

Marco Sgarbi (ed.), *Pietro Pomponazzi: Tradizione e dissenso* (Florence: Olschki, 2010), pp. 508 (paper), €52.00, ISBN 978 88 222 5955 4.

This volume contains a collection of well-researched and insightful essays that expand and deepen our understanding of Pietro Pomponazzi's philosophical writings and their legacy. Pomponazzi's career was marked by polemics particularly in the later years of his life, when controversies arose over his view that according to Aristotelian principles the human soul is probably mortal and over his investigation into potential natural causes for seemingly miraculous events. Since those years, interpretations of Pomponazzi have diverged, seeing him alternatively as a starting point of atheism, the source of the beginnings of modern science, or a slavish Aristotelian. This volume's strength lies in its unveiling of a more nuanced picture of Pomponazzi, presenting him not just as a controversial figure but as both an interlocutor with the medieval philosophical tradition and a dissenter from that tradition.

The volume is divided into three sections. The first examines Pomponazzi's relation to several medieval and Renaissance philosophers. These essays break with earlier interpretations of Pomponazzi that emphasized his "radicalism" or his being part of a tradition of "Paduan Averroists." Rather they illustrate Pomponazzi's foundations in the philosophy of Duns Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, and Renaissance Neoplatonism. Antonino Poppi investigates the connections and differences between Pomponazzi's and Scotus's views on the demonstrability of the immortality of the soul, free will, and contingency of the world. He finds that Scotus was an ally for Pomponazzi's view that only faith provides certainty of the incorruptible nature of the soul, but would have been an opponent of Pomponazzi's promotion of material and astral determinism. While past scholarship made much of Pomponazzi's alleged conversion from Thomism, Antonio Petagine argues that Pomponazzi used Thomistic language, texts, and arguments to undermine Thomas's views about the demonstrability of the immortality of the soul. In a chapter that seems out of place in this book, Ennio De Bellis looks, not at Pomponazzi, but at Nicoletto Vernia's epistemology, discussing his views of universals in relation to medieval discussions. While the previous essays emphasize the Aristotelian roots of Pomponazzi, Francesca Lazzarin shows that Pomponazzi cited Plato, mediated through the translations of Marsilio Ficino, to support his view that talk of demons and angels was meant to instruct the ignorant masses, hiding the "truth" from those without adequate intellectual resources.

The second section treats Pomponazzi's own thought. Vittoria Perrone Compagni explains that Pomponazzi maintained that God was the efficient cause of the universe, prior in respect to being, not time. Because of God's immutability the direct agents of divine causation are the stars that induce forms. In an important essay that corrects the suppositions of earlier scholars, Laura Regnicoli demonstrates that the manuscripts of Pomponazzi's *De incantationibus* were circulated not in small clandestine circles but rather broadly and relatively freely. In the only essay in Spanish, rather than Italian, José Manuel García Valverde writes about the role of textual exegesis in the controversy between Agostino Nifo and Pietro Pomponazzi over the immortality of the soul.

Francesco Paolo Raimondi connects Pomponazzi's determinism to his earlier polemics against the calculators. Raimondi maintains that Pomponazzi's determinism, while part of his opposition to "rational" theology was not an attack on religious faith, which he believed must be accepted without doubt. Elisa Cuttini shows that Pomponazzi contended the purpose of human life must be understood in the relation of individuals to larger communities. Because humans have different capacities, the realization of their end is determined by their role within that society. The universal end of the human race, reflecting Pomponazzi's anthropological hierarchy, is to participate in intellectual life. Guido Giglioni explains how Pomponazzi's explanation of the appearance of San Celestino above the town of Aquila was meteorological. It was not that the town's prayers affected the sky, but rather that the prayers were synchronized with the mutation of vapors. Ivano Paccagnella argues that Pomponazzi's Latin was macaronic, incorporating phrases from the vernacular in a way that was similar to contemporary bilingual sermons. The lack of purism in his Latinity corresponds at least partially to his appearance in Sperone Speroni's *Dialogue on Language* as a character who promotes the idea that philosophy need not be conducted in Greek or Latin. According to Rita Ramberti, Pomponazzi clarified his theory of the soul and his method for doing natural philosophy in *De nutritione et augmentatione*. His method emphasizes the difficulty of obtaining knowledge of both eternal and corruptible beings. The worth of philosophy does not stem from certainty, which it does not possess, but rather is the result of confronting experience with reason.

The third section looks at the widely varying reception of Pomponazzi from the time he was alive until the beginning of the twentieth century. Enrico Peruzzi shows that Pomponazzi's students Girolamo Fracastoro and Gaspare Contarini had great respect for their former teacher despite Contarini's promotion of the immateriality of the soul and Fracastoro's Platonizing views. Eva Del Soldato discusses the opponents of Pomponazzi, such as Silvestro Mazzolini and Cosimo Favilla, who also wrote against Martin Luther. Maurizio Bertolotti maintains that *De incantationibus* was not a direct attack on inquisitors, nonetheless it was produced in the environment in which Pomponazzi's opponents promulgated works in which their principle aim was to show the veracity of witchcraft. Jumping to the first years of the eighteenth century, Mario Longo elaborates the diverse strands of Enlightenment German readings of Pomponazzi. Johann Gottlieb Olearius believed Pomponazzi's statements about the primacy of faith were to be taken as sincere. For Jakob Brucker, Pomponazzi was impious and distant from the modern thought that arrived a century after his death. Moving past the Enlightenment, Davide Poggi argues that the nineteenth-century Italian thinker Roberto Ardigò saw Pomponazzi not as a follower of Aristotle but as the proponent of the positivist method. Ardigò perceived links between Pomponazzi's psychology and nineteenth-century theories of abstraction. Cesare Vasoli writes that another positivist, Francesco Fiorentino, prized Pomponazzi for rejecting the supernatural beliefs he saw as characteristic of the Middle Ages. Bruno Nardi, to the contrary, was a textual historian. Vasoli traces the trajectory of Nardi's numerous studies and readings of numerous manuscripts.

The scholarship of this volume is of extremely high quality. Careful and extensive readings of primary sources and impressive knowledge of secondary literature are the rule. As a result, this work will be of great value to Pomponazzi scholars. The common fault of a number of the essays, however, is related to its strengths. The preponderance of details and untranslated (and frequently uninterpreted) block quotations often obscure the authors' arguments and intents. As a whole, however, the volume succeeds in satisfying the editor's goal of showing the indeterminism of philosophical traditions. Pomponazzi's works demonstrate that understanding the Aristotelian tradition is more than collecting the common ground of those working within that tradition. Confronting Aristotelianism also entails finding the novelties and autonomy that thinkers such as Pomponazzi brought forth, creating ruptures in scholastic thought. Pomponazzi dissented not just from earlier university teachings. In his quest to understand Peripatetic thought and philosophical truth, he self-consciously differed, at times, from Aristotle himself.

Craig Martin  
*Oakland University*