

TWO 16TH CENTURY COIMBRA COMMENTARIES ON *DE ANIMA*: PEDRO DA FONSECA (ATTR.) AND CRISTÓVÃO GIL. ON THE SOUL AND ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

DOS COMENTARIOS DE COIMBRA DEL SIGLO XVI SOBRE EL *DE ANIMA*: PEDRO DA FONSECA (ATTR.) Y CRISTÓVÃO GIL. SOBRE EL ALMA Y SOBRE LA INMORTALIDAD DEL ALMA

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the questions on the science and the immortality of the soul in two 16th-century commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima* which subsist in manuscript form from the teaching of philosophy in Coimbra. The positions of the two commentators – Pedro da Fonseca (attr.) and Cristóvão Gil – are totally opposed in relation to both the commentary tradition on Aristotle's *De anima* they follow and the theories on the soul they assume. Focusing on less-known sources, this study brings to light some innovative aspects of the teaching of philosophy in Coimbra in the 16th century, aiming at contributing to a better understanding of both the transformations of Aristotelianism at the time and the intellectual context in which these transformations were produced.

Keywords

Commentaries on *De anima*; Aristotle; Petrus Fonsecae; Christophorus Gilli; Science of the Soul; Immortality of the Soul

Resumen

Este artículo analiza las cuestiones sobre la ciencia del alma y sobre la inmortalidad del alma en dos comentarios del siglo XVI al *De anima* de Aristóteles que subsisten en manuscritos sobre la enseñanza de la filosofía en Coimbra. Las posiciones de los dos comentaristas aquí analizados – Pedro da Fonseca (attr.) y Cristóvão Gil – son totalmente opuestas, tanto en lo que respecta a la tradición de los comentarios al *De anima* de Aristóteles que siguen como a las teorías sobre el alma que asumen. Centrándose en fuentes poco conocidas, este estudio saca a la luz algunos aspectos novedosos sobre la

enseñanza de la filosofía en Coimbra en el siglo XVI, con el objetivo de contribuir a comprender mejor las transformaciones del aristotelismo en esta época y el contexto intelectual en el que se produjeron.

Palabras clave

Comentarios al *De anima*; Aristoteles; Petrus Fonsecae; Christophorus Gilli; Ciencia del alma; Inmortalidad del alma

1. 16th-century Aristotelianism and the rules for the teaching of philosophy

Most of the commentaries on Aristotle that were written for the teaching of philosophy in Coimbra in the 16th century remain unexplored and in manuscript form.¹ Aristotle's *De anima* was one of the works included in the philosophy curriculum. However, the ecclesiastical authorities were particularly attentive to the theories explained in the commentaries on *De anima*, because some of them shared common ground with theological problems. In fact, important matters concerning the nature of the human soul were discussed while explaining *De anima*: for example, the question of whether the soul is of natural origin or originates from a transcendental principle, extrinsic to the body; the proposition that the soul is the substantial form of the body; and the possibility of rationally demonstrating the immortality of the soul. Moreover, by the early 16th century, some of these issues had become subject of heated controversies, many of them originating precisely in the context of the teaching of *De anima*. At the core of these controversies lay the fact that some philosophers understood Aristotle's statements on the human soul to be limited to the realm of the physical world. Thus, they understood the philosophy of Aristotle as effectively constraining the understanding of theological truths. Pietro Pomponazzi is the philosopher who stood at the centre of this polemic. Some scholars have highlighted three distinct events occurring during the 15th and 16th centuries, each of which had an impact on the Aristotelian commentary tradition: the reevaluation of ancient

¹ This publication is funded with National Funds through the FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia / Foundation for Science and Technology in the framework of the Tematic Line Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy - Research Group Aristotelica Portugalensia, Institute of Philosophy, U&D unit with the reference UIDB/00502/2020. The main catalogues containing 16th-century Aristotelian commentaries are as follows: Charles Lohr, *Latin Aristotle Commentaries: Renaissance Authors* (Florence: Olschki, 1988); Friedrich Stegmüller, *Filosofia e teologia nas universidades portuguesas de Coimbra e Évora no século XVI* (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1959); Maria Amélia Machado Santos, *Manuscritos de filosofia do século XVI existentes em Lisboa*. Boletim da Biblioteca da Universidade de Coimbra, vol. 20 (Coimbra: Biblioteca da Universidade, 1951).

commentaries, such as those of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Simplicius; the influence Averroism had mainly in some Italian universities; the emergence of the aforementioned controversy regarding the immortality of the soul.²

Also relevant to the transfer of knowledge concerning Aristotelianism was the foundation of the Society of Jesus in 1534. Although its founder had not initially considered the teaching mission among the main tasks to be performed by the Society, this activity predominated from the beginning.³ Because of the close connection between the teaching of philosophy and the teaching of theology, the Jesuits were immediately concerned with regulating the programs and contents of the philosophy courses. The first normative documents were written while the founder was still alive and provided general instructions for the teaching of philosophy.⁴ In broad terms, it was determined that, for the philosophy course, the Jesuits should teach Aristotle, while for the theology course, the doctrines of Thomas Aquinas should be taught. However, by the 16th century, the commentary tradition on Aristotle and Aquinas was both voluminous and dissimilar. Therefore, which doctrines of Aristotle and Thomas should be taught? To resolve this question, along with many other difficulties, the Jesuits found it necessary to draw up an internal document that would dictate the norms for teaching within the Colleges of the Society.⁵ The Jesuits discussed the content

² The main intellectual movements and doctrinal influences transforming Aristotelianism were described by Craig Martin, *Subverting Aristotle* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014). On the same topic but particularly focused on theories on the human soul developed throughout the 16th century, see Leen Spruit, “Psychology”, in *A Companion to the Spanish Scholastics*, edited by H. E. Braun, E. De Bom and P. Astorri (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 252-274, and Sander de Boer, “The (Human) Soul”, in *The Routledge Companion to the Sixteenth Century*, edited by H. Lagerlund and B. Hill (New York: Routledge, 2017), 411-435. For the role of the *Cursus Conimbricensis* in consolidating and expanding Aristotelianism see M. Santiago de Carvalho, *O Curso Aristotélico Jesuíta Conimbricense* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2018). For the particular case of the *Cursus Conimbricensis*’s Commentary on Aristotle’s *De anima*, see M. Santiago de Carvalho, *Psicologia e ética no Curso Jesuíta Conimbricense* (Lisboa: Colibri, 2010).

³ The role of the Jesuits in education and its relevance in Europe has been highlighted by Paul Grendler, *Jesuit Schools and Universities in Europe 1548-1773* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019).

⁴ As P. Grendler writes, “in late 1553 and early 1554, Ignatius, with the help of Polanco, wrote the section on universities in the Constitutions, which the Society adopted as binding in 1558. However, Ignatius offered only brief and general guidance on philosophy [...]”. In 1558, guidance was added that “in logic, natural and moral philosophy, and metaphysics, the doctrine of Aristotle should be followed, as also in the other liberal arts”. See P. Grendler, “Philosophy in Jesuits Schools and Universities”, in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, edited by C. Casalini (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 16.

⁵ See Christopher Sander, “*Uniformitas et soliditas doctrinae*: History, Topics, and Impact of Jesuit Censorship in Philosophy (1550-99)”, in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, edited by C. Casalini (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 55-53. Sander shows that control over the contents to be taught did exist and that in some moments it reached conflicting proportions. However, this scholar states that despite the existence of teaching guidelines and sanctions to be applied to those who ignored them, the Society of Jesus never came to elaborate an official doctrine to be uniformly established and taught in all Colleges.

of this document – the so-called *Ratio studiorum* – for many years. From the first documents concerned with the teaching of philosophy until the publication of this official document in 1599, the guidance oscillates between strictness and flexibility, with the latter allowing a certain freedom of opinion. The rules for the teaching of philosophy contained in the final version of the *Ratio studiorum* can be understood in this general spirit: Do not teach doctrines incompatible with the truths of faith, and follow the directives of the ecclesiastical superiors and of the pope for the teaching of philosophy.⁶

To demonstrate the importance of manuscript sources for better understanding the transformations of Aristotelianism, we take as case studies two manuscript commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima* which subsist from the teaching of philosophy in Coimbra in the 16th century. Our analysis will focus on two key issues of that time: the science of the soul and the immortality of the soul. These two commentaries were chosen based on the dates they were written and on their authors. The first commentary was begun in 1559 and finished in 1560. It thus belongs within the timespan of the first philosophy courses taught in Coimbra, after the Jesuits took over the administration of the College of Arts. Stegmüller attributed the authorship of Books I and II to Pedro da Fonseca but doubted that Book III was written by him.⁷ The second commentary is dated 1591 and belongs to the Jesuit Cristóvão Gil.⁸ It was thus written much later, at a date very close to the beginning of the publication of the *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis Societas Iesu* (1592).⁹

The reason for analysing the answers these two commentators provide on the questions about the soul is to illuminate the sharp contrast between their interpretations of Aristotle. They deal very differently with both the commentary tradition and the ecclesiastical norms for the teaching of philosophy mentioned before.

⁶ Sander, “*Uniformitas et soliditas*”, 39-41.

⁷ Anonymous, *In Primum Aristotelis de Anima Scholia*, MS 2399 (Coimbra: Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, 1559-1560), fol. 1^r-4^v. Here we analyze only the *Scholia*, but the commentary covers the three books of Aristotle's *De anima* (fol. 1^r-82^r). Description of the manuscript and link to the digitized public version can be found here: https://ifilosofia.up.pt/proj/arm/bguc_2399_pedro_da_fonseca_atrib (accessed November 2021). Stegmüller, *Filosofia e teologia*, 65, attributes Books I and II to Petrus Fonsecae, but he considers it doubtful that Book III is of his authorship. Lohr, *Latin Aristotle Commentaries*, 151, follows Stegmüller. Hereafter Petrus Fonsecae will be referred to as Pedro da Fonseca / Fonseca.

⁸ Christophorus Gilli, *Commentarii in libros de anima Aristotelis*, MS 2518 (Lisboa: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, 1591) fol. 104^r-176^r. Description of the manuscript and link to the digitized public version can be found here: https://ifilosofia.up.pt/proj/arm/bnp_2518_cristovao_gil (accessed November 2021). Hereafter, Christophorus Gilli will be referred to as Cristóvão Gil/ Gil

⁹ For a report of the dates and places of edition of the various volumes of the *Cursus Conimbricensis*, see Cristiano Casalini, *Aristotle in Coimbra. The Cursus Conimbricensis and the Education at the College of Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 176.

2. A case study – Fonseca (attr.) and Gil on Aristotle’s *De anima*

2.1 The science of the soul

Aristotle begins his treatise on the soul by praising the superiority and nobility of this science.¹⁰ But this *captatio benevolentiae* is followed by the truth of the facts: this science is fraught with the greatest difficulties.¹¹ The first difficulty consists in knowing exactly what kind of being the soul is.¹² This difficulty must be overcome to identify what the object of this science is. Concerning the nature of the soul, Aristotle begins from a trivial belief: The soul is in some way a first principle of living beings.¹³ But is it a single principle, for a single animal, so that there is only one soul with various parts and functionalities? And if it has parts, which of these parts is distinct in nature?¹⁴

Another group of particularly difficult questions raised by Aristotle concerns the affections of the soul. Are all its affections common to the embodied soul? In most cases, all the affections seem to belong to the vital principle of the living being, such as being angry or confident or competitive. The power of reasoning, however, might possibly be that part of the soul, specific and separate from the body, capable of performing non-bodily operations. But if reasoning is identical to imagination, or cannot be performed without imagination, it cannot take place without the body. Conversely, if it is possible to identify in the soul an affection that belongs to it in its own right and is not linked to imagination, then it will be possible to infer that the soul belongs to the kind of non-bodily subsistent things.¹⁵

At the beginning of his *De anima*, Aristotle establishes a connection between the definition of the soul and the science that will study it, and he mentions many difficulties that must be resolved before working on this investigation. He poses these questions as hypotheses – working questions – and opens the way to various interpretations. And indeed, various ways have been explored in the ancient and medieval traditions, both to answer these questions and to understand Aristotle’s thought on them.

As expected, the two 16th-century commentaries on *De anima* here taken as case studies discuss the questions posed by Aristotle at the beginning of his *De anima*. In the case of the commentary attributed to Fonseca, when commenting on *De anima*, I, 1, the author writes a relatively large *Scholium*. There, he discusses a set of questions that he understands as closely connected: the nature of the soul, the place of the science of the soul within the Aristotelian classification of sciences, and the immortality of the soul

¹⁰ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, I, 402a1-4, in *Aristotelis De Anima*, edited by W. D. Ross, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 1.

¹¹ See Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 402a9-10.

¹² See Aristotle, *On the Soul*, I, 402a23-24.

¹³ See Aristotle, *On the Soul*, I, 402b6-7.

¹⁴ See Aristotle, *On the Soul*, I, 1, 402b10-13.

¹⁵ See Aristotle, *On the Soul*, I, 403^a10-11.

and Aristotle's opinion about that subject. In contrast, Cristóvão Gil addresses these questions separately. His commentary on *De anima* I, 1 is very brief, and the remaining questions are analyzed when commenting on *De anima* III, 4. Let us first look at how these two commentators approach the questions about the science of the soul and its place in the classification of sciences, beginning by analysing Gil's position.

In his commentary on *De anima*, I, 1, Gil analyzes the problem of the object and order of the science of the soul. He identifies three main interpretations in the tradition of commentaries and groups them according to the authorities who have defended them. In the first group, Gil lists ancient Greek commentators such as Themistius, Simplicius and Philoponus, who claimed that this science belongs to mathematics, given the abstract and immaterial part of the soul. In a second group, he mentions Francesco Bragadeno, who claimed that the science of the soul belongs to metaphysics, because the core of the science of the soul is the study of the rational soul, which is separated from matter. Finally, in a third group, he mentions two Latin commentators, Albert the Great and Aquinas, who claimed that the science of the soul belongs partly to physics, because it deals with the formal principle of living things, and partly to metaphysics, because it deals with the intellectual soul. To take a position in this discussion, he states that some authors, e.g. Toledo, follow Aquinas and consider the object of this science to be the soul.¹⁶

Gil is well acquainted with Toledo's commentary on *De anima* and, as we shall see later, relies on his authority for such complex issues as the rational demonstration of the immortality of the soul. However, regarding the nature of the science of the soul, he states that instead of Toledo's position, he will follow the position of Paul of Venice, according to whom,

the subject *quod* of this science is the soul, insofar as it is in the animate body, and the subject *quo* is the soul, insofar as it is shown to have properties and affections which belong primarily to the animate body, and to the soul but only insofar as it is the root and the principal instrument through which they come together into the living being.¹⁷

¹⁶ On Toledo's philosophical and theological authority within the Society, see Anna Tropia, "Francisco de Toledo: Setting a Standard for Jesuit Philosophy", in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, edited by C. Casalini (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 251-269. See spec. 256-260 for Toledo's use of Aristotle and Aquinas, as well as for the way he deals with the rules of the Society concerning the teaching of philosophy.

¹⁷ Cristóvão Gil, *Commentarii in libros de anima Aristotelis*, fol. 104r: "Si vero quis petat sitne corpus animatum an ipsa anima huius tractationis rationis subjectum quamvis Toletus hoc libro quaestione 4 animam dicat esse subjectum, propterea quod sententiam citet D. Tho, Aegidius, Janduni et alii, dicem vero cum Paulo Veneto comentarium 3 subjectum quod est ad animam quantum esse corpus animatum, subjectum vero quo esse animam, siquidem proprietates et passiones quae hoc libro demonstrantur (...) ut quod conveniunt corpori animato, anima vero ut radici et instrumento principali quo mediante conveniunt viventii".

Going no further than fol. 104^r and a short paragraph in fol. 104^v, Gil's commentary on *De anima* I, 1 is much briefer than that found in the anonymous commentary. Gil merely summarizes the most common doctrines in the Peripatetic tradition about the object of study of the science of the soul and lists them according to their respective authorities. He then chooses the authorities he will follow, without further explanation.

In contrast to Gil's exposition on *De anima* I, 1, the analysis made by the anonymous author is quite extensive. He begins by attesting that there is a great controversy among Aristotle's commentators about whether the study of the soul belongs only to physics or extends to the entire soul.¹⁸ He then immediately takes a position in this controversy. He states that, because Aristotle in *De anima* deals with the soul only as a formal principle of the body that totally depends on it, the science of the soul falls entirely under the scope of physics: "It is evident, therefore, that the natural philosopher must not treat about every kind of soul; for it is not the whole soul that belongs to nature, but only a certain part of it, whether one or more".¹⁹ The anonymous author claims that, in *De anima*, Aristotle did not intend to examine all kinds of souls, nor did he want to study the soul in its relation to the intelligible. And even where Aristotle tackles the agent intellect, he does so only for the purpose of explaining how it relates to the possible intellect. In response to a plausible objection from someone who might argue that, in book III of *De anima*, "from chapter 2 onwards [Aristotle] deals with the intellect that belongs to the human soul", the anonymous author claims that it must be answered that the human mind [*mens*] is not the subject of Aristotle's *De anima*, since it is only discussed there *per accidens*.²⁰

Commenting on the crucial passage of *De anima* I, 1 [403b8], he states that, as Aristotle claims, "understanding [*intellegere*] is most of all similar to the soul. But if [understanding] is a kind of imagination or cannot be without imagination, then neither can it be without the body".²¹ Hence, the anonymous commentator takes this passage in a materialistic sense: Reasoning, love or hate, "are not affections of the intellect, but [affections] of what [the intellect] has by the fact that it has it".²²

¹⁸ Anonymous, *In Primum Aristotelis de Anima Scholia*, BGUC 2399, fol. 2^r: "Sed an ista disputatio de anima sit naturalis, et utrum ad omnem animam pertineat, magna est apud interpretes controversia".

¹⁹ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 2^v: "Perspicuum ergo est non ipsum de omni anima disserendum naturali philosopho: nec enim omnis anima est naturalis sed quaedam pars ipsius aut una aut plures".

²⁰ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^r: "Sed objicietur nobis quispiam Aristotelem tertium de anima a capitulo secundo in finem usquem de intellectu disserere, qui ad animam humanam tamen pertinetur (...) respondendum est Aristotelem non agere hic de mente nisi per accidens".

²¹ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^r: "Primum enim Aristoteles capitulo 1^o, I libri, ita scribit. Maxime autem ipsum intelligere proprium animae simile est. Quod si hoc etiam imaginatio sit quaedam aut sine imaginatione non sit, nec istud esse sine corpore potest".

²² Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^r: "Ratiocinari, inquit, amare aut odisse non sunt affectus intellectus, sed huiusce quod illud habet ea ratione qua illud habet. Quapropter et hoc corrupto nec recordat nec amat".

Evidently, he refers to the living body that the intellect possesses and the reasons why it is in the body. In his opinion, when the body becomes corrupted, those properties and affections become corrupted as well. Thus, according to this commentator, in *De anima* I, 1 Aristotle stressed the link between the human soul and the mortal intellect because the affections and operations of the former are performed in dependence on, and in relation to, the body. This interpretation would be clearly confirmed in *De anima* III, 5 [430a25-30], where Aristotle states that the passive intellect is corruptible.²³

Therefore, Aristotle did not, in *De anima*, deal either with the substance of the soul or with the soul's proper act, which he called the agent and divine intellect.²⁴ According to the anonymous commentator, in *De anima* III, 4-5, Aristotle indeed differentiated two intellects, mortal and immortal, and his interpretation is adamant: From these words of Aristotle, he claims, one can easily understand that either this interpretation is not natural or that he is not dealing with all kinds of souls here, but only with the one whose name belongs to nature, which is a kind of form that depends upon the body.²⁵ The anonymous commentator does not question the existence of an agent intellect in the human mind. However, he considers that the intellect addressed by Aristotle in *De anima* is the passive, embodied one, which is mortal and corruptible.²⁶ It must therefore be concluded, he states, "from this passage and from the statements of Plato and Theophrastus, gathered by Themistius" that "besides the agent intellect, there is in humans a certain kind of mortal intellect".²⁷

Moreover, because the passive intellect is of a nature totally different from that of the agent intellect, there must be some bond uniting the latter and the embodied soul: a vehicle "that makes the connection between the pure and immortal soul and the

²³ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^{r-v}: "Cum quibus verbis illa etiam conveniunt quae capitulo 5 libri III, continentur, quo loco Aristoteles asserit intellectum passivum corruptibilem esse".

²⁴ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^r: "Nec enim de ea explicat secundum suam substantiam aut per suum proprium ipsius actum quem Aristoteles appellat intellectum agentem et divinum quippiam: sed tamen de ea agit ratione intellectus possibilis ac mortalis qui inseparabilis est a corpore".

²⁵ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 2^{r-v}: "Ex his Aristotelis verbis facile intelligi posset aut naturalem non esse hanc tractationem, aut non de omni anima hoc loco agi, sed de ea tamen cuius nomen naturae convenit, quae forma quaedam est addicta corpori". *Addictus*, the perfect participle of the verb *addico*, here used as an adjective, means *to be in debt with*, *to be slave of*.

²⁶ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^v: "[intellectus mortalis est] is scilicet qui ita se cum corpore coniungit ut nullas edat operationes absque communione rerum sensibilibus quae per suas imagines in fantasia insunt. Ita ut intellectus ille re ipsa ab imaginatione non differat, sed hoc ipso quod in homine inest ac se rationi subijcit diversus ab imaginatione tantum existat".

²⁷ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^{r-v}: "Ex quibus locis, atque ex Platonis et Theophrasti sententia, colligit Themistius, capitulis 37 et 38 et 39 in III De Anima, praeter intel/f.3^v/lectum agentem qui immortalis est, esse in quoque hominum mortalem quandam intellectum".

impure and mortal one”. As Plato said, this author continues, “this vehicle is also mortal; and Simplicius, in his *De anima*, is of the same opinion”.²⁸

The manner in which the anonymous author develops his commentary clearly indicates that he finds the Neoplatonic tradition of commentary on Aristotle to be the correct one and the one most in line with Aristotle’s thinking. The anthropology that follows from it is naturally dualistic: Human beings are endowed with both an embodied soul and an intellectual, non-bodily one. The former is corruptible while the latter subsists in its own right after bodily death. Thus, this author also acknowledges that there are different kinds of soul and that not all souls are physical in nature. In the case of human beings, he is firmly convinced that only a part of the soul is mortal and of natural origin. To what science, then, would the study of a non-physical soul, specific to the human mind, belong?

2.2 On the immortality of the soul

As the anonymous commentator explains, and in accordance with the Neoplatonic commentary tradition he follows, Aristotle admitted the existence of two intellects of opposite natures – one mortal and passive, the other immortal and active. But since the science of the soul deals only with the embodied soul, it concerns only the study of the mortal intellect. This author argues that not only is this the correct way to understand Aristotle, but also that this interpretation settles “the old question which has been sufficiently debated in both philosophical and theological schools”.²⁹ The debate to which he refers here is certainly the one concerning the question of what Aristotle thought about the immortality of the soul. And in fact, this author proceeds immediately to the analysis of this question.³⁰

Assuming that Aristotle did not deal with the agent intellect in *De anima* except *per accidens*, is it still possible to know what Aristotle said about this intellect? Did Aristotle come to know about the existence of a separate, immortal intellect? More specifically, did he ever assert the immortality of the soul in the same sense that the Catholic faith does? According to this anonymous author, although Aristotle indeed claimed the existence of two substantially different intellects with different origins and functions, one mortal and other immortal, he dealt only with the former in *De anima*.³¹ Thus, since

²⁸ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^v: “Etenim vinculum id quo pura et immortalis natura colligatur cum impura et mortali, ipsum quoque mortale esse oportuit, ut ait Plato. Symplicius etiam in illud locum, I capitulo, I De Anima, fere eandem sententiam defendit”.

²⁹ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 3^v: “Ex his etiam vetus illa quaestio et in Scholis, tum philosophicae, tum theologicae, satis agitata, dissolui potest”.

³⁰ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 4^r: “Quid scilicet senserit Aristoteles de animis naturalibus. An videlicet illos mortales, an immortales, quemadmodum fides catholica docet esse existimaverit”.

³¹ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 4^{r-v}: “Aristoteles duos intellectus in homine posuisse, alterum mortalem et alterum immortalem. Voluisse autem mentem immortalem esse ex se ipsa, /f. 4^v /

this science only focuses on the properties and functions of the mortal soul, rational or irrational, it belongs undoubtedly to physics. Now, in what science, if any, would Aristotle deal with the agent intellect? The author of this commentary does not claim that the study of the agent intellect should correspond to metaphysics, nor does he state that the science of the soul is an intermediate science between physics and metaphysics. He is aware that the latter is Agostino Nifo's position, but rejects it vehemently.³² In fact, this anonymous commentator seems to be skeptical as to whether it is possible to determine what Aristotle exactly had in mind when he spoke about the agent intellect. He believes that Aristotle "is above all a natural philosopher (...) devoid of the splendor of faith". Therefore "he could not have said anything completely accurate about the separated soul".³³

In truth, this author is not convinced that the Aristotelian version of the agent intellect had the same meaning of the immortal, individual soul proclaimed by the Catholic faith. It is noteworthy that this author does not mention Pomponazzi, whose opinion regarding Aristotle's doctrine on the immortality of the soul is usually explicitly refuted in commentaries of this kind. Despite being well aware of the controversy, the anonymous commentator does not face it directly. He acknowledges the existence of opinions "that, from what Aristotle has affirmed, seem to persuade us that our soul [*animus*] is mortal",³⁴ but he claims, partly in the explanation he has already made, partly in that which he will further provide, and partly because such doctrines have not reached any valid conclusion, that these issues have been overcome. This author does not entirely discard the possibility that, despite being a rational and empirically-based philosophical knowledge, the Aristotelian science of the soul may attain a vague, obscure knowledge about the nature of the human mind and its immortality. However, according to this author, Aristotle's acquaintance with human nature is rather limited. Because Aristotle stated that the activity of the agent intellect in the embodied soul is limited due to its close connection with the possible intellect, Aristotle could not come to admit the subsistence of the human soul as individual and separate from matter. Therefore, when speaking about subsistence, Aristotle quite evidently did not have in mind the subsistence of an individual soul but was referring only to the body-soul subsistence of the living being.

atque adeo ratione intellectus agentis; mortalem tamen per accidens, hoc est, ratione intellectus possibilis ac mortalis, quem inseparabilem esse a materiale existimavit, et cuius tantum ratione de mente egit in his libris, et ex consequenti per accidens, non autem per se, de illa disputavit".

³² Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 1^v, marginalia: "Haec opinio est Niphi, merito rejicienda".

³³ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 4^v: "Nec enim Aristoteles philosophus maxime naturalis (cuius cognitio a sensibus ducitur) ac splendore fidei destitutus potuit de anima separata quicque accurate et plane disserere".

³⁴ Anon., *In Primum*, fol. 4^v: "objectiones autem illae quae videntur persuadere ex sententia Aristotelis animos nostros mortales esse, partim a nobis suis in locis dissolutas sunt, partim dissolventur, partim nihil necessario concludunt".

Taken to its ultimate consequences, the interpretation of this author would yield the conclusion that the immortal soul is not of natural origin, on Aristotle's view. But in this case, if there is a place for any science of the immortality of the soul, it will belong neither to physics nor even to philosophy. Such knowledge will be achieved only by means of faith, and thus the suitable science would be theology. Thus, this author's understanding of Aristotle's notion of the soul and the correlated science entails this conclusion: Aristotle could not argue for the immortality of the soul, nor could Catholic theology effectively make use of what Aristotle said about the soul to demonstrate such an article of faith.

Now, if these conclusions are correct, the explanations of this commentator on Aristotle do not accord with either the famous declaration of the Lateran Council V, session 8³⁵ or the directives of the *Ratio studiorum*. As we have been discussing, the statements of the anonymous commentator on the immortality of the soul, following a commentary tradition opposite to the Thomistic school, question the effectiveness of the Aristotelian philosophy as propaedeutic to theology and come to coincide with Pomponazzi's position. By contrast, regarding the rational capacities for demonstrating the immortality of the soul, Christopher Gil's statements differ completely from those defended by the anonymous commentator and fully accord with the two ecclesiastical documents mentioned above.

As noted before, when commenting on *De anima*, I, 1, Christopher Gil does not establish any relationship between these two issues: the place of the science of the soul in the classifications of the sciences and the discussion on whether Aristotle has succeeded in demonstrating the immortality of the soul. Thus, to discover Gil's opinion on the issues related to the immortality of the soul, we must turn to his commentary on *De anima* III, 4-5.³⁶ Gil begins by asserting that the immortality of the soul is an

³⁵ On the content of the Bull *Apostolici Regiminis* issued to the eighth session of the Fifth Lateran Council, see Leen Spruit, "The Pomponazzi Affair: The Controversy over the Immortality of the Soul", in *The Routledge Companion to Sixteenth Century Philosophy*, edited by H. Lagerlund and B. Hill (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 230: "The bull denounced some pernicious errors concerning the rational soul, namely that it was mortal and that it was immortal but there was only one such soul for all mankind, doctrines that certain reckless philosophers asserted were true, 'at least according to philosophy' [...]. [It] imposed on all university professors of philosophy the obligation to explain the principles of Christian doctrine and to make it clear, supporting it with persuasive arguments and refuting the arguments to the contrary". For the main theories explained in Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate animae* and for a detailed description of the context of the controversy around this work, see José Manuel García Valverde, "Il *De immortalitate animae* e i trattati apologetic", in Pietro Pomponazzi, *Tutti I Trattati Peripatetici, Monografia Introduttiva*, edited by F. Paolo Raimondi and J. M. García Valverde (Milano: Bompiani, 2013), 87-151.

³⁶ Gil's explanation is carried out under the form of questions. Although Gil follows the division of Aristotle's *De anima* into books and chapters, in many cases he analyzes more than one chapter together, given the connection of contents. This is the case of *De anima* III, chapters 4 and 5. Gil focuses his analysis mainly on the nature of both the passive and active intellect. However, he begins his commentary by examining the two customary questions on the immortality of the

undeniable article of faith. To support this claim, he cites numerous biblical, patristic, and scholastic testimonies, as well as various conciliar norms of the Catholic Church. Then, as expected, he explicitly mentions the council of Lateran V, session 8, according to which the masters in the teaching of philosophy, after rejecting the heretical claim that the human soul is mortal, are required to build arguments to justify the contrary opinion. And this is what Gil does next.

Gil's explanation can be divided into three parts. First, he points out that what is at issue in this controversy is a correct understanding of the nature of intellection. He does so by commenting against pagan philosophers, such as Alexander of Aphrodisias, Epicurus and others who claim that the soul perishes with the body. Since they assert that intellection depends on imagination, they conclude that reason cannot build any arguments concerning immaterial objects. Nevertheless, philosophers such as Francisco de Toledo and Silvester of Ferrara, in line with Aquinas, have shown that arguments can be built to demonstrate the immortality of the soul. This demonstration, Gil states, is not of the same kind as those found in the realm of physics or mathematics but, rather, is like those pertaining to philosophy.³⁷ Now if the arguments against the immortality of the soul lie in the fact that human intellection, in the present life, is conditioned by phantasms ("*dependet ab operatione phantastica*"), the contrary must be argued for.

Hence, the second step of Gil's explanation is focused on the main philosophical principles required to demonstrate that the human soul does not perish. He begins by citing two significant texts of Aquinas on the nature of the human soul: *Summa Theologiae*, Part I, q. 75, a.2 and *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 59, *et alibi ex operationes anima*. But instead of analysing their content, he declares that he will explain these texts *modo breviter*. He thus builds some basic syllogisms, pointing out the main inferences required to rationally argue for the immortality of the soul: "every spiritual substance is incorruptible; the soul is a spiritual substance; therefore, it is incorruptible",³⁸ and, "everything that does not depend on the body is incorruptible; and the spiritual substance does not depend on the body; therefore, it is incorruptible".³⁹

As Gil is aware, however, to reach a valid conclusion, the core claim must yet be proven, i.e., that the human intellect is not a bodily power. He argues that this will be

soul: *De anima rationale immortalitate*, q. 1 (MS 2518, fol. 160v-161v); *Quid senserit Aristoteles de anima immortalitate*, q. 2 (MS 2518, fol. 161^v.162^v). Here only the former is analyzed.

³⁷ Cristóvão Gil, *Commentarii in libros*, fol. 161^r: "Nihilominus dicendum est etiam via naturali et philosophica animae immortalitatem posse demonstrari non quidem demonstratione, mathematica sive physica, hanc asserunt Toletus hoc libro q. 16, Ferrariensis q. 10 (...) ubi citat multa loca D. Thomas".

³⁸ Cristóvão Gil, *Commentarii in libros*, fol. 161^r: "omnis substantia spiritualis est incorruptibilis, anima est substantia spiritualis, ergo incorruptibilis".

³⁹ Cristóvão Gil, *Commentarii in libros*, fol. 161^r: "quidquid enim non pendet a corpore est incorruptibile, sed substantia non pendet a corpore, ergo est incorruptibilis".

proven on the basis of what Aristotle says in *De anima* III, 4: “no bodily power can know universals; but the soul knows universals and knows itself; therefore, it is a non-bodily spiritual power”.⁴⁰ We would perhaps now expect Gil to analyze either the mental process of grasping universal concepts or the nature of self-knowledge. However, because he is aware that in arguing for the immortality of the soul, what is at stake is the very nature of intellection, he is committed instead to finding an argument to prove the immaterial nature of intellection. If this could be demonstrated, then, irrespective of its content, all kinds of intellectual knowledge would be proven to be immaterial and self-subsistent. This is, therefore, the third and last step of Gil’s explanation. He directly addresses the core of this controversy – Pomponazzi’s *firmissima sententia* – and states that he will refute him with Toledo.

Over the course of almost sixteen pages of his commentary on *De anima* III, 5, Toledo compiles an extremely long list of philosophical arguments to show that the rational soul is immortal.⁴¹ At the end of this extensive account, Toledo adds a last argument, *ex abundantia*: even admitting that, in the present life, the rational soul cannot acquire knowledge without the phantasms, this does not prove that intellection is a bodily operation.⁴² And this is the argument Gil uses in his commentary against Pomponazzi. Because Gil’s explanation depends entirely upon that of Toledo, it is appropriate to analyze them in parallel.

Gil’s chosen argument from Toledo focuses on the analysis of the metaphysical nature of any activity. It is built upon a distinction between properties that belong to a subject according to its own nature – *secundum substantiam* – and properties that belong to it only according to some non-essential characteristics of that nature – *secundum modum*. Properties of the first kind are intrinsic to a subject, while properties of the second kind are extrinsic. According to Toledo, whom Gil here follows almost verbatim, the characteristic of intellection *secundum substantiam* is defined as “an intrinsic immaterial accident that belongs exclusively to the soul, without union to the body”,⁴³ or, in Gil’s version, as “an immaterial accident that is inherent in the very essence of the soul and not in the [bodily] organ”.⁴⁴ Conversely, Toledo defines characteristics of

⁴⁰ Cristóvão Gil, *Commentarii in libros*, fol. 161^r: “nulla potentia organica potest cognoscere universalia, aut in seipsam reflecti, intellectus cognoscit universalia, seipsum actus quod suos ergo est potentia spiritualis non organica”.

⁴¹ Francisco de Toledo, *De anima*, lib. III, cap. V, text. XX, q. 16: “An secundum philosophiam anima rationalis sit immortalis?” in *Opera omnia philosophica*, 1 (Colonia: Herman Mill, 1615), 148^v-156^r.

⁴² Francisco de Toledo, *De anima*, lib. III, cap. V, text. XX, q. 16, Nota: 155^v-156^r: “Sed praeterea ex abundantia nunc addimus, etiam si in hac vita non posset cognoscere nisi per phantasmata, nil sequi”.

⁴³ Francisco de Toledo, *De anima*, 156^r: “[actio intellectionis secundum substantiam est] accidens immateriale soli animae inhaerens absque corporis coniunctione”.

⁴⁴ Cristóvão Gil, *Commentarii in libros*, fol. 161^r: “in intellectione autem substantia est esse accidens spiritualem et immateriale, in ipsa anima substantiam non in organo inhaerens”.

intellection *secundum modum* as “something that occurs in the soul by means of the interposition of the phantasm”,⁴⁵ or, as Gil puts it, as “something that, in [the state of union with] the body, depends on phantasms”.⁴⁶ Now considering that, more than the extrinsic modes by which it is affected, what belongs to the nature of something is what pertains to it in its own right, and since the very nature of intellectuality is to be an intrinsic, immaterial accident, exclusive to the soul and originating in it “without any commerce with the body”,⁴⁷ the conclusion is obvious: “it must be considered that the soul is immortal and separate”.⁴⁸

3. Conclusions

Two 16th-century Coimbra manuscript commentaries written by different authors at different dates, were here analyzed as case studies for understanding the transformations of Aristotelianism in late scholasticism. Even though nowadays extensive research is being conducted in this field, the analysis of these texts has shown that much work remains to be undertaken for the complete understanding of such transformations. Concerning the issues on the object of the science of the soul and on the immortality of the soul, this study found that both commentators are fully familiar with either the ancient and medieval commentary tradition on Aristotle or the most recent interpretations circulating at that time.

However, contrary to what one would expect, the two commentators deal with these sources in substantially divergent ways and draw opposite conclusions. If both authors belonged to the Society of Jesus, one would expect to find greater agreement between the doctrines they put forward. They should at least display the same general attitude which led to the last version of the *Ratio studiorum*: to avoid teaching anything against Christian faith and to respect the ecclesiastical directions for the teaching of philosophy. But in the anonymous commentary, there is no evidence of compliance with these rules and in some respects there is defiance. If this commentary did belong to Pedro da Fonseca, we would be led to conclude that, during 1559–1560, the Jesuits enjoyed great freedom in the teaching of philosophy, to the point of defending doctrines considered contrary both to the Jesuit rules and to the instructions of the papal bull *Apostolici regiminis*. Even if we were to agree with Sander’s conclusions about the relative freedom of opinion the Jesuits enjoyed during this period,⁴⁹ the doctrines

⁴⁵ Francisco de Toledo, *De anima*, 156^r: “[actio intellectionis secundum modum est] quod fiat per phantasmata obiecta”.

⁴⁶ Cristóvão Gil, *Commentarii in libros*, fol. 161^r: “quod in corpore a phantasmatis dependeat”.

⁴⁷ Cristóvão Gil, *Commentarii in libros*, fol. 161^r: “[accidens immateriale] soli animae inhaerens absque corporis coniunctione”.

⁴⁸ Francisco de Toledo, *De anima*, 156^r: “Cum igitur substantia intellectionis sit absque corporis commercio, anima iudicanda est immortalis, et separabilis. Et id est secundum veram philosophiam”.

⁴⁹ See note 5.

explained by the anonymous commentator present a case of total divergence. What is more, Fonseca is famous among the Portuguese Jesuits for two main reasons: his strong commitment to Aristotelianism and the absolute trust his superiors had in him.⁵⁰ Now, the author of the anonymous commentary vehemently follows the Neoplatonic tradition of commentary on Aristotle and, at least implicitly, questions the opinion that Aristotle's philosophy is suitable for explaining articles of faith, such as the immortality of the soul. From the analysis of the commentary's content, no plausible arguments can be found to support Stegmüller's attribution of authorship to Fonseca.

At this point in the investigation, at least two questions arise. First, why did Stegmüller attribute this particular commentary to Fonseca? For the moment, we still have not found a reasonable answer to this question. But this fact shows that the information available in catalogs will perhaps need to be revisited.⁵¹ In examining Stegmüller's reasoning for this attribution, as well as the information he gives about this and other observations from the same period, we found a philosophy course taught in Coimbra between 1556 and 1560. It is an extensive commentary in five volumes, extant in manuscript form in the Real Biblioteca de El Escorial. It is an almost complete course (only metaphysics is missing), authored by a Jesuit named Marcos Jorge.⁵² In this course, as expected, there is a commentary on *De anima* that dates from exactly the same period as the one Stegmüller attributed to Fonseca. Now, Marcos Jorge and Fonseca had a close relationship within the Society: They entered the order at practically the same time, they trained together in Coimbra, and they both taught philosophy in Coimbra during the same period. Still, why did Stegmüller give information in his catalogue of the existence of Jorge's course without signaling its importance? There is no place here to analyze this course, but doing so is indeed necessary in order to better understand the Jesuit context of the time.

⁵⁰ For a biography of Fonseca, his commitment with the *Cursus Conimbricensis*, his works on Aristotelian Logic and Metaphysics, and the administrative positions he held in the Colleges of Coimbra, Évora, and the Roman College, see António Manuel Martins, "Pedro da Fonseca's Unfinished Metaphysics: The First Systematic Jesuit Metaphysics before Suárez", in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, edited by C. Casalini (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 328-311.

⁵¹ We discussed the authorship of the commentaries contained in the MS BGUC 2399 in Paula Oliveira e Silva and João Rebalde, "Doctrinal Divergences on the Nature of Human Composite in Two Commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima* (Anonymous, Cod. 2399 BGUC and Francisco Suárez): New Material on the Jesuit School of Coimbra and the *Cursus Conimbricensis*", in *Francisco Suárez (1548-1617): Jesuits and the Complexity of Modernity*, edited by R. Maryks and J. A. Senent (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 399-401; 406-410. On the same topic see Maria da Conceição Camps, "O visível e a visão no Manuscrito 2399 atribuído a Pedro da Fonseca: nota de investigação sobre o capítulo VII do livro II do comentário ao 'De Anima' de Aristóteles", *Revista Filosófica de Coimbra* 22/44 (2013): 387-396. Together with Anna Tropia and João Rebalde we are currently conducting detailed research on the authorship problem and on the intellectual context in which it was taught, while also involved in preparing the edition of this manuscript.

⁵² For a biography of Marcos Jorge, his Philosophy Course, and the relationship with Fonseca, see Oliveira e Silva and Rebalde, "Doctrinal Divergences", 401-406.

Jorge's philosophy course is a unique testimony because it is the only remaining complete course of Jesuit philosophy teaching before the publication of the *Cursus Conimbricensis*. Moreover, it was written in the early years of the Jesuit teaching of philosophy in Coimbra – and by a Jesuit who still belonged to the so-called first generation. The date of this course also corresponds to the period, mentioned at the beginning of this study, in which the Jesuit rules for the teaching of philosophy were less rigid, paving the way for greater freedom of opinion. As such, it is expected that a greater degree of autonomy concerning the commentary tradition is manifested in the explanations given by Marcos Jorge. The study of this course is now underway and will certainly reveal important aspects of transformations of Aristotelianism originating at the time in Coimbra, in the Jesuit milieu.

The second question that arises from this study is the following: If the commentary on the *De anima* here analyzed is not by Fonseca, could it be by another Jesuit? Since this commentary differs in so many ways from the guidelines for the teaching of philosophy in Jesuit Colleges, the possibility that it might belong to another religious order should be carefully analyzed. Before the arrival of the Jesuits, and even a few centuries before the foundation of the College of Arts, many other religious orders had already been established in Coimbra and had organized their own respective *Studia*. In the case of the commentary on the *De anima* attributed to Fonseca, a provenance mark can be read at the outset (fol.1^o): *Da Livraria do noviciado de Santa Cruz de Coimbra*, or, *From the Library of the novitiate of Santa Cruz of Coimbra*. It is therefore very likely that the commentaries contained in this volume belong to a course originating in the Monastery of Santa Cruz, of the Regular Canons of Saint Augustine.

The role and structure of the philosophy teaching of the Jesuits during the 16th century in Coimbra are well known today, due to the large number of studies available. In contrast, studies on the teaching of philosophy in Coimbra in the same period by other religious orders are practically non-existent. Concerning the Monastery of Santa Cruz, José Meirinhos has shown the vitality of its intellectual activity and has emphasized the relationship between the Monastery and the University of that time.⁵³ However, there are no systematic studies on the influence either of this flourishing intellectual center in the teaching of philosophy, or of the role other religious orders

⁵³ In 1537, King John III transferred the University from Lisbon to Coimbra. From 1537 until 1547, as Meirinhos has shown, “[...] Santa Cruz College played an important role, which has still not been properly studied, in the delicate transfer maneuvers (...). Taking all facts into account, perhaps it would not be too daring to affirm that during the first years after the transfer, the Santa Cruz Colleges were the Portuguese University. [...] They were the first great Portuguese schools to share in the reforming spirit of the Renaissance, albeit with some signs of continuity with regard to medieval teaching”, José Meirinhos, “Os colégios e a Universidade de Santa Cruz de Coimbra, 1528–1547 / The Santa Cruz de Coimbra Colleges and University, 1528–1547”, in *Santa Cruz de Coimbra. A Cultura portuguesa aberta à Europa na Idade Média / The Portuguese Culture Opened to Europe in the Middle Ages*, edited by A. Figueiredo Frias, J. Costa and J. Meirinhos (Porto: Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto, 2001), 310–311.

played in this teaching. Such studies are crucial to any true understanding of both the philosophical activity and the transfer of knowledge in Coimbra in the 16th century.

Studies focusing on great philosophical authorities of this period continue to be carried out and contribute effectively to developing a thorough understanding of the transformations of Aristotelianism. Spruit, for example, suggests that the intellectual environment of Spain and Portugal must have been shielded from the influence of heterodox tendencies originating in the Italian universities. For this reason, in the colleges of the religious orders of the Iberian Peninsula, there would have been ideal conditions to return to an interpretation of Aristotle free from the influence of the debates that took place in central Europe and “to develop a scholastic science of the soul”.⁵⁴ However, the analysis of the anonymous commentary on *De anima* carried out here has shown that Spruit is up to date with Renaissance interpretations of Plato and Aristotle, and that he is well aware of the controversies taking place in the Italian universities at the time.

By contrast, looking at Cristóvão Gil’s commentary, one immediately identifies its total alignment with what Gil designates as *vera et peripatetica philosophia*. Gil’s commentary is a perfect example of how both the rules of the Catholic Church and the internal norms of the Jesuits were applied to the teaching of philosophy. Yet the explanations of Thomas presented by Gil are quite far from the medieval text. Gil refers to Aquinas’s texts, but they are explained *modo breviter* and in accordance with Toledo’s teaching. The debate on Aquinas’s doctrines is indeed based on Aquinas’s 15th- and 16th-century commentators, and the Thomistic theories adopted by Gil are in fact those explained by Toledo or by other Jesuits recognized as authorities. However, even if Gil’s commentary seems more in line with the so-called “common opinions”, it provides relevant information concerning the reception and transformation of medieval scholasticism. These can be grasped precisely either by analyzing the doctrinal debate among the schools to which these commentaries bear witness or by paying close attention to the implicit, or vague references found in them, such as their frequent criticisms of the *recentiores*.

Another benefit of investigating the philosophy courses existing in manuscript form is that they provide a more direct contact with the doctrines taught and debated during this period. The texts published at the time were subject to revision by the ecclesiastical authorities; by contrast, when dealing with manuscript sources, we have access to texts that genuinely convey the content of the doctrines taught. Although focused only on two case studies of 16th-century Coimbra manuscript commentaries on Aristotle’s *De anima*, this research points to the need for further explorations of manuscript sources. The information contained in these sources allows for both a better understanding of the transformations of Aristotelianism in

⁵⁴ See Spruit, “Psychology”, 253.

the 16th century and a clearer picture of the intellectual context in which they were produced.

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