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Jesuit Aristotelian Education: *De Anima* Commentaries

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The importance of formal education to the early Jesuit ministry cannot be overemphasized: through institutional and pedagogical reform in education the Jesuits hoped to foster not only an informed citizenry, but also one with civic values, moral virtue and Christian piety.¹ The success of the early Jesuit colleges and universities is due in part to the fact that the Jesuits combined the best of several different educational programs: (a) the development of a literate, cultured and socially responsible citizen through the study of classical texts, as had been promoted by the Italian humanists; (b) an elaborate program of public and private spiritual education; and (c) the rigorous *modus et ordo* of Parisian scholasticism, which included a graded class system, the assignment of a single master to a given class, a strict daily schedule, and an elaborate system of exercises such as repetitions, disputations, and compositions.² In the curriculum too, the Jesuits combined the best of different traditions: the lower faculty of languages, literature and rhetoric was largely adopted from the Humanists,³ while the faculty of arts was modeled on Aristotelian philosophy and the faculty of theology on the Thomistic theology of Paris. While novel in its ability to weave together these disparate educational threads, the choice of the Aristotle for the arts curriculum places the Jesuit educational program firmly in one of the oldest and most established of university traditions, scholastic Aristotelianism. This essay inquires into the position of the early Jesuits in the cultural tradition of Aristotelian university education. Is there something special

about their version of scholastic Aristotelianism? Is there a distinctively Jesuit “way of proceeding” detectable in their Aristotelian education?

As a way into this topic, I examine a set of early Jesuit university textbooks with an eye toward the question, *Is there something distinctive about the Jesuit version of Aristotelianism as it is expressed in these textbooks?* The university textbook underwent something of a renewal with the Jesuits,⁴ and so it serves as an especially good place to look for evidence of a distinctively Jesuit “way of proceeding” in what is otherwise a very traditional educational and doctrinal practice. After outlining an affirmative answer to this question in the abstract, I illustrate it with some turn-of-the-17th-century textbook commentaries on Aristotle’s *De Anima*, which would have formed part of the third year university arts curriculum. The four textbooks I consider were written by professors of philosophy and theology who taught at Jesuit universities in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Mexico: Emmanuel de Goes (author of the Coimbran commentary on the *De Anima*),⁵ Cardinal Franciscus Toletus (noted professor of the Collegio Romano, 1559-69),⁶ Antonius Rubius (a student of Toletus who spent 22 of his years teaching philosophy and theology in Mexico, 1577-1599),⁷ and Franciscus Suárez (professor of philosophy and theology throughout Spain, but most famously the Principal Professor of Theology at Coimbra, 1597-1616).⁸ I focus in some detail on the theory of human cognition discussed in these texts. The psychological theory, however, should be understood to serve as more of a vehicle than the subject matter of the essay. In the end, I suggest that even here in one of the most traditional aspects of the Order, the Aristotelian curriculum, there is something innovative and distinctive about the Jesuits.

I. The Jesuits and Aristotelianism

In his *Constitutions*, Ignatius of Loyola prescribed the texts of Aristotle for the study of philosophy, including logic, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, and metaphysics.⁹ In the wake of Averroism, however, there had been a great deal of debate about the exact relation between Aristotle and the “true philosophy,” that is, the philosophy that leads to orthodox Catholic doctrine. Averroes and his followers, most famously Pomponazzi, had concluded that the principles of Aristotle either fail to establish certain articles of the Catholic faith (e.g., that the rational soul is immortal) or establish something contrary to it (e.g., that there is only one rational soul for all human beings). But if this were right, then it would look as though Aristotle could not provide the proper philosophical foundation for Catholic doctrine, and this would obviously pose a problem for the Jesuit schools. For the early Jesuits, however, Aristotle and the “true philosophy” were, at least by interpretive effort, one and the same. Thus in 1565 Francis Borgia, third General Superior of the Order, issued a circular containing a list of axioms about which there was to be no freedom of opinion, and that were to be taught “according to Aristotle, the true philosophy, and natural reason,” these three things apparently being considered co-extensive.¹⁰ Similarly, the 1586 draft of the *Ratio Studiorum* encourages in philosophy the earnest study of various accepted opinions, such as that the rational soul is, according to Aristotle, immortal.¹¹ The true philosophy, then, was going to be found in Aristotle, one way or another. Lohr has gone so far as to say that “[i]n its reaction to Pomponazzi, [the Jesuit form of] Aristotelianism had become conscious of itself. It gained a sense of having a mission, the sense of trying to preserve a heritage, the sense of unanimity in its understanding of the philosophical enterprise.”¹² Borgia’s list was later rescinded, and the connection

between Aristotle and the true philosophy loosened a bit. Aristotle is rejected here and there, though mostly on theologically irrelevant matters of scientific detail (e.g., it is agreed that Galen was right in claiming that the brain is the organ of the common sense, rather than the heart, as Aristotle had maintained). Occasionally Jesuits admit that it is just unclear whether Aristotle thought that p , where p is a philosophical proposition that is bound up with Christian doctrine (e.g., some are willing to claim that it is unclear whether Aristotle thinks that the human soul achieves personal immortality). By the time the 1599 *Ratio Studiorum* was drafted, Loyola's originally simple prescription of Aristotle's texts is considerably amended to accommodate the more tenuous connections between Aristotle and Catholic doctrine. In the instructions for the Professor of Philosophy, for example, a rule is included on "how far Aristotle is to be followed" in which it is made clear that Aristotle ought typically to be followed, but not if something in the text is found to be either contrary to some universally accepted doctrine or, even more, opposed to orthodox Catholic doctrine.¹³ The relation between Aristotle and the true philosophy is thus subject to a certain amount of examination, interpretation and change in both theory and practice. Nonetheless it seems fair to say that the Jesuits belong solidly and very self-consciously to the tradition of scholastic Aristotelianism.

What sort of Aristotelians were the Jesuits? I mentioned above that there is something distinctive about the treatment of Aristotle in the Jesuit textbooks. One might think that this is a bad thing. Indeed medievalists often approach late scholasticism, the Jesuit version included, as a though it were a degenerate and garbled version of the 12th-14th century original. No doubt influenced in their opinion by the struggle to reconcile the texts of Aristotle with Christian doctrine,

they suggest that later scholasticism is really a second-hand scholasticism more concerned with providing famous backing for Catholic orthodoxy than in engaging in philosophy with Aristotle. Thus Eckhard Kessler, in his article in the *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, asserts that the Jesuits' point is "not to explain Aristotle but to rationalise Christian doctrine," i.e., they are using, even abusing, Aristotle for their doctrinal ends, and this is bad philosophical practice.¹⁴ Similarly, John Trentman, in his article in the *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, bemoans, "scholasticism was transmitted to later generations by philosophical hacks...or ill-tempered clerics. It is little wonder that real scholastic insights were misunderstood and that Aristotelian scholasticism was often 'refuted' by *ignoratio elenchi*."¹⁵ The Second Scholastic, the view seems to be, is the downfall of scholastic Aristotelianism.

In its course, this essay defends the Jesuit *De Anima* commentaries against this attack of corrupting the Aristotelian tradition rather than advancing it. Far from being a degenerate form of Aristotelianism designed simply to buttress Catholic doctrine, the version of Aristotelianism expressed in these textbooks represents a vital and constructive moment in the long history of scholastic Aristotelianism: it advances new and interesting positions; it produces quite sober interpretations of Aristotle; and it develops rigorously philosophical arguments. The Jesuits certainly do have their own way of doing Aristotle commentary, but this way is by no means a philosophically inferior one: they prove themselves to be good Christians, and good philosophers, and good Aristotelians.

II. The Jesuit Commentary Style

In the long history of Aristotle commentary the Jesuit texts stand out. Writing in the wake of the humanists' philological endeavor the Jesuits had available to them a vast number of revived sources to work with, and they used them liberally in their commentaries. As other essayists in this collection remark, the early Jesuits practice an intellectual method of *inclusion*; that is, they present, but do not necessarily endorse, a wide variety of more and less probable opinions on controversial matters. In the *De Anima* textbooks, they wrestle explicitly not only with Aristotle and Aquinas, but also with Greek commentators (Themistius, Simplicius, Theophrastus, Alexander of Aphrodisias), Arabic thinkers (Avicenna, Averroes, Avampace, Alfarabi), perspectivists (Witelo, Bacon), humanists (Ficino, Pico della Mirandola), numerous old and recent Latin commentators (Scotus, Occham, Paul of Venice, John of Jandun, Agostino Nifo, Cajetan, Aegidio Romano), and also each other (Rubius and Suárez are perfectly happy to discuss, and even disagree with, the commentaries of Toletus and the Conimbricenses that are being used in the schools). The consequence is an unusually intellectually rich text that sets before the pupil not only the preferred doctrine, but the conceptual options, the countervailing evidence, and a sense of what is at stake in the dispute.

While the principle of inclusion may make the Jesuit texts special, that by itself does not go very far toward a defense of the Jesuits as constructive members of the Aristotelian tradition; it is possible, after all, that the Jesuits lost the philosophical forest through the trees of controversy. More interesting for my purposes, then, is Charles Lohr's suggestion that many of the Jesuit textbooks are unusually systematic and philosophical.¹⁶ Indeed the texts aim to establish axiomatic foundations first, and then build a system of philosophy (and theology) on those foundations. In this

respect they reflect Loyola's vision of the educational pyramid: in education a strict order must be followed, beginning with solid foundations and, only once the foundations are secure, building on them by proceeding to more advanced topics. Lohr's studies deal chiefly with the metaphysical textbooks, and this systematization of Aristotle is most dramatic in these works, where the subject matter of metaphysics and its place in the curriculum were eventually re-conceived.¹⁷ Nevertheless one finds a similar systematic character in the natural philosophical texts as well, the *De Anima* commentaries included. Suárez is the most distinctive in this respect. His *De Anima* text (like his *Disputationes Metaphysicae*) can only loosely be called a commentary, for it does not include either a translation or summary of Aristotle's text, and it establishes its own order of topics to be discussed, which only loosely follows Aristotle's. This reorganization is necessarily less dramatic in commentaries that include a presentation of Aristotle's text, for their organization is set by the text. Still, the *quaestiones* of these commentaries display a systematic progression of their own, so much so that they could, taken together, stand on their own as an independent treatise on the soul.

Beyond the organization of subject matter, the real philosophical work-horses of the Jesuit textbooks, the disputed questions that appear after a translation and/or summary of Aristotle's text, demonstrate a peculiar philosophical and systematic character of their own. It is the character of the quaestiones themselves that will concern the rest of this essay. The *quaestiones* are impressive not only for their original content but also for their mode of presentation or style of argument, which we might classify today as *rational reconstruction*; that is, they effectively reconstruct Aristotle's thought from first, or at least relatively fundamental,

principles of his own philosophical system. The Jesuits, in other words, provide solid Aristotelian grounds for commonplace Aristotelian conclusions. The grounding principles are ones that are meant to be maximally clear to the human intellect and that the student would have encountered earlier in his studies. The result is a presentation of Aristotle that is extremely clear and rationally well-ordered. This mode of presentation stands in marked contrast to the piecemeal arguments for or against this or that assertion that one finds in many earlier Aristotle commentaries, including those of Aquinas, which give either a lengthy line-by-line commentary or, as in the case of the *Summa Theologiae*, a topically but not philosophically systematic text. It must be granted that the Jesuit texts typically go well beyond the words that one finds in the text of Aristotle under discussion, and it is surely this fact that arouses suspicion. While it may at first look as though the Jesuits are playing fast and loose with the text, however, what they are really doing is trying to interpret that text in a principled, grounded and orderly way, a way that, not incidentally, is very well suited to the ends of education.

III. Aristotelian Psychology: Some Basics

Before illustrating this rational reconstruction at work in the *De Anima* commentaries, it will be necessary to review briefly some of the basics of a broadly Aristotelian theory of cognition. Very crudely, there are three groups of cognitive faculty. The first group, the *external senses*, includes vision, audition, olfaction, touch, and gustation. The second group, the *internal senses*, includes such faculties as the common sense, the imagination and memory, though the exact number of internal senses is a matter of dispute among Aristotelians. The only internal sense that is important for this essay is *phantasia*, which is conceived as a storehouse or treasury of

sensory representations. The third sort of cognitive faculty is the *intellect*, which is distinguished into the active or agent intellect and the passive or patient or sometimes the possible intellect: the patient intellect is the faculty that actually understands things; the agent intellect's function is a matter of some debate, and will be discussed below. The objects of cognitive faculties are somewhat different. Sensory cognition, both external and internal, is directed primarily to the sensible accidents of particular corporeal things: I see Rover's color and shape; I imagine Fido's bad doggy breath; I remember the sound of Rex's bark. What exactly intellectual cognition is directed to is a matter of considerable debate, but certainly the intellect is able to direct itself to such things as the natures, essences, and/or quiddities of things: I understand what it is to be a dog, for example; that is, I understand the nature of *doghood* or *dogness*, which is something that belongs not just to Rover or Rex but to all dogs as such *qua* dog. Finally, it is important to remember that the Aristotelian theory is roughly an empiricist theory of cognition. The intellect comes into the world a *tabula rasa*, equipped with no substantive materials of its own for thought--no forms, no species, no ideas. Revelation aside, human cognition must begin in the senses and proceeds to the intellect. Hence the famous slogan: there is nothing to be found in the intellect that is not first in the senses.

IV. Jesuit Psychology: Three Case Studies

A. Sensible Species

One of the most widely disputed questions that the Jesuit *De Anima* commentaries take up in their chapters on sensory cognition concerns the doctrine of sensible species. The doctrine of sensible species is, in this context, an interpretation of Aristotle's famous claim in *De Anima* II.5 that sensory perception

occurs by the reception in the senses of “forms without their matter.” Species are forms without their matter.¹⁸ The questions disputed are whether such species are really necessary for sensory perception and, if so, what exactly they are. Our Jesuits all agree that sensible species are indeed necessary for sensory perception, and that they are similitudes or copies of sensible accidents that have a special ontological status: like the sensible accidents themselves, species are material phenomena; the materiality attributed to sensible species by the Jesuits, however, is a peculiar degraded form of materiality--species are, as it were, sub-material. The position of our Jesuits on sensible species is itself unusual and interesting: some interpreters claim that species are immaterial, viz., literally forms without any matter at all; others claim that they are half-way between material and immaterial. It is the argument for the position, however, that I want to examine more closely.

Rather than simply launch into yet another interpretation Aristotle’s enigmatic text, these Jesuits establish the theoretical motivation underlying the claim that sensory perception requires the reception of forms without their matter. By figuring out what work these entities are supposed to do in the theory (what problems they are introduced to solve, what questions they are supposed to answer), and by setting out the fundamental theoretical constraints on the theory (constraints imposed by Aristotelian metaphysics, physics and psychology at large), the Jesuits lead the student quite straightforwardly and memorably to their conclusion. The result is an interpretation that uniquely integrates many of Aristotle’s remarks about sensory perception into one theoretically grounded account that can singularly be described as the reception of sensible species. Let’s look at the argument.

In discussing species, our Jesuits first take note of the very basic Aristotelian principle that sensory perception is a form of alteration: the perceiver is altered by the sensible accidents of some object--Rover's brown color, say. Now alteration, according to Aristotelian physics, requires *contact* between agent and patient (*Physics* VII.2, 244b3-5; *De Gen et Cor* I.6, 322b25-6). In the case of sensory alteration, then, contact is required between the sensible object and the perceiver. But sensible objects are typically objects that remain at a distance from the perceiver--Rover, brown fur and all, stays over by his doghouse. There is a theoretical need, then, for a proxy of the sensible object to make contact with the perceiver if alteration is to occur. Species are just these contact-making proxies. What is more, Aristotelian alteration is a form of *assimilation*: in alteration, the patient becomes like the agent in some way (*De Gen et Cor* I.7, 342a10-14). As an alteration, then, sensory perception requires that the perceiver be assimilated to the sensible object by the species--that I somehow become brown, like Rover's color. This can only happen if the species is itself a similitude of the sensible object. Hence the need for species, considered as similitudes of sensible objects: species are the answer to the contact and assimilation constraints on the perceptual theory. The argument is quite simple, and it is clearly grounded in some very basic Aristotelian principles.

As for the peculiar metaphysical nature of species, this is established by appeal to a couple of other very basic Aristotelian principles. First, the materiality of species is established by demonstrating that species are accidents (rather than substances, the other chief ontological category), and that they are accidents of material substances (including both the medium and the sense organs--or the senses, hylomorphically conceived, as they would be on an Aristotelian theory). Since accidents are

proportionate to, or the same kind as, the substances of which they are accidents, species must be material. Their materiality is further confirmed by the fact that they are the effects of material causes (viz., sensible accidents like color and sound), which can only in turn produce material effects (a material cause cannot produce something more perfect, like an immaterial species). So far so good. But if species are material, as they clearly must be, then we're going to have some problems on our hands. First of all, material things are sensible, while species are not--we do not see the species of brown produced by Rover's fur hovering in the air. (It is important not to be confused by the fact that species are called "sensible" species. They are so called because they facilitate the perception of sensible qualities, not because they are themselves sensible.) Second, contrary material accidents (like black and white) cannot co-exist at the same time in the same place, but species of all sorts of color must simultaneously fill the air, enabling us to see different colors through one and the same medium at one and the same time. It is by way of meeting these latter demands that our Jesuits argue that species must have a very special kind of material being, which they call "intentional" (as opposed to "natural") material being. Intentional being, in their idiolect, is a unique kind of material being, an "inferior" or "imperfect" or "degenerate" or "diminished" kind of being:

...species are more imperfect (*imperfectiores*) than their objects, since objects have natural being (*esse naturale*) while species have only intentional being (*esse intentionale*) which is degenerate (*degenerans*) from natural being and for that reason diminished.¹⁹

...intentional species are not more perfect than their objects, but rather they are like vestiges of them and even more tenuous entities. White, for example, is a perfect entity in its kind; but truly the species of white is not equal to it in that kind.²⁰

...we say that species have intentional being because a species of color is not really color but an imperfect quality that exists only in the medium and in the sense organ.²¹

Species, then, are incomplete as material accidents; they do not exist in their material subjects in quite the full-fledged way that sensible qualities themselves do. This degenerate material status is what allows them to remain insensible. Rubius writes that since species do not have natural being but a diminished being, they cannot produce natural effects, nor can they be sensed.²² This status is also supposed to explain why species of contrary accidents can co-exist at the same time in the same place. Suárez writes: “species representing contraries [like black and white] can exist simultaneously in the same subject because intentional qualities are not contraries of each other.”²³ Thus the Jesuits suggest that when Aristotle says that perception involves the reception of forms without their matter, what he must mean (if his theory of sense perception is to be consistent with his other principles) is that copies of the sensible forms of objects are transmitted through the medium and received in the sense-organs of the subject, and that their existence in the medium and subject is real and material but less complete than that of sensible accidents themselves. It is

a peculiar theory, and it says more than Aristotle ever did about forms without their matter, but it is a philosophically well-motivated interpretation of Aristotle, and a solid piece of philosophy. It is a rational reconstruction of Aristotle's reasoning.

B. The Senses: Passive or Active?

De Goes, Toletus, and Rubius all begin their treatments of the senses with the disputed question whether the senses are active or passive. In Suárez the question is not missing, but it is effectively stretched over a series of more narrowly defined questions. Following Aristotle, who describes the senses as passive powers of the soul at *De Anima* II.5, these authors agree that the senses are passive insofar as they receive the aforementioned sensible species from material objects. The point of the question, however, is whether this passive reception of sensible species alone is sufficient to produce sensation, or whether, on top of that, the senses must also *do* something, that is, must *act*. All of these authors argue that, on top of receiving species, the senses must themselves do something in order for sensation to occur. In other words, the senses are in *some* sense active faculties: they elicit (*elicere*), produce (*edere, proferre*), effect (*efficere*) or serve as the active cause of (*causa activa*) sensation.²⁴

That's the position. Now what does the argumentation look like? In defense of their conclusion, the Jesuits offer a set of *a priori* arguments that draw directly, once again, on some of the most fundamental principles of Aristotelian psychology. One argument starts with the uncontested assumption that the sensitive soul is more noble than the vegetative soul. Next, it is pointed out that all Aristotelians agree that it is more noble to act than to suffer. It is also agreed that the faculties of the vegetative soul (nourishment, growth, and reproduction) are active. But if the

sensitive faculties were merely passive, then it would follow that the faculties of the vegetative soul are more noble than those of the sensitive soul, and this is contrary to the initial uncontested assumption. The sensitive faculties must therefore be in some way active on pain of losing their noble status.²⁵

A second *a priori* argument for the activity of the senses turns on a distinction that Aristotle makes in *Metaphysics* IX.8 between what the scholastics interpret as immanent and transeunt activities. Immanent activities, like walking, begin and end in the agent; that is, the agent produces the change in herself. Transeunt activities, like throwing a baseball, end in something other than the performing agent, in the catcher's mitt; the agent produces a change in something else. Now the reception of species is clearly the conclusion of a transeunt activity: species are produced by the object and received in the sense, thereby altering it. If sensation were simply a matter of receiving species from objects, then it too would be a transeunt activity. But sensation, along with all vital functions, are immanent activities; vital functions operate through an internal principle of change. This too is a fundamental principle of Aristotelian psychology, taken from the general discussion of the soul in *De Anima* II.2. The immanence of sensory activity is supposed to explain why animals do but rocks do not have sensations when they receive species; something more, something intrinsic to the recipient, happens in the former but not the latter. For species to result in sensations, then, some further immanent act on the part of the perceiver's sensitive faculty is required.²⁶ End of argument. Once again, this view that the senses are both passive and active, but with respect to different aspects of sensation, goes beyond the text of the *De Anima* II.5. Again, however, the interpretation is

underwritten by firm Aristotelian principles. It is a rational reconstruction of what Aristotle might have said.

C. The Agent Intellect

One of the hottest philosophical topics in the history of medieval and renaissance Aristotle interpretation was Aristotle's theory of intellectual cognition, and in particular his claim that there are twin intellectual faculties, the agent and patient intellect. With regard to the agent intellect, two of the most pressing questions to which our Jesuits applied themselves were (a) is an agent intellect really necessary for intellectual cognition? and (b) what does it do? In the tradition handed down to them, the Jesuits faced not only a wide variety of views about the agent intellect, but also a theological scandal resulting from some Arabic discussions of it that were viewed as a threat to the Catholic doctrine of personal immortality.²⁷ As one might expect by now, the Jesuit response to the tradition is to argue for an interpretation of the agent intellect in a way that (i) goes beyond Aristotle's text, but (ii) makes very clear what is at stake by illustrating the philosophical pressures that might have lead Aristotle to posit such a strange sounding faculty, (iii) grounds the argument in very basic principles of Aristotelian philosophy, and (iv) in the process demonstrates that Aristotle's principles lead to a conclusion perfectly consistent with Church doctrine.

The argument for the existence of an agent intellect runs quite simply as follows. We begin with the fundamental empiricist principle from Aristotle that the intellect is initially a *tabula rasa* with no innate species of its own by which to understand the world; intellectual cognition must come by way of the senses. To understand what it is to be dog, for example, one must first have sensory

acquaintance with individual dogs; one must see, hear and touch Rex, Rover and Fido. Several puzzles arise, however, concerning the transition from seeing Rover and Rex to understanding what it is to be a dog. One such puzzle is that the phantasms that subserve sensory cognition are material and divisible, and so metaphysically incommensurate with and inferior to the intellect, an entirely immaterial and indivisible faculty. Since Aristotelian metaphysical principles dictate that (a) causation requires some sort of commensurability between agent and patient and (b) what is inferior cannot causally affect what is superior, it looks as though we are at a causal impasse. The agent intellect is introduced to provide the requisite bridge between sense and intellect:

Material and divisible things cannot act on indivisible and immaterial things by their own power; but the phantasm is something material and divisible, the intellect something immaterial in indivisible; therefore the phantasm cannot act [on the intellect] by its own power; it therefore requires some other immaterial cause, [that] can act and produce an indivisible species; such a cause is the agent intellect.²⁸

Thus our proposed question arises: for the intellect is not moved except by an object internally represented in the phantasm; but the phantasm is material; therefore it cannot act on the spiritual intellect

by way of spiritual species; therefore some other more suitable principle must be sought, which is called the agent intellect.²⁹

The phantasm, then, is simply not sufficient to produce species in the intellect by which it might understand things, and the agent intellect steps in to help produce something acceptable to the intellect. Being immaterial, the agent intellect is in a metaphysical position to act on the patient intellect (the faculty that actually does the understanding by way of species). The philosophical reason for positing an agent intellect jumps right out in this presentation of Aristotle: the agent intellect is in charge of making for the patient intellect a (metaphysically) immaterial representation of the object represented materially by the phantasm. Once again, the Jesuit interpretation is conducted with considerable simplicity and clarity, and it is underwritten by rather basic principles that would have been taught earlier on in the philosophy curriculum.

That an agent intellect is necessary, and that it is necessary for the reason given above, is absolutely clear in all four of our texts. More difficult questions face these writers, however: how does the agent intellect produce species for the patient intellect, so called “intelligible species”? what role, if any, does the phantasm play in this production? what does Aristotle mean when he says that the agent intellect “illuminates” phantasms? do the resulting species represent singular or universal things? is the agent intellect really distinct from the potential intellect? It is not possible to address all of these questions here, but I would like to introduce one of them in order to illustrate what happens when the details of the Aristotle

interpretation get finer and finer, and when, as a consequence, disagreements arise among the Jesuits.

There is a rather bewildering disagreement as to just how the agent intellect goes about its business of bridging the gap between phantasm and intellect. No two of our authors quite agree about how this is achieved. Yet every one of them defends his interpretation by appeal to some of the same basic principles we have already seen. All of them are impressed by the principle that something material can have no causal effect on something immaterial (because the former is inferior to and incommensurable with the latter). Suárez' commitment to this principle is unwavering. He thus argues that the material phantasm can in no way be causally efficacious in the production of immaterial species; the agent intellect produces the species *de novo*. The phantasm, he argues, serves only as a sort of model the agent intellect consults, a model that determines the agent intellect to produce an immaterial species that represents the same thing as the material phantasm. To say that the phantasm is illuminated, according to Suárez is simply to refer metaphorically to the fact that the agent intellect has produced a species on the basis of the phantasm that is suitable for the patient intellect's cognitive consumption.³⁰ De Goes and Toletus consider themselves constrained by the causal principle as well, but they take the "illumination" literally to change the conditions in the mind, spiritualizing them in such a way that the causal principle is no longer a problem. The agent intellect, they claim, produces a special spiritual light in the soul that bathes the phantasm. Both writers are careful to say that the phantasm itself is not altered in any way (any more than colors on the wall are altered by turning on the light); as Toletus puts it, the spiritual light simply reveals something in the phantasm

that was there all along but hitherto obscured (in the way that light can reveal objects hidden inside a colored glass vase). The phantasm thus illuminated is able to produce a species suitable for the intellect. It is thus not simply the material phantasm that produces the species (this would violate the causal principle); it is rather the spiritually-illuminated-phantasm that does so.³¹ In effect, the spiritual light does the work of providing a metaphysical stepping stone between phantasm and intellect that is clearly meant by these authors to meet the demands of the causal principle.

Clearly, attempts to rationally reconstruct Aristotle's thought do not yield only one interpretation. There is no single "Jesuit" reading of Aristotle. We find individual Jesuit authors advancing their own interpretive views in their textbooks, as in the case of the agent intellect's activity illustrates. What there does seem to be, as I have suggested, is a Jesuit interpretive style. We persistently find in these writers a commitment to producing a solidly Aristotelian argument for their views, that is, one that is clearly grounded in basic Aristotelian principles. Thus even here in their interpretation of the details of the theory, and in their disagreements, we find the Jesuit interpreters searching for the appropriate fundamental theoretical constraints to motivate one or another answer. Those principles are put up front in the arguments of the textbooks. As an impressive consequence, one can often see exactly what is at stake in the differences that these authors have with each other. What is more, one can see that the disagreements are, by and large, not merely verbal disagreements, but genuinely philosophical ones.

V. Concluding Remarks

So what does all this tell us about the position of the Jesuits in the long tradition of scholastic Aristotelianism? Besides turning out some original and interesting developments in the broadly Aristotelian theory of cognition, the texts examined here afford us some insight into the Jesuits' intellectual style and interpretive methodology (at least with respect to Aristotle in the published textbooks). Aristotle interpretation is something that the Jesuits took very seriously. The details of the *Ratio Studiorum* instruct the Professor of Philosophy:

Let him especially endeavor to interpret the text of Aristotle well; let him give no less effort to this interpretation than to the questions themselves. Let him also persuade his listeners that their philosophy will be very partial and mutilated unless they highly esteem this study of the text.³²

In presenting their interpretations, the Jesuits couple a sometimes staggering array of available views with a careful rational reconstruction of Aristotle's thought in defense of their own positions. This reconstruction is based on and constrained by fundamental principle of the system that are clear and plain to the student. There is, as we have seen, room for disagreement within the bounds of this interpretive enterprise. Even here, however, the methodology promotes an impressively philosophical dialectic among the writers (and for the students being taught from these texts).

It cannot be denied that this rational reconstruction conveniently accommodates what we might recognize as nonphilosophical Jesuit desiderata. First,

they make for an eminently teachable text: presenting arguments systematically from clear fundamental principles (rather than piecemeal) is an effective teaching strategy. Second, the practice of rational reconstruction provides a preemptive strike against the Averroistic naturalistic reading of Aristotle; the Jesuits self-consciously meant to show that rigorous philosophical argument from Aristotelian first principles in fact leads to perfectly orthodox conclusions. It should not be assumed, however, that these convenient effects are achieved at the cost of good philosophy; in other words, the fact that the Jesuits had a pedagogical and theological agenda does not by itself mean the compromise of philosophy. To the contrary, it inspired a very sound and innovative approach to philosophical interpretation, one that is alive and well still today.

¹ This educational aim is presented throughout part four of Ignatius of Loyola's *Constitutions*, drafted in 1551 and frequently revised until his death in 1556. The text of the *Constitutions* is available in its various developmental forms in the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, Monumenta Ignatiana, Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones Societatis Jesu*, 3 vols. (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, 1934-38). English translations are available (a) from the Spanish original in George E. Ganss, *Saint Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University* (Milwaukee: The Marquette University Press, 1954) and (b) from the Latin translation in Edward A. Fitzpatrick, *St. Ignatius and the Ratio Studiorum* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933). References to the *Constitutions* will be to part, chapter, article number and clarification as follows: p.1, c.1, n.1, A.

² For helpful discussions of formal education in the early Jesuit ministry, in addition to the books of Ganss and Fitzpatrick cited above, see John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), chapter 6; Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1989), ch. 13; Allan P. Farrell, *The Jesuit Code of Liberal Education* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1938); Rev. Thomas Hughes, *Loyola and the Educational System of the Jesuits* (New York: Scribner's, 1892).

³ There were notable omissions. Certain authors, like Terence, whose works contained theologically objectionable material that could not be easily expurgated from the text, were omitted from the curriculum altogether. See *Constitutions* p.4, c.14, n.2, D.

⁴ For a discussion of textbooks, see Charles B. Schmitt, "The rise of the philosophical textbook," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 792-804.

⁵ Collegium Conimbricensis, *Commentarii Collegii Conimbricensis, Societatis Jesu in tres libros de Anima* (Venice, 1606; originally published Cologne, 1598). Citations are to book, chapter, question, article and page number as follows: I.i, q.1, a.1 (100).

⁶ Franciscus Toletus, *Commentaria una cum Quaestionibus in tres libros Aristotelis de Anima* (Cologne, 1615; reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1985; originally published

Venice, 1574). Citations are to book, chapter, question and folio number as follows:

I.i.1 (100ra).

⁷ Antonius Rubius, *Commentarii in libros Aristotelis de Anima, una cum dubiis et quaestionibus hac tempestate in scholis agitari solitis* (Lyons, 1613; originally published Alcalá, 1611). Citations are to book, chapter, question and page as follows: I.i.1 (100).

⁸ Franciscus Suárez, *De Anima*, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, ed. by D.M. André (Paris: Vivès, 1856-78; originally published Lyons, 1621). Citations are to book, chapter, article, page and column as follows: I.i.1 (100a).

⁹ See *Constitutions* p. 4, c.14, n.3. Charles Lohr traces several subsequent Jesuit documents in which particular texts are specified for use in the philosophy curriculum. See his “Jesuit Aristotelianism and sixteenth-century metaphysics,” in *Paradosis*, ed. Harry G. Fletcher III and Mary B. Schulte (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), 203-220.

¹⁰ Borgia’s circular is reproduced in Le P. Camille de Rochemontieux, *Un Collège de Jésuites aux XVII^e and XVIII^e Siècles: Le Collège Henri IV de la Flèche* (Le Mans: Leguicheux, 1889), 5-8.

¹¹ See “De studio Philosophiae,” rule 20. The 1586 and 1599 *Ratio Studiorum* can be found in G.M. Pachtler, *Ratio Studiorum et Institutiones Scholasticae Societatis Jesu per Germaniam olim vigentes collectae concinnatae dilucidatae a G.M. Pachtler, S.J.*, 4 vols. (Berlin:

A. Hofmann, 1887), 2nd vol. The passage currently under discussion can be found in Pachtler, p. 140.

¹² See Lohr, “Jesuit Aristotlianism,” 205.

¹³ See “Reg. Prof. Philos.,” rule 2; Pachtler, 308.

¹⁴ See Eckhard Kessler, “The intellective soul,” in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 508.

¹⁵ See John Trentman, “Scholasticism and the seventeenth century,” in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 837.

¹⁶ See Lohr’s “Jesuit Aristotelianism,” esp. 218 ff. See also his “Metaphysics,” in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. 606-620, and his “The sixteenth-century transformation of the Aristotelian division of the speculative sciences,” in *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Donald R. Kelly and Richard H. Popkin (Boston: Kluwer, 1991), 49-60.

¹⁷ Certain parts of metaphysics, it is argued, provide the basic principles of being, and so the fundamental principles of all sciences; these parts should therefore be taught early in the curriculum (before the physics), not at the end of it. This is the part of metaphysics that is sometimes called “first philosophy.” Other parts of

metaphysics, including “divine science” of God, concern things that are rightly taught at the end of the curriculum. The metaphysics curriculum thus becomes split. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see the articles of Lohr cited above.

¹⁸ The Jesuits are explicit about this. See Coimbra II.v-vi, q.2, a.2 (221); Rubius, II.v-vi.3 (326-327); Suárez, III.i.4 (614a); Toletus, II.xii, text 121 (108ra-b).

¹⁹ See Rubius, II.v-vi.5 (533 [sic; should be 333]); see also II.v-vi.4 (331).

²⁰ See Suárez, III.ix.4 (647b-648a).

²¹ See Toletus, II.xii.34 (110vb-111ra).

²² See Rubius, II.v-vi.5 (533[sic; should be 333]-334).

²³ See Suárez, III.ii.11 (618b).

²⁴ See Coimbra, II.v-vi, q.1, a.2 (215); Rubius, II.v-vi.1 (316-318); Suárez, III.iv.9 (628b) and III.vi.1 (637a); Toletus, II.v.12 (77ra-va).

²⁵ See Coimbra, II.v-vi, q.1, a.2 (216); Rubius, II.v-vi.1 (318); Suárez, III.iv.9 (628b); Toletus, II.v.12 (75vb).

²⁶ See Coimbra, II.v-vi, q.1, a.1 (214); Rubius, II.v-vi.1 (316); Suárez, III.iv.2 (627a); Toletus, II.v.12 (77ra). The act of the sense in question is, in effect, is an act of consciousness: sensible species causally account for the intentional content of sensory experience--for making my seeing be a seeing of the purple color of a flower; the senses themselves are causally responsible for the first-person awareness characteristic of sensation--it causally accounts for the flower’s purple color be

noticed sensorily by me; both are necessary for a sensory encounter between mind and world.

²⁷ For an extremely informative discussion of this topic, and especially its crucial development in Arabic commentaries, see Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, & Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, & Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²⁸ See Toletus, III.v.13 (141vb); see also same question 143ra.

²⁹ See Suarez, IV.ii.1 (716a); see also Rubius, III.iv-v.1 (659-60); Coimbra, III.v, q.1, a.2 (490).

³⁰ See Suarez, IV.ii (715b-721b)

³¹ See Toletus, III.v.13, concl.3 (141vb-142rb), concl.8 (142vb), ad 3 (143ra); see also Coimbra, III.v, q.2, a.1 (497-8).

³² See “Reg. Prof. Philos.,” rule 12; Pachtler, 338.