

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

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## **Atheism in the Renaissance: Doubts Boundless Sea**

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*Philippine Studies* vol. 12, no. 4 (1964): 744–747

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

the treatment is sketchy. The book as a whole could be better organized, and it definitely should be better printed. But this is a book that should be read by all interested in Philippine literature. And the passages reproduced by Mr. Alinea from the poetic jousts between Jesus Balmori and Cecilio Apostol make us wish that Mr. Alinea will follow this work with a more complete anthology of Philippine literature in Spanish. Such a book is much needed, and Mr. Alinea is the person to compile it.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

## ATHEISM IN THE RENAISSANCE

DOUBT'S BOUNDLESS SEA. SKEPTICISM AND FAITH IN THE RENAISSANCE. By Don Cameron Allen. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964. xi, 272 pp.

This book opens with an essay on the meanings attached by the Renaissance to the terms 'atheism' and 'atheist', and it closes with an account of the 'redemption' and death of an English atheist of the seventeenth century. In between, in well-documented pages, the men themselves of the Renaissance are allowed to come forward and express philosophical opinions symptomatic of the skepticism and the insecure, and consequently violently defensive, faith of their times. As a chronicler whose principal aim is to "display the profiles of some of these atheists . . . [to] record the beliefs of unbelievers", and to describe the "trepidation of the orthodox", Professor Allen is successful. But, in spite of obvious efforts to avoid probing into intellectual history for the causes of late-Renaissance rationalism and fideism, some remarks occasionally made by Dr. Allen about the phenomenon he is discussing reveal certain assumptions that betray his unawareness of the impact thirteenth century Aristotelianism (or one aspect of it: Averroism) had on the content and the methods of Western thought, an unawareness that, in this reviewer's opinion, is fatal to any understanding of the Renaissance character.

More often than not, Professor Allen writes, the word 'atheist' was during the Renaissance a 'smear word'. It was a "majestic term of reproach and condemnation". To most protestants, for example, the pope was the arch-atheist, just as in the eyes of Elizabethan recusant Catholics, "Canterbury was the head of the Anglican atheists." Atheism, of which two faces were known to the Renaissance—the one practical and "not especially dangerous to the Christian Faith," the other speculative and "very much to be feared"—was "seldom separated from heresy or even theological disagreement. In brief, what characterized the late-Renaissance use of the words was "intolerant confu-

sion". It is significant, Professor Allen observes in his preface, that "none of the men in... [the] present study called himself an atheist, none denied the existence of God."

After the introductory chapter on "Atheism and Atheists in the Renaissance", Professor Allen discusses three Italians and three Frenchmen, all 'notorious' among their contemporaries for 'atheistic' views, the "banner bearers", so to speak, "of God's enemies." The Italians are Pietro Pomponazzi, Girolamo Cardano and Giulio Cesare Vanini. "The unholy trinity of Pomponazzi, Cardano and Vanini," according to Dr. Allen, "was known to the least learned of the antiatheists.... It was Pomponazzi who revived the Athenian disease of doubt, Cardano who grew virulent cultures of it, and Vanini who spread the contagion wherever he went." The Frenchmen are Michel de Montaigne, Pierre Charron and Jean Bodin. Montaigne merits treatment in this book because of his Christian Pyrrhonism, Charron because of religious skepticism, and Bodin because of his tolerant and rationalistic Christianity.

Two problems, according to Professor Allen, provided occasion for Renaissance thinkers to manifest their 'orthodoxy' and their 'atheism'. The first was quasi-theological. It was the attempt by many to set up a "rational system of theology that proved the essential, but not mysterious, principles of Christianity." The irony of it all is that in trying to refute the 'atheists', many were themselves depending on, or constructing, rational theologies, and were, in the end, themselves branded as "atheists". The second, "inseparably bound" with the problem of a rational theology, was the problem of the soul's immortality. "The Middle Ages," Professor Allen notes, "was keenly enough interested in eschatological matters, and this interest depended upon the actuality of immortality, which was accepted commonly and almost never demonstrated. The philosophical expositions of this concept really begin toward the end of the fifteenth century.... Suddenly, the proof of the soul and its eternity was of the greatest importance."

Where he stops describing Renaissance phenomena and begins conjecturing on their origins or their uniqueness, there Professor Allen begins losing his firm grasp of his materials. The problem, for the Renaissance as well as the Middle Ages, was not so much the need to convince anyone that the soul was indeed immortal, as it was to convince all that reason was capable of arriving at the immortality of the soul. This problem did not "suddenly" gain in importance during the Renaissance; rather the age-old doctrine, which indeed the early (pre-Aristotelian) Middle Ages had "commonly accepted", had first to be threatened before pains were taken to prove it (a phenomenon true of many doctrines in the history of Western ideas). That threat occurred in the thirteenth century with the rise of Averroism or what F. van Steenberghen calls 'heterodox Aristotelianism'.

As early as 1270, in the *De unitate intellectus*, Thomas Aquinas spoke of "the error [spreading widely] about the intellect, originating from the teachings of Averroes." The monopsychism of the Commentator, i.e., his doctrine that all mankind shared in a common and separate Intellectual Soul, threatened not only individual, but all human immortality as well. In spite of the defeat it suffered at the hands of Bishop Etienne Tempier in 1277, Averroism did not entirely disappear from the philosophical world of the Middle Ages. At about the turn of the fourteenth century it reappeared in the doctrine of John of Jandun at the University of Paris. It seemed fairly well entrenched in Italy by 1321 under the patronage of Taddeo of Parma who wrote *Quaestiones de anima* in ca. 1320, and of Angelo of Arezzo, who in ca. 1325 filled his logical treatises with Averroistic reflections on the soul. In 1364, on 28 August, Francesco Petrarca, writing to Boccaccio with characteristic disgust over dialecticians, testified to the existence of Averroists at this time. He wrote that he had been visited by one who "belonged to that sect of men who practice philosophy after the modern fashion and think they are not efficient enough if they do not bark at Christ and His heavenly doctrine." Again in 1370 Petrarca urges his friend Luigi Marsili to "set all your strength and all your nerves to the fight against that frantic dog Averroes."

This evolving Averroism constituted the tradition of the Italian universities, especially of the University of Padua, at the close of the Middle Ages. It was the legacy received by Pietro Pomponazzi not only from his formal education but also from the intellectual climate of his country and of his time. Within this context only can one begin to realize the significance of Pomponazzi's treatise on the immortality of the soul. (There is a doctoral dissertation being prepared currently by Mr. Richard Yee for the University of Toronto, dealing principally with the place of Pomponazzi's doctrine on the soul in this tradition. To Mr. Yee I owe this insight into the Renaissance concern for a doctrine on the soul.) In this light, for example, the subtitle of Marsilio Ficino's *Theologica platonica (De immortalitate animorum)* becomes intelligible.

In conclusion, let it be said that the inconclusive (and sterile in the eyes of many) debates among the philosophers drove the men of the Renaissance into the *studia humanitatis* in education and moral philosophy, to skepticism in matters concerning speculative philosophy, and to fideism with regard to theology.

The final chapter of this book treats of the 'atheist' redeemed. It traces the spiritual odyssey of John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, who on his deathbed chose to renounce all his doubts and return to the fold of the Christian religion.

Despite the one limitation lengthily discussed above, this book is recommended reading for the fairly accurate picture it gives of

the late Renaissance. This, after all, is all that the author intended. Indeed, he has succeeded in his work of chronicling the 'atheism' of the period. An added attraction in the book is an appendix in which Professor Allen studies the history and authenticity of the "famous, but invisible, polemic against the three major religions of Europe . . . assumed by men of the Renaissance and the early eighteenth century to be the charter of the 'atheists' confederation, a truly horrid protocol awaiting the signatures of the godless of all nations!"—the treatise, *De tribus impostoribus*.

ANTONIO V. ROMUALDEZ

## SOME NOTES ON THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION

**JULIO NAKPIL AND THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION.** With the Autobiography of Gregoria de Jesús. Edited and translated by Encarnación Alzona. Manila, 1964. Copyright by the Heirs of Julio Nakpil. v, 181 pp.

Julio Nakpil (1877-1960) joined the Revolution on 2 November 1896, just in time to take part in the attack on San Mateo under Bonifacio's command. The following December Bonifacio gave him the difficult and dangerous mission of stealing—perhaps we should say surreptitiously requisitioning—gunpowder from the Spanish powder magazine at Binangonan. When Bonifacio went to Cavite for the Tejeros Convention he left the northern command to Isidoro Francisco and attached Nakpil to him as staff officer. After Bonifacio's death Nakpil served under Emilio Jacinto and, somewhat later, General Pío del Pilar. On 10 December 1898 he married Gregoria de Jesus, the young widow of Bonifacio, by whom he had eight children.

In 1925 Nakpil annotated Teodoro M. Kalaw's *La revolución filipina*, drawing for the purpose on his own personal experiences and what he had learned from eyewitnesses. These notes he inscribed to the National Library, but directed that they were not to be published until after his death. They are reproduced in facsimile in the book under review, which is edited at the request of Nakpil's heirs by the distinguished historian, Dr. Encarnación Alzona.

Included in the same book are several other manuscripts left by Nakpil and facsimile reproductions of his published musical compositions. The manuscripts, which are in Spanish, are accompanied by an English translation by Dr. Alzona, who also provides introductory material and explanatory footnotes. An appendix contains the autobiography written in Tagalog by Gregoria de Jesús Nakpil, with an English translation by Dr. Alzona.