaced with textbooks of Jacob Martini (1570–1649), written at the beginning of the 17th century, which characterised metaphysics as a discipline dealing with things.⁴

1 See Gilson 1963, pp. 50–56.

2 Leinsle 1985, pp. 147–165. In 1580 Taurellus was appointed as a professor at the University in Altdorf. Unlike in Wittenberg or in Leipzig, the Formula of Concord did not apply in Altdorf.

3 See Leinsle 1985, pp. 165–175. Cramer was a professor in Wittenberg until 1595.

4 Jacobus Martini was a student of D. Cramer and Cornelius Martini (1567–1621), a professor in Helmsted who tried to give a systematic structure to metaphysics which he managed in a way that influenced Protestant metaphysics throughout the entire following century. See Leinsle 1985, pp. 206–239. Lutheran metaphysics differs from Calvinist metaphysics, emerging in the same period, which inclined to sharply differentiate science of God from the science of beings. See Lohr 1993, pp. 142–143; Lohr

Jessenius' dissertation praising metaphysics and describing its subject does not fit too well within this historical context. It is therefore necessary to revise either the history of the penetration of the influences of metaphysics in the Protestant environment or the date when Jessenius' work was allegedly produced. More facts supporting the latter solution can be found. As has been mentioned, Jessenius did not publish his second treatise on the immortality of the human soul until 1618. Hence it cannot be ruled out that the text was later complemented and reworked, assuming that he had drawn from the work which he produced during his studies in Leipzig. And indeed, it seems that in terms of their content, at least some parts of the dissertation rely on the philosophical theories which Jessenius was not familiar with until the 1590s, meaning his studies in Padua.

In the first place, it is probable that Jessenius' reference to hermetic writings is of a later date. Although both the dialogue *Asclepius* and the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola were known in Lutheran Germany, they were rather marginalised in academic circles, being especially treated as works unworthy of criticism. Jessenius acquired his edition of hermetic texts on his journey from Italy to Wroclaw in 1592 and he did not hesitate to use them as a source. And even if this reference was intended as a paraphrase of the

introductory part of the speech the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* and not of the dialogue of *Asclepius*, it is more likely that – rather than the Lutheran tradition – Jessenius followed in the style of the teachings his teacher in Padua, Francesco Piccolomini, whose philosophy was substantially influenced by Pico's theories.¹

Even the Aristotelian-Thomist solution for the issue of the immortality of the human soul was more heavily discussed in northern Italian universities than in Lutheran universities while the entire issue, as has been shown, was strictly separated from the theological discourse and the thinkers distinguished between the interpretation of Aristotle and the solution itself. Another example of this approach can be found in the work of another of Jessenius' teachers in Padua named Cesar Cremonini (1550–1631). The writings of this Italian thinker which address the issue of the immortality of the human soul were not produced until the 1620s; however, while the first one does date back to 1615, it is remarkable to note that it already features most of the arguments employed by Jessenius. These include both arguments based on the nature of the intellect (that is to say that intellect abstracts from the particulars: it sees immaterial beings, it is aware of itself and its activities, and that it is able to acquire knowledge about everything) and arguments based on the natural desire of the human soul (that is to say that the soul desires happiness,

1999, pp. 289–295.

1 See Plastina 2002, p. 217.

ultimate good, and God and that these desires would not be achieved if the soul were not, indeed, immortal).

Accordingly, Cremonini also states that in this life, the human soul is dependent on sensory ideas, not in terms of the cognising subject, but in terms of the object. In itself, however, it is subsistent.¹ Indeed, Jessenius could hardly draw on Cremonini's manuscripts – although these works produced by Piccolomini's student and successor do address the issue of the immortality of the human soul which was a subject for discussion, as well as Aristotelian interpretations, during Jessenius' time spent studying in Padua.

For that matter, Piccolomini's writings do not discuss this topic as systematically as Cremonini's and yet it was Piccolomini who explicitly restored Ficino's rationale regarding the immortality of the human soul by referring to Plato and by making assertions that the current human status does not allow achievement of the highest good in a perfect, but only in an imperfect way.² Piccolomini also claims that Aristotle advocated the immortality of the human soul, but in view of the fact that intellect is immortal, his contemplations are beyond the limits of natural philosophy and pertain to the field of

metaphysics.³ Jessenius might even have based his "Leipzig dissertation" on Piccolomini's patterns or he may have heard their systematic presentation in Padua during Piccolomini's explication of Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul*. Even an understanding of metaphysics and the definition of its limits in relation to natural philosophy, as presented in Jessenius' essay *On the Immortality of the Human Soul*, is basically identical with the content of his dissertation in Padua titled *On Human and Divine Philosophy* from 1591 which was written under the influence of the Aristotelianism practiced in Padua.

It seems more than probable that Jessenius drew from the teachings of his teachers in Padua when writing his treatise on the immortality of the human soul; and also that the major part of his work was produced later than stated. Before delving further into Jessenius' studies in Padua and Aristotelianism as practiced in Padua, let us explore why Jessenius dates this work to 1586 and why he subtitles it the "Leipzig Dissertation".

1 An analysis of Cremonini's manuscripts was performed by Kennedy 1980.

2 Piccolomini refers to Plato's dialogue, *Epinomis*973c. See Piccolomini 1596, p. 425. However the first edition of this work is dated as early as to 1583. See Kraye 1988, p. 351.

3 This opinion is expressed by Piccolomini in his treatise which he published under the pseudonym *Petrus Duodus* 1575, p. 173. See Kessler 1988, p. 527.

— 5 JESSENIUS' LEIPZIG DISSERTATION

The word “dissertation” causes confusion. The publication of dissertation theses in the 16th century in German-speaking areas was entirely different from today’s practice. Most notably, the author of the dissertation was not the student himself, but the professor who chaired the testing committee. The students’ role was reduced to publicly defending their professors’ theses and to publishing these defences at their own expense. Given the fact that a doctoral degree was granted subject to the publication of a dissertation thesis, this practice allowed professors to present their work to an expert public free of cost. Students who defended and published their theses could contribute thereto, for example, by searching for citations or, in some cases, through doing more extensive research. On rare occasions students – but only the most talented – could write the dissertation texts themselves. Given these facts it remains very difficult, if not impossible, for historians to determine the extent to which students contributed to the dissertation works that they actually defended.¹

In fact, in the introduction to his Leipzig dissertation, Jessenius addressed the chairman without naming a particular professor. Moreover, none of the available sources mention his actual graduation from the University of Leipzig; therefore, the 30-year delay in publication of the

Leipzig dissertation was not motivated by the aim to obtain a doctoral degree (which he applied for based on his graduation from the University of Padua), but by his intention to merely provide a theoretical background for the speech on the resurrection of the dead. Even if he did present his dissertation thesis on this topic on the aforementioned date, he was not obliged to include the name of the chairman. He could also add knowledge obtained in the later period. The fact that he did not include any sources or inspiration of his thoughts, may not at all be seen as surprising. Jessenius does not do so in almost any of his works and it is fully in line with the practices of the time, where the most important thing was the content of the work, regardless of sources, unless the author intends to argue therewith.

There is also the possibility that Jessenius did not produce the whole treatise on the immortality of the soul until the time of its publication, therefore not drawing on any corresponding Leipzig dissertation. In that case, the fact that the dissertation was presented in Leipzig would have had a strictly political meaning the purpose of which was to confirm Jessenius’ (who at the time was the rector of Prague University and was active as a politician representing the Czech estates against the Habsburgs) adherence to Lutheranism which was certainly a significant fact at the end of 1618.² Unfortunately, this is

1 Wollgast 1999, pp. 20–22.

2 The whole interpretation is made even more complicated by the fact that the print and Jessenius’ preamble are

a mere speculation which cannot be supported by any relevant documents. If this is the case, we have to rely on Jessenius' statement made in his Leipzig dissertation as well as the conclusions of our analysis implying that this text was connected to his studies in Padua and were later reworked and amended. —

dated December 1618. While Friedel Pick considers Jessenius to be the publisher of the print (see Pick 1926, p. 182), Josef Polišenský states that at that time Jessenius was still imprisoned in Vienna which implies that the book was published by an unknown publisher "so that Jessenius is not left forgotten", see Polišenský 1965, p. 64. If Polišenský's chronology is correct, it must be assumed that Jessenius either used the translation of the eulogy (originally delivered in German) and other texts prepared for publishing earlier and he entrusted them to an unknown person or antedated the edition including the preamble.

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