

Averroes' Natural Philosophy and its Reception in the Latin West

Edited by Paul J.J.M. Bakker

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CONTENTS

PAUL J.J.M. BAKKER, <i>Introduction</i>	VII
CRISTINA CERAMI, <i>L'éternel par soi</i>	1
JEAN-BAPTISTE BRENET, <i>Alexandre d'Aphrodise ou le matérialiste malgré lui</i>	37
DAG NIKOLAUS HASSE, <i>Averroes' Critique of Ptolemy and Its Reception by John of Jandun and Agostino Nifo</i>	69
SILVIA DONATI, <i>Is Celestial Motion a Natural Motion?</i>	89
CECILIA TRIFOGLI, <i>The Reception of Averroes' View on Motion in the Latin West</i>	127
EDITH DUDLEY SYLLA, <i>Averroes and Fourteenth-Century Theories of Alteration</i>	141
CRAIG MARTIN, <i>Providence and Seventeenth-Century Attacks on Averroes</i>	193
Bibliography	213
Index Codicum Manu Scriptorum	239
Index Nominum	241

**PROVIDENCE AND
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ATTACKS ON AVERROES**

Craig Martin

1. INTRODUCTION

Averroes' legacy during the seventeenth century reflected the changing intellectual climate of that century yet was not entirely divorced from earlier disputes and movements. Despite the fact that he was no longer representative of the dominant forms of Aristotelianism, Averroes frequently became a point of reference in attacks on Aristotelianism during the seventeenth century. These attacks pointed at him out of a variety of motivations conditioned by developments within new natural philosophies and reformed theology.¹

Some thinkers found Averroes to be an emblem of a version of natural philosophy that was more concerned with terminology than nature. The Oratorian advocate of Cartesian philosophy Bernard Lamy, for example, believed that Aristotle's thought had been contorted so that it was unrecognizable and unintelligible. The blame lay on Averroes. Thus in 1683 he wrote, "Today we understand this Philosopher [Aristotle] in another manner. It is not at all his philosophy that reigns in the schools, it is that of the Arabs."² Of these 'Arabs,' according to Lamy, 'Averroes is the most weighty.'³ According to Lamy, 'the philosophy of the Arabs is merely a form of questioning that applies the prejudices of childhood to the terminology of Aristotle.'⁴

While his attribution of Averroism to French university teachings of the time might be doubted, his attacks on Aristotelianism were characteristic. A number of opponents of traditional university teachings attempted to profit from negative asso-

¹ Some of the material of this article is treated in an expanded form in C. Martin, *Subverting Aristotle: Religion, History, and Philosophy in Early Modern Science*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2014.

² B. Lamy, *Entretiens sur les sciences, dans lesquels on apprend comment l'on doit étudier les sciences, et s'en servir pour se faire l'esprit juste, et le coeur droit*, ed. F. Girbal & P. Clair, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966 (Le mouvement des idées au xvii^e siècle, 5), 254: 'Aujourd'hui on entend ce Philosophe d'une autre manière. Ce n'est point proprement sa Philosophie qui règne dans les Ecoles, c'est celle des Arabes.'

³ Lamy, *Entretiens*, 236: 'Après eux étoient rangés les Commentateurs Arabes, entre lesquels Averroës est le plus considérable.'

⁴ Lamy, *Entretiens*, 255: 'Pour entendre la Philosophie des Arabes, il n'est question que d'appliquer aux termes d'Aristote, les préventions de l'Enfance.'

ciations of Averroes. Johannes De Raei, who combined Cartesian and Aristotelian natural philosophy, prefaced his *Clavis philosophiae naturalis* (1654) with a diatribe in which he concluded Averroes possessed ‘an incredible impiety and most dense ignorance of divine matters.’⁵ Other seventeenth-century scholars, such as Pierre Gassendi and Adrianus Heereboord, found Averroes, because of his adherence to what he considered a literal reading of Aristotle, to be a useful frame of reference in promoting the *libertas philosophandi* (liberty of philosophizing), a concept and trope that held that some universities and other conservative institutions excluded all alternatives to Aristotelianism and as a result eliminated freedom of thought and access to the truth.⁶

These seventeenth-century attacks that linked Aristotelianism to Averroes were in some sense artifacts of a bygone age. While Aristotelianism was still prominent in universities and Jesuit colleges in France, the Netherlands, Italy, and elsewhere, the accepted version of Aristotelianism was not closely aligned to Averroes. Jesuits, for example, carefully deemphasized his views, eliminating them from their lectures and commentaries. The 1591 and 1599 *Rationes studiorum*, which gave guidelines for Jesuit teachings, directed instructors to avoid praising Averroes in cases where he wrote something good. Each of his errors, to the contrary, should be used as a means to lessen his authority.⁷ Reliance on Averroes’ commentaries diminished even in Italian universities, his traditional stronghold, by the end of the sixteenth century.⁸ After being printed in Italy over ten times beginning in the 1470s, Averroes’ collected works were never published again after 1576.⁹

Averroes’ flagging influence is reflected in Theophile Raynaud’s judgment. In his 1653 work *De malis ac bonis libris*, the Jesuit wrote, ‘Now Averroes, having been

⁵ J. De Raei, *Clavis philosophiae naturalis seu Introductio ad naturae contemplationem Aristotelico-Cartesiana*, Leiden: J. & D. Elzevier, 1654, sig. * 3^r: ‘Ut enim iam non dicam de incredibili hominis impietate & crassissima rerum divinarum ignorantia.’ For De Raei’s hostility to Averroes, see M. Grene, ‘Aristotelico-Cartesian Themes in Natural Philosophy: Some Seventeenth-Century Cases,’ *Perspectives on Science*, 1 (1993), 66–87, at 72–75.

⁶ A. Heereboord, *Meletemata philosophica*, Nijmegen: A. Hoogenhuysen, 1665, 330; P. Gassendi, *Opuscula philosophica*, Lyon: L. Anisson & J.B. Devenet, 1658, 111.

⁷ L. Lukács (ed.), *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, 5: *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu (1586, 1591, 1599)*, nova editio penitus retracta, Roma: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1986 (Monumenta historica Societatis Iesu, 129), 283.

⁸ B. Nardi, ‘La fine dell’averroismo,’ in: Id., *Saggi sull’aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XV*, Firenze: Sansoni, 1958 (Studi sulla tradizione Aristotelica nel Veneto, 1), 443–455.

⁹ M. Campanini, ‘Edizioni e traduzioni di Averroè tra XIV e XVI secolo,’ in: J. Hamesse & M. Fattori (eds), *Lexiques et glossaires philosophiques de la Renaissance*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’Etudes Médiévales, 2004 (Textes et études du Moyen Age, 23), 21–42.

tossed from a bridge, has left the schools.’¹⁰ In his opinion, Machiavelli, Cardano, Pomponazzi, and proponents of magic had replaced the threat that Averroes once posed. Less than thirty years later, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz agreed with Raynaud and wrote in the perfect tense about ‘Averroists’ who ‘once’ believed in the theory of double truth, thereby suggesting that they no longer populated lecture halls.¹¹ Writing in the 1690s, Pierre Bayle supported these assessments. Noting that Ramon Llull had tried without success to have Averroes’ commentaries condemned in the fourteenth century, Bayle wrote that there was no longer a need to proscribe his works because, ‘his authority is non-existent, and no one wastes the time to read him.’¹² By the end of the seventeenth century, Averroes might have been irrelevant, yet he still remained etched in the collective imagination.

The real target of seventeenth-century attacks on Averroes was the Aristotelians that held sway in the universities, such as Francisco Suárez, Francisco Toletus, and the Coimbrans in Catholic universities and colleges, or Gisbertus Voetius in the Netherlands.¹³ The piety of their philosophical doctrines, often tied to Thomistic interpretations of Aristotle, however, could not be questioned directly, even if the innovators in natural philosophy were religiously motivated. Rather the rhetorical strategy for anti-Aristotelians included associating the bans of teaching other philosophies with the alleged slavishness and impiety of Averroes. Averroes, a Muslim, long known for unorthodox doctrine and seen by humanists as the epitome of barbarous, poorly translated language, of the improper use of philosophy, and of disregard for Christianity, was ideal for casting doubt on Aristotle’s own piety.

Attacks on Averroes during the late sixteenth century and seventeenth century, at least partially, shifted away from concerns about his psychology. In Italian universities after the middle of the sixteenth century, Averroes’ position on the intellective

¹⁰ T. Raynaud, *Erotemata de malis ac bonis libris*, Lyon: J.A. Huguetan & M.A. Ravaud, 1653, 200: ‘Nunc Averroes in scholis depontanus evasit.’

¹¹ G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, 6. Reihe: *Philosophische Schriften*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1923–, 6/4a: 464.

¹² P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 5th ed., 4 vols, Amsterdam: P. Brunel, 1740, 1: 387, n. 51: ‘Son autorité est nulle, & personne ne perd du tems à le lire.’

¹³ For Voetius’ combining of theology and Aristotelian philosophy see Th. Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637–1650*, Carbondale (IL): Southern Illinois University Press, 1992, 7, and A.J. Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676): sein Theologieverständnis und seine Gotteslehre*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007 (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte, 92). For the character of late scholasticism see D. Des Chene, *Physiologia: Natural Philosophy in Late Aristotelian and Cartesian Thought*, Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press, 1996.

soul was no longer philosophically attractive.¹⁴ René Descartes illustrates these diminishing concerns over the unicity thesis. In the preface to the *Meditations* (1641), Descartes cited the Fifth Lateran Council and its assertions about the primacy of the Church's teachings of the soul as expressed at the Council of Vienne. Yet Descartes did not mention the passage that referred to the condemnation of the view that the soul is '*unica in cunctis hominibus*' but only referred to the Council's concerns with materialist and mortalist positions regarding the soul.¹⁵ While Descartes' concerns with materialist psychology might have been defensive – reflecting the possibility that he might be accused of proposing a mortal soul but not a single passive intellect for all humans – they also show that the philosophical attraction of Averroes' views on the soul had failed to register as a possible solution even though it had enticed many thinkers a century earlier.

The issue that emerged in seventeenth-century attacks on Averroes surrounded God's providence in the sublunary realm. The issue of providence in natural philosophy grew in importance during the sixteenth century. The roots of this growing emphasis are found in Philipp Melancthon's reformulation of Aristotelian natural philosophy, which attempted to make the concept of providence a foundation for investigations into nature.¹⁶ Accordingly, for Lutheran natural philosophers providence played a significant role in explanations of a variety of natural phenomena,

¹⁴ See D.N. Hasse, 'Aufstieg und Niedergang des Averroismus in der Renaissance: Niccolò Tignosi, Agostino, Nifo, Francesco Vimercato', in: J.A. Aertsen & M. Pickavé (eds), *Herbst des Mittelalters? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin [etc.]: De Gruyter, 2004 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 31), 447–473, and Id., 'The Attraction of Averroism in the Renaissance: Vernia, Achillini, Prassicio', in: P. Adamson, H. Baltussen & M.W.F. Stone (eds), *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2004, 131–147.

¹⁵ Ch. Adam, & P. Tannery (eds), *Œuvres de Descartes*, Paris: Vrin, 1996, 7: 3. For the text of the Fifth Lateran Council see H. Jedin, *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973, 605. For various interpretations of the bull that prohibited teaching the mortality or the unicity of the soul, see F. Gilbert, 'Cristianesimo, umanesimo e la bolla *Apostolici Regiminis* del 1513', *Rivista storica italiana*, 79 (1967), 976–990, and E.A. Constant, 'A Reinterpretation of the Fifth Lateran Council Decree *Apostolici Regiminis* (1513)', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33 (2002), 353–379. For the Council of Vienne and its reception, see W. Duba, 'The Souls after Vienne: Franciscan Theologians' Views on the Plurality of Forms and the Plurality of Souls, ca. 1315–1330', in: P.J.M. Bakker, S.W. de Boer & C. Leijenhorst (eds), *Psychology and the Other Disciplines: A Case of Cross-Disciplinary Interaction (1250–1750)*, Leiden [etc.]: Brill, 2012 (Medieval and early modern science, 19), 171–272.

¹⁶ See S. Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melancthon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995 (Ideas in context, 34).

including the nature of living things, meteorological phenomena, and astronomy.¹⁷ Calvinist and Catholic theologians and philosophers soon followed similar paths. The revival of atomist philosophies also mandated a careful touch with the issue of providence, because Epicurus had long been associated with the denial of providence and hence impiety.¹⁸ Lutherans used his name as a synecdoche for this position.¹⁹ As a result, Pierre Gassendi was forced to demonstrate how his revival of Epicureanism could be reconciled with Christian conceptions of God's power and care.²⁰ If atomism was to be revived, a new figure was needed as the symbol of a philosophy without providence. That figure was Averroes.

2. MEDIEVAL AND EARLY RENAISSANCE ORIGINS

Associating Averroes with a sublunary world not directly governed by God predates the seventeenth-century revival of Epicurean philosophy. Pirro Ligorio's reaction to the 1570 earthquake in Ferrara perhaps helps illustrate the shifting weight placed on concerns over Averroes' position on providence. At the time of the earthquake, Ligorio was an antiquarian employed at this time in the House of Este's court. Dismissing papal accusations that the cause of the earthquake was divine punishment against the Ferrarese for accepting the Jews, whom Pius v had recently expelled from the Papal States, Ligorio contended there was another cause for these temblors. The divine punishment was not for protecting Jewish refugees, put rather aimed at 'those who are so bold that ... they deny God's providence, having been deceived by Aristotle, Galen, Averroes, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and other Peripatetics.'²¹ Thus Averroes was a member of a group of thinkers who denied providence by dismissing the role of divine intervention in the sublunary world. According to

¹⁷ See Kusakawa, *The Transformation*, 75–123; C. Methuen, 'Special Providence and Sixteenth-Century Astronomical Observation: Some Preliminary Observations,' *Early Science and Medicine*, 4 (1999), 99–113; and C. Martin, 'The Ends of Weather: Teleology in Renaissance Meteorology,' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 48 (2010), 259–282.

¹⁸ H. Jones, *The Epicurean Tradition*, London [etc.]: Routledge, 2001, 95–116.

¹⁹ R.D. Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, 2, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972, 196.

²⁰ M.J. Osler, 'Providence and Divine Will in Gassendi's Views on Scientific Knowledge,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44 (1983), 549–560.

²¹ P. Ligorio, *Libro di diversi terremoti*, ed. E. Guidoboni, Roma: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2005 (Libri delle antichità, 28), 5: 'sono tanto temerarii che ... negano la Providentia d'Iddio gabbati da Aristotele, da Galeno metafrasta, da Averroi et da Alexandro Aphrodisio et dagli altri peripatetici.'

Ligorio's scenario, that scholars followed Averroes' view that there was no divine providence in the sublunary sphere angered God to such a degree that in order to demonstrate his control of natural particulars he destroyed Ferrara.

Ligorio's view was not isolated. The complaint that Averroes or Aristotle denied providence has a long history, its origins nearly contemporaneous with the introduction of Averroes' thought into the Latin West in the thirteenth century. Bonaventure traced the doctrine to Aristotle himself, arguing that Aristotle's rejection of Plato's Forms led to a denial of providence because it eliminated God's ability to have knowledge of all things. Unnamed 'Arabs' compounded this error, by maintaining a 'fatal necessity' based on the argument that if there is no providence, then the substances moving the orb must be the cause of everything.²² In the *Errors of the philosophers* (ca. 1270), Giles of Rome listed among these errors Averroes' position that 'God does not have any providence over individuals,'²³ presumably in reference to comment 37 of book twelve of the long commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. There, after explaining that the celestial bodies, having been moved by the unmoved mover, cause generation and corruption in the sublunary region, Averroes contended that:

This is the source of God's providence for all existents. He knows them by species, since it is not possible to know them numerically. The view of those who think that God's providence extends to every person is right in a sense and wrong in another. It is right insofar as nobody is in a condition peculiar to him, but (this condition) belongs to the class of this species. If this is so, it is correct to say that God takes care of individuals in this way; but providence for an individual, in which nobody else shares, is something that the divine bounty does not necessitate.²⁴

Here Averroes contended that God has some concern with individuals because all individuals obtain their disposition from their species, which are connected to God,

²² Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, Ad Claras Aquas (Quarrachi): Collegium S. Bonaventura, 1891 (Opera omnia, 5), 360–361. See E. Gilson, *Le Thomisme: Introduction au système de Saint Thomas D'Aquin*, Paris: Vrin, 1927 (Etudes de philosophie médiévale, 3), 26–27.

²³ Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum*, ed. J. Koch, tr. J.O. Riedl, Milwaukee (WI): Marquette University Press, 1944, 25 (nr. 6).

²⁴ Translation (with slight modification) from Ch. Genequand, *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Book Lām*, Leiden [etc.]: Brill, 1984 (Islamic philosophy and theology, 1), 155. For the Latin text, see Averroes, *In Metaphysicam*, in: *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 8, Venezia: Apud Junctas, 1562–1574 (repr. Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1962), 320^v.

yet God does not directly communicate with sublunary individuals. This passage became the source for the widely held view that Averroes did not believe there was providence in the sublunary world.

Thomas Aquinas quoted this passage in his commentary on the first book of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, where he discussed whether there is providence for everything. Thomas divided those who denied providence into two camps, those, like Democritus, who deny all providence, and those, namely Averroes, who admit providence with regard to species but deny that particulars are governed as such. Thomas was careful to distinguish between Averroes' position and Aristotle's, maintaining that despite Averroes' attribution of this view to Aristotle, Aristotle did not in fact hold this position. Moreover, according to Thomas, Averroes' position was not in accordance with Christian belief because it 'removes God's judgment from the works of humankind.'²⁵ Thus Thomas believed Averroes erred twice. He misinterpreted Aristotle and was incorrect about the nature of providence.

Thomas' views informed Renaissance debates. During the middle of the fifteenth century, controversies over the relative merits of Aristotle and Plato erupted among Greek emigrants to Italy. Georgios Gemistos Plethon praised Plato and dismissed Aristotle, and more particularly Aristotelians 'convinced by the claims of the Arab Averroes.'²⁶ Implicitly suggesting that Averroes' interpretation was correct, Plethon pointed to one of Aristotle's failings being his view that 'God [is] the end not of the existence or essence of particular things but only of movement and change,' in general.²⁷ George Trapezuntius countered and contended, following Thomas Aquinas, that Aristotle believed that God's providence extended to sublunary individuals. Cardinal Bessarion, in turn, opposed Trapezuntius in his *In calumniatorem Platonis*, a work that responded, at times viciously, to Trapezuntius' attack on Plethon. Bessarion's defense of Plato took the position that Averroes correctly interpreted Aristotle's view. Aristotle's view, however, was incorrect and its impiety allegedly shows the difficulty of reconciling Aristotle with Christianity and the superiority of Plato over Aristotle.²⁸

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super primum librum Sententiarum*, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ed. P. Mandonnet, Paris: Lethellieux, 1929, 931: 'Sed haec opinio expresse tollit iudicium Dei de operibus hominum.'

²⁶ Plethon, *De differentiis*, 1. For the Greek text, see B. Lagarde, 'Le *De differentiis* de Pléthon d'après l'autographe de la marcienne', *Byzantion*, 43 (1973), 312–343. Translation from C.M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 192.

²⁷ Plethon, *De differentiis*, 3. Translation from Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, 192.

²⁸ J. Bessarion, *In calumniatorem Platonis libri IV*, ed. L. Mohler, Paderborn: Schöningh, 1927, 414–415 (III, 29, 1).

What emerged from the Plato-Aristotle debates was a dual question. The first was philosophical or theological – whether God’s providence extends to particulars. The second was historical or interpretative. Did Averroes correctly interpret Aristotle? Did Aristotle hold that God’s providence was limited to the celestial realms? While there are exceptions, the schema that emerged was perhaps unlikely. The Platonists, Plethon and Bessarion, sided with Averroes over Thomas, believing that Aristotle did hold this position, while the Aristotelian Trapezuntius was dismissive of Averroes. This pattern continued, with some exceptions.

One such exception was the Platonist Marsilio Ficino, who attacked Averroes’ views about providence as well as his interpretation of Aristotle. Associating him with Epicurus, Ficino called Averroes impious because of his lack of awareness that Aristotle ‘claims that individual parts are led back to the good of the order which is in the whole as to their end.’²⁹ While it is unclear how this view undermines Averroes’ view of providence, it is evidence that Ficino believed Averroes misinterpreted Aristotle. Ficino, like many other humanists, made the interpretation of texts central to his attack on Averroes. Arguing that Averroes’ faults were due to textual and linguistic issues, from his reading books that had been ‘perverted rather than converted ... into a barbarous tongue,’ Ficino wrote that the ‘words of Aristotle in Greek contradict Averroes.’³⁰ Averroes’ ignorance of Greek undermined his ability to interpret ancient texts and thus his authority.

Ficino found an ally in Pietro Pomponazzi for his view that Aristotle believed in providence in the sublunary realm. Despite Pomponazzi’s reputation for impiety, he concluded that the view that divine providence extends only to celestial bodies and intelligences is ‘false and incorrectly attributed to Aristotle.’³¹ This interpretation of Aristotle, according to Pomponazzi, derives from Calcidius.³² Calcidius’ interpretation of Aristotle, however, is not in agreement with Averroes, who ‘most openly puts forward a God that is concerned with inferior matters.’³³ Thus he

²⁹ M. Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, tr. M.J.B. Allen & ed. J. Hankins, 1, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2001, 155 (2.97). Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII.10, 1075a10.

³⁰ M. Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, tr. M.J.B. Allen & ed. J. Hankins, 5, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 2005, 9 (15.1.2).

³¹ P. Pomponazzi, *Libri quinque de fato, de libero arbitrio et de praedestinatione*, ed. R. Lemay, Lucani: Thesaurus mundi, 1957 (Thesaurus mundi, 8), 166: ‘Haec autem positio proculdubio sic intellecta ut verba sonant, et in se est falsa, et perperam Aristoteli ascribitur.’

³² Calcidius, *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*, Editio altera, ed. J.H. Waszink, Leiden [etc.]: Brill, 1975 (Plato latinus, 4), 250.

³³ Pomponazzi, *De fato* 165: ‘Apertissime ponit Deum sollicitari circa haec inferiora ut suo modo convenit.’ Pomponazzi cited comments 18, 36, 41, 51, 52 of book XII of the long

disagreed with Ficino's assessment of Averroes, and hence Thomas', Bessarion's, and Plethon's, while agreeing with their views of providence.

3. LATE-RENAISSANCE THEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, AND PHILOLOGY

Ficino's and Pomponazzi's views persuaded some, such as Lucillo Filalteo, who contended that while Aristotle admitted providence, the 'Barbarous Averroes' denied it out of impiety.³⁴ Nevertheless investigations into the history of philosophy – and theology – continued during the sixteenth century. A revived interest in the Church Father's views of Greek philosophy undermined attempts to reconcile Aristotle with certain Christian doctrines. In the 1550s, Guillaume Postel, a man himself accused of impiety by both Calvinists and Catholics, brought forth the teachings of Justin Martyr in an effort to discredit Aristotle's followers, or in his words 'in order to overturn the authority of Aristotle, where it is contrary either to divine authority or reason.'³⁵ According to Postel, his work (and Justin Martyr's as well) was needed because since antiquity 'cohorts of atheists' have used Aristotle's ambiguity to prove that there is no providence in particulars.³⁶ One member of this group was Averroes, whom Postel described as 'the greatest enemy of providence.'³⁷ Postel believed developers of scholastic doctrine, the school at Paris, and sacred authorities 'strip these [divine] truths from Aristotle' while 'he himself lies completely neglected.'³⁸

commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as places where Averroes asserts providence extends to sublunary particulars.

³⁴ L. Filalteo, *In IIII. libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo commentarii*, Venezia: Vincentius Valgrisius, 1565, 418: 'Barbarus Averroes eo impietatis venit ut negaret Divinam providentiam.'

³⁵ G. Postel, *Eversio falsorum Aristotelis dogmatum*, Paris: Sebastianus Nivellius, 1552, 75^{r-v}: 'Licet ipse sanctus Martyr cuius iam totis mille & quadringentis circiter annis scripta Graeca extant, possit abunde sibi satis esse & in evertenda Aristotelis autoritate, ubi aut divinae autoritati aut rationi contraria est.' For Postel's uneasy relations with both Calvinists and the Inquisition, see W.J. Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi: The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel (1510–1581)*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1957 (Harvard Historical monographs, 33), 1–29.

³⁶ Postel, *Eversio*, 4^r.

³⁷ G. Postel, *Liber de causis*, Paris: Sébastien Nivelles, 1552, sig. B 1^r: 'Quum autem vocarit Aben Reis (cuius libentius sententiam meae confirmatoriam tanquam a summo providentiae hoste & recipio & maxime ob Ismaelem, Abrahamique Sanguinis nomen & jura, quam Aristotelis) ...'

³⁸ Postel, *Eversio*, 81^v: 'Ipsa schola Parisiensi aut doctrina scholastica, tota (quatenus ecclesiae fuit in hanc diem cognitu necessaria & intelligibilis) sacrorum autoritas innumeris rationibus in utramque partem discussa, spoliaret Aristotelem illis veritatibus, quae in ipso

In his eyes, scholastics ignore the real historical Aristotle, distorting his writings and siding with Averroes.

Postel's unorthodoxy made him unattractive for many. But his attempt to use the Church fathers to undermine the Catholic Church's appropriation of Aristotle corresponded to others' attacks on Averroes' views of providence. For example, Jacopo Mazzoni, in his 1576 comparison of Plato and Aristotle, after arguing that Plato's thought conformed to Catholicism based on the authority of Church fathers, concluded that Plato's views on providence agree with Scripture, while Averroes' belief that matter is uncreated leads to potential ambiguities on the subject.³⁹ In a similar vein Francesco De' Vieri (1547–1590), a professor at Pisa, noted that Plato's doctrines were well received by the 'Greek Doctors' of the Church.⁴⁰ Among Plato's doctrines that De' Vieri believed conformed to Christianity, but not to Aristotle's thought, was that 'God has providence over all things, in particular over man.'⁴¹ Related doctrines, allegedly both Platonic and Christian, included that God answers prayers, God uses angels to take care of humans, and God protects the weak and punishes the proud.⁴² While De' Vieri believed that at times Plato and Aristotle agreed with each other and with true religion, other Platonists, such as Francesco Patrizi, were far more hostile to Aristotle and his followers.

In his habitually exhaustive manner, Patrizi cited a number of patristic sources, not just Justin Martyr, in his discussion of Aristotle's doctrinal missteps in the 1591 *Nova de universis philosophia*. This work was an attempt, not unlike Bessarion's or Plethon's of the previous century, to show that Platonic philosophy corresponded better to Catholic theology than Aristotelian thought did. In the preface to the 'future' Pope Gregory XIV, he began with the rhetorical question: 'Why are only those parts of Aristotle's philosophy read, which are most injurious to God and the Church?'⁴³ Contending that for the last 400 years 'scholastic theologians' have used 'Aristotelian impieties for the foundations of faith,' he listed Dionysius the

liquidæ erant, eo quod veritas a quocunque dicatur a spiritu sancto est, & semper divina: ut tandem post resolutiones ipsas sacrorum, ipse Aristoteles omnino neglectus iaceret.'

³⁹ J. Mazzoni, *In universam Platonis et Aristotelis philosophiam praeludia, sive de comparatione Platonis et Aristotelis*, ed. S. Matteoli, Napoli: M. D'Auria, 2010 (Storie e testi, 19), 311–325.

⁴⁰ F. De' Vieri, *Vere conclusioni di Platone conformi alla Dottrina Christiana et a quella d'Aristotile*, Firenze: Georgio Marescotti, 1590, 3.

⁴¹ De' Vieri, *Vere conclusioni*, 12: 'Dio ha providenza di tutte le cose, & in particolare dell'huomo.'

⁴² De' Vieri, *Vere conclusioni*, 13–14.

⁴³ F. Patrizi, *Nova de universis philosophia*, Ferrara: Benedictus Mammarellus, 1591, sig. a 3^r: 'Cur Aristotelis philosophiae, solae eae praeleguntur partes, quae magis & Deo, & Ecclesiae suae sunt hostes?'

Areopagite, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Arnobius, Lactantius, Cyril, Basil, Eusebius, Theodoretus, Augustine, and Ambrosius as proponents of Platonism and opponents of Aristotle.⁴⁴

One of the doctrines Patrizi found most problematic was the absence of providence in the sublunary realm. According to Patrizi, Origen wrote, 'Aristotle was worse than Epicurus, because he was impious in divine providence.'⁴⁵ Clement of Alexandria complained that for Aristotle 'providence extended only to the moon.'⁴⁶ Accordingly, Patrizi placed the Church fathers in agreement with Averroes' interpretation that Aristotle limited providence, yet he disagreed with the Aristotelian position. Those in 'the Parisian school,' he wrote, 'explained the universe, imitating Averroes' commentaries,' thereby mixing 'the most sordid' into the Catholic faith.⁴⁷ For Patrizi, the alternative was Plato's thought, which he believed corresponded to Christian theology much better. Ecclesiastical authorities had other ideas, bringing Patrizi to the Inquisition, leading him to revise his writings.⁴⁸

While Patrizi was extreme in his Platonism, his views of Aristotle resonated with those of the most famous Aristotelians of the day. Although some have seen the disclaimers of Pietro Pomponazzi and Cesare Cremonini that they were not writing the truth but rather interpreting Aristotle as ruses to mask their own views, nevertheless, their adherence to Averroes' position need not mark their impiety but rather what they saw as their fidelity to accurate textual interpretation. In the case of the question of sublunary providence, Bessarion's view that Thomas was wrong to assert that Averroes misinterpreted Aristotle was shared not just by Patrizi and De' Vieri, but by Aristotelians as well. Patrizi was friends with Cremonini, both had spent time in Ferrara, and Patrizi even dedicated his *Apologia contra*

⁴⁴ Patrizi, *Nova de universis philosophia*, sig. a 3^r: 'Quadringsis vero ab hinc circiter annis, Scholasticis Theologi, in contrarium sunt annexi, Aristotelicis impietatibus, pro fidei fundamentis sunt usi.'

⁴⁵ Patrizi, *Nova de universis philosophia*, 49^r: 'Origines quoque Aristotelem Epicuro inferiorem dicit esse, quia fuerit in divinam providentiam impius.'

⁴⁶ Patrizi, *Nova de universis philosophia*, 49^r: 'Clemens quoque Alexandrinus Origenis praeceptor, Aristotelem, & Peripateticos incusat ... providentiamque usque ad lunam tantum porrigi.'

⁴⁷ Patrizi, *Nova de universis philosophia*, 49^r: 'Qui e Parisiana schola ... nec solum, in eius philosophiam, magnis laboribus incubuerunt, sed vel partem, vel etiam universam Aven Rois imitati, commentariis, quamvis satis infeliciter, explanarunt. Sed etiam ipsum, invitum, & maxime omnium repugnantem, & contradicte, Christianum effecerunt.'

⁴⁸ For how Patrizi changed the *Nova de universis philosophia* as a result of the Inquisition, see F. Patrizi, *Nova de universis philosophia: Materiali per un'edizione emendata*, ed. A.L. Puliafito Bleuel, Firenze: Olschki, 1993.

calumnias Theodori Angelutii to him.⁴⁹ Their distant philosophical poles made them unlikely companions, even though their approaches to Aristotle are similar. Both wished to understand the true thought of Aristotle, rather than incorporate it into theology. Patrizi thought such reconciliation was impossible for Aristotle and listed 43 separate points where Aristotle disagreed with the Christian religion. Likewise Cremonini considered Aristotle's philosophy to be separate from theology, and in a sense separate from the truth.

In his *Apologia dictorum Aristotelis de quinta caeli substantia* (1616), Cremonini described his method as suppositional. While admitting that his arguments might be repugnant to the Christian faith, they were proven from Aristotle's principles. To illustrate his point, he wrote that it is possible to make a Democritean demonstration, explaining effects based on the principles of atoms and void. Such a demonstration, however, will be false, according to Cremonini. The same is true for Aristotle. Using Aristotelian principles it is possible to make demonstrations that are valid according to the initial suppositions, but not necessarily true. Cremonini wrote, 'I do not say that he simply reached the truth, since he erred when he opines against the faith.'⁵⁰ For some, Cremonini's approach suggests masked impiety or insincerity, but it need not.⁵¹ Bessarion and Patrizi have not received the same accusations for arguing Aristotle is incompatible with faith.

In any case, Cremonini applied this suppositional method to the question of providence. He wrote that Aristotle had 'fallen into error, since it is stated by faith and by the decrees of holy theology that God's providence is administered rightly and truly over all singulars.'⁵² Yet Averroes was in a sense correct, not dogmatically, but as an interpreter of Aristotle. Averroes had rendered the doctrine according to 'good Aristotelian sense,' although scarcely according to the truth. Yet as an interpretation

⁴⁹ F. Patrizi, *Apologia contra calumnias Theodori Angelutii*, Ferrara: Dominicus Mamarelus, 1584, sig. A2^r.

⁵⁰ C. Cremonini, *Apologia dictorum Aristotelis de quinta caeli substantia adversus Xenarum, Ioannem Grammaticum, & alios*, Venezia: Meietti, 1616, 4–5: 'Sic est etiam de Aristotele, quem non dico simpliciter veritatem attigisse, quippe qui erravit quandocumque contra fidem sensit.'

⁵¹ For a discussion of the various ways Cremonini has been interpreted see H.C. Kuhn, 'Cesare Cremonini: Volti e maschere di un filosofo scomodo per tre secoli e mezzo,' in: E. Riondato & A. Poppi (eds), *Cesare Cremonini: Aspetti del pensiero e scritti*, Padova: Accademia galileiana di scienze, lettere ed arti in Padova, 2000 (Historia, 1), 153–168.

⁵² Cremonini, *Apologia*, 78: 'Quinimo magnopere in errorem lapsus, ut constat ex fide, & ex decretis sacrae Theologiae, quibus omnia, & singula Dei providentia administrari recte & vere statuitur. & Averroes: ad bonum sensum nempe Aristotelicum reducendum proponimus, secundum veritatem minime, & secundum eam, quam profitetur, interpretis Aristotelici doctrinam.'

it makes good sense because Aristotle ‘was ignorant of true religion’ and its rewards, believing that philosophy itself was its own prize.⁵³ Cremonini’s approach was similar to that of his predecessors at Padua and Bologna. For example, Alessandro Achillini, a professor at Bologna, wrote in his *De distinctionibus* (1510) that Aristotle and Averroes did not believe that God was concerned with the properties of individuals that result from chance. According to Achillini, ‘this error is quite far from the truth of faith; but in natural philosophy it does not appear to be an error.’⁵⁴ During Cremonini’s lifetime, Francesco Piccolomini (1520–1604), a professor of philosophy at Padua, argued that for Aristotle, providence derives from the necessity of nature and God’s goodness stems from his being a mover of the world, rather than from an ‘influence distinct from him.’⁵⁵ Aristotle’s view, however, is the result ‘only of proceeding through the works of nature (*physica opera*), which is not in agreement with the exact truth, which our theologians explain most broadly.’⁵⁶

4. EARLY MODERN POLEMICS

Cremonini’s and Piccolomini’s assessment of Aristotle was shared by a number of writers, often by those who were unsympathetic to Aristotelianism. The promoter of a novel natural philosophy based on the actions of the qualities hot and cold, Bernardino Telesio (1509–1588), argued that Aristotle’s philosophy was contrary to Scripture because of the absence of his acknowledging God’s ‘knowledge and administration of human affairs.’⁵⁷ A 1585 treatise that promoted the chymical philosophy attributed to Richard Bostocke complained about Aristotle’s ‘heathenish

⁵³ Cremonini, *Apologia*, 79: ‘Aristoteles quidem, votum solvendum iudicavit, putans actionem studiosam sibi ipsi esse praemium, quippe. qui ut ignoravit verae religionis cultum, ita nescivit operibus ex vera religione esse aliud praemium aeternum.’

⁵⁴ A. Achillini, *Opera omnia*, Venezia: Hieronymus Scotus, 1568, 312: ‘& sic error Aristotelis a veritate fidei parum distat. sed in philosophia naturali non apparet error.’

⁵⁵ F. Piccolomini, *Librorum ad scientiam de natura attinentium pars secunda*, Venezia: De Franciscis, 1600, 41^r: ‘Quae Providentia sequitur eminentissimam Dei cognitionem, qua noscens Deus se ut bonum, vult omne, quod est bonum, & sua facultate movendo Coelum, motu totius effundit munera bona in universum orbem, idque facit per motum, non per influxum aliquem ab eo distinctum.’

⁵⁶ Piccolomini, *Librorum ad scientiam de natura attinentium*, 41^r: ‘Hanc itaque puto ego de Providentia fuisse opinionem Aristotelis, qui solum per Physica opera progrediens, exactam veritatem inspicere non valuit, quam cum latissime explicent nostri Theologi.’

⁵⁷ B. Telesio, *De rerum natura iuxta propria principia*, ed. L. de Franco, 2 vols, Cosenza: Casa del Libro, 1965, 1: 20: ‘et rerum humanarum administrationem cognitionemque Deo demit omnem.’

Philosophie' that 'teacheth that God medleth not under the Moone.'⁵⁸ In his view, Aristotelian philosophy, following Averroes, 'doth not admit any Metaphisicall principle in naturall thinges,' which makes men forget God and become atheists.⁵⁹ Sebastian Basso, who wished to reform natural philosophy by basing it on Presocratic principles, wrote in 1621 that on the question of providence, sacred writings, all the doctors of the Church, and all the Presocratics were opposed to 'the Averroists and Aristotle himself.'⁶⁰

Authors from both sides of the confessional divide who wrote on heresy and impiety addressed Averroes' views on providence. Philippe de Mornay (Du Plessis) (1549–1623), a French protestant with Platonist leanings, wrote in his 1605 book *De veritate religionis* that Aristotle's and Averroes' emphasis on nature was impious.⁶¹ Melchior Cano, a Spanish Dominican, wrote in his *De locis theologis* (1563) that the attention given to Aristotle and Averroes in Italy gave birth to the 'pestiferous dogma' about 'divine improvidence around human affairs.'⁶² Having cited Cano and a number of Church fathers, Tommaso Campanella enumerated errors of Aristotle in his *De gentilismo non retinendo* (1636). The second error listed – after the eternity of the world – was that God does not provide for sublunary things.⁶³ Campanella also believed that Averroes understood Aristotle better than Albert the Great and Thomas did, because they tried to alter Aristotle in places where he was clearly against the Catholic faith.⁶⁴

These attacks that struck at Aristotle and Thomas' interpretation of him were met by those who wished to maintain the Thomistic synthesis adopted by Jesuits after the Council of Trent. In a point by point refutation of Cano, the Jesuit Antonio

⁵⁸ R.B. [Richard Bostocke], *Auncient Phisicke*, London: Walley, 1585, sig. ****.

⁵⁹ Bostocke, *Auncient Phisicke*, 7.

⁶⁰ S. Basso, *Philosophiae naturalis adversus Aristotelem libri xii*, Genève: Petrus de la Rouière, 1621, 221: 'Hactenus de secunda quaestione, in qua, sacra Scriptura revelante, concordantibus universis Ecclesiae doctoribus, summo Veterum omnium consensu, adversus Averroistas, ipsumque Aristotelem.'

⁶¹ Ph. de Mornay (Du Plessis), *De veritate religionis Christianae, adversus atheos, Epicureos, ethnicos, Iudaeos, Mahumedistas, & caeteros infideles*, Leiden: Andries Clouck, 1605, 378.

⁶² M. Cano, *De locis theologis libri xii*, Salamanca: Mathias Gastius, 1563, 312: 'Audivimus enim Italos esse quosdam, qui suis & Aristoteli & Averroi tantum temporis dant, quantum sacris litteris ii, qui maxime sacra doctrina delectantur; tantum vero fidei, quantum Apostolis & Evangelistis ii, qui maxime sunt in Christi doctrinam religiosi. Ex quo nata sunt in Italia pestifera illa dogmata de mortalitate animi, & divina circa res humanas improvidentia, si verum est, quod dicitur.'

⁶³ T. Campanella, *De gentilismo non retinendo*, Paris: Dubray, 1636, 22

⁶⁴ Campanella, *De gentilismo*, 7–8.

Possevino (1534–1611) cited book x of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1179a24–25) as evidence that Aristotle believed that Gods have some concern over human affairs.⁶⁵ Francisco Toletus (1532–1596) maintained that the Averroists had misinterpreted Aristotle on this question,⁶⁶ although his fellow Jesuit, Pedro da Fonseca (1528–1599) thought Aristotle’s explanations of providence were inadequate.⁶⁷ The Jesuit Antoine Sirmond (1591–1643) made the question of the immortality of the soul depend on the question of God’s providence, arguing that any God that provided over human affairs would necessarily also provide for the afterlife.⁶⁸ Jean de Silhon (1596–1667) held a similar view and maintained in his 1626 *Les deux vérités* that God’s goodness requires that the human soul be immortal.⁶⁹ Mersenne’s *Questions on Genesis* (1623) affirmed Thomas’ views on providence and linked Averroes’ view on providence not to Aristotle but to Cardano and impiety in general. Although a year later in his *La vérité des sciences* he wrote that *De mundo*, which he admitted to not knowing if Aristotle had truly written it, ‘had almost prevented him from believing that Aristotle had denied that God’s providence extend to the smallest things.’⁷⁰

Lutherans also attacked Aristotelians who limited providence in an effort to promote a version of Aristotelianism that was in concord with Christianity. The Lutheran physician and polemicist Nikolaus Taurellus (1547–1606) wrote a diatribe against Andrea Cesalpino (1519–1603) in which he maintained that Cesalpino’s view that God was a speculative intelligence rather than an active one was obscure, barbarous, impious, in error, and uninformed by the meaning of the Greek text. For Taurellus, God’s concern over the quotidian was proved by Scripture; and, moreover

⁶⁵ A. Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta de ratione studiorum in Historia, in Disciplinis, in salute omnium procuranda*, 2 vols, Roma: Domenico Basa, 1593, 2: 92.

⁶⁶ F. Toletus, *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in octo libros Aristotelis De physica auscultatione*, Venezia: Apud Junctas, 1580, 61^r, 242^v.

⁶⁷ P. da Fonseca, *Commentaria in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae*, 2 vols, Lyon: Giunta, 1597, 1: 22.

⁶⁸ A. Sirmond, *De immortalitate animae demonstratio physica & Aristotelica*, Paris: Michel Soly, 1635, 46.

⁶⁹ J. de Silhon, *Les deux vérités de Silhon. L’une de dieu, et de sa providence, L’autre de l’immortalité de l’ame*, ed. J.R. Armogathe, Paris: Fayard, 1991 (Corpus des œuvres de philosophie en langue française), 143–158.

⁷⁰ M. Mersenne, *Quaestiones celeberrimae in Genesim, cum accurata textus explicatione*, Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1623, 399; Id., *La vérité des sciences. Contre les sceptiques ou pyrrhoniens*, Paris: Toussaint du Bray, 1625 (repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann 1969), 121: ‘La seconde erreur d’Aristote se voit dans le 6. chapitre de son livre du monde (encore que tous ne demeurent pas d’accord s’il a fait ce livre) dans lequel il dit que Dieu ne se messe pas des petites choses de ce monde.’

was also Aristotle's opinion.⁷¹ Despite the fact that Cesalpino, a professor of botany and medicine as well as Clement VIII's personal physician, did not directly address Aristotle's view on providence, his view of the prime mover and his position that lower intelligences, or demons, acted in the sublunary regions rather than God himself, made him an emblem for impiety connected to Aristotle. The Dutch theologian Gerard Johannes Vossius (1577–1649) linked Cesalpino's view to Aristotle's, and the English theologian Samuel Parker (1640–1688) thought Cesalpino was an example of how Aristotelian principles could lead to impious philosophy.⁷²

Others defended Aristotle by countering the Platonists' polemics. In his 1645 *De pietate Aristotelis*, Fortunio Liceti (1577–1657), a professor at Padua, described Patrizi as an 'enraged enemy' of Aristotle. Liceti contended that correspondences between Aristotle's theology and the Old Testament could be uncovered through a reading of the *De mundo*, a work now generally considered spurious, and that by Liceti's time had been rejected as inauthentic by Julius Caesar Scaliger and Daniel Heinsius.⁷³ In Liceti's view *De mundo* shows that Thomas was correct in believing that Aristotle held that there is providence in human affairs (397b30–398a1). Moreover, according to Liceti, Aristotle came to this view because he had read Scripture.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, in a sense Averroes' view prevailed. The historical acrobatics of Liceti convinced few, and leading philologists pointed out differences between Christianity and Aristotle's thought. For example, Guillaume Du Val's synopsis of the *Metaphysics*, which accompanied Isaac Causabon's and Giulio Pacius' 1619 Greek edition of Aristotle's complete works, interpreted Aristotle as believing that God does not see human actions. Therefore Aristotle was impious because he 'denied divine providence and justice.'⁷⁵ Du Val's judgment, however, was not part of a

⁷¹ N. Taurellus, *Alpes caesae. Hoc est, Andr. Caesalpini Itali, monstrosa & superba dogmata, discussa & excussa*, Frankfurt: Palthenius, 1597, 31.

⁷² G.J. Vossius, *De theologia gentili, et physiologia Christiana; sive De origine ac progressu idololatriae; deque naturae mirandis, quibus homo adducitur ad deum, libri ix*, Amsterdam: Joan Blaeu, 1668, 267; S. Parker, *Disputationes de deo, et providentia divina*, London: M. Clark, 1678, 67–68.

⁷³ See J. Kraye, 'Daniel Heinsius and the Author of *De Mundo*', in: A.C. Dionisotti, A. Grafton & J. Kraye (eds), *The Uses of Greek and Latin. Historical Essays*, London: The Warburg Institute, 1988 (Warburg Institutes surveys and texts, 16), 171–197; and Ead., 'Aristotle's God and the Authenticity of *De Mundo*: An Early Modern Controversy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 28 (1990), 339–358.

⁷⁴ F. Liceti, *De pietate Aristotelis erga deum & homines libri duo*, Udine: Schiratti, 1645, 5, 69–70, 88.

⁷⁵ G. Du Val, *Aristotelis operum ... accessit synopseos analyticae universae doctrinae peripateticae*, 2 vols, Paris: Typis Regiis, 1619, 2: 122–123: 'Hinc enim manifeste colligeretur,

program to undermine Aristotelianism or systematic theology. Elsewhere he urged his readers to ‘marvel at the theology of this pagan man [i.e., Aristotle]’ because of its similarities with Christian thought.⁷⁶ While there is some element of the desire to reconcile Christianity with ancient philosophy in Du Val’s synopsis, his conclusions depended on textual and philological evidence and not on readings of Thomas or Averroes, as is fitting for an aide to a Greek edition of Aristotle. Yet on this one point regarding providence, his interpretation of Aristotle’s Greek coincided with Averroes’ reading.

Promoters of new natural philosophies, agreeing with the philologists and Averroes, and ignoring Thomas’s interpretations, demonized Aristotle’s view on providence. Francis Bacon thought it was a sign of impiety that Aristotle’s nature becomes the final cause of his physics, leaving ‘no further need of God’ and an absence of divine providence in his explanations of the natural world.⁷⁷ Following Bacon’s line of thought, Samuel Parker wrote in 1678 that those who followed Aristotle ‘built their theology on the foundations of his impiety.’⁷⁸ Joseph Glanvill (1636–1680) combined these contentions in *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*, printed in 1661. He contended that, ‘the *Aristotelian Philosophy* is in some things *impious*, and *inconsistent with Divinity*’ [his emphasis], writing that in the Peripatetic system, ‘God was idle.’⁷⁹ John Webster’s 1654 critique of universities noted that Aristotle wrote according to ‘Diabolical’ instinct and ‘denies in the twelfth of his *Metaphysics* that God takes care of minute, and small things.’⁸⁰ The Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688), despite preferring Aristotle to Democritus and Descartes, pointed out the superiority of Plato to Aristotle, writing, ‘we cannot deny that Aristotle hath been taxed by sundry of the ancients, Christians and others, for not so explicitly asserting these two things, the immortality of human souls and providence over men, as he ought to have done, and his master Plato did.’⁸¹

Deum non videre actiones nostras ... At haec asserere impium est, & divinam providentiam iustitiamque tollere.’

⁷⁶ Du Val, *Aristotelis operum*, 2: 122: ‘Mirare, Lectori, hominis Ethnici Theologiam.’

⁷⁷ F. Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, in: *The Works of Francis Bacon*, 4, ed. J. Spedding, R.L. Ellis & D.D. Heath, London: Longman, 1860 (repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1962), 363–365.

⁷⁸ Parker, *Disputationes*, iv–v: ‘Cum enim unum *Aristotelem* secuti sint, ipsis Impietatis fundamentis Theologiam suam extruxerunt’ [his emphasis].

⁷⁹ J. Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*, London: Henry Eversden, 1661, 183–184.

⁸⁰ J. Webster, *Academiarum examen, or, the Examination of Academies*, London: Giles Calvert, 1654, 1–2.

⁸¹ R. Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe: Wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism Is Confuted*, 2 vols, Andover (MA): Gould and Newman, 1837, 1: 115.

Some living in Catholic countries also described Aristotle in similar negative terms. Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) expressed disbelief in the great weight that some thinkers placed in Aristotle's views. The efforts made to determine what Aristotle thought about a question of faith is a sign of an 'inversion of reason [that] certain men are shocked in philosophy we speak differently from Aristotle, but not troubled if we speak differently from the Gospel, the Fathers, and the Councils in theology.'⁸² Claude Bérigard (1578–1663) in his *Circulus pisanus* (1643) described Aristotle as impious for his belief in the limited role of the prime mover below the celestial spheres.⁸³ Leibniz wrote in comments on Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* that the 'providence of Aristotle is above the moon,' and contrasted his beliefs with the Mu'tazilites, whom he found similar doctrinally to Christians.⁸⁴ Consolidating this idea was Pierre Bayle, who, having noted that Aristotle clashed with Christianity on the 'points of the greatest consequence,' described two such points: the eternity of the universe, and that providence did not 'extend itself to sublunary beings.'⁸⁵ Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle became not just accepted as an accurate textual reading, but also as a tool in polemics against Aristotelianism. By attributing to Aristotle an impious view of providence, the alternative philosophies, whether Cartesian or corpuscular, Mosaic or mechanical, could better present themselves as the true philosophy.

5. CONCLUSION

Attacking Averroistic, and thereby Aristotelian, views of providence was an opportunistic tactic for discrediting an established philosophical opponent. It was, however, more than just a tactic. Developing a natural philosophy that promoted acceptable theories of providence was central to many early modern innovators in natural philosophy. Descartes, for example, explicitly maintained that God's providence

⁸² N. Malebranche, *The Search after Truth [Recherche de la vérité]*, tr. Th.M. Lennon & P.J. Olscamp, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 (Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy), 145.

⁸³ C. Bérigard, *Circulus pisanus, de veteri & peripatetica philosophia*, Udine: Schiratti, 1643, 3.

⁸⁴ Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften*, 6/4c: 2493: 'Aristoteli providentia est supra lunam.'

⁸⁵ Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, 1: 327 'Il faut rendre cette justice à ses plus aveugles Sectateurs, qu'ils l'ont abandonné dans les choses où il a choqué le Christianisme. Ces choses sont de la dernière conséquence, puis qu'il a soutenu l'éternité de l'Univers, & qu'il n'a point cru que la Providence s'étendit sur les Etres sublunaires.'

extended to particular actions of humans.⁸⁶ Robert Boyle (1627–1691) argued that the mechanical philosophy was not incompatible with the proposition ‘That God governs the World he has made.’⁸⁷ For Boyle, this governing of the world extended not just to human beings but also to ‘such Small and Abject Ones, as Flies, Ants Fleas, &c.’⁸⁸ These views he contrasted to ‘many (especially *Aristotelian*) Deists’ [his emphasis], who do not even credit God with creating the universe.⁸⁹ Similarly, Robert Hooke (1635–1703) used his microscope in an effort to give experiential evidence for Boyle’s view that ‘the Wisdom and Providence of the All-wise Creator is not less shewn in these small despicable creatures, Flies and Moths.’⁹⁰ For Hooke, the microscope offered empirical evidence for God’s providence throughout the sublunary world.

Finally, the culmination of the scientific revolution in the person of Isaac Newton (1643–1727) saw not the promotion of deism but the endorsement of a version of God at odds with Aristotelianism. Newton opposed scholastic philosophy, which he believed had corrupted Christianity by combining Scripture with the metaphysics of heathen philosophers, including Aristotle.⁹¹ In the words of Alexandre Koyré:

Newton’s God is not merely a ‘philosophical’ God, the impersonal and uninterested First Cause of the Aristotelians ... He is – or, in any case Newton wants him to be – the Biblical God, the effective Master and Ruler of the world created by him.⁹²

⁸⁶ C.P. Ragland, ‘Descartes on Divine Providence and Human Freedom,’ *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 87 (2005), 159–188.

⁸⁷ *The Works of Robert Boyle*, ed. M. Hunter & E.B. Davis, 11, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000, 300.

⁸⁸ *The Works of Robert Boyle*, 11: 300.

⁸⁹ *The Works of Robert Boyle*, 11: 301.

⁹⁰ R. Hooke, *Micrographia, or Some physiological descriptions of minute bodies made by magnifying glasses: With observations and inquiries thereupon*, London: John Martyn, 1665, 198.

⁹¹ I. Newton, *Drafts on the History of the Church* (section 5), ms Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Yahuda 15.5, 97^r, URL: <<http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/diplomatic/THEM00222>>. Cf. R. Iliffe, ‘Those “Whose Business It Is to Cavill:” Newton’s Anti-Catholicism,’ in: J.E. Force & R.H. Popkin (eds), *Newton and Religion: Context, Nature, and Influence*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999 (International archives of the history of ideas, 161), 97–119, at 106.

⁹² A. Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968 (The Hideyo Noguchi lectures, 7), 225. For Newton’s views on providence see: D. Kubrin, ‘Newton and the Cyclical Cosmos: Providence and the Mechanical Philosophy,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28 (1967), 325–346; I.B. Cohen, ‘Isaac Newton’s *Principia*, the Scriptures, and the Divine Providence,’ in: S. Morgenbesser, P.C. Suppes & M.G. White (eds),

Thus Newton fashioned his system of the universe so that God's rule extends equally everywhere. In the General Scholium that accompanied the second edition of the *Principia*, Newton described God 'not as the world soul but as lord of all,' who is omniscient and omnipresent. Newton held that God 'rules all things, and he knows all things that happen,' thereby rejecting the idea of 'a god without dominion, providence, and final causes.'⁹³ Furthermore, the elimination of the division between celestial and sublunary regions in his physics entailed the incoherence of Averroes' alleged position that God's providence only extended to the planetary orbs. Just as the laws of nature are universal for Newton, God's rule is uniform, affecting the terrestrial and celestial according to the same measure. Newton's natural philosophy solved a number of outstanding problems in natural philosophy. Among them was the development of a system that was in accord with his vision of the divine that included God's providence emanating to terrestrial individuals.

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⁹³ I. Newton, *The Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, tr. I.B. Cohen & A. Whitman, Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 1999, 940–942.

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MS Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College Library, 513 93
MS Cambridge, Peterhouse Library, 157 92
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- MS Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Dep. Erf., CA F. 349 92
- MS Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, Yahuda 15.5 211n91
- MS Kassel, Gesamthochschul-, Landes- und Murhardsche Bibliothek, Phys. 2° 11
92
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MS Oxford, New College Library, 285 92
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- MS Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 3493 92
MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 14698 92
MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 16297 92
- MS Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, L.III.21 91
- MS Todi, Biblioteca Comunale, 23 107n63

INDEX NOMINUM

All names mentioned in the book, with the exception of Averroes, are included in this index. Medieval authors (before ca. 1500) are alphabetically listed according to their first names, modern authors according to their last names.

- Abū Bišr Mattā 74, 74n23
 Accattino, P. 42n17, 44n24, 45n27, 46n27, 47n30, 47n32, 50n37, 51n40
 Achillini, A. 88, 205, 205n54
 Adam, Ch. 196n15
 Adamson, P. 45n25, 196n14
 Aertsen, J.A. 1n2, 38n5, 150n28, 196n14
 Aho, T. 146n17
 Aiello, A. 115n80
 Al-Ahwānī, F. 55n46
 Al-'Alawī, Ğ. 2, 2n3, 18n48
 Al-Biṭrūġī x, 71, 72, 72n8, 73–75, 77, 77n35, 83, 86
 Al-Fargānī 82
 Al-Fārābī viii, 1–3, 3n5, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16, 17, 17n45, 18, 18n48, 19, 19n49, 20, 20n50, 21–23, 23n56, 24, 25, 28, 29, 29n67, 29n69, 30, 31n71, 32, 33, 35, 37, 157, 157n49, 167n74, 171n80
 Al-Ġazālī 60, 151, 151n33, 184, 184n100
 Al-Kindī 4
 Albert of Brudzewo 88
 Albert the Great xi, 52n41, 53n42, 76, 77, 77n35, 77n36, 78, 86, 87, 91, 101, 101n45, 102, 102n47, 102n48, 103, 152, 157n52, 206
 Alexander of Aphrodisias viii, ix, 2, 3n5, 12, 13, 13n26, 13n28, 13n29, 14, 14n30, 15, 15n37, 16, 18, 19, 19n49, 29, 29n67, 32n73, 33, 37, 40, 40n12, 41, 41n14, 41n15, 41n17, 42, 42n19, 42n20, 42n21, 43, 43n23, 44, 44n23, 44n24, 45, 45n25, 46, 46n27, 47, 47n30, 47n31, 47n32, 48, 48n33, 49n35, 49n36, 50, 50n37, 50n38, 51, 51n40, 52, 53, 53n42, 54, 55, 55n45, 55n48, 56, 57, 59–62, 64, 65, 65n71, 65n74, 66, 66n75, 67, 148, 150, 197, 197n21
 Allen, M.J.B. 200n29, 200n30
 Ambrosius 203
 Anaxagoras 143, 148, 150, 154, 154n43, 165, 165n67
 Aouad, M. 42n18
 Aris, M.-A. 119n91, 161n59
 Aristotle vii–xii, xiv, 1–3, 5, 5n11, 6n12, 7, 8, 13, 14, 14n31, 14n32, 15n36, 20, 20n50, 22, 23, 23n56, 24, 25, 25n57, 25n58, 25n59, 26, 27n62, 27n64, 28, 28n65, 28n66, 30, 31, 31n71, 31n73, 32, 32n73, 32n74, 33–40, 40n11, 44, 46–49, 49n35, 49n36, 52, 53, 57, 59, 62, 62n61, 63, 65, 66, 66n76, 67n76, 69, 70, 73, 74, 77, 78, 81, 84, 85n63, 89, 89n1, 89n2, 89n3, 90, 90n4, 90n5, 90n6, 91, 93, 93n10, 93n11, 93n12, 94, 94n13, 94n14, 94n15, 94n16, 94n17, 94n18, 95, 95n19, 95n20, 97, 99, 100, 102, 103, 103n51, 105, 106, 106n60, 108n64, 110n71, 111, 116n82, 118n89, 119, 119n91, 120, 121n95, 122, 123,

- Aristotle (*Cont.*) 123n101, 123n103,
124, 127, 128, 128n4, 128n5, 129n6,
130, 135, 136n22, 137, 137n25, 138n26,
139, 141, 141n2, 142, 143, 144n14,
146–151, 153, 154, 154n41, 155n44,
156, 156n47, 157–165, 165n67, 166,
166n68, 166n69, 167, 168, 168n75,
169, 169n76, 170n77, 171, 171n78,
171n80, 172, 175, 175n86, 176n86, 177,
177n89, 178n90, 179, 179n91, 179n92,
180, 180n94, 181, 182n97, 182n98, 183,
183n98, 183n99, 184, 184n100, 185,
185n103, 185n104, 186, 187, 187n107,
188, 188n110, 189, 189n113, 189n114,
190, 190n115, 190n116, 191, 191n116,
192, 193, 193n4, 194, 195, 197, 197n21,
198–200, 200n29, 200n31, 201,
201n33, 201n35, 201n37, 201n38,
202, 202n38, 202n43, 203, 203n45,
203n46, 204, 204n50, 205, 205n56,
206, 206n60, 206n62, 207, 207n70,
208, 209, 209n78, 210, 210n84,
211
- Aristotle of Mytilene 47, 48
- Armogathe, J.R. 207n69
- Arnobius 203
- Arnzen, R. 64n70, 65n73, 72n9, 72n12,
73n14, 73n15, 101n43
- Augustine 203
- Avicenna x, 12, 20, 20n50, 21, 44,
45n26, 95, 96, 96n22, 96n23, 96n24,
96n25, 97, 97n26, 98–101, 101n46,
102, 105, 114n78, 116, 122, 124, 151
- Bacon, F. 209, 209n77
- Badawī, ‘A. 45n25, 45n26, 46n27,
50n38
- Bakker, P.J.J.M. 175n86, 196n15
- Balme, D. 63n67
- Baltussen, H. 45n25, 196n14
- Barbotin, E. 49n36
- Barker, P. 88n69
- Barnes, J. 156n47
- Basil of Caesarea 203
- Basso, S. 206, 206n60
- Bayle, P. 195, 195n12, 210, 210n85
- Bazán, B.C. 45n27, 92, 119n91, 161,
161n59, 161n60, 162, 162n61, 162n62,
163n63, 178
- Beck, A.J. 195n13
- Bergeron, M. 42n17, 42n19, 42n20,
42n21, 43n23, 44n23, 44n24,
49n36
- Bernard of Verdun 76, 79, 79n42, 84,
86
- Bertolacci, A. 74n23
- Bessarion, J. 199, 199n28, 200–204
- Boer, S.W. de 150n29, 196n15
- Bonaventure 107n62, 151, 198, 198n22
- Bordt, M. 70n2
- Bostocke, R. 205, 206n58, 206n59
- Bouwsma, W.J. 201n35
- Bouyges, M. 60n58, 63n66, 70n4
- Boyle, R. 211, 211n87, 211n88, 211n89
- Brenet, J.-B. ix, xiii, 2n2, 37, 37n1,
37n2, 38, 38n4, 38n5, 4041n16,
67n77, 79n45, 80n46, 99n32, 103n49,
119n91, 120, 120n92, 121n97
- Bridges, J.H. 174n82, 174n83
- Briggs, C.F. 134n18
- Brown, S. 142n5
- Bruns, I. 42n17, 42n19, 42n20, 42n21,
43n23, 44n23
- Burke, R.B. 174n82, 174n83
- Bérigard, C. 210, 210n83
- Calcidius 200, 200n32
- Calippus 69, 70, 77, 77n35
- Callus, D.A. 107n61
- Calma, D. 92, 115n80, 116n81, 125

- Campanella, T. 206, 206n63, 206n64
 Campanini, M. 194n9
 Cano, M. 206, 206n62
 Caramello, P. 103n49
 Cardano, G. 195, 207
 Carmody, F.J. 71n6, 72n8, 72n12,
 101n43
 Caston, V. 42n17, 44n24
 Cathala, M.-R. 78n38
 Causabon, I. 208
 Cerami, C. viIn2, viII, 32n74, 32n75
 Cesalpino, A. 207, 208
 Charles, D. 69n1
 Charlton, W. 95n19
 Chase, M. 7n15, 12n23, 12n24, 21n51
 Clagett, M. 149n26
 Clement of Alexandria 203, 203n46
 Clement VIII (Pope) 208
 Cobetto Ghiggia, P. 46n27
 Cohen, I.B. 173n81, 211n92, 212n93
 Constant, E.A. 196n15
 Conti, A.D. 132n12
 Cooper, J.M. 63n67
 Copernicus, N. 71
 Cos, J. 103n49
 Craven Nussbaum, M. 63n67
 Crawford, F.S. 38n6, 145n14
 Cremonini, C. 203, 204, 204n50,
 204n51, 204n52, 205, 205n53
 Crosby, H.L., Jr. 149n26
 Cudworth, R. 209, 209n81
 Cyril of Alexandria 203

 Dales, R.C. 90n7, 101n45, 103n49,
 107n62, 107n63
 Davidson, H.A. 1n1, 4n6, 6n12, 21,
 21n51, 21n52, 21n53, 25, 29n69, 37n3,
 61
 Davis, E.B. 211n87
 De Franco, L. 205n57

 De Libera, A. 39n8, 39n9, 40n13,
 51n38, 53n42
 De Mornay (Du Plessis), Ph. 206,
 206n61
 De Raei, J. 194, 194n5
 De Silhon, J. 207, 207n69
 Dekker, D.-J. 145n15
 Delorme, F.M. 91, 152n38
 Democritus 65n74, 199, 209
 Des Chene, D. 195n13
 Descartes, R. 196, 209, 210
 De' Vieri, F. 202, 202n40, 202n41,
 202n42, 203
 Dhanani, A. 153n40
 Diels, H. 6n12
 Dionisotti, A.C. 208n73
 Dionysius the Areopagite (Ps.) 203
 Donati, S. IX, X, XI, 93n9, 104n57,
 105n58, 115n80, 121n96, 122n98,
 134n18
 Donini, P. 42n17
 Dreyer, M. 119n91, 161n59
 Druart, Th.-A. 40n13, 145n14
 Du Val, G. 208, 208n75, 209, 209n76
 Duba, W. 196n15
 Dufour, R. 42n17, 42n19, 42n20,
 42n21, 43n23, 44n23, 44n24, 49n36
 Duhem, P. 71n6, 76, 76n34, 77n36,
 79n42, 83, 83n55, 83n56, 83n58,
 83n59, 84n60, 151, 151n34
 Dyke, C. van 134n18
 D'Ancona, C. 37n3, 64n69

 Eardley, P. 134n18
 Ebbesen, S. 1n2
 Ellis, R.L. 209n77
 Endress, G. viIn2, 1n2, 7n15, 38n5,
 64n69, 71n6, 72n11, 72n12, 95n21
 Epicurus 65n74, 197, 200, 203, 203n45
 Etzkorn, G. 154n41

- Euclid 164, 174n83
 Eudoxus of Cnidos 69, 69n1, 70, 77n35, 78, 78n39
 Eusebius of Caesarea 203
 Evans, J. 69n1

 Falcon, A. 13n30, 14n30, 14n35, 15n36, 15n37
 Fattori, M. 194n9
 Fazzo, S. 13n27, 65n71
 Federici Vescovini, G. 7n15
 Ficino, M. 200, 200n29, 200n30, 201
 Filalteo, L. 201, 201n34
 Finnegan, J. 45n26, 46n27
 Fonseca, P. da 207, 207n67
 Force, J.E. 211n91
 Frede, M. 69n1
 Freudenthal, G. 61, 61n59, 64n69

 Galen 60, 197, 197n21
 Gannagé, E. 7n15
 Gassendi, P. 194, 194n6, 197
 Gauthier, R.-A. 52n41
 Gaye, R.K. 156n47
 Genequand, Ch. viiIn2, 13n27, 29n67, 33n76, 65n72, 70n4, 73n17, 74n19, 74n22, 75n28, 198n24
 Gensler, M. 146n16
 Geoffrey of Aspell 92, 93n9, 105, 105n58, 106, 106n60, 107, 107n63, 108, 108n66, 109, 109n67, 109n68, 109n69, 110, 110n70, 110n71, 125
 Geoffroy, M. 37n3, 45n26, 55n44, 57, 57n51, 59n56, 60n58, 63n66
 Georges, S. 69n1
 Gerard of Cremona 46n27
 Geyer, B. 77n35
 Gieben, S. 107n63
 Giermek, J. 154n41
 Gilbert, F. 196n15

 Giles of Rome 134, 134n18, 151, 157, 158, 158n54, 159, 159n55, 159n56, 160n57, 173, 198, 198n23
 Gill, M.L. 90n7
 Gillispie, C.C. 71n7
 Gilson, E. 198n22
 Glanvill, J. 209, 209n79
 Glasner, R. viiIn2, viii, xiii, 1n2, 2, 2n4, 5n9, 13n28, 21n51, 22, 22n55, 29n69, 31n72, 147, 147n18, 147n19, 147n20, 148, 148n21, 148n22, 148n23, 148n24, 149–151, 151n31, 151n32, 151n34, 153, 153n39, 154, 154n42, 155, 157n50, 163, 184, 185n102, 191
 Glick, Th. 79n42
 Goddu, A. 164, 164n64
 Goldstein, B.R. 70n3, 72n8
 Gotthelf, A. 63n67
 Goulet, R. 7n15, 42n18
 Grafton, A. 208n73
 Graham, D.W. 95n20
 Grant, E. 76, 76n34, 79n42, 149n26, 175n85
 Green, R. 154n41
 Gregory of Rimini xii, xiii, 141–143, 143n10, 143n11, 143n12, 144, 144n13, 144n14, 145, 146, 161, 163, 164
 Gregory xiv (Pope) 202
 Grellard, C. 149n27, 150n29, 153n39
 Grene, M. 194n5
 Guerlac, H. 212n92
 Guldentops, G. 59n56
 Gutas, D. 38n5, 45n25
 Gál, G. 154n41
 Günz, A. 42n18

 Haaparanta, L. 146n17
 Haase, W. 44n24
 Hackett, J.M.G. 83n55
 Hamesse, J. 194n9

- Hankins, J. 200n29, 200n30
Hanna, S.A. 7n16
Hardie, R.P. 156n47
Hartmann, P. 79n42
Hasnawi, A. 7n15, 12n23, 13n27,
13n29, 61n59
Hasse, D.N. IX, X, 71n5, 79n45, 196n14
Hayduck, M. 45n25
Heath, D.D. 209n77
Heereboord, A. 194, 194n6
Heiberg, J.L. 14n33, 70n3
Heinsius, D. 208, 208n73
Hetherington, N.S. 70n3
Hipparchus of Nicaea 73
Hissette, R. 118n89
Hogendijk, J.P. 71n6
Honnefelder, L. 119n91, 161n59
Hooke, R. 211, 211n90
Hossfeld, P. 77n36, 101n45, 102n47
Howlett, D.R. 75n27
Hubien, H. 171n79
Hugonnard-Roche, H. 76n34
Hunt, R.W. 107n61
Hunter, M. 211n87
Hussey, E. 128n4
Hyman, A. 95n21, 97n27, 98n28,
98n29, 98n30, 98n31, 99, 99n32,
99n33, 99n34, 99n36, 100, 100n37,
100n38, 100n39, 100n40, 100n41
- Ibn Bāğğa X, 4, 12, 20, 20n50, 21, 55,
71, 171n80
Ibn Ṭufayl X, 71
Ibn al-Hayṭam X, 71, 82, 82n52, 83,
83n57, 83n58, 85, 87
Iliffe, R. 211n91
- Jacob, M.C. 212n92
Jannone, A. 49n36
Janos, D. 13n27
- Javelli, C. 169n76
Jebb, S. 173n82
Jedin, H. 196n15
John Blund 106, 107n61
John Buridan 76, 79, 79n43, 79n44,
80, 84, 86, 171, 171n79, 175, 175n85,
175n86
John Dumbleton 160, 164, 175
John Duns Scotus 146, 151, 160, 165,
165n66, 165n67, 166, 166n68,
166n69, 166n70, 166n71, 166n72, 167,
167n73, 168, 168n75, 169, 169n76,
189, 190, 191n116
John Philoponus 3n5, 4, 6, 6n12, 7,
7n15, 8, 10, 10n20, 11, 12, 16, 17,
17n45, 18, 18n48, 19, 19n49, 20–24,
29, 45n25, 99
John of Jandun X, 69, 76, 79, 80,
80n46, 80n47, 80n48, 81, 81n49, 82,
82n50, 84, 85, 85n63, 85n64, 86, 87,
121, 165, 167, 167n74, 168, 169
Jolivet, J. 37n3
Jones, H. 197n18
Jones, H.S. 74n20
Judson, L. 90n7
Jung, E. 87n68
Juste, D. 69n1
Justin Martyr 201, 201n35, 202, 203
- Kelley, F. 154n41
Kennedy, E.S. 75n29
Knuuttila, S. 1n2
Koch, J. 198n23
Kosman, A. 90n7
Koyré, A. 211, 211n92
Kraye, J. 208n73
Kren, C. 76n34
Kruk, R. 7n15
Kubrin, D. 211n92
Kuhn, H.C. 204n51

- Kupreeva, I. 44n24
 Kusukawa, S. 196n16, 197n17

 Lagarde, B. 199n26
 Lagerlund, H. 52n41, 80n46
 Lamy, B. 193, 193n2, 193n3, 193n4
 Langermann, T. 82n53
 Lay, J. 71n6, 72n10, 73n16, 85n65
 Leibniz, G.W. 195, 195n11, 210, 210n84
 Leibold, G. 131n11, 154n41, 176n87
 Leijenhorst, C. 196n15
 Lemay, R. 200n31
 Lennon, Th.M. 210n82
 Lennox, J.G. 63n67, 90n7
 Lettinck, P. 4n7, 21n51
 Leucippus 65n74
 Liceti, F. 208, 208n74
 Liddell, H.G. 74n20
 Ligorio, P. 197, 197n21, 198
 Litt, Th. 78n41
 Livesey, S.J. 165, 165n65
 Lloyd, G.E.R. 46n27, 69n1, 70n2
 Lohr, Ch. 84n61
 Lukács, L. 194n7
 López Fajeat, L.X. 38n4
 Lüthy, C. 150n30

 Machiavelli, N. 195
 Maggiòlo, P.M. 103n50
 Mahdi, M. 7n16, 18n46, 18n47
 Maier, A. 128n3, 132n12, 151, 151n35,
 152, 152n36, 157, 157n52
 Maierù, A. 103n53
 Malebranche, N. 210, 210n82
 Mancha, J.L. 83n57
 Mandonnet, P. 107n62, 199n25
 Marcolino, V. 143n10
 Martin, A. viii2, 71n4
 Martin, C. xiii, 193n1, 197n17
 Maróth, M. 13n27

 Mazzoni, J. 202, 202n39
 McVaugh, M. 150n28
 Melanchthon, Ph. xiii, 196
 Melsen, A.G.M. van 151
 Mendelsohn, E. 71n6
 Mersenne, M. 207, 207n70
 Methuen, C. 197n17
 Michael Scot 51, 70, 71, 71n5, 72n8,
 74–76, 78, 85–87
 Michot, J. 45n26
 Millás Vallicrosa, J.M. 82n52, 83n58
 Minio-Paluello, L. 128n5
 Mohler, L. 199n28
 Moraux, P. 44, 44n24, 45n27, 46n27,
 46n28, 47n31, 48n33, 50n37
 Morgenbesser, S. 211n92
 Moses Maimonides x, 21n54, 60n57,
 71, 77n35, 153n39, 210
 Munk, S. 21n54, 60n57
 Murdoch, J.E. 149, 149n26, 149n27,
 150n30, 152, 152n37, 173n81, 174n84,
 175n85

 Nardi, B. 194n8
 Newman, W.R. 150n30
 Newton, I. 211, 211n91, 211n92, 212,
 212n93
 Nicholas of Autrecourt 153n39
 Nicolaus Copernicus, N. 88
 Nicole Oresme 149, 163, 164, 175, 176
 Niewöhner, F. 52n41
 Nifo, A. x, 69, 76, 79, 84, 84n61,
 84n62, 84n63, 85, 86, 86n66, 86n67,
 87, 88
 North, J.D. 69n1

 Olscamp, P.J. 210n82
 Origen 203, 203n46
 Osler, M.J. 197n20
 Owen, G.E.L. 46n27

- Pacius, G. 208
 Panti, C. 107n63
 Paravicini Bagliani, A. 103n53
 Parker, S. 208, 208n72, 209, 209n78
 Pasnau, R. 134n18
 Patrizi, F. 202, 202n43, 203, 203n44, 203n45, 203n46, 203n47, 203n48, 204, 204n49, 208
 Peter Lombard 146, 160, 199
 Peter of Conflans 107
 Peurbach, G. 87
 Piccolomini, F. 205, 205n55, 205n56
 Pickavé, M. 122n98, 196n14
 Pius v (Pope) 197
 Plato 148, 186n105, 198–200, 202, 203, 209
 Plethon, Georgios Gemistos 199, 199n26, 199n27, 200–202
 Pluta, O. 52n41
 Podkoński, R. 151n33
 Pomponazzi, P. 84, 195, 200, 200n31, 200n33, 201, 203
 Popkin, R.H. 211n91
 Poppi, A. 204n51
 Pormann, P.E. 83n54
 Possevino, A. 207, 207n65
 Postel, G. 201, 201n35, 201n36, 201n37, 201n38, 202
 Preus, R.D. 197n19
 Prinz, O. 75n27
 Ptolemy IX, X, 69, 70, 70n3, 71–73, 75, 76, 76n33, 77, 77n35, 79, 80, 80n47, 82–86, 86n66, 87, 88
 Puig Montada, J. 1n2, 2, 4n7, 12n23
 Puliafito Bleuel, A.L. 203n48
 Quirós Rodríguez, C. 21n54
 Ragland, C.P. 211n86
 Ramon Llull 195
 Rashed, M. 1n1, 4, 4n6, 4n8, 7n15, 8n17, 12n25, 14n30, 15n36, 15n38, 15n39, 15n40, 15n41, 16n43, 25n57, 25n58, 25n59, 26n60, 26n61, 27n63, 66n75, 67
 Rashed, R. 76n34
 Raynaud, T. 194, 195, 195n10
 Richard Rufus of Cornwall 154, 154n43, 155, 155n44, 155n45, 156
 Richard Swineshead 176
 Richard of Mediavilla 152, 157n52
 Richter, V. 131n11, 176n87
 Riedl, J.O. 198n23
 Riondato, E. 204n51
 Robert Grosseteste 107n63, 151, 151n34
 Robert Kilwardby 107
 Robert, A. 149n27, 150n29
 Roger Bacon 83, 83n55, 83n58, 84, 87, 91, 93n9, 104, 104n57, 105, 111, 112, 112n74, 112n75, 113, 113n76, 114, 151, 152, 152n38, 154n43, 157, 157n52, 172, 173, 173n82, 174, 174n82, 175, 184
 Roger Swineshead 149
 Ross, W.D. 5n9, 128n4
 Ruland, H.-J. 65n71, 66n75
 Sabra, A.I. X, 71, 71n6, 71n7, 72n8, 72n13, 73n15, 73n17, 75n30, 82n54, 153, 153n40
 Samsó, J. 71n6
 Santos-Noya, M. 143n10
 Scaliger, J.C. 208
 Schmitt, Ch.B. VII, VIII
 Schofield, M. 63n67
 Scholten, C. 7n15
 Schroeder, F.M. 45n27, 46n27
 Scott, R. 74n20
 Sebtí, M. 45n26
 Serra, G. 37n3, 64n69

- Shank, M. 88n69
 Sharples, R.W. 42n17, 44n24, 46n27,
 47n30, 50n37
 Siger of Brabant 92, 115, 116, 119,
 119n91, 120, 120n94, 121, 121n95,
 121n96, 125, 152, 157n52, 163
 Simplicius 6n12, 6n13, 7n14, 12, 13n26,
 14n33, 14n34, 15, 15n37, 16n44,
 18n48, 19n49, 21, 21n51
 Sirmond, A. 207, 207n68
 Sorabji, R. 6n12
 Spedding, J. 209n77
 Speer, A. 33n75, 38n5, 93n9, 150n28,
 151n33
 Spiazzi, R.M. 78n38, 102n49
 Steel, C. 55n44, 59n56
 Steele, R. 91, 152n38
 Stephen of Alexandria 45n25
 Stone, M.W.F. 45n25, 196n14
 Streijger, M. 175n86
 Stroick, C. 52n41
 Sturlese, L. 52n41
 Suppes, P.C. 211n92
 Suárez, F. 80, 195
 Sylla, E.D. XI, XII, XIII, 69n1, 87n68,
 88n69, 141, 141n1, 141n2, 141n3,
 142n4, 142n6, 143n10, 143n11,
 144n13, 145n14, 146n16, 149n25,
 149n26, 150n28, 160n58, 171n79,
 183n98, 189n112
 Takahashi, A. viiIn3
 Tannery, P. 196n15
 Taton, R. 173n81
 Taub, L.C. 70n3
 Taurellus, N. 207, 208n71
 Taylor, R.C. 40n13, 145n14
 Telesio, B. 205, 205n57
 Tellkamp, J.A. 38n4
 Themistius 40
 Theodoretus 203
 Theophrastus 38
 Thijssen, J.M.M.H. 175n85
 Thillet, P. 65n71, 65n73, 65n74, 66n75
 Thomas Aquinas XI, 52n41, 66n76,
 76–78, 78n38, 78n39, 78n40, 78n41,
 86, 91, 101, 102, 102n49, 103, 103n49,
 103n50, 103n52, 103n53, 103n54, 104,
 104n55, 104n56, 107n62, 116, 120,
 120n93, 121, 134, 134n18, 151, 159n57,
 162, 163, 169n76, 175, 175n86, 176,
 199, 199n25, 200, 201, 203, 206–209
 Thomas Bradwardine 149, 150, 160,
 175, 175n85, 176
 Thomas Wylton 133, 133n15, 133n16,
 134, 134n19, 135
 Théry, G. 46n27, 50n38, 52n41
 Todd, R.B. 45n27, 46n27
 Toletus, F. 195, 207, 207n66
 Trapezuntius, G. 199, 200
 Trapp, A.D. 143n10
 Trifogli, C. XI, XII, 93n9, 105n58,
 112n73, 127n1, 128n3, 132n12, 133n15,
 134n18, 134n19, 139n28, 139n29,
 151n32, 157, 157n53, 158n54, 159,
 159n57
 Twetten, D. 1n2
 Työrinoja, R. 1n2
 Ullmann, M. 74n18
 Uña Juárez, A. 191n116
 Vallat, Ph. 37n3
 Van Riet, S. 96n22, 101n46
 Van Steenberghen, F. 120n94
 Verbeek, Th. 195n13
 Verbeke, G. 45n25
 Verger, J. 104n57
 Versteegh, C.H.M. viiIn3
 Voetius, G. 195, 195n13

- Vossius, G.J. 208, 208n72
 Vuillemin-Diem, G. 77n37
- Walter Burley XI, XII, XIII, 127, 127n2,
 128–131, 131n9, 131n10, 132, 132n12,
 133, 133n16, 133n17, 134, 135, 135n20,
 135n21, 136, 136n22, 136n23, 137, 138,
 138n26, 138n27, 139, 139n28, 141–145,
 145n15, 146, 146n16, 147, 161, 164,
 165, 169n76, 170, 170n78, 171, 171n78,
 172, 180, 181, 181n96, 182, 182n97,
 182n98, 183, 183n98, 183n99, 184,
 184n100, 184n101, 189, 189n114, 190,
 190n115, 190n116, 191, 191n116, 192
- Waszink, J.H. 200n32
 Webster, J. 209, 209n80
 Wegener, L. 151n33
 Weijers, O. 104n57
 Weisheipl, J.A. 90n7, 101n45, 103n49,
 103n53, 107n62
 White, M.G. 211n92
 Wielockx, R. 115n80
 Wiesner, H. 13n27
 William Heytesbury 160, 164, 175
 William of Auvergne 52n41
 William of Clifford 92, 113, 114,
 114n79, 125
- William of Moerbeke 77, 78
 William of Ockham XII, XIII, 131,
 131n10, 131n11, 132, 132n12, 141, 142,
 142n5, 142n6, 142n7, 143, 143n8,
 143n9, 144–147, 153, 154n41, 160,
 161, 163–165, 171, 175, 176, 176n87,
 176n88, 177, 177n89, 178, 178n90,
 178n91, 179, 180, 180n94, 180n95,
 181, 184, 187, 187n107, 187n108,
 188, 188n109, 188n110, 188n111, 189,
 189n113, 191, 192
- Wirmer, D. 33n75, 38n5, 39n8, 39n9,
 40n13, 55n46
 Wolfson, H.A. 90n7
 Wood, R. 119n91, 127n2, 154n41,
 154n43, 161n59, 183n98
 Woodhouse, C.M. 199n26, 199n27
- Xenarchus of Seleucia 3n5, 13, 13n30,
 14, 14n30, 15, 16, 18, 45n25
- Yrjönsuuri, M. 146n17
- Zimmermann, A. 92
 Zonta, M. 57n50, 57n52, 57n53, 58n54,
 58n55, 65n71