

Defending Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Age of the Counter-Reformation: Iacopo Zabarella on the Mortality of the Soul according to Aristotle

Branko Mitrović (Auckland)

Abstract: The work of the Paduan Aristotelian philosopher Iacopo Zabarella (1533-1589) has attracted the attention of historians of philosophy mainly for his contributions to logic, scientific methodology and because of his possible influence on Galileo. At the same time, Zabarella's views on Aristotelian psychology have been little studied so far; even those historians of Renaissance philosophy who have discussed them, have based their analysis mainly on the psychological essays included in Zabarella's *De rebus naturalibus*, but have avoided Zabarella's commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*. This has led to an inaccurate, but widespread, understanding of Zabarella's views. The intention of this article is to provide a systematic analysis of Zabarella's arguments about the (im)mortality of the soul in the context of Aristotelian psychology. Zabarella's view that the soul is mortal according to Aristotle is remarkable for his time, while his elaboration of this position is far more comprehensive than that of Pietro Pomponazzi, the other significant Renaissance thinker who shared the same view.

Contemporary history of philosophy may be interested in the work of a pre-modern commentator on Aristotle for two reasons: because he has something important to say about Aristotle or because of the influence he exercised on the philosophy of his time and that of later epochs. The Paduan philosopher Iacopo Zabarella (1533-1589) attracts attention on both accounts – through the twentieth century, his writings on the scientific method were at the centre of a lively debate about their influence on Galileo, while, at the same time, he is probably the only Renaissance commentator whose views still receive attention from modern Aristotelian scholarship.¹ However, the interest in Zabarella's work has mainly focused on his methodological and

¹ For Zabarella's biography see Edwards 1960. For a complete list of the various editions of Zabarella's works in the period 1578-1623 see Maclean 2002, 195-198, and Edwards 1960, 363-376. For modern scholarly interest in Zabarella's work see for instance Barnes 1992, 273.

logical writings, while his works on natural philosophy – most notably the commentaries on the *Physics* and the *De anima* – have hardly been studied at all. A recent collection of articles about Paduan Aristotelianism has paid huge homage to Zabarella by dedicating to him seven out of the seventeen articles included, but devoted almost no space to his views on psychology.² At the same time, there exists a widespread and erroneous view, that Zabarella in his writings did not take stance on Aristotle's views on the immortality of the soul.³ The intention of this paper is to correct this misconception. According to Zabarella, Aristotle's view was that the soul, including the passive intellect, cannot survive the death of the body. The agent intellect does survive death; however, the agent intellect is not part of the human being but is God himself. Zabarella's interpretation of Aristotelian psychology is the most thorough and systematic Renaissance work in the tradition of Alexander of Aphrodisias – a fact that has often escaped the attention of the few authors who have written about his views on Aristotelian psychology.

Three groups of sources need to be considered when it comes to the study of Zabarella's views on psychology. Zabarella's *De rebus naturalibus*, first published in Venice in 1590, a year after its author's death, contains twenty-four essays on natural philosophy, nine of which deal with psychology, and it is to these nine essays that the authors who have written on Zabarella's views on psychology commonly refer.⁴ These essays mainly set out Zabarella's views on the *functioning* of the human soul according to Aristotle. Zabarella's incomplete commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*, first published posthumously in 1605 in Venice and then reprinted in Frankfurt in 1606 covers the first chapter of Book One of *De anima* (402a1-403b19), the first seven chapters of Book Two (412a1-419b3) and the fourth and fifth chapter of Book Three (429a10-430a25).⁵ The commentary says very little

² Piaia 2002.

³ This is the standard view of contemporary scholarship on Zabarella. See for instance: Gilbert 1967, 365 f; Kessler 1992, 530; Kessler 1998, 836-839; Mikkeli 2009; Edwards 1960, 41. Among modern scholars writing about Zabarella's psychology probably the most accurate descriptions are those provided by Napoli 1963, 374-379 and Iorio 1991, 242-249. Poppi 1972 is also accurate, but limited on what Zabarella says in his essays published in *De rebus* – Poppi relied on the commentary on *De anima* only occasionally.

⁴ Zabarella 1607. See Maclean 2002 and Edwards 1960, 363-373, for the publication history of Zabarella's works. The psychological essays included in *De rebus* are: "*De facultatibus animae*", "*De partitione animae*", "*De accretione et nutritione*", "*De sensu agente*", "*De visu*", "*De mente humana*", "*De speciebus intelligibilibus*", "*De mente agente*", "*De ordine intelligendi*"; they were also reprinted in the commentary on *De anima*. In this paper they have been cited according to Zabarella 1607. Including these essays in the commentary on *De anima* seems to have been Zabarella's intention from the beginning, see his remarks in the commentary, Zabarella 1606, column 530.

⁵ Zabarella 1606. The editions published in 1605 and 1606 do not differ in their content and even the additional essays about human psychology which originate

about the functioning of the soul and concentrates on the question of the (im)mortality of the soul. The sections on which Zabarella decided to comment seem to reflect this interest. The commentary often reads as if it had been written in order to present and defend the views of Alexander of Aphrodisias in a systematic fashion and it particularly targets the sections relevant for the debate about the immortality of the soul. (It should be mentioned that Zabarella knew Alexander's preserved works on the soul well – i.e. Alexander's own *De anima* and *De intellectu* – these works had been generally available since the late *quattrocento* and especially after the publication of the *editio princeps* in 1534.)⁶

The least studied document about Zabarella's psychological doctrines are the three manuscripts preserved in the Ambrosiana library in Milan: *D 236 inf.*, *D 352 inf.* and *Q 113 sup.*⁷ The first of them contains Zabarella's 1584 lectures on Aristotelian psychology. The second is actually the manuscript version of the commentary on Books Two and Three on *De anima*. The third manuscript starts with six short lectures about the order of lecturing on Aristotelian psychology and then proceeds with the text of Zabarella's commentary on the first book of *De anima*.

Context

In 1513 the fifth Lateran Council made it mandatory for all philosophers working in universities to teach the Christian view when it came to the immortality of the soul,

from *De rebus naturalibus* are included in both of them; however, pagination is different since the 1605 Venice edition has leaf numbers whereas the 1606 Frankfurt edition, cited here, has column numbers, two per page. The 1606 version of the commentary on *De anima* and the 1607 edition of *De rebus naturalibus* are available in a 1966 one-volume facsimile edition.

⁶ For a full list of Alexander's psychological works and a discussion of the authorship of the spurious ones, see Moraux 1942, 312-320. For the Renaissance *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of Alexander's works see Cranz 1960; Movia 1970, 28-31 and Mahoney 1968. While Alexander's commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* is lost, Paul Moraux has managed to reconstruct some segments and arguments from this commentary, mainly on the basis of testimonies by Philoponus (Moraux 2001, 317-423). Such exegetical techniques were obviously available to Zabarella as well. For instance, when Zabarella explains the relationship between form (εἶδος) and actuality (εντελέχεια) in his comments on the opening section of the second book of *De anima*, at 412a20-22, he relies on the explanation which, according to Philoponus, seems to have been stated by Alexander in his commentary (*ibid.*, 332; Philoponus, *In Aristotelis De anima*, 216, 9-21.).

⁷ Edwards 1960 also lists the Vatican manuscript Cod. Regin. Lat. 1234 as discussing some problems related to *De anima*, but this manuscript really concentrates on smallpox.

but it did not argue the full concordance of Catholic faith and Aristotle.⁸ At least some early sixteenth century philosophers, such as Thomas de Vio (Cardinal Caietan), clearly distinguished between Aristotle's views and what they regarded as truth.⁹ In his commentary on *De anima*, Caietan made the following observation concerning Aristotle's statement (at 430a24) that the passive intellect is perishable:

[...] this is a most erroneous view, since, as you will recognise, it is impossible to deduce anything but truth, from the principles of philosophy. From the point of faith this view is false: therefore it cannot follow from the principles of philosophy. It is therefore neither as true, nor as sound nor as probable according to philosophy that I will be writing this, but only in order to expose the opinion of this Greek, which I will try to show to be false according to the principles of philosophy.¹⁰

The most important early sixteenth century articulation of the view that the soul is mortal according to Aristotle was formulated by Pietro Pomponazzi in his 1516 treatise *De immortalitate animae*.¹¹ The publication of the treatise was followed by a fierce controversy which shows that the idea was not well received by philosophers or ecclesiastical authorities.¹² Even half a century later, in the years when Zabarella studied and started teaching, the Pomponazzi debate still reverberated in the halls of the University of Padua, as witnessed by the posthumous publication of the contribution to the debate by Zabarella's uncle and *praeceptor*, Marcantonio Genua, whose attack on Pomponazzi's views was published under the title *Disputatio de Intellectus humani immortalitate* in 1565.¹³ In any case, it is hard not to have sympathies for Pomponazzi's complaint:

⁸ “[...] de natura praesertim animae rationalis, quod videlicet mortalis sit, aut unica in cunctis hominibus; et nonnulli temere philosophantes, secundum saltem philosophiam verum id esse asseverent. hoc [...] damnamus. [...] Insuper omnibus et singulis philosophis in universitatibus studiorum generalium [...] mandamus ut [...] veritatem religionis Christianae omni conatu manifestam facere [...]”, Mansi 1960-1961, vol. 32, 842.

⁹ For a summary of Caietan's position see Iorio 1991, 171-174.

¹⁰ “[...] haec positio est falsissima, quoniam ex principiis philosophiae, ut putaveris non deducitur recte nisi verum. hoc autem constat ex fide esse falsum: igitur non potest ex principiis philosophiae sequi: unde neque ut verum, neque ut consonum neque ut probabile philosophiae haec scripserim: sed tamen, ut exponens opinionem istius graeci: quam conabor ostendere esse falsam secundum philosophiae principia.” Caietan 1514, 318 f.

¹¹ Pomponazzi 1516.

¹² Gilson 1961; Kessler 1992, 504-507; Pine 1986.

¹³ Genua 1565. Copies of this book are to be found in the Vatican library as well as in Marucelliana in Florence.

There are some people these days, it seems, who would not consider a person to be a Christian unless that same person asserts that Aristotle was a Christian.¹⁴

Pomponazzi's work on the soul is much better known today than Zabarella's. A number of thorough surveys of his arguments have been published in recent decades, there exists an English translation of *De immortalitate* and Ragnisco's nineteenth century study provides a fair and complete comparison of Pomponazzi's and Zabarella's views on psychology.¹⁵ It is unclear in how far Pomponazzi was influenced by Alexander's writings and during the 1960s there was a debate about the way Pomponazzi developed his stance and whether he had originally started from Averroist positions.¹⁶

In his *De immortalitate*, Pomponazzi's approach to the problem of the immortality of the soul according to Aristotle consisted of three important steps: the first two elaborated the rejection of the views of Averroes and Aquinas, while in the third step he asserted that the soul is *simpliciter* material and immaterial *secundum quid*. The main argument, which he repeats *ad nauseam* in various formulations both against Averroes and Aquinas, pertains to Aristotle's statements in *De anima* that if the intellect cannot function without imagination, then it has to be inseparable from the body and that the soul never thinks without the products of imagination (403a8-10 and 431a17). Since imagination belongs to material and mortal parts of the soul, the two statements amount to the explicit admission of the soul's inseparability from the body. But when it comes to the third step and Pomponazzi's own views, it is not quite clear what he meant by immortality *secundum quid*. Martin Pine, in his monograph about Pomponazzi translates "secundum quid" as "relative" and argues that such "relative immortality" actually means the mortality of the soul, pure and simple.¹⁷ One possible understanding of the phrase *secundum quid* in this context, would be that in Pomponazzi's view the soul is substantially mortal but can still acquire a glimpse of things eternal – that it participates in eternity by being able to

¹⁴ "Quidam nam, ut michi videtur, hac tempestate sunt, qui nisi aliquis Aristotelem dicat fuisse christianum, ipse christianus ab eis non habeatur." Pomponazzi 1525, Book 1, chapter 2. Also cited in Ragnisco 1887, 950.

¹⁵ English translation "On the Immortality of the Soul" in Cassirer 1948: 280-385. For a survey of Pomponazzi's views see Pine 1968 and 1986; Ragnisco 1887. See also Gilson 1961; Kessler 1992, 500-507; Nardi 1965; Poppi 1970.

¹⁶ See Nardi 1965, 149-203, and Poppi 1970, 29-92. One should bear in mind that Pomponazzi could not read Greek.

¹⁷ Pine 1986, 106 and 116. Some older scholars thought differently; Ragnisco 1887 took "secundum quid" in a more substantial sense and argued that for Pomponazzi the soul was between things mortal and immortal whereas for Zabarella the study of the soul was part of natural science. But, for instance, Pomponazzi also pointed out that for Aristotle psychology was not part of metaphysics and Ragnisco does not explain how something can be *between* things mortal and immortal.

acquire some knowledge about eternal things. Indeed, Pomponazzi concludes, the human being is not really provided with the intellect, but a shadow of the intellect.¹⁸

A major difference between Pomponazzi's and Zabarella's work is that Pomponazzi relied almost exclusively on Latin commentators whereas Zabarella possessed extensive and thorough knowledge of the works of major Greek commentators on *De anima*; one of Zabarella's favourite targets was Simplicius, whose views had been previously promoted in Padua by his uncle Marcantonio Genua.¹⁹ In spite of his uncle's invectives against Pomponazzi, Zabarella held the latter in high regard.²⁰ The main tone of Zabarella's and Pomponazzi's approaches is nevertheless different. Pomponazzi concentrated on proving that the soul is mortal according to Aristotle. He made efforts to construct the arguments that show that the immortality of the soul is incompatible with Aristotle's other views. For instance, he argued that if the world is eternal (as Aristotle thought), and souls immortal, it will follow that an infinite number of souls already exist without a body – and it is hard to conceive how this could have been Aristotle's view, considering that Aristotle denied the possibility of actual infinities.²¹ Pomponazzi also asked about the location of the soul when separated from the body: in that case it would be either nowhere or somewhere; but if it is somewhere, how did it arrive there? The answer has to be either by change or by movement; but both options are impossible since, as Aristotle argued, what is indivisible cannot move from place to place.²² One will not find such attempts to construct such arguments in Zabarella, who saw himself much more as a commentator on Aristotle.

Zabarella on the soul

Unlike Pomponazzi, who concentrated on proving that the soul is mortal, Zabarella's main effort was directed towards refuting the arguments of those authors who argued the soul's immortality. At the same time, he pays much less attention to the sections which actually suggest that Aristotle thought that the soul was mortal.

¹⁸ Pomponazzi 1516, 98.

¹⁹ His extensive survey of Simplicius' teachings on the soul in the opening section of the commentary on Book Three of *De anima* (655-673), starts with the words: "Referam inprimis expositionem Simplicii, non quod vbique velim considerare ipsius Chymeras, sed vt auditores aliquam habeant cognitionem sententiae Simplicii de intellectu humano, quam ego puto alienissimam esse a mente Aristotelis [...]", Zabarella 1606, 656. Later in the same section Marcus Antonius Ianua is mentioned once again as someone who followed "Chymaeras Simplicij", 673. Even if Zabarella may have held his old teacher and uncle in fond memory in his later years, he did not think highly of his approach to Aristotelian psychology.

²⁰ Zabarella 1607, 425.

²¹ Pomponazzi 1516, 88.

²² *Ibid.*, 96.

When, at 414a20, Aristotle states that the soul cannot exist without a body and that it is not a body, but is associated with a body and resides in a body, Zabarella is content to note that those who do not see from this statement that the soul is the informing form have to be blind (344). Such sections receive Zabarella's approval but he comments on them only marginally. Even his treatment of the argument about imagination on which Pomponazzi insisted so much, concentrates rather on resolving a logical problem which was originally introduced by Themistius and Averroes. Also, Zabarella's command of sources and the entire preceding Aristotelian tradition is exceptionally wide and much more comprehensive than Pomponazzi's.

Zabarella's main efforts thus centre on the fourth chapter of the third book of *De anima*. The commentary on this chapter takes almost one third of the entire commentary on *De anima*. In the commentary on the *De anima* Zabarella does not embark on a systematic refutation of the Averroist position; this job is performed separately in his essay "De mente humana" in *De rebus naturalibus*.

Zabarella is almost pedantic in ensuring that he did not fail to comment on those sections which could have been interpreted as asserting the immortality of the soul, even in the cases when such interpretations would have meant gross violence to the text. For instance, at 413b25 Aristotle observes that it was unclear whether the intellect, which seems to be a separate part of the soul, alone may be separable (323). The critics of Alexander relied extensively on this section to prove that in Aristotle's view the intellect *was* separable. Such an interpretation of this section is clearly a partisan reading, but Zabarella does not miss the chance to remind us that if Aristotle, as Alexander's opponents assert, believed that the intellect *was evidently* separable, then he would not have said in the preceding clause that nothing was clear about the intellect.

If we leave aside trivial refutations of the clearly partisan readings of Aristotle, the important sections of *De anima* which Zabarella had to deal with or explain away in order to dismiss the claims of these authors who argued that the soul according to Aristotle was immortal are the following:

a) 412a6-27 (Book 2, Chapter 1): Aristotle states that the soul is the form and actuality of the body. This is the crucial section for commentators like Alexander or Zabarella, who argued that Aristotle's view was that the soul was mortal.

b) 413a4 (Book 2, Chapter 1): Aristotle states that it is not certain whether the soul may be only attached to the body, like a sailor to a ship.

c) 429a15 (Book 3, Chapter 4): Aristotle states that the intellect is ἀπαθές. If this word is taken to mean "impassive", it could be easily taken to imply that the intellect is immortal.

d) 429a18 (Book 3, Chapter 4): In the continuation of the previous section, Aristotle also says that the intellect was ἀμύγη, a word which may be taken to suggest that the intellect is *unmixed* with matter, and consequently imperishable.

e) In Averroes' commentary, section 429a18 (Book 3, Chapter 4) was accompanied by a digression in which Averroes argues the immortality of the

intellect. In his commentary on *De anima* Zabarella discussed extensively these arguments of the Commentator.

f) 429a21 (Book 3, Chapter 4): This section provides the link between the important sections 429a18 and 429a24. Aristotle argues in this section that the intellect is pure potentiality.

g) 429a24 (Book 3, Chapter 4): Aristotle says that the intellect does not mix (μεμίχθαι) with the body – again, as in 429a18, this phrase may suggest that the intellect is unmixed with the body and consequently imply that the soul is immortal.

h) 429b7-430a25 (Book 3, Chapter 4): This, final, section of the fourth chapter of Book Three contains a series of statements and questions; Aristotle argues that the intellect is in a way potential even when it has become several groups of objects, though not in the same way as before, and it is also capable of thinking itself.

Soul as the form of the body: 412a6

In the opening sections of the second book of *De anima* Aristotle identifies form (εἶδος) with actuality (ἐντελέχεια) (412a6) and says that the soul must be like the form of the body (ὡς εἶδος σώματος) which potentially has life and it is thus the actuality (ἐντελέχεια) of the body (412a17). Since the term actuality (ἐντελέχεια) is used in two senses, analogous to knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) or to thinking (ἐντελέχεια) the soul is actuality in the former sense (412a22). The soul's full definition is thus that it is the first actuality (ἐντελέχεια) of a body which has organs (412a27).

Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, this section, in combination with Aristotle's position on the individuation of forms introduced substantial complexity in the debate about the immortality of the soul. Crudely speaking, according to a commonly accepted interpretation, Aristotle's view is that forms (essences) of things are individuated by the matter in which they are instantiated: individual creatures of the same kind (e.g. dogs) share the same essence (i.e. dogness) but they are numerically different material instantiations of that same essence. The implication for psychology is that insofar as the soul, or some of its parts (e.g. the intellect), are assumed to be immortal and immaterial, they cannot be individual: if the human soul (or some of its parts) were immortal, there would exist only one soul for the entire humankind. That soul would be individual, but there could not be a distinct soul for each individual human being. That the intellect is immortal and one for all humans but does not constitute part of the form of the human body was asserted by Averroes; as Renaissance Aristotelians knew, and Zabarella never omitted to mention, before Averroes, the idea had been formulated already by Themistius.²³ Although the view itself was condemned by the Church as early as 1277 and this condemnation was repeated by the Bishop of Padua in 1489

²³ Themistius, *In libros Aristotelis De anima paraphraseos*: 26.37 and 103-20-104.22.

as well as by the fifth Lateran Council in 1513, it was widespread and particularly strong at the University of Padua where Zabarella studied and taught.²⁴

Contrary to the Averroist position, a commentator such as Alexander of Aphrodisias, who insists on the mortality of the soul, is bound to emphasize Aristotle's statements which identify the soul with the informing (and thus perishable) form of the body. In his own *De anima*, he generally follows Aristotle's order of exposition from *De anima*, but nevertheless, the account of the soul as the form of the body takes almost one quarter of his treatise.²⁵

Averroes' views also differ from Alexander's in understanding the nature of the second actuality (ἐντελέχεια), which, in his view, is not operation, but operating form and Zabarella, in his comments on the opening sections of *De anima* (412a6-412b1 and 414a5-414a19) makes substantial effort to argue against this view. Commenting on the opening section of the second book of *De anima* (in his comments on 412b6), Zabarella notes that one may wonder about the appropriateness of Aristotle's presentation, since the Philosopher first says that the form is actuality and then divides form into form and operation, whereas form was not operation (114). Therefore, some authors – Averroes is here targeted without being named – suggest that the second actuality does not refer to operation alone, but to the operating form and that Aristotle presented here a division into the idle and operating form; the former would be the first and the latter the second actuality. In Zabarella's view, the term "actuality" is wider than "form"; every form is actuality, but not every actuality is a form. In his reconstruction of Alexander's commentary on *De anima*, Moraux describes this same position as one that was originally formulated in Alexander's commentary on *De anima* and reported by Philoponus, and Zabarella could have derived it from there.²⁶ In Zabarella's account, Aristotle says that the form is actuality, then divides actuality into the first and second actuality, and finally states that the first actuality is the soul – and this is to be explained by Aristotle's concern that the word "form" (εἶδος) signified indistinctly any kind of form, material or abstract, including Platonic Forms (115). In Zabarella's view, Aristotle wanted to refer to the kind of form which was the perfection and fulfillment of something else (*complementum alterius*) but was not by itself an entity fulfilled in its species (*ens completum in specie*) – a perfection that is present in the thing whose perfection it is and does not exist outside it (the way Plato's Forms do). For this reason he introduced the concept of the first actuality.

²⁴ Gasparo Contarini, writing in the first decades of the *cinquecento* about his Paduan education noted that Averroes' philosophy (and especially the belief that the soul does not survive the death as individual) was so firmly entrenched that those who did not share this view were simply not regarded as philosophers. Contarini 1571, 179. See also Pine 1986, 35 and 58.

²⁵ In fact, he also provided a number of additional arguments in favour of the view that the soul is the form of the body which are not to be found in Aristotle. See Alexander, *De anima*, 12 f.

²⁶ Moraux 2001, 332; Philoponus *An.*, 216, 9-21.

In Zabarella's interpretation, there are two perfections of the body: one constitutes it into a specific being and makes it a *hoc aliquid* – a human, a horse etc. – and this is the first perfection, the first actuality, the form insofar as it informs and actualises matter (134). But a thing which is not operating does not achieve its fulfillment. Its operation is its second actuality. "Operating form" is then to be understood both as the first and second actuality; insofar as it is the form, it constitutes the *hoc aliquid*; insofar as it operates, it achieves the second actuality (134).

We shall see later how Zabarella dealt, in *De rebus naturalibus*, with the Averroist claims that the passive intellect is immortal and one for the whole human race. In the commentary on *De anima*, he states that the followers of Averroes commonly err by believing that the first actuality, as described in this definition, does not give being to matter and specific being (*esse specificum*) to the body (141). They say that the intellective soul is not the informing form; for them, a human being is a human through its possession of the cogitative capacity, the most noble part of the imagination, not available to the brutes. In their view, the intellective soul supervenes on an already formed human being; it does not form matter but assists the human being like an intelligence to the orb. These authors want to assert the immortality of the soul, and knowing that according to Aristotle's philosophy it is necessary that every form which gives being to matter must be corruptible, in order to prevent the claim that the soul is mortal, they deny that it is an informing form.

"Like a sailor on a ship": 413a4

In the second book of *De anima*, at 413a4, after having said that the soul (or its parts, if it has parts) is not separate from the body and that in some cases actuality belongs to parts themselves, Aristotle states that it is uncertain whether the soul's relationship with the body may be comparable to that of a sailor with a ship. This section, Zabarella notes, has been used by many authors against Alexander, in order to show that the intellect does not give being to the body and is separable (167).

As Zabarella summarises it, Aristotle stated emphatically in the opening of the second book of *De anima* that the soul in general was the actuality of the body; in this context he says is that there are doubts about the separability of some parts of the soul, considered individually (168). Since the intellect is not attached to any part of the body, it may appear that it is not the actuality of any bodily part. But Zabarella points out that if Aristotle said emphatically that *some* part of the soul is not the actuality of the body he would contradict himself. When Aristotle talks about the (in)separability of the soul (or its parts), he takes for granted that those parts to which the definition pertains (i.e. which are the actuality of the body) must be inseparable, since the actuality of a body must be inseparable from the body whose actuality it is (169). What Aristotle says here is that there were doubts about whether the entire soul or some of its parts were the actuality of the body. In the next

sentence Aristotle says that there is nothing to prevent individual parts from being separable, since they are not actualities of any part of the body.²⁷

Zabarella reports that Alexander interprets this sentence as a statement of doubt, for which reason his approach is unjustly derided by Philoponus and Averroists. Alexander's critics argue that Aristotle, in his definition of the soul – when he says that the soul was the first actuality of the body – means actuality in general, so to include both *informing* and *assisting* actuality (170). But when, in this section, he says that “some part” may not be the actuality of the body (*nullius corporis esse actum*), they say that he only denies that it is an *informing* actuality – “informing” in the sense of giving the form to the body and “assisting” in the sense of being separable from it. According to their interpretation, the definition of the soul pertains to the intellective soul as an assisting actuality and to other parts of the soul as an informing actuality. Zabarella rejects this view on the basis of the following counterarguments:

a) If, in the definition of the soul, actuality were understood indifferently of whether it was an informing or assisting actuality, then Aristotle, from such a definition, could deduce neither separability nor inseparability. (Obviously, this argument could be answered by saying that some parts of the soul are informing, others assisting and that precisely in this section Aristotle begins to introduce the differentiation between them.)

b) If Aristotle differentiated between assisting and informing actuality, he would mention the difference somewhere in this book, which he does not do (171).

c). When Aristotle talks about the separability of the intellect in *De anima*, this is always in the form of a doubt (172).

d) Simplicius, who certainly thinks that the soul is separable from the body, in this very section nevertheless follows the same interpretation as the one Zabarella advocates. Simplicius differentiates between two states of the rational soul: remaining-in-itself and progressed-into-the-body. He thus does not deny that the human rational soul is the informing form and that insofar as it was the actuality of the body, the soul was inseparable. In Simplicius' view, according to Zabarella, therefore, saying that the soul is like a sailor on a ship does not mean denying that it was the informing form.

In Zabarella's interpretation, when Aristotle says that it is unclear whether the soul is like a sailor on a ship, this means that we already know that it is an informing form (*forma informans*) but Aristotle also wants to point out that it was a governing form (*forma gubernans*). The paragraph merely states that it is not clear whether the entire soul was such (including the vegetative soul) or only the sensitive and intellective (175).

²⁷ Aristotle says: “οὐ μὴν ἄλλ’ ἕνιά γε οὐθεν κωλύει, διὰ τὸ μηθενὸς εἶναι σώματος ἐντελεχείας.” *De anima*, 413a6 f.

The impassivity of the intellect: 429a15

In the fourth chapter of the third book of *De anima*, at 429a15, Aristotle argues that the intellect (transl. W. S. Hett)

must (although impassive) be receptive of the form of an object, *i.e.*, must be potentially the same as its object, although not identical with it: as the sensitive is to the sensible, so must mind be to the thinkable.²⁸

As Zabarella notes, the central difficulty of this section is to determine what Aristotle means by impassive (ἀπαθής). In the Latin translation he cites, he leaves the translation “impassibile” from the traditional medieval version, but intervenes by replacing “speciei” (which is used in the medieval version as the translation for εἶδος) with “forma”.

Averroes interprets the section as asserting the soul’s abstraction from the body and its immortality – that the intellect is subject to no change and immortal. Zabarella rejects this interpretation since the phrase Aristotle uses, ἄρα δεῖ (*ergo oportet*), implies that this section has to be somehow derived from the content of the preceding paragraph, where Aristotle discusses the similarity between the intellect and sense and says that if thinking (τὸ νοεῖν) is like perceiving (τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι), it must be a process in which the soul is affected by what is thought²⁹ or something similar (429a13). In Zabarella’s view, Aristotle derives the position that the intellect is impassive (ἀπαθής) from the fact that to understand is to be acted upon, as is the case with the senses. Consequently, if “impassive” meant that the intellect is neither a body nor a power (*virtus*) in a body, as Averroes argues, it would follow that the senses were also abstract and immortal (685). Having considered this difficulty, Zabarella reports, even many Averroists accepted that the impassivity mentioned by Aristotle in this context does not pertain to the intellect only, but has to be in some sense shared by the intellect and senses – that the paragraph cannot be taken to argue the absence of corruptive change in the soul, *i.e.* its immortality. Instead, these authors argue that both the intellect and senses are impassive with respect to corruption – *i.e.* nothing is corrupted in the act of sensing and understanding and that the act of sensing is a perfective and not a corruptive affection. But in Zabarella’s view this is like saying that a black Ethiopian is white because he has white teeth; Zabarella is rather inclined to follow Simplicius’ interpretation that the Greek word ἀπαθής in this context signified “not being affected” (*passione carens* or *inaffectum*) (686). Aristotle’s text states, “ἀπαθής ἄρα δεῖ εἶναι, δεκτικὸν δὲ τοῦ εἶδους” and according to Simplicius, Aristotle is saying here that the intellect is not affected (*inaffectum*), *i.e.* it lacks any intelligibles by itself and must receive them.

²⁸ Aristotle says: “ἀπαθής ἄρα δεῖ εἶναι, δεκτικὸν δὲ τοῦ εἶδους καὶ δυνάμει τοιοῦτον ἀλλὰ μὴ τοῦτο, καὶ ὁμοίως ἔχειν, ὡσπερ τὸ αἰσθητικὸν πρὸς τὰ αἰσθητά, οὕτω τὸν νοῦν πρὸς τὰ νοητά.” *De anima*, 429a15-18.

²⁹ Aristotle says: “ἢ πάσχειν τι ἂν εἴη ὑπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ”, *De anima* 429a14.

Although the Greek word can actually have the meaning “impassibile”, it can also express the negation of any affection taken in general, both substantial and accidental, which is better expressed by the word “inaffectum”. The difference between “impassibilis” and “inaffectum” is best explained in the example of prime matter, Zabarella says, which cannot be said to be “impassibilis” – it is, in fact, most affected (*maxime passibilis*), since it is affected by everything and receives everything, but it is also unaffected in the sense that it by its nature it lacks any form, either substantial or accidental.

“*The intellect is unmixed*”: 429a18

In the continuation of the same section in the fourth chapter of the third book of *De anima*, at 429a18, Aristotle argues that it is necessary that since the intellect (transl. W. S. Hett),

thinks all things, it should be uncontaminated, as Anaxagoras says, in order that it may be in control, that is that it may know; for the intrusion (παρεμφαινόμενον) of anything foreign hinders and obstructs it.³⁰

(J. A. Smith uses “co-presence of what is alien to its nature” for παρεμφαινόμενον.) Commenting on this section, Averroes states that

Since material forms are either the body or forms in the body, it is obvious, that the same substance which is called the material intellect is neither a body nor a form in a body and is not mixed with matter at all.³¹

In other words, Averroes’ argument is that material forms are forms mixed with matter; the material intellect is not body or form in body and therefore it is not a material form. Zabarella, in his commentary, reports this view as well as that of Philoponus and Aquinas, who all agree that in this context Aristotle’s intention is to show that the intellect is not *forma materialis*.

Following this interpretation, Zabarella notes, it would be impossible to make this section coherent with the previous one or the one to follow (692). The true interpretation of the section in Zabarella’s view is provided by Alexander, and also Simplicius, Themistius and some Averroists, who all (except Alexander) still claim that the intellect is immortal and separate from matter, but do not assume that this

³⁰ “ἐπεὶ πάντα νοεῖ, ἀμιγῆ εἶναι, ὥσπερ φησὶν Ἀναξαγόρας, ἵνα κρατῆ, τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶν ἵνα γνωρίζῃ παρεμφαινόμενον γὰρ κωλύει τὸ ἀλλότριον καὶ ἀντιφράττει.” Aristotle, *De anima*, 429a18-21.

³¹ “Et quia formae materiales sunt aut corpus aut forme in corpore, manifestum est quod ista substantia que dicitur intellectus materialis neque est corpus neque forma in corpore; est igitur non mixtum cum materia omnino.” Averroes 1953, 385 f.

context can be taken to demonstrate it (693). The un-contaminatedness (*immistio*) which Aristotle attributes to the intellect by saying that it is ἀμυγῆ, can be conceived in three ways (694):

a) un-contaminatedness with the body (*immistio cum corpore*) as with underlying matter: the intellect could be said to be *immistus* if it is not derived from the potentiality of matter, as all material forms, but abstract.³² In this case it would not depend on matter for its existence, in the way that material forms do.

b) un-contaminatedness with a corporeal organ – in this sense it would differ from senses by not being located in an organ.

c) in respect to objects – i.e. it must not contain *in actu* the objects it is receiving.

In Zabarella's interpretation, Aristotle refers here to the third kind of *immistio*, which can also be partly attributed to the senses (694). Aristotle's thesis is that if that which is receptive had in itself something of the object it receives, this would impede reception, and the recipient would not be able to receive more (701). If the human intellect had any form, it would keep cognising it and could not cognise any other form.³³ This is similar to prime matter, which must not have any nature included in itself if it is to be receptive of all forms, since what appears inside prevents other things (*quia intus apparens prohibet alienum*).

Aristotle never attributes the first kind of un-contaminatedness (*immistio*) to the intellect, Zabarella emphasizes, but rather, he argues the opposite view, when he says that the soul is the first actuality of the body (695). The comparison with the senses, immediately preceding this section, Zabarella observes, is well placed: senses do not have for their objects all things, but only some *species* of things (e.g. the sight has colour). The intellect must be unmixed in respect of all things and *simpliciter*.

Now, Aristotle called the thing with which the intellect must not be mixed *παρεμφανόμενον*. The Greek term presents substantial problems when rendered in Latin, or other languages. It can be rendered into Latin as *iuxta apparens* or *intus apparens*. The Greek word, Zabarella notes, could be taken to signify both: *παρά* is *iuxta*, *ἐν* is *intus* and *φανόμενον* is *apparens*. Consequently two interpretations are possible (703). In the first sense, if something receptable is contained in the receptive, it will impede its own reception, e.g. if the eye included redness, this would prevent the eye from receiving redness. The other sense is that *intus apparens* would prevent the reception of what is different to it – e.g. if redness were in the eye, it would impede the reception of other colours. Alexander seems to have adopted the first sense and Zabarella subscribes to the first interpretation as well. Philoponus, Zabarella reports, presents both interpretations as follows (702):

³² “eductus de potentia materiae, ut omnes formae materiales, sed abstractus”, Zabarella 1606, 694.

³³ “qui est omnium rerum receptivus et cognoscitivus, alicuius rei speciem in sua natura inclusam haberet, illa ab ipso intellectu, semper et incessanter cognito prohiberet ne aliam recipere, vel intelligere posset.” *Ibid.*, 701 f.

a) Using this phrase, Aristotle signifies matter. If the intellect is to be receptive of everything, it must not be mixed with matter, and is consequently *abstractus a materia*.

Zabarella dismisses this interpretation, because matter is the origin (*radix*) of every passive potentiality, it is receptive of all material forms, so it cannot be that which hinders reception and affection. This interpretation in his view is as paradoxical as saying that fire makes things freeze or that a contrary thing produces its contrary. Whatever contains matter is able, by matter, to be affected and receive, as is the case with senses, which are material forms and still not prevented by matter from receiving their sensible objects.

b) Being aware of this difficulty, says Zabarella, Philoponus proposes a second interpretation, which is true and many have accepted it, that παρεμφαινόμενον signifies the very intelligible object, which, included in the very nature, would prevent the intellect to receive other intelligibilia.³⁴

Also, Zabarella points out, one should note the dual nature of the form which is being received (704). On the one hand, the material form is received in primary matter whereas, on the other, the spiritual form, such as sensible species (*species sensibilis*) is received in the organ of sense; similarly the intelligible species is received in the intellect. Primary matter is receptive of all material forms, but elements can receive only some. The same applies to the cognitive capacities of the soul: the intellect is receptive of all spiritual forms (which Aristotle calls εἶδος ἀνευ ὕλης) whereas senses can receive only some of these forms – for sight, colour is primary and quantity the secondary sensible, since quantity is a common sensible, whose species cannot move sight unless it is conveyed to the eye with colour. Similarly, *genera* and *species* of primary objects are also secondary sensibles. In Zabarella's interpretation παρεμφαινόμενον γὰρ κωλύει τὸ ἀλλότριον καὶ ἀντιφάττει means that if the primary object is contained in the recipient, this will prevent any further reception of all secondary qualities: an organ of sight prevented from seeing colour would be also unable to see quantity (705).

Immateriality of the intellect: Averroes' digression at 429a18

Averroes' commentary on *De anima* includes an extensive and important digression at 429a18 on which Zabarella provides additional commentary (707). Zabarella reports two important proofs that Averroes made in his digression (708):

- a) that the intellect is a passive power.
- b) that the intellect is immaterial and abstract.

³⁴ “[...] ipsum obiectum intelligibile, quod si in ipsa natura includetur, prohiberet, ne intellectus alia intelligibilia recipere possit”, *ibid.*, 702.

The first proof is based on the claim that passive virtues are moved by that what they are attributed to, whereas active virtues move what they are attributed to. A mover cannot move another thing unless it is actual, while that which is passive cannot be moved unless it is in potency; the actual changes that which has the potency to be changed. Averroes infers from this that the intellect in the act of understanding is affected by the intelligible object. Zabarella agrees with this conclusion.

The second proof is based on the argument that the intellect receives all material forms (when Aristotle says that the intellect understands everything, Averroes converts this into “omnia materialia”) and that everything that receives must be deprived of the nature of the thing received (709). Averroes justified the latter premise by saying that if the substance of the recipient were the substance received, it would thus move itself, since what is moving and what is moved would be one and the same, which is utterly impossible. This second argument in Zabarella’s view is a mere sophism (710). The major premise, “that everything that receives must be deprived of the nature of the thing received” is beyond any doubt for Zabarella. But Averroes’ error was in the minor premise, that the intellect receives only material forms (726). When Aristotle says that the intellect understands everything, Zabarella points out, he does not say all material things but absolutely all things; throughout the treatise Aristotle clearly implied that the object of understanding is every object, material and immaterial. Averroes’ argument can actually be turned the other way around: since the major premise says “everything that receives” (*omne recipiens*) it would follow that the intellect is neither an abstract nor material form and that therefore it is not a form at all. In fact, Zabarella explains, neither material nor immaterial are *the primary* object of the intellect, the way quantity is not the primary object with respect to sight. Just as we cannot say that the organ of sight should lack quantity, so we cannot say that the intellect is a material form because it receives material forms.

The passive nature of the intellect: 429a21

Continuing the consideration of the nature of the intellect in the fourth chapter of the third book of *De anima*, at 429a21, Aristotle says that the intellect has no other nature but being possible (*δυνατός*). What is called the intellect of the soul, that by which the soul understands and judges (*διανοεῖται καὶ ὑπολαμβάνει*), has no actuality of things before it thinks.³⁵

Zabarella uses this section to point out that if the preceding section were interpreted as Averroes suggested, i.e. as pertaining to being unmixed with matter and body, than it would be utterly unclear how Aristotle could argue, in this section, that the intellect has the nature of potentiality (731). At the same time, if section

³⁵ Aristotle says “οὐθέν ἐστιν ἐνεργεῖα τῶν ὄντων πρὶν νοεῖν”, *De anima*, 429a24.

429a18 is interpreted according to Zabarella's interpretation, then the content of this section directly follows.

The nature of the intellectual soul, Zabarella explains, is discussed by Aristotle in two ways, in relation to the body or in relation to its operation with intelligible objects (732). The terms "actuality" and "potentiality" can each thus be discussed in both of these senses. The soul is thus actuality in relation to the body but in relation to its operation it is pure potentiality. When Aristotle talks about potentiality in relation to the soul we should interpret this in the sense of lacking the second actuality. Similarly, in the *Metaphysics* (1029a26-35), Aristotle expresses the view that prime matter is neither substance, nor quality, nor quantity, but he does not deny that prime matter has its proper essence; rather, his point is that it is not under one of those categories, but that it receives real forms (*formas reales*), the way the intellect receives spiritual forms.

It is important to note that Zabarella has to make this point and differentiate between the forms received by the passive intellect and those received by prime matter. Commenting on this section, Averroes writes in his commentary on *De anima* that the material intellect differs from prime matter by the fact that prime matter is neither cognising (*cognoscens*) nor comprehending (*comprehendens*). This is because prime matter receives various individual forms (*formas diversas, scilicet individuales*) while the material intellect receives universal forms (*formas universales*). This differentiation is not available to Zabarella, since he argues, in his essay "De ordine Intelligendi" in *De rebus naturalibus* (1041-1049), that the passive intellect can understand individuals.

"The intellect is unmixed": 429a24

At 429a24, Aristotle states, in the version Zabarella relies on, that it is unreasonable to say that the intellect is mixed (μεμῖχθαι) with the body, for in that case it would acquire qualities (ποιός τις γὰρ ἂν γίγνοιτο), e.g. hot or cold, and³⁶ would even have an organ, as is the case with the senses. He agrees with those who say that the soul is the place of forms (εἰδῶν) except that this does not apply to the soul as a whole, but only to its thinking capacity and not in actuality but potentially. (Averroes's version, as well as modern editions, has "or" at the place of "and" in "and would even [...]".)

This paragraph is probably the most difficult section of the entire *De anima* to explain if one starts from the position Zabarella advocates. If the soul is the form, actuality of a material body and if it has been emphatically said that it is inseparable from (though not identical to) the body, it is not easy to comprehend in what sense it could be "unmixed" with the body. It is equally unclear how far a form instantiated in a material object can be said not to participate in the properties of that object: if a stone gets hot, are we supposed to say that its primary matter got hot, but not the

³⁶ See the discussion about this conjunction later in this section.

stone? Zabarella's main strategy is to differentiate between being mixed *secundum esse* and *secundum operari* (i.e. as the first actuality of the body or in relation to the second actuality) (740). Averroes claims that in this section Aristotle argues that the intellect is not a power in the body (*virtus in corpore*), i.e. it is not a material form (*forma materialis*), and that it is a form abstracted from matter and only assisting, not informing.³⁷ Zabarella, however, remarks that up to this point in the treatise, Aristotle has said nothing about the intellect in relation to the body but only in respect to its operation, and that his statements in this section appear to have been deduced from what has been said previously. Therefore, they cannot pertain to the intellect's relation to the body but only to intelligible objects; all one could infer from what has been said so far is that the intellect is unmixed with intelligibles. However, whereas Zabarella may be right about the preceding sections, the problem is that Aristotle here clearly claims that the intellect does not mix, μεμῖχθαι, *with the body*. Zabarella's additional observation is that Aristotle points out that if the intellect were *mixed*, it would have its proper organ – while, Zabarella notes, if we understand 'mixed' as 'mixed with the body' this simply does not follow: the form of an element is a material form, it does not have an organ. (Zabarella does not take into account the possibility that the whole body could be the organ of the intellect.) Also, in one sense, "mixing" would pertain to the question of whether the intellect operates with any intervention from the body. But in that sense we cannot say that it is unmixed with the body, since Aristotle states that it was impossible to understand without the use of imagination (740).

In Zabarella's presentation, the context contains two syllogisms (745):

- If the intellect is mixed with the body, it must have a quality.
- But it has no qualities.
- Therefore, it is unmixed with the body.

and:

- If the intellect is mixed with the body, it must have its own organ.
- But it does not have an organ.
- Therefore it is unmixed with the body.

Both syllogisms are hypothetical and based on the negation of the consequent.

In the first syllogism, Zabarella's important question is, what does Aristotle understand under quality; Averroes and Simplicius, Zabarella reports, think that he does not mean the form. He uses "warm" and "cold" as examples while only bodies are said to have these qualities. If forms are said to have certain qualities, this is in the sense that they require some qualities in order to be in the body. Averroes and

³⁷ Zabarella 1606, 741: "forma abstracta a nexu materiae, et assistans solum, non informans".

Simplicius from this concluded that if the intellect were form of a body, it would have material qualities.

The question is, how to justify the negation of the first consequent (746). According to Simplicius, its falsity is proved by the fact that if the intellect were immersed in matter, it would not be able to perceive intelligibles, which are Ideas themselves – an interpretation which Zabarella rejects as Platonist: since Aristotle initiates the section by saying “therefore it is not” (διὸ οὐδὲ), he is referring to something he had already said – while he has not discussed Ideas earlier in the book. In the second book of *De anima* Aristotle says that the soul is the actuality of a body, for which reason Alexander denies the falsity of the consequent. This would easily resolve the problem, but Zabarella thinks that this is unlikely to be the case. Averroes, however, in Zabarella’s view, relies on a corrupt manuscript when commenting on this section. Averroes’ version relies on “aut” at the place where the Latin versions have “Et ei instrumentum aliquod esse”, which led Averroes to understand that Aristotle here stated one, not two consequents.³⁸

Zabarella’s interpretation of this section is that for Aristotle the intellect by its being is the actuality of the body and thus mixed with the body, but by its operation, which is the reception of the species, it is not mixed, since it only receives species. (745) Zabarella says:

If the intellect were mixed with the body, i.e. if in its reception of species it were subject to some corporeal condition, which would be the reason of reception, consequently it would have a quality, i.e. mixed with intelligibles and affected,

³⁸ The reference to a corrupt manuscript indicates another complication in Zabarella’s account. The point is that our modern Greek version, such as e.g. published in the Loeb, states ἢ κἄν ὀργανόν [...] εἶη, which both J. A. Smith and W. S. Hett render into English as “or [...] even have an organ”. Both the modern text and these two translations in fact correspond to the version Averroes worked with. Consequently, Averroes assumes that Aristotle is asserting a disjunction in the *consequens*: that the intellect would have a quality in one of the two ways, either by becoming hot or cold or an organic soul. He then proceeds to confute both parts of the disjunction thus showing that the *consequens* is false. The Greek version Zabarella relies on, however, apparently suggests a different reading, and the reading we find in Zabarella was common for the time. The three Latin versions published with the standard 1562 edition of Averroes render this section as: (a) “qualis enim aliquis utique fiet, calidus aut frigidus, si organum aliquod erit”; (b) “nimirum calidus aut frigidus: atque etiam instrumentum aliquod adesse”; and (c) “aut calidus, aut frigidus, aut haberet aliquod instrumentum.” Only this third one corresponds to our modern Greek version. Obviously, translators worked with different manuscripts or printed versions. Zabarella, who generally follows the medieval translation (the first cited above) in this case intervenes in the translation by saying: “calidus, aut frigidus, & ei instrumentum aliquod esset”.

whereas this is false, since it has no quality, i.e. is not mixed with intelligibles, which Aristotle assumed to have been proved in the fourth text (429a18).³⁹

The present paragraph according to Zabarella thus concludes that *in its operation* the intellect is not mixed to the body – that it receives species without any reception in the body. If the intellect were mixed with the body in its operation, this would have to be through some organ (749).

The explanation is hardly satisfactory. We have already seen, for instance, that the intellect cannot perform any operation without the body but now we learn that somehow *in operation* it is separate from the body. Insofar as the intellect depends, for its operation, on the imagination, it is hard to say that it is not subject to some corporeal condition. At the same time, it is hard to reproach Zabarella for not managing to find an interpretation which would make compatible two such fundamentally incompatible sections as the argument that the intellect is corruptible because it depends on imagination for its functioning and the description of passive intellect in this section.

The nature of the passive intellect: 429b7-430a25

The final part of the fourth chapter of the third book of *De anima* offers a summary of some additional questions that Aristotle considers in relation to the passive intellect. They are a chance for Zabarella to expose the implications of Alexander's position for the understanding of the nature of the passive intellect. At 429b23 Aristotle states that someone might ask, if (transl. W. S. Hett)

the mind is a simple thing, and not liable to be acted upon, and has nothing in common with anything else, as Anaxagoras says, how will it think, if thinking is a form of being acted upon.⁴⁰

For it is necessary for two things to have something in common in order for one to be acted upon by another.

Themistius and Philoponus, Zabarella reports, argue that Aristotle by “not having anything in common”, refers to matter in this context; the things the intellect understands participate in matter whereas the intellect is immaterial, so it has nothing in common with the things it understands (850). But Zabarella rejects the

³⁹ “Si intellectus esset mistus corpori, id est, si ad hoc ut reciperet species, inniteretur alicui corporali conditioni, quae esset ratio recipiendi, tunc esset qualis, id est, mistus cum intelligibilibus, & affectus, at hoc est falsum, quia non est qualis, id est, non mistus cum intelligibilibus, quod Aristoteles supponit demonstratum in textu quarto.” Zabarella 1606, 748.

⁴⁰ Aristotle says that one could ask: “εἰ ὁ νοῦς ἀπλουν ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπαθεὶς καὶ μηθεὶς μηθεν ἔχει κοινόν, ὥσπερ φησὶν Ἀναξαγόρας, πῶς νοήσει, εἰ τὸ νοεῖν πάσχειν τί ἐστίν”, Aristotle *De anima*, 429b23-25.

view that “not having anything in common” pertains to matter. In his view, the reference to Anaxagoras indicates that the meaning here is the same as ἀμιγῆ at 429a18, where Aristotle also discussed Anaxagoras’ views.

In continuation, at 429b29 f., Aristotle says that it had been determined before that “being acted upon by something common” (πάσχειν κατὰ κοινόν) is such that before it thinks, the intellect is potentially, but not actually, the things thought.⁴¹ This would enable the mind to be potentially identical with the objects of thought but actually to be nothing, until it thinks. As Aristotle describes it, what the mind thinks must be in it in the same sense as letters are on a tablet which bears no actual writing.

The common interpretation of this remark by commentators such as Simplicius, Zabarella reports, was that here Aristotle resolves the problem from 429b23, by distinguishing between being acted upon in a corruptive and perfective way (858). The problem with this interpretation is that it presupposes that at 429b23 Aristotle says that what is affected must come into material contact with the agent by which it is affected – but in Zabarella’s interpretation Aristotle merely says

that what is affected must have something in common with the agent. The intellect has nothing in common with anything. We show that Aristotle did not talk about ordinary matter, but that the intellect *simpliciter* and in general has nothing in common with other things since it is thoroughly unmixed.⁴²

The question there pertains to the simplicity of the intellect, not its abstraction from matter. These authors also assume that it is possible to be acted upon without having anything in common with the agent and that this happens when something is acted upon in a perfective way – but Zabarella says that this is impossible and that being acted upon perfectly also requires that what is passive and active come together (*convenientia patientis cum agente*).

Being acted upon by an agent perfectly means that some perfection is present in the agent and that the patient is by nature organized to receive such perfection. Doubts, however, arise because it has been said that the intellect is thoroughly unmixed with other things, which seems to cancel the coming-together which is necessary for the relationship between what is affected and the agent.⁴³ In Zabarella’s view, the solution is thus to be understood following Simplicius, who

⁴¹ Aristotle says: “δυνάμει πῶς ἔστι τὰ νοητὰ ὁ νοῦς, ἀλλ’ ἐντελεχεία οὐδέν, πρὶν ἂν νοῆῃ”, *ibid.*, 429b30 f.

⁴² “quod patiens debet habere aliquid commune cum agente & quod intellectus nil habet commune cum aliquo, ostendimus Aristotelem non significasse communem materiam, sed simpliciter & generaliter, quod nihil habet commune cum aliis, cum sit penitus immistus.” Zabarella 1606, 858.

⁴³ “[...] intellectus est penitus immistus cum aliis rebus, hoc enim tollere videbatur illam convenientiam quae debet semper reperiri inter patiens & agens”, *ibid.*, 859.

argued that Aristotle here conceded that *agens* and *patiens* must in some sense agree and this happens in the intellect, which potentially, as it becomes the very intelligibles, by which it is affected, is obviously by its nature not actually mixed with them.⁴⁴

Famously, Alexander, in his *De anima*, argued that the intellect is not any one thing in essence, but it is all of them in potentiality.⁴⁵ Since it is not anything in actuality before it thinks, when it thinks something, it becomes the object of thought. It thus resembles not so much a tablet on which nothing has yet been written, but rather the “not being written on” of the tablet itself.⁴⁶ Zabarella disagreed with this view and thought that the discussion in the third book pertains to the soul and not merely a soul’s capacity. It is the soul and not its faculty that is affected. This is an interesting case of Zabarella’s disagreement with Alexander.

Refutation of Averroist psychology

In his rejection of Averroist psychology in the essay “De mente humana” Zabarella lists ten arguments in favour of the view that the soul is the assisting form formulated by Themistius⁴⁷, Averroes and the latter’s followers (924) and then presents their refutation (938-942). We have already seen how he discussed some of these arguments (i.e. the argument based on Aristotle’s statement at 413a4 that the soul may be like a sailor on a ship, or at 429b25, that the intellect is unmixed with matter) – and his discussion in “De mente humana” merely summarises these responses. Some other Averroist arguments he cites strike one as trivially false, and make the impression that he is merely listing and refuting them in order to be thorough. The arguments worth considering are as follows:

a) The cognition of universals is by abstraction from matter. Therefore it can be performed only by a faculty separate from matter. Consequently, the rational soul, by which universals are known, must be separated from matter and cannot provide the being (*esse*) of a human.

Zabarella answers this argument by saying that the understanding of universals is an action of the intellect; it happens by abstraction; and the intellect is abstracted insofar as it is separate from any specific organ. This is enough to understand universals. Zabarella thus agrees with the statement that the intellect is separated from the organ in operation (*operando*), but he disagrees that this was according to its being (*secundum esse*). From the abstraction of universals nothing else can be concluded except that the intellect is not organic.

⁴⁴ “ut fiat ipsamet intelligibilia, a quibus patitur, licet non sit eis actu commistus secundum naturam”, *ibid.*, 859.

⁴⁵ Alexander, *De anima*, 83.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴⁷ The reference to Themistius’s *Paraphrasis* pertains to the sections 26.24 and 103.20-104.22; Zabarella often talks about Themistius and Averroes together.

b) Some authors also argue that the passive intellect is one and the same substance as the active intellect – whereas the latter is a form separate from matter. So the passive intellect must be of this kind as well.

Zabarella denies that the passive and active intellect are the same; active intellect is a form separate from matter, but this is not the case with the passive intellect (943).

c) Some authors also invoke Aristotle's statement in the first book of *De anima* (411b17) that it is hard to imagine in which part of the body the intellect should be located and argue that consequently Aristotle's view has to be that the soul is not the form of a body and that it is separate from matter.

Zabarella answers this argument by saying that when Aristotle states that the intellect does not occupy a specific part of the body, this merely means that it is not organic; but from this it does not follow that it does not give being to a human being.

At the same time, Zabarella offers the following arguments against the Averroist view that the passive intellect is immortal according to Aristotle (920-930):

a) If the rational soul does not provide the human being with its specific being, then the human being cannot be said to be intelligent. One cannot say that this happens by the intellect attaching itself to the phantasms, since, as Aquinas points out, as long as the intellect is separate, its conjunction with phantasms is not sufficient to ascribe understanding as an activity of the intellect to a human being.

b) If the intellect were not the form but rather an operation, then understanding would be a transient action and not an immanent one. But everyone agrees that it is immanent. This is the same as if one said that the soul is like a sailor on a ship: the actions of the sailor are transient, and not immanent. In other words, it would be impossible to say that a man is intelligent (929).

c) It is also wrong to assume, as Averroes does, that the human species is constituted through the introduction of the cogitative faculty. The cogitative faculty can either be a substantial form distinct from the sensible soul, or a separate capacity of the soul. But the first is impossible, and Averroes never argues it, because such a form would be distinct from both rational and sentient soul. Nor can it be a capacity: in that case a human being would not differ from animals by a substantial form, nor by its soul, but by a capacity of the soul, in which case the difference would only be accidental.

d) If the cogitative faculty were the constitutive principle of the human being and at the same time the same as imagination, then the human being would not be different from animals. Rather, Aristotle explicitly discusses the functions of the soul which imagination cannot perform.

Zabarella's arguments against the idea of the unity of the intellect

From the critique of Averroes' view that the intellect is separable, there follows the critique of the view that the intellect is one for the entire human species (962). Zabarella lists the following arguments in favour of the unity of the soul stated by

Themistius and Averroes (963) and then rejects them on the basis of the following arguments (968-970):

a) If the rational soul were to be multiplied by number, it would be a material form. Since everything material is potentially understood and everything potentially understood is an object which moves the passive intellect, in that case the intellect would be its own object, it would move itself and be an object to itself. Since this is absurd, it follows that the intellect is not a material form, nor is it multiplied.

In answering this argument, Zabarella accepts its validity (that if the intellect were a material form it would be potentially understood, therefore its own object and would move itself) as long as the form is taken to be the informing form, which gives being (*esse*) to the natural thing. He points out that Aristotle describes how the intellect understands itself in *De anima*, at 3.8 (429b7) and that it does not understand itself primarily, but only secondarily and by understanding other things.

b) If the intellect were multiplied, so would be the acts of understanding. Consequently, there would be individual acts of understanding of the same thing, different in number. If two persons understand one and the same thing, they will perform separate acts of understanding the same thing. In order to extract the universal, an infinite number of separate acts of understanding would have to be postulated. Every thing understood would have its own thing understood and so on ad infinitum. The universals singularly comprehended would have to have their own universal extracted in order to be comprehended. However, singular things are understood insofar as they have something universal, which is intelligible in act. An example is the understanding of understanding, which is the understanding of something singular and if many men understand universal understanding, then there will be many singular acts of understanding of a singular understanding; in that case they will have their own *rem intellectam* and so *ad infinitum*. Averroes' answer is that the understanding of the same universal in different humans must be multiple in some ways and be one in some way. They are multiplied by being in different phantasms, but they are one since the intellect which receives them is one. If the universal which is received in the intellects of different human individuals is going to be one, then these intellects must be one.

Zabarella says that this argument can be answered in two ways. One can point out that our understanding can be understood by its representative being and by its formal being. In the formal sense all our understanding is singular: it is a spiritual quality in the soul of an individual human. But in the sense of representation it can be either universal or singular – i.e. either a representation of a universal or singular property. For instance, if I think about a horse in general, the thought will be universal by representation, but the thought itself will be singular; but if I think about a singular horse, the understanding will be individual in both senses. (The same will apply to the understanding of understanding; even if understanding is thought about in universal sense, its very understanding will be one *formaliter*). Zabarella's view is that every act of understanding is singular (and thus can be said to be understood potentially), even including the understanding of universal

understanding, since considered *formaliter* it is still singular. It thus has its *rem intellectam* (i.e. universal understanding) as object (*rem*) by which all acts of understanding are understood (*complectitur*). At the same time, universal understanding, insofar as it is universal, does not have an object understood (*rem intellectam*), or insofar as it has it, this is as singular. No infinite regress will therefore follow and the boundary will be placed in the understanding of the universal, which does not have a wider *rem intellectam* since only singular is said to have *rem intellectam*.

Alternatively, one could deny that understanding is understood potentially; when one says that all singular things are understood potentially, this is true of material things and their apprehension through the senses; a stone in the intellect is a singular concept and not a potentially understood thing but actually understood thing. Both the thing understood (*res intellecta*) and understanding (*intellectio*) are without matter, and although the intellect is a form of a material body, it performs this operation without matter.

c) If the intellect of one human being were different than the intellect of another human being, then a teacher would not be able to convey knowledge to a student: since science is not an active quality (it is not like the heat of a fire), it cannot produce a science different in number in the student (963).

Zabarella answers here that birds can learn to imitate human voice, but this does not prove that they share the same phantasms as humans. The intellect of the teacher is different in number from the intellect of the pupil. The teacher's intellect is numerically different from the one in the pupil and the same applies to the knowledge (*scientia*) in their minds. If it is responded that knowledge is not an active quality, the answer is that it is not active by material action but nothing prevents its acting by spiritual action. The soul expresses its concepts through words and voices; but words are signs not only of concepts, but also of real objects to which concepts pertain. The pupil will thus, upon learning a word, apprehend the thing the word signifies and whose concept is in the teacher's mind. That way what is represented by the teacher's word can produce its species by being heard in the pupil's mind.

Zabarella states three arguments that in his view show that the Averroist position is wrong:

a) It was demonstrated earlier that if the rational soul was the form, it had to be multiplied. But if the soul were one for all humans, then we would be all one person.

b) Acts of understanding belonging to different humans are different: ergo, the diversity of operations indicates diversity of forms. Averroes tried to resolve this problem by referring to the diversity of phantasms. Aquinas rightly dismissed his argument by saying, Zabarella reports, that phantasms in understanding have the role of what is moving (*locum moventis*) and not the form, whereas the role of the

form belongs to the intelligible species produced by the phantasm in the intellect⁴⁸ – the same way a colour to the eye is *movens* but species received in the eye is *forma*. If phantasms were only individuated according to individual humans, while the intelligible species were one and the same for all, then it would follow that what the intellect received in one human it received in all – if the eye were the same for all humans, then all would see the same colour at the same time (966).

c) If the intellect were one and the same, then contrary opinions would exist in it – for instance, one person may think that the world is eternal and another that it is perishable (967).

Conclusion

The central theme of Zabarella's psychological works is the refutation of the thesis that according to Aristotle the soul is immortal. His method, unlike Pomponazzi's, is systematic and resembles the way a modern historian of philosophy would approach the task, by reviewing all those sections which could be used to assert the opposite view. The commentary on *De anima* can be read as an attempt at reconstructing Alexander of Aphrodisias' lost commentary. But what *Zabarella's own* view was and whether he thought that the soul was mortal according to truth or only according to Aristotle, is much harder to say. Obviously, it is impossible to state with certainty, for an author who wrote in the period when the expression of a certain view was suppressed, whether he subscribed to the forbidden view – that is, unless the author was persecuted. In the best case we can make guesses about whether Zabarella *thought* that the soul was *really* mortal. On the basis of the material published, Zabarella's attitude coincided with Caietan's. He drew a clear distinction between Aristotle and truth; when he had to present those of Aristotle's views which were different from the dogmas of the Catholic Church, he followed the instructions of the fifth Lateran Council and usually included a brief explanation of what was true according to the views of theologians.

There exists a long-standing debate about Pomponazzi's real views on the mortality of the soul and how genuine his expressions of faith were.⁴⁹ Unlike Pomponazzi's, Zabarella's protestations of faith never sound cynical nor do they allow us to attribute him belief in *duplex veritas*. Arguably, unlike Pomponazzi, Zabarella did not attempt to provide a philosophical account of theological themes such as miracles, so he had no need to rely on the doctrine of double truth.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, his expressions of faith are ritualistic. When he comes to discuss the

⁴⁸ “habent locum moventis, non formae [...] sed locum formae habet species intelligibilis a phantasmate in intellectu producta”, Zabarella 1607, 965.

⁴⁹ For Pomponazzi and *duplex veritas* see Pine 1968.

⁵⁰ One should still note that among Zabarella's biographers there exists a long but unconfirmed tradition that ascribes him belief in the real mortality of the soul and not only according to Aristotle, while his brilliance in astrology seems to have bordered on heresy. See Edwards 1960, 40-52.

argument that the intellect is perishable because it depends on imagination, in the commentary on *De anima*, Zabarella explains it by saying that any form depends for its being on the body (73). According to the true philosophy, taught by theologians, he reminds us, there can exist a form which gives being to matter, without taking its being from matter and does not depend on matter, since it can also exist without it, whereas according to Aristotle's philosophy such forms are not possible. An explanation like this clearly conforms to the instructions of the fifth Lateran Council.

In the essays which discuss the functioning of the intellect published in the *De rebus naturalibus* and reprinted in the commentary on *De anima*, Zabarella is much less explicit in his Alexandrian views on the mortality of the soul according to Aristotle than is the case in the commentary on *De anima*. More generally, in *De rebus* he is occasionally quite prepared to dismiss specific arguments because they are contrary to Roman-Catholic faith. It is possible to think that the essays were conceived as descriptions of how human cognitive processes *actually* work and therefore not meant to be faithful to historical Aristotle. The question of the immortality of the soul resurfaces there twice, in the discussion of the immortality of the agent intellect, where Zabarella has to propose an interpretation which *de facto* suggests the mortality of the passive intellect (1041) and relation to Zabarella's rejection of intellectual memory (1004). The question is treated inconclusively, which may have led some of the readers to infer that Zabarella left the question of Aristotle's views on the immortality of the soul unanswered – a misunderstanding of his position that has become widespread in the meantime. In fact, in order to find to what Zabarella thought about this question, we need to look at his commentary on *De anima*.

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