

ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Studia Classica et Mediaevalia

Band 26

**hrsg. von
Hans-Christian Günther**

**Accademia di studi italo-tedeschi, Merano
Akademie deutsch-italienischer Studien, Meran**

GASPARO CONTARINI
DE IMMORTALITATE ANIMAE
ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Edited by Paul Richard Blum
in cooperation with
Elisabeth Blum, Jan Čížek, Martin Holan, Jan Janoušek,
Jozef Matula, Jiří Michalík, Tomáš Nejeschleba,
Lloyd A. Newton, Jana Slezáková, and Martin Žemla

Verlag Traugott Bautz

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der
Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind
im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Cover illustration: 16th-century portrait of Gasparo Contarini, available
at https://archive.org/details/EST97RES_P73E.

Verlag Traugott Bautz GmbH
99734 Nordhausen 2020
ISBN 978-3-95948-467-1

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	7
1. On the Genesis of this Edition – Acknowledgments.....	7
2. Contarini on Immortality.....	8
3. The Opening of the Treatise.....	10
4. The Conclusion.....	13
5. Some arguments.....	15
6. Life and Philosophy.....	19
7. Technical Notes on the Edition.....	22
8. Citations and Abbreviations.....	25
GASPARO CONTARINI	
DE IMMORTALITATE ANIMAE	
ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.....	29
Liber Primus.....	30
Book One.....	31
Introduction.....	37
Part I: Investigation.....	67
Part II: Aristotle’s opinion.....	139
Liber Secundus.....	174
Book Two.....	175
Contarini’s Premisses.....	181
Pomponazzi’s Arguments for the Materiality of the Soul	
.....	199
Some passages from Aristotle.....	245
Index.....	269

Introduction

Paul Richard Blum

1. On the Genesis of this Edition – Acknowledgments

As one project of the Center for Renaissance Texts at Palacký University in Olomouc (Czech Republic), headed by Tomáš Nejeschleba, a group of scholars edited, translated, and annotated the treatise on immortality by Gasparo Contarini, which is now being published in Latin and English. A first translation was made by Paul Richard Blum, which then was discussed, revised, and amended by the group that included (in alphabetical order) Elisabeth Blum, Jan Čížek, Jan Janoušek, Jozef Matula, Jiří Michalík, Tomáš Nejeschleba, and Martin Žemla; Martin Holan and Jan Janoušek transcribed the Latin text from the 1571 edition and edited it;¹ Jana Slezáková collated Book I of the 1571 edition with the editions 1518 and 1525 and book II with the manuscript of the Marciana library, provided to us in a file by Pietro Bassiano Rossi. Lloyd A. Newton revised the English translation.

Funding for this Latin/English edition was provided by the Czech Science Foundation as part of the Research Project „Between Renaissance and Baroque: Philosophy and Knowledge in the Czech Lands within the Wider European Context“ (GA ČR 14-37038G). Further support was given by the Center for the Humanities at Loyola University Maryland, Baltimore, and a Herzog-Ernst-Stipendium of Fritz Thyssen Stiftung.

¹ A Latin/Czech edition of book I was published as Gasparo Contarini, *O nesmrtnosti duše I*, ed. Tomáš Nejeschleba and Paul Richard Blum (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2014), <http://www.renesancni-texty.upol.cz/soubory/publikace/Blum-Nejeschleba-Contarini-O-nesmrtnosti-duse.png>. within the project of the Center for Renaissance Texts.

2. Contarini on Immortality

Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542) was the first to write a critique of the treatise *On the Immortality of the Soul* by Pietro Pomponazzi (1462-1525).¹ As a former student of Pietro Pomponazzi he responded immediately to the publication of Pomponazzi's book of 1516; and the teacher included, anonymously but approvingly, Contarini's critique in his *Apologia* (1518), which was his own response. Contarini's reply to the apology appeared together with the first critique as books I and II of his *De immortalitate animae* in the posthumous edition of his works.² Although we need to be

¹ On Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542) see Gigliola Fragnito, "Gasparo Contarini", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 28 (Roma: Treccani, 1983), *sub voce*. Gigliola Fragnito, *Gasparo Contarini: Un magistrato veneziano al servizio della cristianità* (Firenze: Olschki, 1988). Elisabeth G. Gleason, *Gasparo Contarini: Venice, Rome, and Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft429005s2/>. Pietro B. Rossi, "Vita activa / vita contemplativa: l'ideale etico e civile di Gasparo Contarini (†1542), patrizio veneziano e cardinale," in *Phronēsis - prudentia - Klugheit: Das Wissen des Klugen in Mittelalter, Renaissance und Neuzeit. Matthias Lutz-Bachmann zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Alexander Fidora (Porto: Féd. Internat. des Inst. d'Études Médiévales, 2013), 203–26. Still notable: Lodovico Beccadelli, *Vita del Cardinale Gasparo Contarini scritta da Monsignor Lodovico Beccatello*, ed. Angelo Maria Quirini (Brescia: Rizzardi, 1746).

² I will refer to the editions in Pomponazzi Pietro, *Tractatus acutissimi, utilissimi et mere peripatetici* (Venice: Scotus, 1525; reprint ed. Francesco Paolo Raimondi Casarano: Eurocart, 1995), fols. 76r-80v; and Contarini Gasparo, *Opera* (Paris: Nivellius, 1571), pp. 179-231. Plain page references within the ranges of 179-231 will refer to this 1571 edition. – On the debate on the immortality of the soul see Paul Richard Blum, "The immortality of the soul", in James Hankins (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge (University Press) 2007, 211-233; in Czech: "Nesmrtelnost duše", in James Hankins (ed.), *Renesanční filosofie* (Praha: Oikoumene, 2011), 279-309. Most recent studies with bibliography on Pomponazzi in Marco Sgarbi, ed.,

aware that Contarini is closely responding to Pomponazzi's treatise, it would derail our investigation into an infinite regress if we went into the details of this exchange because it is obvious that Pomponazzi and Contarini were enveloped in the medieval and Renaissance debate about the nature of the human soul and intellect.³ Therefore, it is convenient for an introduction to look at Contarini's book as a text in and of itself.

Pietro Pomponazzi: Tradizione e dissenso. Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi su Pietro Pomponazzi, Mantova, 23-24 ottobre 2008 (Firenze: Olschki, 2010) (with the relevant older secondary research).

³ Still elementary Giovanni Di Napoli, *L'immortalità dell'anima nel Rinascimento* (Torino: SEI, 1963); Étienne Gilson, "Autour de Pomponazzi. Problématique de l'immortalité de l'âme en Italie au début du XVIe siècle," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 36 (1962): 163–279; Étienne Gilson, "L'affaire de l'immortalité de l'âme à Venise au début du XVIe siècle," in *Umanesimo europeo e umanesimo veneziano*, ed. Vittore Branca (Firenze: Sansoni, 1963), 31–61.

For those not familiar with the debate, the question of the immortality of the soul had the following main components:

1. The soul, according to the Aristotelian tradition, consisted of the vegetative, the sensitive, and the rational part, whereby
 - a. the sensitive and rational parts consisted of sense perception, common sense, imagination and phantasy, reason, and memory
 - b. imagination, reason and memory could also be termed intellect
 - c. the intellect includes also the will
2. The intellect is
 - a. *either* eternal before and after birth
 - b. *or* born with a human being and dies with the body
 - c. *either* one and the same for all humans but incorporated in the individual
 - d. *or* created by God with the individual and surviving individually after death and waiting for reunification at the resurrection
3. The soul is
 - a. one thing including the intellect – what happens to it at death?

Let us begin with Contarini's statements on the principles of philosophizing that open and close his work. He seems to have identified a fundamental problem of philosophy that marks his disagreement with Pomponazzi and gives occasion to his writing.⁴

3. *The Opening of the Treatise*

In his dedicatory letter to Pomponazzi, Contarini exposes at length his wavering between mortality and immortality of the soul. He mentions his university experience in Padua, the major schools of Averroes and Alexander of Aphrodisias, but does not name any of the contemporaries. Within his description of the pro and con of mortality, he issues the principle "that a philosopher should not affirm anything that is not known by itself or confirmed with efficient arguments."⁵ This is, of course, not just an ephemeral autobiographic remark; rather, he is establishing a philosophical principle: a philosopher cannot accept anything as true, which he

-
- b. composed of several parts, of which the lower parts (vegetative and sensitive) die away while the upper part of the soul may be immortal
 - c. the substantial form of the human being
4. The human being is an individual thanks to
- a. the body which gives numeric identity
 - b. the soul, which makes the individual even beyond death.

⁴ Cf. Enrico Peruzzi, "Natura e destino dell'anima umana: Le critiche di Gasparo Contarini al *De immortalitate animae* di Pietro Pomponazzi," in *Fenomeno, trascendenza, verità. Scritti in onore di Gianfranco Bosio*, ed. Ferdinando Luigi Marcolungo (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2012), 169–83; see also Enrico Peruzzi, "Gli allievi di Pomponazzi: Girolamo Fracastoro e Gasparo Contarini," in *Pietro Pomponazzi: Tradizione e dissenso. Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi su Pietro Pomponazzi, Mantova, 23-24 ottobre 2008*, ed. Marco Sgarbi (Firenze: Olschki, 2010), 349–64; Luca Burzelli, "Aspetti della tradizione aristotelica nel *De immortalitate animae*: Gasparo Contarini lettore di Avicenna," *Rinascimento* Seconda Serie 59 (2019): 365–90.

⁵ 180E: "nullique assentiendum sit viro philosopho, quod neque per se sit notum; neque efficaci ratione comprobatur."

did not clearly recognize to be so,⁶ either through self-evidence or through rational proof. Why is it necessary to state that? Because the student wants to beat his teacher with the weapons he had received from him: reliance on the accessibility of truth and the power of rational argument. Furthermore, in the course of the discussion he will address the problem that had troubled Pomponazzi concerning the truth of faith as it is inevitably connected with the question of immortality. Is there a rift between faith and reason, authority and argument? That is the subtext Contarini is establishing.

For he continues observing that the one party denies immortality, the other claims to have clear rational insight about it (*inspicere certis rationibus*, 180F) and therefore deserves to be trusted (*adhibenda sit fides*). On the surface he suggests a solution of practical wisdom: when two people disagree whether they see a person at a distance or not, it is more likely that the one has a weak vision than that the other claims to see what is not there, provided this one has sound eyes and mind (180G). This appears to be a pragmatic conclusion with some epistemological merit. For, provided there is no ill will and reasoning comes to a standoff, it is epistemologically sound to suspect the source of variance in the beholder, rather than in the issue at hand. But also looking at it logically, one result outweighs the other, for the positive answer outweighs the negative one. To deny what is there is weaker than to affirm it, for it would require the counterfactually not seeing what is there. In the case at hand, not to believe in immortality would be easier (true or not) than to believe in immortality if it were false. In the end, it's a wager, and Contarini will come back to it.

Let us assess what Contarini is avoiding: he is not swerving into skepticism, nor into fideism – both strategies used by Pomponazzi in the final part of his treatise. Not even double truth

⁶ Cf. the famous first rule in René Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, part 2.

is an option. Rather, towards the end of the second book, Contarini will refer to the truth of reason and that of faith: it is a relation of enhanced perfection to the effect that faith confirms and makes even more plausible what natural reason has found on its own:

Since, then, natural light proves that the soul is immortal but falters with regard to the status of the souls after death and can offer nothing certain, it is most congruent that this is brought to perfection by the supernatural light. Also, what has been perfected does not disagree with what the natural light has begun.⁷

So he is not defending ‘non-overlapping magisteria’ as Stephen Jay Gould would have it.⁸ Therefore we may term Contarini’s programmatic approach an hermeneutics of plausibility. In the long history of *fides quaerens intellectum*, or *intellectus quaerens fidem*, it would be worth investigating whether this is an old strategy or a new twist. It seems to go beyond the traditional establishing reason as elaborating the *praeambula fidei*, because – in an atmosphere when fideism was a serious alternative to rationalism – Contarini refuses to separate the truth of revelation from natural knowledge and claims a seamless consistence of both. This will be one of the major messages of this text to the detractors of immortality as we can see from the conclusion of the second book.

⁷ 229C: “Cum ergo lumen naturale probet animam esse immortalem: de statu vero animarum post mortem fluctuet, nihilque certi affere possit, maxime congruum est, ut id lumine naturali perficiatur; neque hoc quod perfectum est, disconvenit ei quod lumine naturali inchoatum est.”

⁸ Gould Stephen Jay, “Nonoverlapping Magisteria,” *Natural History* 106 (March 1997) 16-22: “... whatever my private beliefs about souls, science cannot touch such a subject and therefore cannot be threatened by any theological position on such a legitimately and intrinsically religious issue.” (Quoted from http://www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould_noma.html)

4. *The Conclusion*

Concluding his response to Pomponazzi, Contarini summarizes the commonality and the divergences of their theories. They agree that the intellect is abstract from matter; that the intellect is one, indivisible, and not determined by place or time; and that understanding lies in the intellect (*tanquam in subjecto*, 231B; i.e., where it actually takes place) rather than in the body.

They disagree first on the series inferences, made by Contarini, namely that the intellect must be a form, which is an autonomous act (*actus, qui per se est*) that is imperishable. In these terms it appears contradictory that Pomponazzi admits abstraction but denies immortality (231B). The second point of disagreement is the theory that rational argumentation about the process of sensing and thinking proves that the intellect is a pure form, but that the consequences, namely the state of immortality, is beyond rational investigation.

For Contarini this amounts to denying an antecedent of a scientific proof on the basis of the impossibility to verify its factual consequence with the same epistemological instrument (*eodem lumine certificari*, 231C). Philosophy proves that the soul is immortal but cannot make any statements about the post-mortal life. In modern parlance, it is impossible to tell what it is like to be immortal. Contarini is stretching the scientific imagination because he implies that science can lead to further fields of investigation that are valid in some way and yet require some kind of transition to a different method or to different sources of verification. Reason leaves itself behind.

In a first approximation we may infer that there is a plurality of investigative fields and resources; and such plurality not only defies ‘non-overlapping magisteria’ in terms of scientific method but also assumes a seamless transition from one realm of reality to another. It is obvious that non-overlapping sciences cannot defeat each other. But the temptation lies in assuming that

contiguous disciplines and their relevant realities interfere with each other. The reality of the soul is such an area of contiguity and distinction: from the material form to the lower powers of the soul and to the immaterial form of the human being – this is how the debate about immortality can be represented, as suggested by Contarini. One could either try to show that the physical reality of the embodied soul encompasses the soul entirely, including the mind. This would be physicalism.⁹ Or one could try and convince oneself that the ultimate reality is of spiritual nature, as some Neoplatonists tried to argue, taking recourse to emanation and similar metaphysical forms of thought.¹⁰ That would be animism. Here Contarini intervenes by stating: the fact that the study of the human soul leads to a reality (that of spiritual beings) that cannot be researched in terms of animal psychology does not refute its finding that the human intellect is immortal, and the impossibility to research immortality from within does not make the human intellect mortal.¹¹

Those observations lead to his final remark that “this we take to be true philosophizing; and this philosophy is the perfection of the mind, namely, that which acknowledges its deficiency.”¹² Contarini elevates his disagreement with Pomponazzi to

⁹ I am using the term ‘physicalism’ in the sense of the programmatic attempt at describing and investigating psychic facts with the methods and patterns of physical science. Cf. Rudolf Carnap, “Psychologie in physikalischer Sprache”, *Erkenntnis*, 3 (1932/1933), 107-142 (“Psychology in the Language of Physics”).

¹⁰ From a physicalist point of view, employing these modes of thought indicates defeat from the beginning.

¹¹ We are confronted with a debate that continues in the 21st century and was termed by the physicist Niels Bohr “complementarity” of interpretations; see Gregory N. Derry, *The Only Sacred Ground. Scientific Materialism and a Sacred View of Nature within the Framework of Complementarity* (Baltimore: Apprentice House, 2014).

¹² 231C: “Hocque putamus vere philosophari; hancque philosophiam, quae suum noscit defectum, perfectionem animi esse censemus.”

the level of philosophical principle. If we want to label the two methods, we can certainly use terms like scientism versus critical philosophy. As Contarini portrays his former teacher, Pomponazzi seems to follow the logic of Aristotelian natural philosophy, i.e., some sort of physicalism, whereas Contarini aims at philosophical method and uses the immortality problem as a welcome occasion to move forward into meta-theory. It is always wise to overcome a theoretical impasse by leaving the well-known stakes and claims behind and moving to a level that not only solves the problem but also explains why it has become contentious. This is what Contarini is doing in his opening and closing of his contribution to the debate. In order to overcome physicalism, he elevates the problem to a methodical and meta-theoretical level, which allows him, instead of simply denying physical stances, to show the contiguity of mortal and immortal soul in one consistent theory and reality.

Now it is time to see how he achieves that within this book on the immortality.

5. Some arguments

Contarini's aim is to prove that the human intellect is a form, and an immaterial one that is also immortal. In order to convince his readers he reports the notions of substance and accident, form and matter, generation (coming to be) and perishing; from there he moves on to material forms, to organic composites and their mode of activity. Then he explains motion and operation with the distinction between movement that is induced externally and internal movement (what Aristotle ascribed to animate substances) and arrives at that kind of motion that is eternal and (here he reaches the goal of his narrative) being infinite cannot be material (184E). The fruit of this reasoning is this second kind of forms, which are qualified as immaterial and as the principle of motion in material things.

If we feel reminded of lectures in history of philosophy, this might be a good guess. It is worth noting that Contarini refers again and again to “the philosophers” as those who established the notion of immaterial form step by step. He does not argue in the direct sense; rather he prefers a narrative that tells us: immortal souls are a plausible story. This is a rhetorical ploy with a number of effects and implications. For one thing, he can withdraw from their teachings any time, and specifically so, in case doubt about the orthodoxy of this philosophy arises. He also appeals to his primary reader, Pomponazzi, to recall the standards of professional philosophy, which are not idiosyncratic inventions but establish and follow certain rules of argument and terminology. But to my mind, the most important effect of this style of presentation is the distanced perspective on the theory. Referring to ‘the philosophers’ means inserting an argumentative layer between the argument and the matter at hand. Such an additional level not only allows to disown the subject matter (if need be) but also to take a critical look at the way the argument is coherently constructed and at the procedure that made the theory. At the same time, the whole argument acquires a historicist ring: ‘that’s why and how we arrived over time at the theory as it is now.’ That is to say, Contarini argues on the level of meta-theory.

Ludovico Beccadelli (1501-1572), Contarini’s pupil and biographer, put it this way: “To study the doctrines taught by others is to understand the reasons how these came about, whereas relying only on authority is not to know but to believe; therefore [Contarini] always aimed at knowing.”¹³ Beccadelli also suggested

¹³ Beccadelli, *Vita del Cardinale Gasparo Contarini*, 27; cf. Paul Richard Blum, “Ludovico Beccadelli: Philology Safeguards the Unity of Truth,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 64 (2017): 82–87; 82. – This issue of the journal, edited by Annalisa Cappiello, Marco Lamanna, and Christoph Sander, contains several articles on the unity of truth around the papal bull *Apostolici regiminis* of the Lateran Council in 1513.

a further option provided by a historic approach to a philosophical debate, namely, textual and philological analysis, as can be seen in his own treatise *On the Immortality of the Soul* (written probably in 1565), which only recently has been published.¹⁴

The other example comes from the context of the activity of the soul that can be described as striving or desire (*appetitus*) and manifests itself in free will and choice. Contarini expressly states: “As we see, from the free choice of the will follows that the human soul is of itself without body and hence absolutely immortal.”¹⁵ His philosophical argument is self-movement. And he refers to Plato who had argued the soul is immortal because it moves itself. Now, with respect to the host of traditional arguments regarding the freedom of will and choice, Contarini steps out of his routine and argues:

When someone considers himself he can clearly understand that. Everyone should ask himself “Who am I?” and he will see that he is not brain nor heart, nor any body part but something standing above all parts of a body.¹⁶

¹⁴ Pietro B. Rossi, “‘Sempre alla pietà et buoni costumi ha exortato le genti’: Aristotle in the milieu of Cardinal Contarini († 1542),” in Luca Bianchi (ed.), *Christian readings of Aristotle from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 317–95; text edition pp. 363–386; Marco Sgarbi, “Ludovico Beccadelli sull’immortalità dell’anima: Una prospettiva in lingua volgare,” *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* 106, no. 3 (2014): 657–86; edition of the version in Italian pp. 677–686; cf. Blum, “Ludovico Beccadelli: Philology Safeguards the Unity of Truth.” On the question of immortality, specifically in Italian authors, cf. Marco Sgarbi, *Profumo d’immortalità. Controversie sull’anima nella filosofia volgare del Rinascimento* (Roma: Carocci, 2016).

¹⁵ 193C: “Ecce ergo quod ex electione libera voluntatis, sequitur humanum animum per se esse sine corpore: quare et absolute immortalem.”

¹⁶ 193C: “Si quis etiam se ipsum consideret, poterit hoc perspicue comprehendere: interroget enim se quisque, quis sum ego? videbit vtique se non esse cerebrum, neque cor, neque aliquam corporis partem, sed superius quoddam partibus omnibus corporis superstans.”

He claims that self-motivation and immateriality are evident to personal experience and that this argument trumps the historical development of Aristotelianism. He is not shy to proclaim that this argument is the strongest possible, which less than any other evidence from the philosophy of nature may be objected (193C). Furthermore, it is of interest for modern philosophy of mind that he expressly distinguishes the mind from brain. He establishes a kind of brain/mind dualism in order to defeat it with self-inspection. Contarini declares the observation of the “Who am I?” to be the key to sound philosophy.¹⁷

These examples from Contarini’s complex treatise suggest that he not only enters the debate where it had matured with Pomponazzi, he also tends to transcend the debate by showing the theoretical ‘economy’ or ‘mechanism’ of the current discourse. To enter the debate would mean to plainly ‘decide’ whether or not the soul is immortal; what he achieves is to convince his readers of the foundations, the purposes, and the philosophical strategies that are at work. This must have been the reason why Pomponazzi cherished his former student’s response as the most comprehensive and acute of all.¹⁸ How much Pomponazzi appreciated this critique of his own philosophy transpires from the fact that he used the same word “acutissimus” for Contarini’s text, which adorned the title of his own collection of treatises.

¹⁷ A sample of comparing philosophy of mind with Renaissance psychology in Paul Richard Blum, “The Epistemology of Immortality: Searle, Pomponazzi, and Ficino,” *Studia Neoaristotelica* 9 (2012): 85–102. More on Contarini’s philosophical method in Elisabeth Blum and Paul Richard Blum, “Gasparo Contarini Philosopher,” in *Edizioni, Traduzioni e Tradizioni Filosofiche (Secoli XII–XVI) Studi per Pietro B. Rossi*, ed. Luca Bianchi, Onorato Grassi, and Cecilia Panti, vol. 2 (Canterano: Aracne editrice, 2018), 487–99.

¹⁸ Pomponazzi, *Tractatus acutissimi*, 76ra: “... hic contradictor, mea sententia nihil reliquit; quod rationabiliter adversus nos adduci possit. Est enim tractatus iste copiosus, doctus, gravis, acutissimus; et divino artificio conflates.”

At this point some remarks on Contarini's personality are in order.

6. *Life and Philosophy*

Contarini wrote a small number of other works, philosophical, political, and theological. Most importantly after his treatise on immortality he authored a *Compendium of First Philosophy*,¹⁹ in which he established in short chapters and with little discussion a Neoplatonic system of the world, that is, a world of hierarchical ontology. The final part (*liber septimus*) reiterates the immateriality and immortality of the human soul based on the continuous gradation of beings from God via the intelligences down to material things.²⁰ He also wrote specialized treatises on logic, physics, and one on the freedom of the will, which might have been known to Descartes.²¹ In a commentary on some letters of St. Paul he explains the doctrine of resurrection in the same pattern of hierarchy as we had seen: his terminology of incarnation and resurrection is that of the doctrine of body and soul.²²

In this last mentioned work, the Cardinal was speaking, which gives occasion to make a few remarks on Contarini's public career.²³ As a member of a noble family in Venice he was born in 1483 and soon appeared to be gifted and prone to philosophy. As an anonymous writer said about him: "No task was too hard, for he always had philosophy on his tongue and in his heart."²⁴

¹⁹ *Primae philosophiae compendium* in *Opera*, pp. 9-176.

²⁰ *Opera*, pp. 169-176.

²¹ Zbigniew Janowski, *Cartesian Theodicy: Descartes' Quest for Certitude* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), p. 43-44.

²² *Opera*, pp. 433-530: *Scholia in epistulas Divi Pauli; Ad Hebraeos*, chapter 2, pp. 516-517.

²³ Based on Fragnito and Gleason as cited.

²⁴ Fr. Dittrich (ed.), *Regesten und Briefe des Cardinals Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542)* (Braunsberg: Huye, 1881), Regesten no. 1, p. 8: "Munera non sperno. Pien di philosophia la lingua e'l petto."

Naturally he entered the service of the Venetian Republic after he had studied at Venice's university, that of Padua. His most important teachers were the Byzantine Marcus Musurus (1470-1517), for Greek, and Pietro Pomponazzi, for Philosophy. As mentioned at the beginning, when Pomponazzi published Contarini's responses to his treatise on the immortality of the soul, he omitted the name, calling him just "The Contradictor", while at the same time praising him as the most complete critique possible. This is why Contarini remained nameless in the debate on immortality and as a philosopher in his own right.

It was also customary at that time that young noble men joined various clubs and circles with cultural and political agendas. One effect was that he entertained to join a religious order, another that he started to ponder the theology of justification and human works, not much different from Martin Luther at the same time. Not enough detail about Contarini's doubts is known; however, this fact makes it worth noting how much Contarini emphasizes the activity and operation of the human mind and the experience of free will.²⁵ An important experience was his visit in Florence in 1511, where he learned to admire Francesco Cattani da Diaccetto (1466-1522), one of Marsilio Ficino's students.

So, while the young Venetian is working as a diplomat and bureaucrat for his hometown, he is personally engaged in religious and philosophical troubles. Therefore he wrote at the same time both his treatise on the immortality of the soul and a book on the duties of bishops, a book that set standards of morality and applies them to the public office.²⁶ The most exemplary bishop of his time,

²⁵ Cf. Elisabeth Blum, "Gasparo Contarini's Double Access to the One Truth, as Seen in His Letter on Predestination," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 64 (2017): 88–96.

²⁶ *Opera*, pp. 401-431; English: Contarini Gasparo, *The Office of a Bishop*, ed. John Patrick Donnelly (Milwaukee, Marquette, 2002).

Contarini says, was Pietro Barozzi (1441-1507),²⁷ the same bishop of Venice who in 1489 had decreed that the theory of the one intellect by Averroes should not be discussed anymore. Of course this decree was futile, since among others Pomponazzi and his student kept debating about Averroism. Here we see that Contarini kept combining political, moral, and theoretical agendas.

This happened in 1517, a year known for the Lutheran reform. Indeed, in 1521 the Venetian was invited by the Emperor Charles V to the Diet (*Reichstag*) in Worms, which among others debated the *causa* Luther. Shortly after that he is on a mission to Spain, where he wrote in his spare time the book on *First Philosophy*, as mentioned, followed by his most read book on the Venetian government, which was most likely inspired by Thomas More, the author of the *Utopia*, whom he met in Flanders in 1521.

During the years that followed he continued his political activities for Venice and also for the Church, which included an appeal to religious concord in his treatise on the *Confessio Augustana*, so that in 1535 he was made Cardinal. Together with Reginald Pole (1500-1558) he was member of a group, called *spirituali*, with strong sympathy for Luther's doctrine of justification and for more or less heretic movements, but also with a strong conviction as to the authority of the Church.²⁸ Due to their irenic attitude during the preparations of the Council of Trent (1545-63), both became the leading Church politicians who tried to avoid the secession of the Protestants.

²⁷ *The Office*, pp. 85, 95, 121.

²⁸ Fragnito, *Contarini: Un magistrato veneziano*, 251–306; Stephen Bowd, "Prudential Friendship and Religious Reform: Vittoria Colonna and Gasparo Contarini," in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*, ed. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 349–70; Stephen Bowd, "Religious Reform in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Reformation* 16 (2011): 179–94.

His combining spirituality and politics²⁹ can be captured in the fact that Contarini made himself a copy of the (yet unedited) *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, having done the exercises personally; he helped writing the foundational document of the Jesuits and worked to get the new order approved by Pope Paul III.³⁰ What he had not achieved with the Germans, he managed with the Basque and Spanish bullheads: he saved them from isolation and heresy and integrated them in the Church.

Therefore, a concluding question of this introductory note may be this: Is any of his attitudes – his spirituality, his politics, his Neoplatonic metaphysics – connected with his specific way of addressing the question of the immortality?

7. *Technical Notes on the Edition*

Gasparo Contarini produced two texts on the question of immortality: First, by invitation of his teacher Pomponazzi, he engaged in his analysis of the question; this text was published anonymously in Bologna in 1518 by Pomponazzi as *Tractatus contradictoris*, to which he added his defense, *Apologia*. The first book of the *Apologia* was dedicated specifically to Contarini's critique; books II and III addressed a number of criticisms by other philosophers and theologians. Contarini responded to the defense with a second text, which survived in a manuscript and in print in the 1571 Paris edition of Contarini's works. The manuscript, of unknown date,

²⁹ Cf. Rossi, "Vita activa," 211–26.

³⁰ Ignatius de Loyola, *Exercitia spiritualia*, ed. Iosephus Calveras and Candidus de Dalmases (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 1969) (Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, vol. 100), (introduction) p. 86: "Romae, Cardinalis Gasparus Contarini, factis Exercitiis, ea sibi manu propria exscripsit" (footnote: MI, Scripta, II, 872); p. 87 and 91: the scribe of the so-called Autograph of the Exercitia is identical with the one who wrote the *Quinque Capita or Formula Instituti Societatis Iesu*, which Contarini submitted to Paul III. Cf. Gleason, *Contarini*, 92.