# 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 1600[1] 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; Polišenský 1965; Sousedík1995. 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 Városssová 1987, p. 76.

7 Városssová 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-elector 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 doctrine[2] 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 visitator from 1577. The visitators 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.

*Notitae 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 Lobkowicz Library in Nelahozeves under the registration mark LK IV Gf. 32, suppl. 1. The author hereby extends his thanks to the owners of the Lobkowicz 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.

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.

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

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, 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

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.

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, Epinomis973c.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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