

# *History of Universities*

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# Benet Perera's Pious Humanism: Aristotelianism, Philology, and Education in Jesuit Colleges. An Edition of Perera's *Documenta quaedam perutilia*

*Cristiano Casalini and Christoph Sander\**

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## I. Introduction

Scholars commonly distinguish between different kinds of sixteenth-century Aristotelianism:<sup>1</sup> a secular, predominantly Italian Aristotelianism on one hand, and the so-called 'Christianized' Aristotelianism of the Catholic tradition, which was approved and fostered by the Church, and supposedly endorsed by the Jesuits more than by any other religious order, on

\* The authors would like to thank Paul Richard Blum, Ulrich G. Leinsle, and Paul F. Grendler for their comments on an earlier version of this article, and Kasper Volk and Anke Timmermann for their linguistic revisions of the article. The authors also are very grateful to the Biblioteca Ambrosiana (Milan) and the Archivio Storico della Pontificia Università Gregoriana (Rome) for providing digital images of the manuscripts.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Charles H. Lohr, 'Jesuit Aristotelianism and Sixteenth-Century Metaphysics', in Harry George III Fletcher and Mary Beatrice Schulte (eds.), *Paradosis: Studies in Memory of Edwin A. Quain*, (New York, 1976), 203–20; Eckhard Kessler, 'The Transformation of Aristotelianism during the Renaissance', in John Henry and Sarah Hutton (eds.), *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: Essays in the History of Science, Education and Philosophy. In Memory of Charles B. Schmitt* (London, 1990), 137–47; Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 10–34; Antonino Poppi, *Ricerche sulla teologia e la scienza nella Scuola padovana del Cinque e Seicento* (Soveria Mannelli, 2001); Cornelis H. Leijenhorst, Christoph H. Lüthy, and J.M.M.H. Thijssen, 'The Tradition of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy. Two Theses and Seventeen Answers', in Cornelis H. Leijenhorst, Christoph H. Lüthy, and J.M.M.H. Thijssen (eds.), *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden/Boston, 2002), 1–29, at 1; Sascha Salatowsky, *De Anima: Die Rezeption der aristotelischen Psychologie im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, 2006), 21; Simone De Angelis, *Anthropologien: Genese und Konfiguration einer 'Wissenschaft vom Menschen' in der frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin/ New York, 2010), 64–5; Craig Martin, *Subverting Aristotle: Religion, History, and Philosophy in Early Modern Science* (Baltimore, 2014), 5–10.



the other.<sup>2</sup> This distinction is made both based on different methods of teaching and on the specific purposes for which Aristotle's works were studied: Catholic clerics are supposed to have adopted a medieval scholastic, mostly Thomistic reading of Aristotle in order to reinforce certain doctrines of faith, or at least to use Aristotelian philosophical doctrines that did not contradict the articles of faith that were at the basis of the study of theology. But from the fifteenth century onwards, another, more critical reading of Aristotle emerged. Philosophers at Italian universities, particularly at Padua, constructed a philological and historical approach towards the *Corpus Aristotelicum*. Those 'secular Aristotelians' are said to have read Aristotle's works for secular purposes, for example, as basis for the study of medicine or law, or by integrating the study of Aristotle's works in the humanities curriculum (*studia humanitatis*).<sup>3</sup> Their approach is, then, also related to the humanist movement of the period.<sup>4</sup>

Since such a distinction between two separate schools or distinct types of Aristotelianism seems rather too simple, several scholars have proposed a more nuanced picture to date.<sup>5</sup> The concept of Jesuit philosophy as a Thomistic reading of Aristotle, and as one to be contrasted with the approach of secular Italian humanists, however, remains firmly in place.<sup>6</sup> Admittedly, this concept has historical antecedents: when the Jesuits defined their order, at the point of its foundation, as a teaching order, they needed to decide which philosophical direction would serve their goals best.<sup>7</sup> The *Constitutions*, published in 1558, called for the following of Thomas Aquinas in theology, and of Aristotle in philosophy.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, the Jesuits grew to be the early modern order most recognized for supporting Thomism, and for considering philosophy a handmaiden of theology.

In recent years, several studies have challenged, added to and refined this picture, particularly by highlighting the heterogeneous and complex

<sup>2</sup> This point has most recently been repeated in Martin, *Subverting Aristotle*, 6: 'In this [Jesuit] version, Aristotle was presented if not as pious himself, than [sic] as a handmaiden to true religion'.

<sup>3</sup> Schmitt, *Aristotle*, 14–15; Lohr, 'Aristotelianism', 204–5; and others.

<sup>4</sup> Paul F. Grendler, 'Humanism: Ancient Learning, Criticism, Schools and Universities', in Angelo Mazzocco (ed.) *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden/Boston, 2006), 73–95 may provide first guidance on this topic. See also n. 91 below.

<sup>5</sup> The majority of scholars referred to in n. 1 similarly note and criticize a sharp distinction between two distinct schools of Aristotelianism.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Lohr, 'Aristotelianism', 215.

<sup>7</sup> Cp. John W. O'Malley, 'How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education', in Vincent J. Duminuco (ed.), *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives* (New York, 2000), 56–74.

<sup>8</sup> *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms*, trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis 1996), 182–3. However, the passage does not specify any manner in which Jesuit lecturers ought to follow these authorities.



nature of Jesuit philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Since sixteenth-century Jesuit scholars considered a wide range of sources, the definition of a 'secular', 'humanist' or 'Catholic Aristotelianism' would fail to grasp the complexities of actual practice. Particularly interesting are the different and various intersections between the Jesuits, their influences and other strands of early modern philosophy. Moreover, the ambiguity of the *Constitutions* allowed for much room for manoeuvre in and around the teachings of Aristotle (and Aquinas), so that Jesuit philosophers inadvertently dissented, held conflicting views, and even disputed openly among themselves about various topics. Accordingly, Jesuit philosophy was not a fixed concept, but rather a complex and controversial one that resulted in significant differences between Jesuits of different times and geographical origins. Finally, since all Jesuit philosophers were also teachers, their scholarship and philosophy were closely linked with teaching methods, and conflicting doctrines often implied conflicting pedagogical ideals. Historians have shown a tendency to underestimate this pedagogical basis of Jesuit philosophy. It is this aspect that shall be addressed in the present study.<sup>10</sup>

This article aims to shed light on the philosophical pedagogy of the Jesuit Benet Perera (1535–1610). Perera proposed a philosophical pedagogy that would not be defined simply as either secular or Christian Aristotelianism. He promoted a philological approach to Aristotle's works as a seed for a sound and orthodox concept of philosophy. His approach was strongly criticized, particularly in the Jesuits' own ranks. While Perera's students appreciated his teachings, his critics accused him of 'Averroism' and identified his philosophical approach as potentially not serving the goals of Jesuit philosophy, or even being at odds with central Council decrees of the Catholic Church.

In its analysis of Perera's philosophy, this article offers three contributions to scholarship: (1) It provides, for the first time, a complete study and transcription of Perera's treatise on the useful, error-free study of Christian philosophy,<sup>11</sup> the *Documenta quaedam perutilia iis qui in studiis philosophiae*

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Alfredo Dinis, 'Censorship and Freedom of Research among the Jesuits (XVIth–XVIIIth Centuries): The Paradigmatic Case of Giovanni Battista Riccioli (1598–1671)', in Luís Miguel Carolino and Carlos Ziller Camenietzki (eds.) *Jesuitas, Ensino e Ciência: Séc. XVI–XVIII* (Casal de Cambra, 2005), 27–57; Cristiano Casalini, *Aristotele a Coimbra: Il Cursus Conimbricensis e l'educazione nel Collegium Artium* (Rome, 2012); Michael John Gorman, 'The Scientific Counter-Revolution: Mathematics, Natural Philosophy and Experimentalism in Jesuit Culture 1580–1670', Ph.D. thesis (Florence, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Cristiano Casalini and Claud Pavur (eds.), *Jesuit Pedagogy (1540–1616). A Reader* (Boston, 2016) provides a new overview of this field.

<sup>11</sup> A comprehensive study on Perera's work and further biographies are provided in Marco Lamanna and Marco Forlivesi (eds.), *Benet Perera (Pererius, 1535–1610). A Renaissance Jesuit at the Crossroads of Modernity*, special issue of *Quaestio. Journal for the History of Metaphysics* 14 (2014).



*cum fructu et sine ullo errore versari student*. Its text is extant in a manuscript held at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan (MS D496 inf., ff. 25r–31v).<sup>12</sup> This treatise was previously mostly neglected in scholarship, or only used in part.<sup>13</sup>

(2) This article places Perera's treatise within its historical context—that of the Jesuit Roman college of the 1560s, the period during which Perera taught philosophy. Several themes developed in the *Documenta* echo other pedagogical writings by Perera, as well as parts of his philosophical masterpiece (*De communibus omnium rerum principiis*, 1576), which mostly derived from his lectures at the Roman college. A contextualization of Perera's treatise sheds new light on the question of how Perera's promotion of his own idea of a Christian philosophy for schools provoked criticism among his fellow Romans Diego de Ledesma, the prefect of studies at the college, and Achille Gagliardi.

(3) Finally, this article discusses Perera's conception of a humanistic approach to philosophy as a useful instrument for outlining a Christian philosophy curriculum for Jesuit colleges. It will become clear that Perera's concept of philosophy was strongly connected with contemporary Catholic and humanistic philosophical thought, and that his philosophical approach cannot be placed within the rigid dialectics of 'secular' vs. 'Catholic' Aristotelianism.

<sup>12</sup> This manuscript of 14 pages is written in one hand, with only few corrections or insertions. A codicological description of the manuscript may be retrieved from *Manus Online* ([http://manus.iccu.sbn.it/opac\\_SchedaScheda.php?ID=35772](http://manus.iccu.sbn.it/opac_SchedaScheda.php?ID=35772), accessed on 18.05.2017). The present article will refer to specific passages in the manuscript by providing references to the specific *documentum* and paragraph. The title of the manuscript is derived from doc. 3: 'Quocirca convenit eos qui in Philosophia sine ullo errore versari cupiunt, si non se totos dederint ad perdiscendas & pertractandas res Theologicas, saltem ad eas cognoscendas et quasi degustandas aliquid opere studijque conferre'. The *explicit* ('Sed revertamur ad institutam tractationem') suggests that it was once part of a lecture—a strong possibility given that it is preserved together with some of Perera's philosophy lectures: *Institutio logica* (ff 1r–23v), *Metaphysicae disputationes* (ff 33r–82v), *Expositio operis Metaphysicae Aristotelis* (ff 84r–91v), *Principium librorum philosophiae* (ff 93r–117r).

<sup>13</sup> The following works all refer to the manuscript, primarily for the purpose of documenting Perera's alleged Averroism: Mario Scaduto, *L'epoca di Giacomo Lainez (1556–1565): L'azione* = Storia della Compagnia de Gesù in Italia 4 (Rome, 1974), 283–8; Paul Richard Blum, *Studies on Early Modern Aristotelianism* (Leiden/Boston, 2012), 141–7; Christoph Sander, 'The War of the Roses. The Debate between Diego de Ledesma and Benet Perera about the Philosophy Course at the Jesuit College in Rome', *Quaestio* 14 (2014), 31–50, 42–4; Cristiano Casalini, 'Pererio 'Cattivo Maestro': Su un cold case nella storia della pedagogia gesuitica', *Quaderni di Noctua* 2 (2014), 59–110, 103–8. The manuscript is also quoted in an editorial note in *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, ed. László Lukács, (7 vols, Rome, 1965–92), ii. 664 (quoted as MPSI, followed by volume and pages). Blum's book chapter of 2012 incorporates his own article, see Paul Richard Blum, 'Benedictus Pererius: Renaissance Culture at the Origins of Jesuit Science', *Science & Education* 15 (2006), 279–304.



## II. Origin, Purpose, Content

A discussion of the dating of the manuscript, the purpose of Perera's treatise, and its intended readership, and a complete outline of its content shall provide an initial introduction to the subject of this article. Although some of this material will be repeated and discussed further in the next section, which introduces the broader context of Perera's treatise, this first overview will provide a more general if comprehensive introduction to the treatise.

Unfortunately, the manuscript does not survive with an explicit date of composition, so that we can only surmise that the *Documenta* are likely to have been composed at the Collegio Romano between 1565 and 1567. The *Documenta* were certainly written after 1565, as Perera refers to Carlo Sigonio's translation of Aristotle's *Rhetorica*, previously unpublished.<sup>14</sup> And since Perera started to lecture on scholastic theology in 1567, it is unlikely that the *Documenta* were drafted after this date.<sup>15</sup>

What might have been Perera's motivation or occasion to write the *Documenta*? It is known that Perera started to teach philosophy in 1558, and that he participated in a survey given to all philosophy teachers at the Collegio in 1561.<sup>16</sup> This survey was conducted by the later prefect of studies of the college, Diego de Ledesma, in order to understand the current practice of philosophy teaching. Perhaps thanks to this survey, lecturers spent time reflecting on topics including those incorporated in Perera's *Documenta*.<sup>17</sup> Perera also compiled a bibliography for philosophy teachers (completed after 1563); and two further of his educational documents survive, which date from 1564.<sup>18</sup> Together, these sources and the *Documenta*

<sup>14</sup> For the passage of the *Documenta* see below, n. 46. Aristotle, *Aristotelis de arte rhetorica libri tres*, transl. Carlo Sigonio (Bologna, 1565). Sigonio taught Aristotle's *Rhetoric* at Venice from 1553 onwards, and his lecture notes survived in manuscript; see William McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio: The Changing World of the Late Renaissance* (Princeton, 1989), 18–19. If Perera did, in fact, refer to an unpublished translation by Sigonio, this would not have been written before 1561/2: the manuscript is preserved together with his Logic lectures, which Perera then delivered for the first time. On Perera's teaching activities, see Ugo Baldini, *Legem Impone Subactis: Studi su filosofia e scienza dei Gesuiti in Italia, 1540–1632* (Rome, 1992), 569–70; and Ricardo García Villoslada, *Storia del Collegio Romano dal suo Inizio (1551) alla soppressione della Compagnia di Gesù (1773)* (Rome, 1954), 327–31.

<sup>15</sup> García Villoslada, *Storia del Collegio Romano*, 52, assumes that Perera's shift towards theology resulted from the argument with Ledesma and Gagliardi.

<sup>16</sup> For Ledesma's survey of 1561/2, see MPSI ii. 457–9. Ledesma and his peers' comments on the survey can be found in MPSI ii. 464–81.

<sup>17</sup> Evidence from MPSI documents does not indicate that any prescriptive guidelines for philosophy teachers at Rome were in place prior to 1561. See also below n. 23.

<sup>18</sup> The bibliography was published in Charles H. Lohr, 'Some Early Aristotelian Bibliographies', *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* 1 (1981), 87–116, 99–116. Lohr dates



form parts of Perera's comprehensive engagement with educational and pedagogical developments from 1563 to 1567.

The *Documenta* can be considered a propaedeutic manual: an introductory and preparatory work for an audience of students of Aristotelian philosophy at a Jesuit college. It is indeed very likely that Perera integrated his treatise into his philosophy lectures.<sup>19</sup> The scholastic context emerges, for example, from Perera's explicit advice on the structure of philosophy lessons (doc. 6) and on speaking in class (doc. 4). It seems likely that Perera here addresses teachers rather than students.<sup>20</sup> The propaedeutic goal then becomes clear in Perera's extensive reflections on the texts on which philosophy lessons are based, and on students' methods of studying those texts (doc. 7–8).

Structurally, the *Documenta* consist of eight individual *documenta*, each devoted to one specific topic; the first six provide the reader with rules for a pious and efficient course of philosophical study, while the last two engage with the textual basis of the course, and thus with Aristotle's writings and Aristotelian commentaries.<sup>21</sup>

At the beginning (doc. 1) Perera states that philosophy is subordinate to Christian faith. Hence, whenever faith conflicts with Aristotle's doctrines, it is faith (of divine origin) that is true, not philosophical doctrines generated by fallible human minds. Perera even warns his reader of arrogance and vanity by referring to Adam and Eve, and their fall in the Garden of Eden. The next three *documenta* analyse the relation between theology and philosophy further. Perera states (doc. 2) that it is impossible for a human being to understand by natural reason all Christian doctrines—the Creation of man and the resurrection are examples of ungraspable concepts. Therefore, Perera continues (doc. 3), all Christian philosophers ought to have a basic understanding of theological matters, be able to speak with confidence about them. Philosophers' statements in class are the subject of document no. 4, and Perera discourages pronouncements like, 'Since it is eternal, the world is true according to philosophy, but false according to

the bibliography to between 1563 and 1565 both due to the appearance of a publication of 1562 within it, and because it is preserved together with Perera's lectures of 1563 and 1565. Further educational documents by Perera were edited and published in: *Ordo classium rhetorices, humaniorem litterarum et grammatices* (1557, with potentially spurious attribution to Perera, cf. MPSI ii. 427–9); *Breve instruzione del modo di leggere il corso* (1564, cf. MPSI ii. 665–9); *Ratio studendi iis qui versantur in studiis bonarum artium apprime utilis* (1564, cf. MPSI ii. 670–85). The editor, L. Lukács, dates the documents by circumstantial evidence alone.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. above n. 12.

<sup>20</sup> It should also be noted that the Latin term 'legere' (used 23 times in the *Documenta*) may apply both to the reading act of a student, and to that of a lecturing teacher.

<sup>21</sup> The second part constitutes c. 87% of the text.



faith'. Since faith is always true, and philosophy is the science dealing with true and immutable things, it can by no means happen that the doctrines of faith contradict those of philosophy. However, faith may sometimes be at odds with Aristotle's doctrines, the product of a fallible human mind. Perera does not conclude that doctrines of faith that cannot be proven by natural reason are against reason, but that they are above reason. The subsequent document (doc. 5) addresses the moral condition of philosophers: it is disgraceful, Perera states, for philosophers not to strive for truth and wisdom but for their own glory and reputation. But it is even more disgraceful to corrupt philosophy with vices and immoralities, since the teachings of philosophy condemn vices, and advise to avoid them more than disease and death. And the most disgraceful way to philosophize is to pervert the truth intentionally. Perera then records his brief recommendations on the structure of an ideal lesson (doc. 6), starting with reading followed by reflection and disputation, and closing with the composition of a written record.

Document no. 7 discusses, in twelve paragraphs, principles for reading and studying Aristotle.<sup>22</sup> (1) First, Perera recommends a general *modus philosophandi*, which begins with what is known, such as sensory experience—the human intellect operates naturally in this way. (2) Since Aristotle's books are notorious for their clear general structure, but often more obscure in the individual chapters, those who analyse Aristotle may diverge from the rich Aristotelian text. (3) The richness and obscurity of Aristotle's writings may be cut through with a good knowledge of Greek, since Aristotle employs some expressions in a unique way, but others to denote different concepts in different contexts. (4) Perera then introduces a specific aspect of Aristotle's method: his use of different types of demonstration according to the tangibility of different subject matters. His demonstrations on the heavenly bodies, for example, can only be proposed as probabilities. This epistemic and methodological background is important for any evaluation of Aristotle's position. (5) Perera also points out that his own contemporaries often know pre-Socratic teachings (which are discussed and criticized by Aristotle) through the mediation of later authors alone, whereas the original philosophical intentions of any pre-Socratic author are elusive. Only the doxographical writings of ancient authors like Pliny, Plutarch, and Diogenes Laertius are extant. Furthermore, the manner of and motivation for Aristotle's discussion of another philosopher's opinion, refutation of a philosophical theory, or criticism of another's language need to be considered.

<sup>22</sup> We have not been able to determine a rationale behind the order of the individual paragraphs.



(6) Nonetheless, readers of Aristotle must focus on Aristotle's text without distraction, always in comparison with passages previously read, in order to identify correspondences or contradictions within Aristotle's writings. (7) Perera states that learning Aristotle's writing by rote is an almost futile exercise, and proposes that the reader recollect the most crucial passages from Aristotle's writings in order to record them in writing eventually. (8) The best way to explain a passage of Aristotle's text is by means of another passage from Aristotle, since a phrase obscure in one place may become clearer in the light of another, more comprehensible passage. (9) Perera further emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the principles of Aristotelian philosophy for the interpretation of Aristotle's writings, especially primary philosophical principles, e.g. the eternity of motion. These, however, should be evaluated according to their area of application. One should be aware if they contradict principles of faith (and if so, whether they can be refuted by natural reason), and they must also be compared to the principles of Platonic philosophy. (10) Perera encourages those who are able to read Aristotle in Greek to do so, because they might not only understand the text better, but also appreciate the beauty of Aristotle's expression. For those who read Aristotle exclusively in Latin, Perera provides a brief overview over Latin translations available, and recommends specific translation for specific pieces of Aristotle's writing. (11) He then briefly outlines a history of the transmission of Aristotle's works in the original Greek manuscripts, in order to explain the textual corruption and obscurity that occur in contemporary versions of the Greek text; and dispenses philological advice for dealing with these textual difficulties. (12) Finally, Perera invites students to reflect on their progress in Aristotelian philosophy and closes by reassuring students that they will understand the complexities of Aristotle's works as long as they continue to study them.

In his last and most extensive *documentum* (doc. 8), Perera weighs the value of commentaries on Aristotle's works, and distinguishes three types of authors: the ancient Greek commentators (Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, Simplicius, and Philoponus); the Arabic commentators Avicenna and Averroes; and two Medieval Latin commentators, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas.

Of all these, Alexander is Perera's favourite, since Alexander increased Aristotle's popularity in the ancient period, but also because he was the first to truly clarify and elucidate Aristotle's writings. According to Perera, all of Alexander's commentaries (first published in the sixteenth century) are essential reading. Perera has no views on Themistius, except praise for his useful paraphrases of Aristotle's works. For Simplicius, Perera praises his commentaries on the *Physics* and on the *Categories*, but admits that the



Greek version of his commentary on *De caelo* is corrupt, and the Latin poorly translated. Further, Perera thinks Simplicius' commentary on *De anima* more Platonic than Aristotelian, and therefore questions the authorship of the text. Perera shows much less enthusiasm for Philoponus' work: his language might be elegant, but some of his arguments were rather sophistic; he was also criticized by Simplicius on this point.

With regard to Arabic authors, Perera first emphasizes Avicenna's renown as a medical authority. But while Avicenna's medical writings are a good read, Perera states, his philosophical works are less distinguished, and perhaps even only noteworthy because Averroes frequently criticized Avicenna, and some Latin authors acknowledged and referred to him frequently. Contrary to common praise for Avicenna's philosophical works, Perera regards them as obscure and not essentially Aristotelian.

The most extensive subsection is devoted to a highly favourable philosophical portrait of Averroes. Perera emphasizes the importance of Averroes for Aristotelian philosophy, especially his contribution to the interpretation of Aristotle's doctrines and to protecting them against incorrect interpretations. Consequently, Perera says, Averroes is admired by all scholars, except for those who have not read him at all or have not fully comprehended his writings. Perera recommends that not only Averroes' commentaries on and paraphrases of Aristotle be studied, but also certain of his extant original works (*De substantia orbis*, *Destructio destructionum*), and arguments made within his commentaries as digressions from the commentary proper. Perera explains Averroes' occasional failure to elucidate Aristotle with Averroes' corrupted sources. Averroists like Marcantonio Zimara have made a great effort to overcome the philological problems in Averroes' writings and to explain his doctrines, and thereby contributed to a better understanding of Aristotle.

Finally, Perera attends to the medieval Latin authors. Albert the Great's works can be divided into two groups: commentaries on Aristotle, and other works. Perera highlights Albert's erudition and his knowledge in natural history. Perera especially praises (Pseudo-)Albert's *Dialogus de apprehensione* (doubting, correctly, its authorship). But although Perera finds much to admire in some of Albert's philosophical doctrines (e.g. the conception of intelligences), he also admits to not understanding or subscribing to all of the concepts that Albert introduces. Perera also mentions existing criticism of Albert's writings in natural history, accusing him of using material from other authors rather writing from personal experience.

Perera then describes Thomas Aquinas as a promoter of Aristotle's writings both in his own commentaries and thanks to Aquinas' canonization, which popularized Aristotle's works to a Christian audience. According to Perera, this 'extrinsic' reason made Aquinas a model for the reading and



public teaching of Aristotle, and he was acknowledged as conducive to the science of Christian theology. Perera praises Aquinas for his clarity of expression and his profound knowledge of divine things, as well as for his restraint in the criticism of other authors—Aquinas always defends his adversaries by identifying their mistakes as specific and limited; and even when a benevolent reading is not possible, Aquinas directs his criticism not against an individual, but always against the doctrine under discussion. With regard to philosophy, Aquinas' theological *Summae* (*Summa theologiae*, *Summa contra gentiles*) deserve students' attention even more than his succinct commentaries on the *Corpus Aristotelicum*. Of these, Perera especially recommends Aquinas' commentaries on *De interpretatione* and on *De caelo*, in which he follows the Greek commentators (Ammonius and Simplicius) comparatively closely. If Aquinas had followed this approach in all his commentaries—which was impossible, since the Greeks' commentaries were not available in the Latin West at the time, Perera admits—his commentaries would not just be supplements to those of the Greeks, but preferred to them. The section closes with a short defence of Aquinas against those who criticize his breaking up Aristotle's words into tiny divisions, which, as Perera agrees, makes Aquinas a demanding read (but these are not grounds for his general dismissal).

A final paragraph referring back to the first *documentum* reminds the reader to reject doctrines which are directed against philosophy and Christian faith, for example, Alexander's denial of God as an efficient cause and Averroes' doctrine of the unity of the intellect. Those errors are natural, Perera remarks, since their authors, human beings, were fallible by nature. Perera closes the *Documenta* with the request that the reader praise God for revealing knowledge concealed from pagan philosophers to his contemporaries (i.e. Christian philosophers).

### III. Historical Context

When Perera started lecturing on philosophy at the Roman college in 1558, he did not find any explicit teaching guidelines in place for philosophy teachers.<sup>23</sup> The first known attempt to establish such guidelines was not made until 1561, when Diego de Ledesma conducted the abovementioned

<sup>23</sup> For the history of the Roman college and Ledesma's role within it, see Ernesto Rinaldi, *La Fondazione del Collegio Romano: Memorie storiche* (Arezzo, 1914); John M. Belmonte, 'To Give Ornament, Splendor and Perfection: Diego de Ledesma and Sixteenth Century Jesuit Educational Administration' (Ph.D. thesis, Chicago, 2006); Paul Gilbert, 'La preparazione della *Ratio studiorum* e l'insegnamento di filosofia di Benet Perera', *Quaestio*, 14 (2014), 1–30.



survey of philosophy teachers in order to find out which material they considered worth reading and discussing in class.<sup>24</sup> As soon as Ledesma was promoted to the position of the college's prefect of studies, and as soon as it was one of his duties to supervise studies at the college, in 1564, his own survey gathered his colleagues' insights into possible ways to improve the teaching of all disciplines; notably, his survey extended beyond the field of philosophy.<sup>25</sup> The results served Ledesma as a basis for a first 'plan of studies' or *Ratio studiorum* for the Roman college.<sup>26</sup> Perera himself had also reflected on pedagogy, especially with regard to philosophy teaching, and preserved his thoughts into two short pedagogical treatises (dating from around 1564)—with the *Documenta* a third significant supplement—and a bibliography of commentaries on the *Corpus Aristotelicum*.<sup>27</sup> In addition to Perera's pedagogical treatises, evidence of their actual implementation has survived in the form of his lecture notes for his philosophy lectures.<sup>28</sup> These were later incorporated to a significant extent into his philosophical manual *De communibus omnium rerum naturalium principiiis*, which was published in 1576.<sup>29</sup>

As will be shown below, these well-known and well-analysed documents by Ledesma and Perera, once considered in addition to Perera's *Documenta*, appear in a new light. Indeed, the *Documenta* reveal connections to both Perera's own writings and the educational guidelines proposed

<sup>24</sup> See also above n. 16.

<sup>25</sup> See also above n. 16. While Perera contributed a paper to Ledesma's first survey of philosophy teachers, he was, surprisingly, not included in the later, more substantial survey, cf. MPSI ii. 466 n. 11: at the time, Perera was still teaching his philosophy course. Some have argued that this exclusion is indicative of early attacks on Perera's teachings. The scope of this present essay does not allow for a detailed account of the controversy around Perera's teaching methods; interested readers are referred to literature referenced above (n. 13).

<sup>26</sup> Plan of studies, 1564: MPSI ii. 481–90. This document is to be distinguished from the *Ratio Borgiana*, which was not authored by Ledesma according to László Lukács, 'De prima Societatis Ratione studiorum sancto Francisco Borgia praeposito generali constituta (1565–1569)', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 27 (1958), 209–32.

<sup>27</sup> For references for these works, see above n. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Blum, *Aristotelianism*, 140–1, provides an overview.

<sup>29</sup> Blum demonstrates this (see above, n. 28). On the publication of Perera's book, see MPSI iv. 664–5, and García Villoslada, *Storia del Collegio Romano*, 78–80. Benedictus Pererius, *De communibus omnium rerum naturalium principiiis & affectionibus libri XV* (Rome, 1576) may be considered first edition of Perera's book: the alleged edition of 1562 appears to be spurious (according to Blum, *Aristotelianism*, 140 n. 3). The appearance of Ledesma's name as one of the committee of 1576, which was to discuss the potential print publication of Perera's work, poses an additional conundrum, since Ledesma died in 1575: an obituary provides evidence for his death, see *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu, quae primam Rationem studiorum anno 1586 editam praecessere*, ed. Cecilio Gómez Rodeles et al. (Madrid, 1901), 862. Martin, *Subverting Aristotle*, 90, appears to consider the Paris edition of 1579 the *editio princeps*, or at least reactive to the *censura* committee. The authors of this present article have not been able to detect any differences between the editions of 1576 and 1579.



by his critics.<sup>30</sup> We will address these connections by following the structure of the *Documenta*: first, ‘rules concerning the relation between philosophy and faith’, and second, ‘rules relating to the textual basis for studying philosophy’. It will become clear that piety and philology are intertwined in Perera’s concept of philosophical studies.

### Piety

In the *Documenta*, Perera describes in certain terms how the doctrines of Christian faith and philosophy relate to each other.<sup>31</sup> While faith is above reason, the two domains cannot contradict each other in principle. However, some divinely revealed doctrines might not be completely understood by the human intellect or resist philosophical proof, since philosophy is necessarily guided by natural reason alone. Moreover, Perera is at pains to emphasize that each philosopher, whether Aristotle or another, is a mere fallible human being, and therefore not immune to errors.<sup>32</sup> In the preface of *De communibus*, which imports several passages from the *Documenta* verbatim, Perera refers to these errors as ‘philosophers’ errors’, not ‘errors of philosophy’.<sup>33</sup> This rather programmatic idea, however, poses a conundrum

<sup>30</sup> In contrast to Perera’s other pedagogical treatises and a number of Ledesma’s records, the *Documenta* do not seem to address strictly pedagogical questions—e.g. the ideal length of a teaching unit or the nature, time in the academic year and order of texts to be read—in any detail. Perera’s audience for the *Documenta*, as stated in their title, may explain this: they are not written exclusively for teachers, but more generally for students of philosophy. Also, as we assume, the *Documenta* were integrated in a philosophy lecture. Some similarities with documents written primarily for teachers can, however, be detected: for example, in the *Documenta* Perera alludes to the sequential structure of lessons (*lectio, speculatio, disputatio, scriptio*), and in his *Il modo* he elaborates on this point in a more pedagogical manner: ‘Perché alcuni sono più atti ad argumentare, altri a rispondere, altri ad altre cose, procuri d’essercitare ciascuno principalmente secondo il talento suo; et in summa faccia che li suoi scolari si diano più tosto al speculare et disputare, che a leggere molte cose o scrivere’. Cf. MPSI ii. 669.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. doc. 1–5. <sup>32</sup> Cf. doc. 1, 4 and 8. See also below n. 75.

<sup>33</sup> Pererius, *De communibus*, praef. reads: ‘illi quidem errores Philosophorum, non Philosophia[e]; hoc est, hominum non scientiae’. On this passage, see also Blum, *Aristotelianism*, 149–50. Perera further remarks in his preface: ‘Nec mirandum cuiquam accidat, Platonem et Aristotelem, caeterosque sapientes viros, et philosophorum principes, nonnumquam graviter et turpiter errasse: videlicet, homines fuerunt, quorum erant fallaces sensus angusta ingenia, infirma iudicia, vita multis flagitiis inquinata, mens humanae inscientiae circumfusa tenebris et caelesti lumine destituta. Quin potius non immortales Deo gratias agamus qui ea nobis clarissime patefecit, quae acutissimos Philosophos latuerunt. Nec solum in iis quae tradit philosophia, quid nobis probandum sequendumque quid contra repudiandum et fugiendum esset, omnium errorum discussa caligine iudicavit: sed etiam earum rerum quae omnem humanae intelligentiae vim et facultatem superant cognitionem ad quam philosophia aspirare non potest, liberaliter impertuit’. These two passages may be compared with Perera’s statement at the end of the *Documenta*: ‘neque vero mirandum est hos viros caeterosque sapientes tam graviter & absurde lapsos & deceptos fuisse, homines enim fuerunt, quorum errant fallaces, sensus, angusta ingenia, infirma iudicia, vitae multis



whenever a lesson results in a conflict between all three: faith, philosophy, and Aristotle. Perera offers a solution to this problem in the *Documenta*:

Students are not to imitate the way of speaking of those philosophers who are used to explain philosophical controversies speaking like this: “the world is eternal” has to be accepted as true according to philosophy, but as false according to faith’. This is so, since truth always is in accordance with truth and our faith is true. The same holds for philosophy, since this is the science which considers true and immutable things. Therefore it is impossible that the dogmas of faith contradict the doctrines of philosophy. Therefore, one should speak like this instead: ‘something, namely that the world was created, needs to be accepted as true and certain according to faith. But Aristotle thought this false and impossible’. And this must not seem to be strange and absurd. For Aristotle, like all human beings, is capable of error, and from time to time he erred in one case or another, and one should not be surprised when the truth of faith clashes with the errors of Aristotle.<sup>34</sup>

If one compares Perera's ideal of a pious philosophy for schools with the results of Ledesma's survey and his plan of studies for the Roman college, the two seem to agree at a basic level on one essential point. Perera demands that philosophers always keep religious objects in mind and that they are equipped with a basic understanding of theological issues at minimum.<sup>35</sup>

flagitiis ingenerata, mens humanae inscitiae tenebris circumfusa, & celesti destituta lumine. Nos igitur immortales gratias Deo immortalis agamus, eumque pie & caste semper colamus, atque veneremur, quod singulari beneficio suo: pro Christum senatorem, & doctorem humani generis: ea nobis clarissime patefecit, quae acutissimis doctissimisque philosophis obscura & occulta esse voluit, nec tamen in iis qui philosophiam tradit quod sequendum, aut fugiendum, quod ite probandum aut interpretandum nobis esset iudicavit. Sed etiam earum rerum: quae omnem intelligentiam vim atque facultatem, infinitis partibus superant, cognitionem liberaliter impertivit’. Cf. also doc. 5: ‘tamen est repugnans doctrinae Aristotelis, neque hoc mirum et absurdum videri debet, nam cum Aristoteles more aliorum hominum, et potuerit errare et interdum erraverit, tum in hoc tum in alijs rebus, non est mirandum veritatem fidei pugnare cum erroribus Aristotelis’. A similar point is raised by Jacobus Pontanus, a Jesuit from Dillingen, in a speech which certainly alludes to Perera's *De communibus*, see Jacobus Pontanus, *Akademische Reden an der Universität Dillingen 1572–1582*, ed. Ulrich G. Leinsle (Münster, 2014), 137.

<sup>34</sup> Doc. 4: ‘Caveant imitari consuetudinem loquendi eorum philosophorum, qui in explicandis controversijs philosophiae ita loqui consueverint. Hoc v.g. mundum esse aeternum, verum etiam et teneri debet secundum philosophiam, at secundum fidem Christianam falsum esse, nam cum verum semper vero consonet, fides autem nostra vera sit, et item philosophia si quidem est scientia quae in rebus veris et immutabilibus, necesse fieri non potest ut dogmata fidei adversentur decretis philosophiae. Quare sic potius loquendum est, hoc scilicet mundum esse de novo factum, pro vero et certo habendum est secundum fidem. Sed Aristoteles putavit esse falsum et impossibile. Itaque licet sit consentaneum fidei: tamen est repugnans doctrinae Aristotelis, neque hoc mirum et absurdum videri debet, nam cum Aristoteles more aliorum hominum, et potuerit errare et interdum erraverit, tum in hoc tum in alijs rebus, non est mirandum veritatem fidei pugnare cum erroribus Aristotelis’. The English translation is slightly adapted from Sander, ‘The Debate’, 43–4.

<sup>35</sup> See doc. 3.



Ledesma and his colleague Achille Gagliardi find that, among other things, ‘nobody other than a theologian shall teach philosophy’, and ‘philosophy shall be taught in a manner appropriate to its serving theology’.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, these philosophers appear to have agreed on the point that philosophy was not a purely secular undertaking separate from all theological implications. Nevertheless, a controversy appears to have arisen regarding the role of Aristotle within this conception of pious philosophy, and the possibility of matters of faith to be proven by natural reason.

This alleged conflict took place on at least three different levels, the first epistemological. Ledesma had investigated Perera’s teaching based on his students’ lecture notes—an indirect piece of evidence.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the points that seemed suspect in the eyes of Ledesma emerge clearly in the notes: Perera was recorded as denying that some doctrines of faith—especially those concerning the status of the immortal human soul—could be demonstrated by natural reason, and claiming that Aristotle held the opposite view.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, the argument concerned doctrine. Ledesma and Gagliardi maintained that, within the Society of Jesus, doctrines like the immortality of the soul need to be considered true not only according to philosophy, but also according to Aristotle’s authority.<sup>39</sup> Ledesma in particular was very eager to match doctrines of faith with Aristotle’s doctrines: he wished to exert the power of natural reason also on religious doctrines.<sup>40</sup> The famous papal bull *Apostolici regiminis* (decreed in 1513 at the Fifth Lateran Council) was Ledesma’s most potent justification for his measures.<sup>41</sup>

Thirdly, the argument revolved around pedagogy. Ledesma was pursuing practical pedagogical goals, for instance, in his juxtaposition of a sound way of teaching with the impious custom which was permitted at some Italian universities:

It is an absurd and destructive way of disputing and of speaking, in which one thing is proven according to philosophy, and another according to the

<sup>36</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 476 (signed by Gagliardi): ‘Nullus doceat philosophiam aut philosophiae cursum, qui non sit theologus’; MPSI ii. 478 (signed by Gagliardi and Ledesma): ‘sic doceatur philosophia, ut serviat theologiae’.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 502–3. This accusation is discussed in Casalini, ‘Pererio’.

<sup>38</sup> See also Christoph Sander, ‘In dubio pro fide. The Fifth Council of the Lateran Decree *Apostolici Regiminis* (1513) and Its Impact on Early Jesuit Education and Pedagogy’, *Educazione. Giornale di pedagogia critica*, 3/1 (2014), 39–62, 49; Blum, *Aristotelianism*, 145.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 478: ‘et ideo, notentur opiniones non tenendae in his quae fidem concernunt, ac eae quae sunt defendendae, ut omnes sic doceant, et totis viribus defendant, et ad id obligentur expresse, etiam secundum Aristotelem, ut de immortalitate animae etc.; ac per totam Societatem sic servetur’.

<sup>40</sup> On Ledesma’s guideline, see Sander, ‘In dubio pro fide’.

<sup>41</sup> This point is also analysed in detail in Sander, ‘In dubio pro fide’.



truth [i.e. the Christian doctrine] or when the same thing is asserted to be true according to philosophy but false according to faith.

This would not be a love of wisdom [*philosophia*] but a love of error [*philopseudia*], which shuns the truth. And something that contradicts divine doctrine, i.e. faith, cannot be the truth. Truth always agrees with truth in such a way that truth cannot stand against truth. For this reason, the third [i.e. fifth] Council of the Lateran was right to repudiate this way of disputing and speaking in the strongest terms.

And it is not very different from this to say that this thing should be maintained in Aristotle but this in reality or in the faith. Although this might occasionally be necessary, it should still be done moderately, so that we do not give the impression that in matters pertaining to the faith and religion we are suppressing the faith itself, that is, the teaching received from God, by raising up Aristotle's authority against it.

This is actually done by those who strive with all their strength to show, in many cases, that Aristotle held opinions contrary to the faith, although it is clear that he disagreed with the faith in [only] a very few matters; and—even worse—they try to do the same in the many passages in which Aristotle certainly could quite reasonably be interpreted in favour of the faith, especially since men of great authority have openly testified that that opinion is Aristotle's.

They have done a disservice to Aristotle, whom they think they are supporting because this way they are turning him from a true to a false idea, and they are forcing him against his will to say what is false and to make disgraceful errors even in the most important matters. What about the fact that from this serious and frequent striving for Aristotle against faith and truth, certain serious disadvantages arise, both unworthy of a Christian man and entirely intolerable?

First, it does not contribute anything positive at all but rather presents a great obstacle to stir up recklessly so great an adversary against the faith, and to arm him with great zeal against it, and to help him fight it in all matters. Then, many people, when they hear that something is true according to Aristotle, understand that whatever it is, is so according to philosophy, indeed, according to the best philosophy of all (which they think to be Aristotle's), and what Aristotle thought, they believe to be in accord with natural reason and its light; and therefore disputing this way, as much as they can, they unwisely subvert the Council's decree, because they believe their faith stands opposed to reason and natural illumination. But it is quite damaging or a very serious matter that, when they are teaching that Aristotle thought something in contradiction to the faith, they strive to confirm it with arguments in such a manner that they themselves also seem to agree with Aristotle against the faith; especially when with all their zeal they strive to dissolve the reasons that could bring be brought forward to endorse faith and truth, just in order that they might protect Aristotle's opinion. It is clearly a serious obstacle to the



faith and the truth when their arguments and reasons seem to be weakened and broken.<sup>42</sup>

These statements, although they were published a few years after the argument with Perera, openly contradict Perera's recommendations.<sup>43</sup> Ledesma conceded only few cases to the perceived conflict between faith and Aristotle, but these cases granted anyone the permission to consider Aristotle useless for true Christian philosophy. For Ledesma, the suspicion of Aristotle's doctrines as overall contrary to the doctrines of faith was an unfounded, overly strong conclusion. The few cases in which Aristotle and faith are at odds should not, he maintained, result in an overall mistrust of Aristotle's teachings. At first glance, Perera seems to agree with Ledesma on the metaphysical assumption that there is only one truth and that therefore, overall, faith and reason cannot contradict one another. However, Aristotle plays a different role in Perera's rationale. In the *Documenta*,

<sup>42</sup> Diego de Ledesma in Franciscus Toletus, *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in octo libros Aristotelis de physica auscultatione* (Venice, 1573), praef.: 'Illud quoque absurdum et perniciosum est, vel disputandi, vel loquendi genus, quo, illud ex philosophia, hoc ex Veritate, asseritur: aut idem secundum philosophiam verum, secundum Fidem falsum esse affirmatur. Neque enim philosophia, sed [gr. philopseudia] erit, quae a veritate abhorret; neque, quae cum divina doctrina, id est, Fide pugnet, veritas esse poterit. Sic enim vero verum congruit, ut veritas veritati non possit esse contraria. Quocirca non immerito in Concilio Lateranensi tertio hoc disputandi, ac loquendi genus, verbis exterminatur gravissimis. Neque illud dissimile est, Hoc in Aristotele hoc vero in veritate, aut in Fide esse dicendum: ut enim id interdum necessarium sit, tamen ea fieri moderatione debet, ut ne in rebus, quae ad Fidem et religionem attinent, Fidem ipsam, hoc est a Deo acceptam disciplinam, obiecta Aristotelis auctoritate praemere videamur: quod sane isti faciunt, qui summo conatur viribusque nituntur ostendere compluribus in rebus, Aristotelem contra fidem sensisse, cum tamen constet, paucissimis in rebus a Fide dissentire, et (quod peius est) idem conantur efficere multis locis, in quibus quidem Aristotelem possent non sine magna etiam probabilitate pro Fide interpretari, cum praesertim viri gravissimi Aristotelis sententiam eam esse aperte testentur. In quo sane de ipso Aristotele, cui favere se putant, male merentur, cum sic eum a vera ad falsam sententiam abstrahunt, et cogunt falsum dicere vel invitum, in rebus etiam gravissimis errare turpissime. Quid quod ex hac graviori, frequentique pro Aristotele contra Fidem et veritatem concertatione, gravia quaedam incommoda accidunt, et Christiano viro indigna, et omnino non ferenda? Primum enim, nihil prodest, obest autem plurimum temere excitare tantum contra Fidem adversarium, eumque summo studio contra illam amare, et ad eam oppugnandam omnibus rebus iuvare. Deinde plerique, cum audiunt verum quid esse secundum Aristotelem, id omnino intelligunt, quid est, secundum philosophiam, immo secundum omnium optimam (quam esse putant Aristotelis) philosophiam, et quod Aristoteles sensit, id credunt esse naturali rationi ac lumini consentaneum, atque ideo sic disputantes, quantum in ipsis est, idem illud Concilii decretum per imprudentiam evertunt, quod credant, rationi, et lumini naturali fidem adversari. Illud autem incommodum vel gravissimum est, cum enim contra Fidem docent aliquid sensisse Aristotelem, id sic confirmare nituntur argumentis, ut ipsi quoque contra Fidem cum Aristotele sentire videantur; praesertim cum quae pro Fide, et veritati adduci possunt, ea summo studio conentur dissolvere, ut Aristotelis sententiam tueantur; quod sane plurimum Fidei, et veritati obesse constat, cum eius argumenta et rationes infirmari, frangique videantur'. For the supposed attribution to Ledesma, see below n. 96.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. above n. 34.



Perera does not avoid a distinction between true philosophy and Christian faith on the one hand, and Aristotle's doctrines on the other. It is this historically accurate understanding of Perera's, of Aristotle as being a fallible human philosopher, that allows him to maintain this distinction.

### Philology

While Ledesma's aims were primarily pedagogical, Perera's approach was largely philological, and hence essentially different. In Perera's view, the study of philosophy starts with reading Aristotle.<sup>44</sup> Firstly and notably, he recommends reading Aristotle in the original Greek, and ranks translations extant at the time in order of usefulness for those not versed in Greek.<sup>45</sup> Perera particularly recommends the *translatio vetus* of Aristotle's works on logic and physics, and for other works (including those that were not part of the Jesuit curriculum like the *Poetica* or the zoological works), he names reliable contemporary humanistic translators, including Carlo Sigonio (1524–84), Denis Lambin (1520–72), Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490–1573), and Piero Vettori (1499–1585).<sup>46</sup> These recommendations indicate that Perera approved of the humanists' attempts to make Aristotle's texts more accessible.<sup>47</sup> Perera also frequently points out the advantages of

<sup>44</sup> Cf. doc. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. doc. 7 §10: 'In scriptis logicis & physicis maxime omium probatur mihi translatio vetus quae nuper emendata fuit, & recens excussa parvis voluminibus circumfertur, nam etsi nonnunquam importuna quadam superstitione, singula verba Aristotelis eo quo greco sunt ordine, quasi numerata latine reddens, & formulas graece linguae proprias totidem verbis latinis satis barbare, & insulse exprimens faciat nobis Aristotelem obscurum & ferreum quendam scriptorem, tum contra vere et fideliter (quod imprimis requirendum est ab interprete) sensum eius – representat caeteris versionibus (quas adhuc vidi) praeferendam iudico – Demum in Metaphisicis probo versionem Bessarionis: in hisque de animalibus Theodori Gazae; in Ethicis Lambini, vel etiam Argiropuli; in politicis Johannis Sepulvedae, in Rhetoricis Caroli Sygonii, in poetica Petri Victorii'.

<sup>46</sup> According to Ferdinand Edward Cranz and Charles Bernard Schmitt (eds.), *A bibliography of Aristotle editions, 1501–1600* (Baden-Baden, 1984), the first few editions of the translations named by Perera are: *Metaphysica*, transl. Bessarion (Paris, 1515); *De animalibus*, transl. Gaza (Venice, 1504); *Ethica*, transl. Lambin (Paris, 1558); transl. Argyropylus (Leipzig, 1501); *Politica*, transl. Sepúlveda (Paris, 1548); *Rhetorica*, transl. Sigonio (Bologna, 1565); *Poetica*, transl./comm. Vettori (Florence, 1560); trans. Vettori (Venice, 1562). Jesuits using humanistic translations of Aristotle are also discussed in Christoph Sander, 'Medical Topics in the De Anima Commentary of Coimbra (1598) and the Jesuits' Attitude towards Medicine in Education and Natural Philosophy', *Early Science and Medicine* 19 (2014), 76–101, 82 n. 23. On texts called for by a Jesuit curriculum, see Paul Richard Blum, 'Der Standardkurs der katholischen Schulphilosophie im 17. Jahrhundert', in Eckhard Kessler, Charles H. Lohr and Walter Sparr (eds.), *Aristotelismus und Renaissance: In Memoriam Charles B. Schmitt* (Wiesbaden, 1988), 127–48.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. doc. 7, § 10: 'Esse legatiores autem versiones Aristotelis, quae multis additis et immutatis faciunt Aristotelem non modo suo, sed latine loquentem longe retroque ponendas censeo'. On the relatively recent popularity of translations of Aristotle's works, see also Katharine Park, 'Psychology: The Organic Soul', in Charles Schmitt et al. (eds.) *The Cambridge History*



being familiar with Aristotle's texts, to gain a good understanding of his teachings, and as a firm basis for the discussion of difficulties in the text.<sup>48</sup> Further, Perera points out that a lack of knowledge in the Greek language is at the root of some authors' misunderstanding of Aristotelian texts, not aided by the fact that many of them could not rely on the help of more recent ancient Greek commentators.<sup>49</sup>

It is, secondly, noteworthy that Perera rejects the common practice of teaching by rote, and, for students, of learning by rote.<sup>50</sup> He considers a systematic committing to memory of Aristotle's theories, by compiling lists or tables of his major tenets, much more useful. Perera refers to this method in his other pedagogical writings as well.<sup>51</sup> Like the reading of Aristotle in the original Greek, the creation of a structured excerption from Aristotle's works agrees with Perera's general hermeneutic strategy elucidating obscure Aristotelian passages with the aid of other, related and clearer passages.<sup>52</sup>

*of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), 464–84, 458; Brian Copenhaver, 'Translation, Terminology and Style in Philosophical Discourse', *ibid.*, 75–110, 77.

<sup>48</sup> Some examples emerge from doc. 7, §3, §10 and §11. Perera's reference to the transmission of Aristotle's manuscript according to Strabo, *Geographicorum libri XVII* (Basel, 1539), 408, is also documented in its entirety in Pererius, *De communibus*, 128 (IV, 4). On Strabo's account see William K. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vi: *Aristotle. An Encounter* (Cambridge, 1981), 59.

<sup>49</sup> The new Aristotle editions compiled by Greek commentators are discussed in Charles H. Lohr, 'Renaissance Latin Translations of the Greek Commentaries on Aristotle', in Jill Kraye and M. W. F. Stone (eds.), *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy* (London/New York, 2000), 24–40. In his *Ratio*, Perera remarks: 'Scriptorum genera duo sunt: Unum eorum qui aliorum sententias suis vel scholiis vel commentariis explanant; alterum eorum qui nullius interpretationi adstricti non alienas, sed suas scriptis exponunt sententias. Priores, ut munere interpretandi probe fungantur, oportet primum quidem linguae, qua scripsit author quem interpretantur, scientes ac peritos esse. Huius enim ignoratio saepenumero interpretes, caeteroquin doctos viros, in multos ac faedos errores induxit. Cui rei fidem faciunt mille quaestiones frivolaes, sescentaque figmenta in explicando Aristotele, ob inscitiam linguae graecae, a latinis philosophis excogitata. Deinde convenit eos in aliis scriptis eiusdem authoris probe versatos ac exercitados esse, ut opus quod interpretandum susceperunt, vel ex aliis locis declarando vel cum aliis conferendo, ut quid vel simile vel diversum aut contrarium ab authore dictum fuerit, demonstrando accuratius et luculentius exponant'. Cf. MPSI ii., 678. References to Averroes and Aquinas appear in doc. 8. See also below n. 65 and 98.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ledesma's remark in MPSI ii. 477: 'Docendi modus sit, ut vel mediocria ingenia possint lectionem memoria concipere, et memoriter repetere'. Cf. Perera's doc. 7, §7. On this matter, see also Paul Nelles, 'Libros de Papel, Libri Bianchi, Libri Papyracei. Note-Taking Techniques and the Role of Student Notebooks in the Early Jesuit Colleges', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 76 (2007), 75–112.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 675–6, and 666–7, where Perera states: 'Deve ancora scrivere qualche cosa, almanco notare circa ogni materia alcuni belli concetti o resolutione, o sua o d'altri; alcuni testi et testimonii principali, o di Aristotele o d'altri antichi, acciò di queste cose possa aiutarsi un'altra volta'.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. doc. 7, §6 and §8. See also above n. 49.



Perera's two strategies for appropriating Aristotle's texts provide the basis for a critical and historical understanding of his philosophy. This basis becomes instrumental, for example, when Perera advises his readers to keep the following points in mind: (a) The certainty of a demonstration depends on the realm within which it is conducted;<sup>53</sup> (b) Aristotle's principles need to be gauged against those of Platonic philosophy and faith;<sup>54</sup> (c) Aristotle's criticism of his predecessors needs to be taken with a grain of salt, and his specific reasons for his criticism to be taken into account, especially given that his predecessors' original ideas are often only available in doxographical accounts.<sup>55</sup>

Many of these guidelines for the study of Aristotelian philosophy reappear later in Perera's *De communibus*; but there, they serve a different purpose. In the *Documenta*, Perera presents his ideas on a historical understanding of Aristotle's ideas as preparation for the study of his works; the doxographical accounts, the comparison of Aristotle's principles to those of other philosophers, and the transmission of Greek Aristotelian texts are all relevant in this context. By contrast, in the *De communibus*, book IV (*De antiquis philosophis, eorumque variis, circa rerum naturalium principia, opinionibus*), Perera's ideas emerge in the context of a history of philosophy, with particular focus on ancient philosophical schools and their chronology.<sup>56</sup> In this book, Perera proposes that some philosophers' theories are particularly useful:<sup>57</sup> in his discussion of the immortality of the soul, for example, Perera compares Aristotle's and Plato's approaches to the doctrine of faith directly with each other—a direct implementation of his guideline mentioned above. It should be noted that the chapters of *De communibus* which also survive in a separate manuscript copy are evidence of Perera's ambition to analyse the texts of ancient philosophers (other than Aristotle) in comparison with each other.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Cf. doc. 7, §4.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. doc. 7, §9.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. doc. 7, §5.

<sup>56</sup> Perera's history of ancient philosophy and the related refutation of Simplicius is examined in Constance Blackwell, 'Neo-Platonic Modes of Concordism versus Definitions of Difference: Simplicius, Augustinus Steuco and Ralph Cudworth versus Marco Antonio Zimara and Benedictus Pererius', in Stephen Clucas, Peter J. Forshaw and Valery Rees (eds.), *Laus Platonici Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence* (Leiden/Boston, 2011), 317–42.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Pererius, *De communibus*, 112–3 (IV, 1).

<sup>58</sup> Rome, Archivio Storico della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, APUG 1345, ff. 132r–146r, includes the following treatises: *Secundum Platonem Animam rationalem esse immortalem*, *Animum nostrum esse immortale etiam secundum Doctrinam Aristotelis*, *Probatum immortalitatem animae rationalis rationibus Philosophicis*, *Anima rationalem esse veram, et naturalem formam hominis*, *De varijs sectis Philosophorum*, *Reprehenditur Simplicius, qui conatur ostendere omnes praedictas opiniones veras esse atque inter se contentientes*. This collection is erroneously ascribed to Ledesma in *Manus online* ([http://manus.iccu.sbn.it/opac\\_SchedaScheda.php?ID=162831](http://manus.iccu.sbn.it/opac_SchedaScheda.php?ID=162831), accessed on 18.05.2017), and in Sander, 'The Debate', 40 n. 48. Rather, these short treatises are near-perfect copies of chapters published in Perera's



Perera understood that, in addition of his own efforts to achieve a proper critical reading of Aristotle's text, the project was also a collaborative undertaking. The longest part of the *Documenta* is therefore devoted to a critique of Aristotle's commentators.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Perera wrote an extensive bibliography comprising the 131 commentaries he approved of the most, and he refers to it twice in his pedagogical treatises.<sup>60</sup> In three of his writings Perera divides the commentators (who are roughly the same across all three documents) into three major groups: Greek, Arabic, and Latin.<sup>61</sup> For the *Documenta*, two aspects of his 'literature review' are especially noteworthy. Firstly, Perera's appears to most approve of the commentaries by Alexander and Averroes. He acknowledges Alexander's importance for the peripatetic school, which led Averroes to pronounce that 'Nobody is an Aristotelian if not an Alexandrian'.<sup>62</sup> Perera clearly knew that this pronouncement was adopted by Giovanni Bernardino Longo, but in the variation of: 'nobody is an Aristotelian if not a perfect Averroist'.<sup>63</sup>

*De communibus*; and on f. 138r the scribe ascribed them to 'B.P.', i.e. 'Benedictus Pererius'. Yet the intriguing question of why only this particular selection is preserved in the manuscript—the treatises in the manuscript originate from two different sections in Perera's printed book and concern two unrelated topics—remains to be answered. One possibility is that these chapters were copied in order to be checked as part of the *censura* of Perera's work: they address the crucial questions of the immortality of the soul, and the accounts of ancient pagan philosophers, i.e. two issues that particularly concerned Ledesma.

<sup>59</sup> Perera's review of philosophical literature is the first to emerge from a Jesuit context. For later accounts, see Antonio Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta* (2 vols, Rome, 1593), ii. 117–36; Andreas Schott, *Vitae Comparatae Aristotelis ac Demosthenis, Olympiadibus ac Praeturi Atheniensium Digestae* (Augsburg, 1603), 147–66.

<sup>60</sup> The number of titles is provided in Lohr, 'Some Early Aristotelian Bibliographies', 93. For references, cf. MPSI ii. 666: 'Habbi il catalogo delli migliori commentarii, che si trovano, sopra tutte le parti della philosophia, quale si è fatto in Roma'. Cf. MPSI ii. 677: 'Cathalogum autem eorum authorum, qui de omnibus philosophiae partibus (de aliis enim in praesentia mihi loquendum esse non duxi; quamvis haec omnibus accomodari queant) docte ac luculenter scripserunt, in fine huius tractationis ascribam'.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 666: 'Et benchè deve il maestro seguire li principali authori come sono tra li greci Alessandro, Simplicio, Themistio; fra gl'arabi Averroe, fra li latini Alberto et S. Thomaso; nondimeno non deve esser sectario, massime di authori latini, che discordano dalli antichi. Deve essere modesto in refutare le opinioni che riprende, principalmente se sono de gravi authori, benché deve essere risoluto nelle cose che insegna, et non dubbio né problematico'. Cf. Pererius, *De communibus*, praef.: 'Graecos Aristotelis interpretes Alexandrum Themistium, et Simplicium, in Aristotelicis sentiis et verbis explicandis praeter caeteros, secuti sumus'. This is followed by sections on the Latins (only Thomas Aquinas) and the Arabs (Avicenna and Averroes). See also *ibid.*, 115 (IV, 2) and doc. 8.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Pererius, *De communibus*, 115 (IV, 2). See also doc. 8: 'ut (quemadmodum refert Averroes) nemo Aristoteles haberetur qui non esset Alexandreus'.

<sup>63</sup> This has been previously proposed in Sander, 'The Debate', 42. Cf. doc. 8: 'Is [quidam clarissimus philosophus] enim cum doceret publice philosophiam saepe numero dicere solebat, neminem unquam fore bonum Aristotelicum qui non esset perfectus Averroista'. Giovanni Bernardino Longo, *Expositio in Prologum Averrois in Posteriores Aristotelis* (Naples, 1551), praef., states: 'sentiis merito ab Alexandro mutatus est, ut NEMO ARISTOTELICUS NISI AVERROISTA'.



However, Perera does not credit Longo but another 'Averroist', Marcantonio Zimara, for rendering Averroes' ideas more comprehensible. In his guidelines for teachers of philosophy, Perera recommends Averroes' writings due to his good reputation in Italy, and mentions some of his followers, among them Zimara.<sup>64</sup> Perera discovers Averroes' contribution to Aristotelian philosophy in his efforts to defend Aristotle against others, and to explain his doctrines more clearly.

Secondly, Perera pays as much attention to philological issues in the commentators as he does in Aristotle's works. For example, he questions the authenticity of Simplicius' commentary on *De anima* and Albert's *De apprehensione*.<sup>65</sup> Perera emphasizes that all or most of Alexander's Greek commentaries were not available before his lifetime, and that even Thomas Aquinas was only aware of a few of them.<sup>66</sup> Further, the poor transmission of the Greek text of Simplicius' commentary on *De caelo* introduced errors into the Greek text itself, as well as into its later Latin version.<sup>67</sup> And even Averroes was only able to access Aristotle's texts via inadequate Arabic translations.<sup>68</sup> Finally, in his comparison of Aristotle's philosophy with the theories of others, Perera meticulously records several deviations from Aristotelian principles in the writings of philosophers like Simplicius, Avicenna, and Albert.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 665: 'Leggere Averroe è molto utile, sì per la sua dottrina, come per la fama che ha in Italia; et per poterlo intendere, leggerà li suoi seguaci, come Janduno, Barleo, Paulo veneto, Zimarra, Nipho'.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'sed ego maxime omnium laudo & probo librum quod inscribitur de Apprehensione modo dialogi compositum, cuius libri doctrina quaedam & sententiae sine dubio sunt Alberti stili vero apertior, completior atque [30r] politior est: quasi ut credere possim auctorem eius fuisset Albertum'.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'Huius [Alexandris] igitur commentarii omnes qui nunc extant (utinam autem extarent omnes)'; '[Thomas] non potuit autem ut opinor quod graecorum scriptatum non dum reperta essent, aut Latinitatem donata'.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'Eandem plane laudem obtinerent, quos scripsit in libros de caelo nisi & graece multis locis corrupti essent, & in Latinum sermonem perversissime translati fuissent'.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'Constat tamen Averroim in explanatione verborum Aristotelis nonnumquam lapsus & hallucinatus esse propterea quod mendosam & corruptam versionem Aristotelis haberet, quod ipse non aut semel traduerit & conqueritur, sed quantum in eo fuit semper graecos interpretes sequutus & imitatus est, porro obscuritas et perplexitas orationis quam in commentariis eius apparet, tota provenit ex translatione Latina, nam cum lingua Arabica & Latina maximo intervallo disiunctae sint quod mirum est id quod Arabice scriptum fuit si verbum e verbo Latine reddatur, obscurum horridum, & insulsum existere'. Perera does not mention Averroes' lack of knowledge of Greek here explicitly.

<sup>69</sup> On Simplicius, see also above n. 56 and 67. Cf. esp. doc. 8: 'Opus autem eius in libros de anima valde dissimile est reliquorum scriptorum, continet enim doctrinam brevem ieiunam involutam & platoniam, potius quam peripateticam, cuius operis auctor quicumque fuit (nam multi putant non esse Simplicii) ita se gerit [28v] ut non tam Aristotelem explicare quam varias quasdam contemplationes Jamblici sequeri & declarare voluisse videatur'; on Avicenna: 'Opus eius philosophicum, Logicam, physicam, et metaphysicam complectens in laude est apud multos philosophos, sed in eo tametsi nonnumquam subtilis est tum



Overall, Perera considered philological analyses of commentaries on Aristotle an important part of their evaluation. They allow readers to determine how reliable and useful a commentary is by discovering (a) whether the author had access to the Greek text, (b) how faithfully the text they see has been transmitted to their own time, and (c) how great the discrepancies (philosophical and conceptual) are between the commentary and the Aristotelian teachings.

Thirdly, it is remarkable how much attention Perera pays to matters not strictly related to Aristotelian philosophy. For example, Perera recommends reading various of Averroes' digressions on cosmological questions as well as Averroes' *De substantia orbis*;<sup>70</sup> holds Avicenna's medical writings in high esteem;<sup>71</sup> and acknowledges (Pseudo-)Albert's epistemological dialogue *De apprehensione* as well as his writings on natural history.<sup>72</sup> He also considers reading Lucretius helpful for understanding Aristotle.<sup>73</sup> And finally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, Perera approves of consulting the theological works of Thomas Aquinas in philosophical matters.<sup>74</sup> Perera therefore clearly did not limit himself to a single concept of philosophy or to Aristotle's writings alone.

semper obscurus, perplexus, horridus, dissimilis peripateticorum et ab Aristotelica philosophandi ratione longissime remotus est'; on Albert: 'illud tamen vitiosum & dignum reprehensione videri potest quod in modo philosophandi nimis obscurus & horridus sit, et non tamen peripateticos quam Arabes, & Platonicos sequi & imitari studuerit, cum enim de rebus arduis & gravibus disputat'.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'Sunt etiam alia opera eius philosophica immortalis laude digna ut libellus de substantia orbis'.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'Avicennam quanto in medicina aliis omnibus (Hippocratem et Galenum his non numero) superior fuit tanto in philosophia et se ipso & aliis quorum plurimis inferior extitit. Itaque quemadmodum scripta eius quae pertinent ad medicinam libenter legerem, ita quae spectant ad philosophiam, legere non magnopere curaverim, nisi ea de causa forte legenda sint quod is saepe reprehendatur ab Averro, & a quibusdam Latinis philosophis in praetio habeatur, atque frequenter citetur'. Cf. Pererius, *De communibus*, praef.: 'Fuit is praestantissimus medicus, fuit etiam (quorundam iudicio) peracutus Metaphysicus, sed eum doctrinae Aristotelis (quam omnibus Philosophiae studiosis maxime probatam et cognitam esse oportet) nec valde studiosum, nec admodum intelligentem fuisse constat'. On Perera and the Jesuits' approaches to medicine, see Sander, 'Medical Topics', 91 n. 59.

<sup>72</sup> See above n. 65, and doc. 8: 'Deinde in his quae scripsit [Albertus] de metallis, animalibus & plantis valde accusatur a viris earum rerum doctissimis & peritissimis aiunt enim eum quaecunque ab aliis accepisset'.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. doc. 7, §5: 'Eius [Lucretii] lectio non parvam lucem afferet ad intelligenda multa loca Aristotelis'. Cf. also Pererius, *De communibus*, 277–8 (V, 1). This was repeated (certainly alluding to Perera) by Pontanus, *Reden*, 78. Yet some philosophers also referred to Aristotle in their interpretation of Lucretius, cf. e.g. Raffaele Franchi, *Raphaelis Fra[n]ci Florentini i[n] Lucretiu[m] paraphrasis, cu[m] appe[n]dice de animi immortalitate*. (Bologna, 1504), 18r–v.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'sed ea potissimum cognosci & iudicari debet ex scriptis theologicis [Thomae] maxime vero ex quadripartita summa theologiae'. Cf. also Pererius, *De communibus*, praef.: 'Sed D. Thomam eximium Philosophiae decus, et splendissimum Theologiae lumen, firmissimumque columnen, prae caeteris miramur, et colimus'.



Finally, Perera is sensitive to any potential conflicts between Aristotle's commentators and the Christian faith. He names some doctrines by Alexander and Averroes as problematic, and reflects on these commentators' integrity and credibility on this basis, concluding that in spite of some difficult statements they are yet not to be dismissed altogether. As he had done for Aristotle, Perera attributes these errors to both the fallible human intellect and God's intention to withhold doctrines of faith—intended only for Christian believers—from these authors.<sup>75</sup>

Under consideration of these four aspects of Perera's approach to Aristotle's commentators, the conflict between Perera and Ledesma emerges clearly, in spite of the fact that both are Jesuits. Ledesma observes the same distinction between Greek, Arabic, and Latin commentators, and in 1573 compiles an even longer bibliography on commentators than Perera's;<sup>76</sup> from 1564 onwards, he emphasizes repeatedly that Greek or Arabic commentators are suitable for teaching purposes but may not be revered.<sup>77</sup> By contrast, the Latin commentators, above all Thomas Aquinas, must not be criticized but rather praised by Jesuit teachers, according to Ledesma. But, although Perera does not openly criticize Aquinas in the

<sup>75</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'Si quod autem in libris eorum quos ante memoravimus erratum inest contra philosophiam & christianam veritatem, id nobis continua nulla vel dignitatis vel auctoritatis eorum habita ratione improbandum, reiiciendum & execrandum est, [...] cogitationes curam & providentiam habere [...] neque vero mirandum est hos viros caeterosque sapientes tam graviter & absurde lapsos & deceptos fuisse, homines enim fuerunt, quorum errant fallaces, sensus, angusta ingenia, infirma iudicia, vitae multis flagitiis ingenerata, mens humanae inscitiae tenebris circumfusa, & celesti destituta luminem'. Cf. also above n. 32.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Toletus, *Physica*, praef.: 'Dum de Aristotelis mente certabitur, optimis quibusque utemur Authoribus, Graecis, Latinis, Arabibus: ex Graecis Theophrastio, Alexandro, Ammonio, Philopono, Porphyrio, Simplicio, Themistio, Eustrathio, caeterisque, quorum nobis commentarios temporum iniuria non ademerit. Ex latinis autem D. Thoma, Boethio, Alberto magno, Aegidio, Scoto, Marsilio, ita tamen, ut et qui ex recentioribus praesant, suum quoque locum habeant. Scotus, Caietanus, Sonzinas, Iavellus, Iandunus, Burlaeus, Buridanus, Zimara, Nyphus, et caeterique, si qui alii in hoc genere excellere videbuntur. Unus sane D. Thomas instar erit omnium, in quo et diligentia interpretandi, et doctrinae gravitas cum pietate coniuncta, multa, varia ac solida eruditio, incredibilis praeterea methodus, integris etiam disciplinis pertractandis; nec commentariis solum quos scripsit in Aristotelem, sed multo etiam magis Summa Theologiae, Summa contra gentes, Quaestionibus disputatis, et caeteris eius scriptis, tantam (ut de Theologia taceamus) Philosophiae lucem attulit unus, quantam caeteri omnes (aliorum pace dixerim) possint explanatores afferre: in quo, ex nullius arbitror laude quippiam detrahi, si id dicitur de D. Thoma, quod ipsorum quisque, se et viveret, et adesset, de eodem videretur esse dicturus. Ex Arabibus autem (quamvis numero, doctrina, et eruditione, si vel cum Graecis inferiores) utemur Avempace, Alpharabio, Avenzoar, Averroes, et aliis: Avicenna potissimum, quod eius scripta omni memoria gravissimis hominibus probata sint, et quod unus inter omnes Arabes proxime ad verum Philosophiae Christianae decus et laudem videatur accessisse'.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 478: 'Item, ne laudent nimis, imo ne laudent quidem, Averroin vel alios impios interpretes; sed si qui laudandi sint, potius laudent D. Thomam, Albertum Magnum, vel alios christianos et pios. Quod si sit discedendum ab eorum sententia, id modeste faciant'. Cf. also MPSI ii. 487, 499, 502.



*Documenta*, he does not praise him very much, and mainly points out the brevity of his commentaries on Aristotle.<sup>78</sup> In his investigation of Perera's philosophical teachings, conducted through an analysis of his pupils' notes, Ledesma found that Perera dismissed Aquinas and the Latin commentators excessively.<sup>79</sup>

In a later treatise, Ledesma particularly condemned the doctrines of Alexander, Themistius, and Averroes, especially their philosophy of the soul, and found them 'impious'.<sup>80</sup> Averroes in particular seems to have troubled Ledesma and Gagliardi: they explicitly prohibited Jesuit teachers from confessing Averroist sympathies.<sup>81</sup> Gagliardi similarly recommended a prohibition of following Averroes' digressions; Averroes, however, was on the list of Perera's preferred authors.<sup>82</sup> Overall, Aristotle's commentators were one crucial aspect that caused the conflict between Perera on the one hand, and Ledesma and Gagliardi on the other.

This matter remained a sensitive issue among Jesuits for some time and was particularly discussed while the Jesuits drafted their *Ratio Studiorum* for all colleges.<sup>83</sup> Although the official versions of 1586, 1591,

<sup>78</sup> Cf. doc. 8: 'quae in eo fuit amplissima non tantum petenda est ex commentariis eius in Aristotelem quos ille breves & succintos esse voluit, ut ultimas sententias Aristotelis breviter & dilucide exponeret non ut ostentaret subtilitatem & copiam eruditionis'. Cf. also Casalini, 'Pererio', 106. Perera's *laudatio*, situated towards the beginning of the passage and addressing the topic of Aquinas, alludes to his historical role in relation to Aristotelian philosophy via his canonization, rather than by merit of his philosophical works.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 503: 'Item, parum reverenter [Perera] tractat D. Thomam, et contra illum ardentem disputat fere semper et contra latinos'.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Monumenta paedagogica*, 551–3: 'Nec quicquam obstat si, praeter aliquos impios interpretes, quales sunt Averroes Simplicius et olim Plato, qui non sunt sequendi. [...] Contraria stultitia est Averrois, qui unicam posuit assistentem in omnibus, et forte etiam Themistius sic posuit intellectum agentem [...] Imo vero et Themistius, et Theophrastus, et Averroes; nam, quamvis hic Averroes unam dicat intellectivam in omnibus, et fortasse alii de intellectu saltem agente idem dicant, tamen faciunt immortalem secundum Aristotelem. Nec obstat, ut quosdam recentiores omittamus, si Alexander impius et aliqui etiam ex antiquis christianis putent, secundum Aristotelem, mortalem'. This document is not edited in the MPSI. Cf. also Toletus, *Physica*, praef.: 'Hoc autem loco admonendus es, Lector pie, ne cum in hos, aut alios impios Aristotelis interpretes, sive Graecos, sive Arabes incideres, in iis praesertim, quae ad pietatem attinent, facile illis credas, atque committas. Nam, cum impii fere omnes fuerint, Ethnici, Idolatrae, nonnulli etiam Sarraceni, vel Mahumetani, de Deo, de divinis rebus, de ultimo fine, de divina providentia, de vita beata, de animis ipsis hominum non raro male scripserunt [...] ut [Averroes] non immerito apud aliquas celeberrimas provincias, impii cognomen invenerit'.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 478: 'Item, non se ostendant esse averroistas, aut graecorum fractionem sectare vel arabum contra latinos aut theologos'.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. MPSI ii. 478 (subscribed by Gagliardi): 'Item, prohibeatur ne magistri interpretentur digressiones Averrois vel Simplicii aut alterius; sed simpliciter proponantur opiniones eorum indifferenter'.

<sup>83</sup> On this project of the *Ratio Studiorum*, see e.g. Mario Zanardi, 'La "Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu": Tappe e vicende della sua progressiva formazione (1541–1616)', *Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche* 5 (1998), 135–64; John W. Padberg,



and 1599 echoed Ledesma's sceptical and critical tone in many respects, and especially his scepticism towards Averroes, Perera's approach was not ignored altogether.<sup>84</sup> Even before the first *Ratio* was established in 1586, Perera was a member of a committee whose aim was to reconsider the issue of philosophical censorship and to construct a syllabus of philosophical doctrine within the Society of Jesus. Naturally, Perera was not in favour of limiting philosophers' freedom of thought.<sup>85</sup> In spite of Perera's plea for this freedom, the *Ratio* of 1586 banned Averroes from the reading list and prescribed fifteen philosophical doctrines.<sup>86</sup> When this *Ratio* was reviewed by the Roman Jesuits later in the same year, all of them agreed on this prohibition, except for Perera, who emphasized once more that Averroes' doctrines, and those of other pagan authors, contain some true content which can be cited and taught.<sup>87</sup> The *Ratio* of 1586 also attempted to prescribe the doctrine of Aquinas to Jesuit theologians, and one of Perera's fellow Jesuits, Didacus Tapia (*d.*1591), reported that Aquinas was criticized by many. His review states that Tapia knows several men who praise Aquinas not as a philosopher, but as a theologian.<sup>88</sup> Aquinas, these critics say, did not know Greek and therefore he did not penetrate Aristotle's ideas to the extent that recent philosophers 'addicted to the Greek language' (*graecizantes*) are able to.<sup>89</sup> For Tapia, this critique is not valid, since Aquinas did, indeed, know translations and the works of the Greek commentators, and knew the works of Aristotle better than those moderns who oppose Aquinas. It seems very likely that Tapia knew about his colleague Perera's attitude towards Aquinas: Perera, too, had highlighted the problem of Aquinas' lack of knowledge in Greek.

'Development of the Ratio Studiorum', in Vincent J. Duminuco (ed.), *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives* (New York, 2000), 80–100.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. MPSI v. 100–1, 283, 189–91; vii. 249.

<sup>85</sup> Sander, 'The Debate', 45–9.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. MPSI v. 95–109.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. MPSI vi. 261: 'De Averroe: Placet totus ut iacet; excepto P. Pererio, cui videntur quaecunque et in Averroe et in aliis gentilibus vere dicta sunt, simpliciter esse citanda atque docenda; praesertim cum in digressionibus Averrois uberius soleat esse philosophiae doctrina'.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. MPSI vi. 261: 'Scio nonnullos non ita celebrare S. Thomam in philosophia, ac in theologia celebrare illum videntur. Et hanc pro se adducunt rationem, quia S. Thomas graecam linguam non intellexit, et sic Aristotelis sensum non penetravit ita intense, ac alii antiqui et moderniores graecizantes. Horum rationem non esse tanti momenti, patet. Primo, quoniam S. Thomas, si graecam linguam non novit, vidit, legit, intellexit translationes et commentaria graeco: tum, qui satius intellexerunt Aristotelem, quam illi moderni, qui S. Thomae philosophiae opponuntur'.

<sup>89</sup> The term *graecizantes* is often used by Jesuits in a pejorative sense, to refer to humanist philosophers of the time.



#### IV. Conclusions

A more thorough analysis might reveal more contradictions between Perera's and Ledesma's concepts of philosophical pedagogy, and further studies may also shed more light on the position of Perera's project within the multiple forms of Aristotelianism in the early modern period. However, the dossier at hand alone enables us to conclude that Perera's positive attitude towards some of Aristotle's commentators formed a core element of his conflict with Ledesma, since these commentators and their partial incompatibility with Christian faith were problematic at the time. Nonetheless, Perera was able to justify his own position as 'sufficiently pious' by relying on his critical, historical, and philological approach to philosophy.<sup>90</sup> It is this emphasis on philology that Perera shared with the sixteenth-century humanist movement in philosophy.<sup>91</sup>

It has been observed that Perera, perhaps in an attempt to make his theories less offensive, softened the tone of his praise for Averroes in the preface to his *De communibus* (1576). This appears to have been done in reaction to the investigation against him,<sup>92</sup> as is clear from a comparison of this preface with his admiration for Averroes expressed in the *Documenta*. This revision was motivated by an attempt to prevent the printing of Perera's book by Ledesma, Gagliardi, and other Jesuits. Eventually, the *imprimatur* had to be granted by Pope Gregory XIII himself.<sup>93</sup>

The very first philosophical *cursus* that was published by a Jesuit author was that of Franciscus Toletus, and the first tome was his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, printed in 1573.<sup>94</sup> Toletus was a colleague of Perera's and Ledesma's in Rome, and Ledesma was among the censors for the edition.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Initial insights into humanism, philology, education, and piety may be gathered from Charles G. Nauert, 'Rethinking "Christian Humanism"', in Angelo Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden/Boston, 2006), 155–80; Grendler, 'Humanism'.

<sup>91</sup> For a short overview on definitions and historiographical accounts of the term 'humanism', see Heikki Mikkeli, *An Aristotelian Response to Renaissance Humanism: Jacopo Zabarella on the Nature of Arts and Sciences* (Helsinki, 1992), 9–14. On the connection between philosophy and philology, see esp. Jill Kraye, 'Philologists and Philosophers', in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), 142–60.

<sup>92</sup> Blum, *Aristotelianism*, 140.

<sup>93</sup> See above n. 29.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Toletus, *Physica*. It is further worth noting that Perera's *De communibus* (*omnium rerum naturalium principii*) is primarily a work on Aristotle's *Physics*: see Ugo Baldini, 'The Development of Jesuit Physics in Italy, 1550–1700: A Structural Approach', in Constance Blackwell and Sachiko Kusakawa (eds.), *Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Conversations with Aristotle* (Aldershot/Brookfield, 1999), 253.

<sup>95</sup> Ledesma was among the *censores* of Toletus' commentaries on the *Physica* (cf. Toletus, *Physica*, 77v, 192r, 249v) and the *De anima*. In *De anima* Ledesma seems to have included ten prescriptive propositions that were to be taught, cf. Franciscus Toletus, *Commentaria*



When Perera wrote the preface for his own book, he must have looked at the anonymous preface to Toletus' commentary, which was most likely written by Ledesma himself.<sup>96</sup> Accordingly, the prefaces share some common material on Averroes, and both of them mention the well-known yet disgraceful addiction to Averroist philosophy.<sup>97</sup> Further, both of them point out that Averroes did not have direct access to the Greek text of Aristotle.<sup>98</sup> Yet the more subtle differences between the two texts are even more noteworthy. Ledesma introduces the topic of an over-reliance on Averroes into a general attack against the habits of secular Italian universities. At first glance, Ledesma's critique of Averroes in itself is not so much a refutation of his philosophical tenets than an argument *ad hominem*. In Ledesma's opinion, the Muslim Averroes is harmful for Christianity.<sup>99</sup> However odd such an argument might sound today, it clearly echoes Ignatius of Loyola's advice in the *Constitutions* for the reading of suspect authors:

Even though a book is without suspicion of evil doctrine, when its author is suspect it is not wise to read it. For through the book affection is stirred up for the author; and approval given to the author in what he says well may lead one later on to accept what he says poorly. Moreover, it rarely occurs that some poison is not mixed into that which comes forth from a heart full of it.<sup>100</sup>

*vna cum quaestionibus in tres libros Aristotelis de anima* (Venice, 1575), 6v–8r; Sander, 'In dubio pro fide', 57.

<sup>96</sup> As *censor* of Toletus' *Physica* Ledesma appears to have written or contributed to the anonymous preface himself: numerous coincidences with his thought can be observed. Yet this attribution remains an assumption at best, since it is only based on the circumstantial evidence: the resemblance of thought presented in the preface with Ledesma's ideology and Ledesma's role as one of the *censores* of the volume. This preface is discussed in Martin, *Subverting Aristotle*, 91–2; Luca Bianchi, *Pour une histoire de la double vérité* (Paris, 2008), 150; it is noteworthy, however, that neither scholar ascribes the piece to Ledesma. The preface also was known to Antonio Possevino, cf. Possevino, *Bibliotheca selecta*, ii. 106.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Toletus, *Physica*, praef.: 'Nec vero satis mirari possum, sic quosdam in nonnullis Academiis esse Authoribus impiis addictos, ut tantum non apud illos, eorundem authorum causa, fides periclitetur, quo cum sermo devenerit, de uno Averroae pauca dicam'. Cf. Pererius, *De communibus*, praef.: 'hoc autem cuius Philosopho, turpe est, Christiano autem unius hominis, qui labi potuit (et vero in rebus magni momenti non semel lapsus est) decreta omnia pugnaciter defendere, ac mordicus tenere, et quasi tempestare delatos, ad eius doctrinam, tanquam ad saxum aliquod adhaerescere? Quid foedius?'

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Toletus, *Physica*, praef.: 'Usus praeterea est corrupto Aristotelis libro, et pluribus in locis depravato; id quod eius scripta prae se ferunt. Graecis fere omnibus explanatoribus caruit; Latinis etiam, qui nec dum extabant, destitutus fuit': cf. Pererius, *De communibus*, praef.: 'Sint ista ut dicunt: negari tamen non potest, Averroem, interpretando Aristotelem, ob ignorantiam linguae Graecae, mendososque codices, et bonorum interpretum penuriam, multifariam hallucinatum esse'.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Toletus, *Physica*, praef.: 'Adde fuisse Mahumetanum, et (quod ipsa scriptura facile declarant) conceptum animo adversus Christianam religionem odium semper habuisse; ut necesse sit, sua eum sordissima secta, scripta quoque philosophica infecisse non parum'.

<sup>100</sup> Translated in George E. Ganss, *Saint Ignatius' Idea of a Jesuit University. A Study in the History of Catholic Education, Including Part Four of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*



Ledesma also highlights Averroes' reliance on a 'corrupted book of Aristotle' and his lack of knowledge of almost all Greek commentators (and indeed any of the Latin commentators) —an accusation against the reliability of the Arabic philosopher.<sup>101</sup> Yet, Ledesma concedes, 'wherever Averroes was right, we will not reject him, wherever he was wrong, we will prefer other interpreters, wherever he was impious, we will condemn him'.<sup>102</sup>

For Perera, by contrast, a reliance on one individual philosopher is not disgraceful, especially not in the case of Averroes; but it is disgraceful for Christians in general to rely exclusively and regardless of circumstance on one single philosopher, since all philosophers are fallible human beings.<sup>103</sup> The very concept of authority becomes a contested one in this view—in Perera's words, 'I owe much to Plato, more to Aristotle, but most to reason'.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, Averroes' lacking knowledge of Greek and his faulty sources are raised not as an accusation but rather as an excuse for the mistakes Averroes made when he interpreted Aristotle relying on his own linguistic abilities and on available texts. To sum up, Perera concedes two types of error: firstly, errors which arise from the limited capacity of human understanding and the human condition, which is to err; and secondly, errors which are due to contingent factors of textual transmission, language faculties, and philological issues.

Perera's conception of a pious Christian philosophy which also rests on philological issues derives from these ideas. For Perera, an awareness

(Milwaukee, 1954), 326. Latin in MSPI i. 297: 'Quamvis liber suspicione, malae doctrinae vacet, cum tamen suspectus est auctor, legi eum non convenit. Solet enim opus in causa esse ut, qui legit; ad auctorem afficiatur; et auctoritas, quam apud ipsum habet in iis quae benedicit; posset postmodum aliquid persuadere ex iis quae male dicit. Rarum est etiam aliquid veneni non admisceri in iis, quae a pectore veneni pleno egrediuntur'.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Toletus, *Physica*, praef.: 'Usus praeterea est corrupto Aristotelis libro, et pluribus in locis depravato; id quod eius scripta prae se ferunt. Graecis fere omnibus explanatoribus caruit; Latinis etiam, qui nec dum extabant, destitutus fuit: ut necesse sit, in eo nec gravem, nec securam inesse doctrinam, nam et si acutum quiddam raro, exile tamen dicendi, et philosophandi genus, in eo reperitur; est tamen illud obscurum, inusitatum, et saepe ab Aristotelis sensu intelligentiaque alienum, quod recta interpretatione, ac versione Aristotelis, aliorumque interpretum luce caruerit'.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Ibid. 'Nos igitur, ubi quidpiam recti dixerit, non aspernabimur: ubi secus, alios ei longe doctiores antepo-  
nemus, et ipsum impietatis, ubi tale quid dixerit, condemnabimus'.

<sup>103</sup> See also Sander, 'The Debate', 45–6, for Alfonso Salmerón's similar attitude.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Pererius, *De communibus*, praef.: 'Ego multum Platoni tribui, plus Aristoteli, sed rationem plurimum'. Cf. also MPSI ii. 671: 'Aristotelicum illud in omni studiorum ratione servandum est: Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas'. On this passage see Ulrich G. Leinsle, 'Delectus opinionum. Traditionsbildung durch Auswahl in der frühen Jesuitentheologie', in Georg Schmuttermayr, Wolfgang Beinert and Heinrich Petri (eds.), *Im Spannungsfeld von Tradition und Innovation: Festschrift für Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger* (Regensburg, 1997), 116 n. 32; Blum, *Aristotelianism*, 143; Sander, 'The Debate', 44 n. 66; 46 n. 76.



of how reliable a text may be is a prerequisite for any judgement on philosophical doctrines. Moreover, it enables scholars to defend some authors and explains why some philosophical tenets seem to contradict the truth of Christian faith. Perera's study plan from the *Documenta* provides an impressive picture of such an approach. Philological and historical scholarship was meant to support his programme of propaedeutics in three ways: (a) a brief reconstruction of the textual transmission and its consequences, and a scholarly review of extant editions of translations of, and commentaries on, Aristotle; (b) an awareness of topics peripheral to a strictly philosophical curriculum of Jesuit universities; and (c) an emphasis on a mindful reading of doxographical accounts.

However, these features are supplemented by the more epistemological insight that the human intellect is fallible by nature, and the metaphysical belief that a true argument in philosophy can never, in principle, contradict a doctrine of faith. A science of true, immutable things—and both philosophy and theology fall into this category—nevertheless needs to cope with factors such as fallible human individuals, their textual heritage, and also fallible human readers with their own sets of language skills and textual backgrounds. In Perera's view, a reflection on both the philological and epistemic factors for human error ensures an erudite and pious groundwork for Jesuit philosophy. Additionally, Perera's efforts here also redeemed Ignatius of Loyola's overarching attempt to establish a Jesuit learning that mirrored the principle of *pietas et eruditio*, a combination of thorough education and religious dedication.<sup>105</sup> Perera did so in his own way, and integrated different trends of Aristotelian philosophy into his own, even including approaches that were considered impious by some of his fellow Jesuits. Perera fitted these approaches into a strictly Christian philosophy curriculum.

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<sup>105</sup> John W. O'Malley, 'How Humanistic Is the Jesuit Tradition? From the 1599 Ratio Studiorum to Now', in Martin R. Tripole (ed.), *Jesuit Education 21: Conference Proceedings on the Future of Jesuit Higher Education, 25–29 June 1999* (Philadelphia, 2000), 189–201; Peter Hans Kolvenbach, 'Pietas et eruditio', *Gregorianum* 85 (2004), 6–19.



## Edition

### Criteria of edition

The treatise entitled *Documenta quaedam perutilia iis qui / in studiis philosophiae cum fructu / et sine ullo errore versari / student*, is preserved in manuscript at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan under the shelf mark D496 inf. (ff. 25r–31v). It is in good condition and the high quality of the reproduction narrows the range of possible errors of reading to a few lines at the top of the ff. 27r and 27v, where the ink passed through the sides of the sheet. The document shows a few corrections and one major insertion, which we have marked between asterisks [“\*”] (f. 26r).

Concerning the editing style, the document presents numerous contracted words and abbreviations that we decided to expand in this edition, since the author traced clear and coherent signs for missing syllables and letters. We respected the author’s capitalizations and punctuation, correcting them only when this was evidently due to the author’s incoherence.

### **Documenta quaedam perutilia iis qui in studiis philosophiae cum fructu et sine ullo errore versari student:**

#### Primum Documentum

- 5 Meminerint philosophiam subiectam esse debere fidei, & religioni Christianae, ita ut quicquid fides docet verissimum et certissimum habeant, quamquam vel repugnet Aristoteli vel ad eius cognitionem philosophia aspirare non possit. Etenim magis quam Aristoteli credendum est Deo, qui auctor est fidei nostrae, et cui libuit plurimas et maximas res abscondere a sapien-
- 10 tibus, & prudentibus & eas revelare parvulis, & cum philosophia sit opus humani ingenij secundum mensuram eius definita, non est mirandum eam, immensae Divinitatis auxilia atque misteria non posse comprehendere. Itaque semper in memoria et ante oculos habeant illas sententias non plus sapere quam oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem, et item scrutator maiestatis opprimetur a gloria, & quemadmodum serpens primos
- 15 parentes humani generis perniciose deceperit inani pollicitatione scientiae boni & mali.



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