

Girolamo Cardano. *De immortalitate animorum*.

Ed. José Manuel García Valverde. *Filosofia e scienza nell'età moderna*. Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2006. 426 pp. index. bibl. €35. ISBN: 88-464-7446-5.

This is a valuable edition of a mid-sixteenth-century treatise on immortality by the Milanese mathematician and physician Girolamo Cardano (1501–76). The work consists of a lengthy preliminary analysis and 300 pages of text. It is dedicated to a fellow Milanese, Jacobus Philippus Sacco, president of the Senate of Milan (1531–50). The text consists of fifteen chapters, followed by an index of subjects, bibliography, and index of proper names. The edition is based on the original 1545 version published in Lyons and reprinted there in 1663 in volume 2 of Cardano's *Collected Works*.

Cardano's treatise is a complex work, having its origin in ancient, medieval, and Renaissance texts on the human soul. The author shows thorough knowledge of the pertinent treatises and his editor has been no less diligent in annotating the same. Methodologically, the work is a transition from the medieval question-literature derived from university exercises to the modern monographic treatment, which in part explains its strength and weakness.

From the list of questions at the beginning of Cardano's treatise (unless they are provided by the editor), one encounters a scholastic work, typically beginning with a question reflecting the view that the author will oppose. In this case, the first question might read: "It would seem that the human soul is mortal" ("Videtur quod anima humana mortalis sit"), or, "Proofs against the immortality of the soul"

("Argumenta contra immortalitatem animae"). The author would then provide a list of authors opposed to immortality (the so-called *auctoritates*), representing the sources of received opinion. After this would follow a list of arguments (called *rationes*) supporting the same thesis.

Hereafter, one would find a "But the contrary view has been held" argument ("Sed contra"), and this suppressed premise is the view that the author would maintain. Following this is an attempted refutation of the views of the authorities and of the arguments given earlier in the *quaestio*. The purest advocate of this type of argument form was the brilliant Dominican scholar from Aquino in south-central Italy, Friar Tommaso by name. Such an argument structure does not lend itself to the independent development of ideas that the modern monographic treatment better affords.

In Cardano's work we find, after the dedication, the first of fifty-four chapters, "arguments against the immortality of the human soul" ("Argumenta contra immortalitatem animae humanae"). In chapter 2 are "arguments for the immortality of the soul" ("argumenta pro animi immortalitate"). In the following chapters, Cardano lists other arguments defending immortality by authors including Plato, Aristotle and his Greek commentators (for example, Theophrastus, Simplicius, and Philoponus), Latin writers such as Cicero, Greek Neoplatonists (especially Plotinus), and later Arab commentators (in particular, Avicenna and Averroes).

Two of the most important chapters are chapter 11 "Aristotle's opinion on the immortality of the soul" ("Aristotelis de animorum immortalitate opinio"), in which Cardano states the main principles of Aristotle's view — from the *locus classicus*, *De Anima* 3.5.430a20–25 — and implicitly reveals his own thesis; and chapter 12 "The solution to arguments against the immortality of the soul" ("Solutio argumentorum contra animi immortalitatem"), in which Cardano attempts to answer all the arguments opposing immortality mentioned in the first several chapters. Valverde says that Cardano implicitly defends the view that the number of active intellects is limited, which necessarily seems to require the transmigration of souls, but it is not clear where Cardano says this.

I found Cardano's work to be discursive. Logical arguments seem to be few and far between. Part of the difficulty is due to the transitional nature of the literary form, mentioned previously.

As for the quality of the editing, I found it to be uniformly good. The errors were trivial. I spot-checked many items in the indices and usually found them to be exact. *Ibid.* and *op. cit.* no longer allow precise and quick reference, especially when the referent is so far removed from the object of the reference. Preferably, when referring to a work in a footnote, one should abbreviate the reference by giving the author's last name and the publication date of the work.

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