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Résumé de l'article

Cet article s'intéresse au traité De immortalitate animae (Paris, 1491) rédigé par Guillaume Houppelande, l'un des plus célèbres membres de la Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Paris au XVe siècle. Le traité de Houppelande, qui renvoie à la fois à des sources anciennes, patristiques et médiévales, comporte plusieurs arguments sur l'immortalité de l'âme. Nous commençons par porter une attention particulière à l'attitude de Houppelande à l'égard des théories philosophiques et théologiques sur lesquelles se fondaient ses arguments, avant de nous concentrer sur une analyse de la relation de Houppelande avec la philosophie médiévale.

Guillaume Houppelande's Small Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul*

JOZEF MATULA

This article focuses on the treatise De immortalitate animae *(Paris, 1491) written by Guillaume Houppelande, one of the most famous members of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris in the fifteenth century. Houppelande's treatise, which refers to ancient, patristic, and medieval sources, contains several arguments on the immortality of the soul. Special attention is first given to Houppelande's attitude towards those philosophical and theological theories that supported his own arguments before focus is turned towards an analysis of Houppelande's relationship to medieval philosophy.*

Cet article s'intéresse au traité De immortalitate animæ *(Paris, 1491) rédigé par Guillaume Houppelande, l'un des plus célèbres membres de la Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Paris au XV^e^ siècle. Le traité de Houppelande, qui renvoie à la fois à des sources anciennes, patristiques et médiévales, comporte plusieurs arguments sur l'immortalité de l'âme. Nous commençons par porter une attention particulière à l'attitude de Houppelande à l'égard des théories philosophiques et théologiques sur lesquelles se fondaient ses arguments, avant de nous concentrer sur une analyse de la relation de Houppelande avec la philosophie médiévale.*

Introduction

Despite a resurgence of interest among scholars in the medieval and Renaissance views of the immortality of the soul, little attention has been paid to the small treatise *De immortalitate animae* (1491) written by the French theologian and professor at the Collège de Navarre,[1] Guillaume Houppelande (also Hopelande and Hoplant, d. 1492).[2] Guillaume Houppelande, born in Boulogne-sur-Mer,

* I am grateful to the National Science Centre of Poland for its financial support of OPUS Project No. 2018/29/B/HS1/0046, "Dlaczego humaniści quattrocento musieli bronić jednostkowej nieśmiertelności?" (Why did Quattrocento humanists have to defend individual immortality?). I wish to thank Dr. Joanna Papiernik (University of Lodz) for suggesting the source, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions.

1. The Collège de Navarre was at the centre of the first French humanist movement in the second half of the fourteenth century and throughout the fifteenth century. Many prominent philosophers and theologians taught at the college, among them Pierre d'Ailly, Jean Buridan, Nicole Oresme, and the humanist theologian Jean Raulin, who built a large library. See Gorochov, *Le Collège de Navarre*.

2. Busson, *Le Rationalisme*, 164–69.

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was a priest of Saint-Séverin, a canon of Notre-Dame, and an archdeacon of Brie.[3] The aim of this article is to elucidate Houppelande's views on the immortality of the soul and to trace, as far as possible, these views to their sources in the writings of classical, medieval, and Renaissance thinkers. The focus of this article is on certain questions related to Houppelande's philosophy, which is situated at the juncture of scholastic medieval thought and humanistic philosophy.[4]

In one of his letters, Robert Gaguin, a French Dominican friar and humanist scholar, characterizes Houppelande as a most excellent genius who wrote very rarely.[5] Houppelande's treatise on the immortality of the soul is probably the only of his preserved works. The treatise was reissued seven times in less than fifteen years (between 1489 and 1504) and translated into English at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[6] Despite the title, Houppelande's *De immortalitate animae* is not a comprehensive scholastic commentary on Aristotle's work on the nature of the soul; the treatise is not extensive, and in fact its main purpose is not to deal with the nature of the human soul at all. Rather, the major question of the treatise is whether the immortality of the soul can be demonstrated by rational arguments.

3. Franklin, *Dictionnaire des noms*, 303; Féret, *La Faculté*, 314. For a detailed biography, see Sullivan, *Parisian Licentiates*, 291–92; Gaguin, *Epistole et orationes*, 403n; De Gaulle, *Nouvelle histoire*, 250. On Houppelande's influence on Robert Gaugin, see Collard, *Un historien*, 61.

4. Joanna Papiernik is preparing a significant book on the topic of the immortality of the soul in the early Italian Renaissance (Papiernik, *Philosophies of the Afterlife*).

5. Epistola lxiii, Paris, 13 February 1494, in Gaguin, *Epistole et orationes*, 402–3: "quamvis excellentissimi ingenii esset, rarissime scripsit; nec operum illius aliud apud me extat quam de Immortalitate anime, non contemnendus libellus, in quo recensitis veterum omnium sectarum philosophice poeticeque discipline traditionibus catholicam sententiam promit" (although he had an excellent intellect, [he] rarely wrote; and I have no other works of his except for *De immortalitate animae*, a noteworthy book in which, by reviewing the philosophical and poetic traditions of all ancient sects, he presents the Catholic viewpoint; my translation).

6. The treatise was published at least four times in Paris (1491, 1493, 1499, and 1504). The text was eventually translated into English by John Jackson at the beginning of the seventeenth century where it was published together with translations of passages from *Zodiacus vitae* by Marcello Palingenio Stellato (1500–51), an Italian poet and humanist; *De anima* by Matthäus Dresser (1536–1607), a professor of Greek at the University of Erfurt between 1559 and 1574; *De resurrectione* by Athenagoras (c. 133–190 CE); and a Socratic dialogue on the soul by Xenocrates. The collection of texts is an anthology of long extracts in translation from the best arguments for the soul's immortality. See Houppelande, *The Soule Is Immortall*, trans. Jackson.

Henri Busson in his *Le Rationalisme dans la littérature francaise de la Renaissance* lists Houppelande among thinkers such as Pierre d'Ailly, Peter Crockart, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Guillaume Budé, who represent the rationalist approach to the immortality of the soul before 1530. According to Busson, rationalism "consiste dans l'application des méthodes rationnelles aux choses religieuses à l'exclusion de la foi."[7] A similar view on Houppelande is presented by Franco Simone, who states that Houppelande argued for the possibility of demonstrating the immortality of the soul "con argomenti puramente razionali" (with purely rational arguments).[8]

Ancients' arguments against the immortality of the soul

The treatise itself comprises three parts and a conclusion. Houppelande begins the first part by exposing the heterodox views of ancient philosophers on the nature of the soul and enumerates all those who believed the human soul to be immortal. He highlights the genius of ancient thinkers who explored the principles of the world, nature, and the order of the heavens. Houppelande lists several ancient authors and their definitions of the human soul (i.e., Thales of Miletus, Anaximenes of Miletus, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Diogenes, Zeno of Citium, Chrysippus, Democritus, Aristoxenus, and Aristophanes). Attention is also given to the opposite opinion according to which the soul is mortal. Houppelande mentions the Sadducees and Epicurus; Roman authors such as Caesar, Cato the Elder, Valerius Maximus, and Pliny the Elder are also well-known examples of the stance against the immortality of the soul. Houppelande underscores that the Sadducees, who take their name from Sadoc (*sadducei a sadoc dicti*), reject impudently (*impudenter*) any belief in immortality, assuming

7. Busson, *Le Rationalisme*, xii.

8. Simone, "Il pensiero," 11: "Il trattato *De immortaliate animae* di Guillaume Houppelande, dove precisamente si continuava a sostenere essere possibile dimostrare l'immortalità dell'anima con argomenti puramente razionali, aveva avuto dal 1489, anno della sua pubblicazione, al 1504 ben sette edizioni. Tuttavia, non invano anche nel pensiero francese la filolofia umanistica aveve fatto un suo camino, segreto ma fruttuoso" (The treatise *De immortalitate animae* by Guillaume Houppelande, where precisely it was continued to argue the possibility of demonstrating the immortality of the soul through purely rational arguments, had, from its publication in 1489 until 1504, a total of seven editions. However, it was not in vain that humanistic philosophy had made its way, secret but fruitful, also in French thought; my translation).

that the soul perishes along with the body, and deny honours and punishments.[9] Epicurus also affirms that the soul is mortal and supposes that *summum bonum* lies in pleasures (*voluptas*).[10] He believes that death is the end of the soul, and that neither the afterlife nor eternal punishment or reward exists.[11] For Houppelande, Epicurus's view on the mortality of the soul is supported by Pliny the Elder, who, in book 2 of his *Natural History*, discusses the topic of immortality and the limitations of human life. Pliny writes that although many people have sought eternal life, humans' attainment of such a state is ultimately impossible. The reason is that God has given humans numerous gifts and blessings, but He cannot give them the gift of eternal life.[12]

9. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, ed. Bochin, fol. 1v. Alonso de Espina (c. 1410–after 1464), in an enumeration of Jewish sects in the *Fortalitium fidei*, identifies the Sadducees with the denial of immortality: "alii vocantur saducei qui non credunt animas post mortem manere" (some are called Sadducees, who do not believe in the immortality of souls after death; my translation). Espina, *Fortalitium Fidei*, bk. 3 (*De bello iudeorum*), fol. 68r.

10. Lactantius, *Divinarum institutionum* 3.7.7: "Epicurus summum bonum in voluptate animo esse versatur" (Epicurus thinks that the highest good is in the pleasure of the mind; Lactantius, *Divine Institute*, trans. MacDonald, 176–77). Cf. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.84: "nihil bonum nisi voluptatem, ut Epicurus" (nothing good but pleasure, as Epicurus maintains; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. Younge, 194). On Lactantius in the Renaissance, see Rutherford, "Lactantius Philosophus?"

11. Presentations of Epicurean philosophy of great importance for the Renaissance are found in the philosophical dialogues of Cicero (*De natura deorum*, *Tusculanae disputationes*, and *Academica*). See Hankins and Palmer, *Recovery of Ancient Philosophy*, 34; Robert, "Epicure." However, Epicurus did believe in a kind of *moral* or *memorial* immortality—the idea that one can live on through the memories and legacies they leave behind after death. Epicurus believed that one could achieve this kind of immortality by living a virtuous and honourable life, and by leaving a positive impact on the world through one's actions and contributions. See Drozdek, "Problem of the Immortality," 51–52.

12. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 1v. See Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 2.5: "Inperfectae vero in homine naturae praecipua solatia, ne deum quidem posse omnia. Namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere, si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitae poenis, nec mortales aeternitate donare aut revocare defunctos nec facere ut qui vixit non vixerit, qui honores gessit non gesserit—nullumque habere in praeterita ius praeterquam oblivionis" (And indeed this constitutes the great comfort in this imperfect state of man, that even the Deity cannot do everything. For he cannot procure death for himself, even if he wished it, which, so numerous are the evils of life, has been granted to man as our chief good. Nor can he make mortals immortal, or recall to life those who are dead; nor can he effect, that he who has once lived shall not have lived, or that he who has enjoyed honours shall not have enjoyed them; nor has he any influence over past events but to cause them to be forgotten; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. Bostock and Riley, 25). See Epstein, *Medieval Discovery of Nature*, 135.

Another source is the passage from Valerius Maximus's *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri IX*. Although this work does not provide a detailed philosophical or theological discussion of the immortality of the soul, it does, according to Houppelande, include several stories and legends that reflect the ancient Roman belief in the continued existence of the soul after death. Houppelande mentions the story about a custom of the Gauls (*gallos*): they will lend money to a man, but the man has to pay the loan back in the underworld. This story leads to the conviction that human souls are immortal.[13] Houppelande underscores the presence of many similar opinions about the mortality of the soul as stated by Sallust about Cato the Elder and highlights that discussing them separately is unnecessary because they are generally known.[14]

Arguments for the immortality of the soul

After the enumeration of views denying the immortality of the soul, Houppelande does not turn to a philosophical critique of these ancient views but instead cites passages from one of the most important works of the Jewish Hellenistic tradition: the *Liber sapientiae Salomonis* (2.1–24, 3.1–2).[15] According to *Liber sapientiae Salomonis* 2.23, God created man as immortal and made him an image of his own proper being, which clearly implies that man's immortality derives from the fact that his soul is an image of the Divine Wisdom. This argument derived from the creation of man in the image of God (*imago dei*) in

13. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 1v–2r. See Valerius Maximus, *Factorvm et dictorvm memorabilivm* 2.6.10: "Horum moenia egresso uetus ille mos Gallorum occurrit, quos memoria proditum est pecunias mutuas y quae iis apud inferos redderentur, dare solitos, quia persuasum habuerint animas hominum inmortales esse. Dicerem stultos, nisi idem bracati sensissent; quod palliatus Pythagoras credidit" (When someone has left the walls of Massilia behind they run into the old custom of the Gauls. Tradition has it that the Gauls will lend you money, but you will have to pay back the loan in the Underworld. They do this because they are convinced that human souls are immortal. I would call them fools, if these men in their breeches did not have the same belief as Pythagoras in his Greek cloak; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, trans. Walker, 59). See also Pomponius Mela, *Description of the World*, trans. Romer, 107.

14. Ramsey, *Sallust's* Bellum Catilinae, 199. Caesar and Cato did not write extensively on the nature of the soul or the question of its immortality, and they did not express a clear belief in its immortality. On Cicero in the Renaissance, see Marsh, "Cicero in the Renaissance."

15. On the *Liber sapientiae Salomonis*, see Weitzman, *Solomon*, 4–5; Chesnutt, "Wisdom of Solomon."

Genesis 1:26 and was widely influential among medieval Christian authors.[16] For Houppelande, the appropriation of wisdom leads to righteousness and immortality (*Liber sapientiae Salomonis* 3.1–4).

The passages from *Liber sapientiae Salomonis* are supported by the wisdom of ancient poets and philosophers who flourished in talents (*in geniis*).[17] The teachings of Hermes Trismegistus that discuss the immortality of the human soul are a seemingly important source, for example. In the dialogue *Asclepius*, Hermes speaks about the immortality of the soul, eternal punishment of evil, and reward of good.[18] According to Henri Busson, Houppelande is a humanist, familiar with the teachings of Hermes Trismegistus, Plato, Seneca, Sallust, and Cicero,[19] and Raymond Marcel suggests that the numerous references to Hermes Trismegistus and Plato indicate Houppelande's familiarity with some of Marsilio Ficino's treatises.[20] The flourish of interest in the rediscovery of ancient sources, principally Platonic philosophy represented by Marsilio Ficino and his circle, significantly contributes to the debate about the nature of the human soul.[21] Before the end of the fifteenth century, the fame of Marsilio Ficino had crossed the Alps and penetrated into the thoughts of intellectuals such as Guillaume Fichet (1433–80) and Robert Gaguin (1433–1501).[22] According to Marcel, Houppelande, together with Symphorien Champier, Amaury Bouchard, and Charles de Bovelles, retained the immortality of the soul as the theme of Ficinian philosophy.[23] Nevertheless, Houppelande does not mention Ficino himself, and the references to Hermes Trismegistus may come

16. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*. It is found almost everywhere in the long tradition of discussions on immortality among thinkers beginning from the patristic period. See William of Auvergne, *The Soul*, trans. Teske, 485–93.

17. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 2r.

18. *Hermetica*, trans. Copenhaver, 84.

19. Busson, *Le Rationalisme*, 167: "Visiblement, c'est un humaniste: non seulement, il connaît Hermès Trismégiste et Platon que les travaux de l'école de Florence venaient de renouveler, mais il a lu Sénèque, Salluste, Cicéron." Plotinus is not mentioned in the treatise. See Joukovsky, *Le regard intérieur*, 19.

20. Marcel, "Introduction," 95; Rice, "Humanist Idea"; Stevens, "Re-Evaluation"; Lebègue, "Christian Interpretations"; Gougenheim, "L'Humanisme."

21. Blum, "Immortality of the Soul." For a general overview, see the older but still valuable work by Di Napoli, *L'immortalità*, esp. chps. 1 and 2.

22. On Germain de Ganay as an admirer of Ficino, see Collard, *Un historien*, 57; Toussaint, "L'influence de Ficin."

23. Marcel, "Introduction," 95.

from many medieval sources (e.g., Vincent of Beauvais, Thomas Bradwardine, Alexander of Hales, Roger Bacon, and Robert Grosseteste).[24]

Houppelande's references to the *Asclepius* dialogue and especially to Flavius Josephus (*Judean War*) indicate that for him the necessity of divine justice after death is a guarantee of the truth about the immortality of the soul.[25] Therefore, if the Pharisees and Essenes support the idea of God's judgment or God's punishment after death, then they must assume that the human soul is immortal. Several ancient authors, including Varro, Seneca the Younger, Sallust, Cicero, Boethius, and Macrobius, also transmit stories on honour, fame, and heroic sacrifice for one's country.[26] A deep appreciation for those who dedicated their lives to serving their country suggests a belief in their immortality.[27] In sum, the rich fount of sages and philosophers from various non-Christian traditions (ranging from Egyptian thinkers to Muhammad) would seem to be sufficient evidence of human immortality.[28]

However, the philosophical approach to the issue seems to be more complicated than the approach based on tradition. As Houppelande is aware of the doubts expressed by John Duns Scotus, he pays close attention to Aristotle's *pro et contra* arguments to demonstrate Aristotle's position on the immortality of the human soul. The first argument comes from the soul/sailor analogy (soul/body = sailor/ship) in *De anima* 413a8–9, in which Aristotle asks whether the soul is the *entelechy* of the instrumental body in the same way that a sailor is of a ship.[29] Houppelande understands the analogy as Aristotle's attempt to

24. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 2r–2v. Vincent of Beauvais in *Speculum naturale* mentions Hermes Trismegistus and Asclepius among standard authorities like Augustine, Basil, Isidore, and others. Campanelli, "Marsilio Ficino's Portrait"; Moreschini, *Hermes Christianus*, 115.

25. Accoding to Josephus, the Pharisees and the Sadducees represent opposite poles of thought on the immortality of the soul. See Josephus, *Judean War*, trans. Mason, 123–25; Mason, *Flavius Josephus*, 156–57.

26. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 3r.

27. See Cicero, *De republica* 6.13: "omnibus, qui patriam conservaverint, adiuverint, auxerint, certum esse in caelo definitum locum, ubi beati aevo sempiterno fruantur" (for everyone who has saved and served his country and helped it to grow, a sure place is set aside in heaven where he may enjoy a life of eternal bliss; Cicero, *Republic*, trans. Rudd, 83).

28. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 4r.

29. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 4v. See Tracy, "Soul/Boatman"; "Soul as Boatman"; Mittelmann, "Neoplatonic Sailors"; Bos, *Soul*, 229.

distinguish between the parts of the soul, emphasizing the rational soul as separable and perpetual. A man compared with "a sailor in his ship" can arrive at perfect intellectuality, separate from corporeality. Houppelande underlines this in another passage from *De anima* (424a28), where Aristotle fundamentally differentiates between sense and intellect.[30] An excessive or excellent sense object is destructive of the sense faculty (that is, an intense sensory object destroys sensation); by contrast, an excessive intelligible object is neither destructive nor capable of corrupting the rational faculty.[31] The rational faculty is not weakened in function; thus, the intellect is imperishable in its being.[32]

The separability and divinity of the intellect is supported by passages from Aristotle's *De animalibus*, *Metaphysica*, *De morte et uita*, *Posteriorum*, and *Ethica Nicomachea*.[33] However, Houppelande also lists seven passages to provide *contra* arguments against the immortality of the soul. According to Houppelande, Aristotle seems to be against the immortality of the soul in parts of the *Predicamenta*, *De longitudine et brevitate vitae*, *De anima*, *Ethica Nicomachea*, *Metaphysica*, *De Caelo* (book 1), and *Physica* (book 5).[34] Arguments

30. See Aristotle, *De anima*, trans. Hamlyn and Shields, 43.

31. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 4v.

32. The maxim *excellens sensibile corrumpit sensum* or *sensibilium excellentia corrumpit sensum* became popular amongs the scholastics. See Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis*, 182. Duns Scotus (*Opera omnia*, 44) summarized Aristotle's argument in the following words: "Item III *De anima* ponitur differentia inter sensum et intellectum, quod excellens sensibile corrumpit sensum, et propter hoc post sensationem talis minus sentit minus sensibile; non sic de intellectu. Imo postquam intellexerit summa intelligibilia, magis intelligit inferiora; ergo intellectus non debilitatur in operando, et tunc ultra sequitur, quod sit incorruptibilis in essendo" (Furthermore, in *De anima*, book III, he says that the senses differ from the intellect, because something that stimulates the sense excessively tends to impair it so that afterwards even an object that does not stimulate the sense so strongly is less capable of being perceived, whereas such is not the case with the intellect. Quite the contrary, once the highest intelligibles have been grasped what is less intelligible becomes even better known. The intellect consequently is not weakened in function, and from this it follows further, the intellect is imperishable in its being; Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Wolter, 145).

33. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 4v–5r. In his *De anima* (413a23), Aristotle defines the soul as an *entelechy* and form of the body, dividing it into nutritive, sensitive, and rational faculties. But he also declares that only the intellect was unmixed, independent of the body and immortal (*De anima* 430a) and determines, moreover, in *De animalium generatione* (736b), that this is what comes in "from outside."

34. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 5r–5v. Aristotle, *Predicamenta* 2a35–2b7; *De longitudine et brevitate vitae* 465a26–32; *De anima* 430a23–26; *Ethica Nicomachea* 1110a26–29; *Metaphysica*

could come from various sources, the most likely author being Duns Scotus, but similar lists of arguments are also found in John Hennon's question *Utrum anima rationalis sit immortalis*.[35]

In general, Aristotle speaks differently in various places, and principles that are supportive of immortality, as well as those that are straightforwardly against it, can be found in his treatises. Following Duns Scotus (the *doctor subtilis*), Houppelande is convinced that Aristotle was constantly doubtful of the immortality of the soul until the end of his life.[36] Duns Scotus's statement that the immortality of the human soul cannot be demonstrated found sympathy and respect with Houppelande. He explicitly mentions Duns Scotus, who, in his commentary on Lombard's *Libri Quattuor Sententiarum*, speaks about Aristotle's hesitancy and doubts on the question of the immortality of the soul and formulates various arguments to show that the immortality of the soul contradicts the principles of Aristotle's philosophy.[37] Notably, Duns Scotus never doubted that the soul is immortal and that it can survive without the human body; however, he is not optimistic about the possibility of proving the soul's immortality. He holds that we cannot know naturally, and *a fortiori* cannot demonstrate, that the human soul is immortal, maintaining that human reason is incapable of solving problems such as the immortality of the soul.

Despite Duns Scotus's strong arguments, Houppelande is inclined towards Cardinal Bessarion's stance, which is that Aristotle does not significantly differ on the question of immortality from his master Plato.[38] Houppelande is familiar with Bessarion's *In calumniatorem Platonis* as the main source of his affinity for Plato.[39] His sympathy with Plato is also supported by reading Cicero, whose philosophical works offered many elements that attracted Renaissance

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1041b12; *De Caelo* 279b31–32, 282b4; *Physica* 203b9.

35. Duns Scotus, *Opera omnia*, 34–59; *Philosophical Writing*, 135–62. See also Pluta, "John Hennon's Question."

36. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 5v.

37. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 5v. See also Duns Scotus, *Opera omnia*, 28–29; Bridges, "Problem of the Demonstrability"; Bettoni, *Duns Scotus*, 86–92; Sondag, *Duns Scot*, 201–4.

38. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 5v.

39. Simone, "Il pensiero," 11.

thinkers. In Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes*, Aristotle is highly appreciated for his genius and industry, but Plato is rated higher than his talented pupil.[40]

Houppelande, as a Christian priest, is against the transmigration of the soul (Plato, Porphyry) and any form of bizarre incarnation of the human soul into birds or monkeys, to mention a passage from Saint Ambrose's *De bono mortis*.[41] However, he thinks highly of Plato's philosophy and believes that Plato "had the best opinion" about the fate of people who live a just and holy life. Houppelande mentions Virgil's praise for Plato and describes the life of a wise man who differs from others by voluntarily returning to the difficult and mortal world of people (Plato, *Republic* 514a–521d).[42] Unlike Plato and Porphyry, Houppelande emphasizes that believing the apostles, saints, and prophets who wrote about the resurrection of the body or the return of souls to their respective bodies is a more sincere act. Immortality requires resurrection; otherwise, the soul that is separated from the body will remain forever in a deprived state.[43]

Houppelande does not hide the complexity of the issue of resurrection and immortality of the soul, for which finding rational evidence or explanation using natural philosophy is difficult. Although the immortality of the rational soul cannot be demonstrated by evident reason, probable reasons (*persuasiones probabiles*) may persuade both the believers and the unfaithful. Houppelande

40. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 5v. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 1.22: "Aristoteles, longe omnibus—Platonem semper excipio—praestans et ingenio et diligentia, cum quattuor nota illa genera principiorum esset complexus, e quibus omnia orerentur, quintam quandam naturam censet esse, e qua sit mens; cogitare enim et providere et discere et docere et invenire aliquid et tam multa alia meminisse, amare odisse, cupere timere, angi laetari, haec et similia eorum in horum quattuor generum inesse nullo putat; quintum genus adhibet vacans nomine et sic ipsum animum ἐνδελέχειαν appellat novo nomine quasi quandam continuatam motionem et perennem" (Aristotle, far surpassing all others, Plato always excepted, in intellect and industry, accepted the famous four elements from which everything cornes to be, and supposed that a fifth nature exists from which mind cornes. Thought and foresight, learning and teaching, discovery of something and memory of many other things, and love and hatred, desire and fear, painful emotions and joy—these and things like them he thinks belong within none of those four elements. He adduces a fifth nameless element and so calls the soul itself by a new name, *endelecheia*, that is, a sort of continual and perpetual movement; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. Douglas, 33).

41. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 8v–10r; Ambrose, "Death as a Good."

42. Pearson, "Virgil's 'Divine Vision.'"

43. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 9v–10r.

follows three probable reasons from Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes*.[44] The first one comes from the natural and innate knowledge of all men from ancient times. The second reason is derived from the hopes and expectations of prudent and good men, who heroically sacrificed themselves for their countries.[45] In this respect, Houppelande also refers to Plato's second letter (311c) addressed to Dionysius (Letter 2, 311c) and to Cicero's *Cato Maior de Senectute* (23.82).[46] Cicero is a key source for Houppelande's reflections on the question of immortality, as he provides compelling moral arguments. If the soul is mortal, then death deprives it of the highest good and of all good things, without any hope of reward. Hence, the ensuing question concerns the precise purpose of doing good or sacrificing for one's country if there is no life after death.

The third reason comes from similitude and likeness of human minds to God and affinity with God's nature.[47] Houppelande indicates that the human mind is, due to its excellent intellectual activities, similar to God. The argument is generally presented in the form of the affirmation that man is made in the image of God, and this assertion would be false if indeed men were to be mortal. Houppelande cites quotations from Eusebius's *Praeparatio evangelica* (10.26–30) on Plato, Porphyry, and Moses; from the *Liber sapientiae Salomonis* (2.1–24); and from Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* (1.2).[48] The argument is present from ancient times, reflecting the belief that humans have a divine spark or essence within them, which connects us to the divine and makes us a part of the larger universe. The perfection of the rational soul lies in abstraction from the body. A good example is the body of an old man who lives a moderate life, and whose soul does not fade away but is perfected due to intellectual activity, knowledge, and virtue. Prudence leads a man to wisdom, and virtue leads a man away from concupiscence. A weakening of a body or bodily organs does not signify a weakening of mental abilities; on the contrary, the soul becomes stronger and more virtuous. Houppelande refers again to Aristotle, who states

44. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 22v–23r.

45. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 1.32: "Nemo unquam sine magna spe immortalitatis se pro patria offerret ad mortem" (No one would ever offer himself up to die for his country without a strong hope of immortality; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. Douglas, 39).

46. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 11v–12r.

47. Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 1.66. Cicero also alludes to the possibility that both gods and human souls are composed of Aristotle's hypothetical fifth element.

48. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 13v.

in *De anima* 408b20–22 that if an old man had the eyes of a young boy, then he would see like a young boy, and demonstrates that the powers of any soul are meant to be naturally strong during old age.

Aristotle's example of the old man whose eyes are replaced with those of a young man was a frequent subject in medieval commentaries, and it illustrates that the soul itself is unaffected by old age.[49] A similar note is found in Thomas Aquinas's commentary on *De anima*.[50] Aristotle is supplemented with a quotation from the Gospel of Mark 8:22–24; this passage recounts how Christ healed a blind man's sight and indicates that Christ did not add any strength to the individual soul but only corrected the injury or indisposition of the organ.[51] Houppelande thus attempts to prove immortality by the observation that the soul is not weakened by the weakness of the body; therefore, the soul must not die with the death of the body.

Even though rational arguments are not convincing enough, Houppelande claims that the opinions of the sages, whom Aristotle writes about in *Ethica Nicomachea*, have a certain truth and common opinion (*opinionibus sapientum oportet acquiescere, habent enim fidem quandam*).[52] In history, philosophers following natural reason did not offer any proofs of the immortality by demonstration; instead, they provided effective persuasions and dialectical arguments (*efficatiores persuasiones seu plures rationes dyalectice*).[53] Houppelande, referring to Aristotle's *De caelo* 287b29–34, contends that many opinions in the past were also held without clear evidence simply because they were "mixed and

49. Aristotle maintains that were an aged person to receive eyes, vision would be fully restored, thereby proposing that the soul does not change as the body does. See Polansky, *Aristotle's* De anima, 23.

50. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 14v–15r. Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* 14.18: "Ad decimumoctavum dicendum quod anima non debilitatur debilitato corpore, nec etiam sensitiva; ut patet per id quod philosophus dicit in I de anima, quod si senex accipiat oculum iuvenis, videbit utique sicut et iuvenis. Ex quo manifestum est quod debilitas actionis non accidit propter debilitatem animae, sed organi" (A soul is not weakened when its body is weakened, not even the sensitive soul; this is clear from what the Philosopher says in Book I of the *De Anima* [I, 4, 408b 20], that if an old man were to receive the eye of a young man, he would see just as well as the young man does. From this it is obvious that inadequacy of action does not occur because of the weakness of the soul but that of the organ; Aquinas, *Questions on the Soul*, trans. Robb, 367). Cf. Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 3.2.14; Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 149.

51. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 15r. Cf. William of Auvergne, *Soul*, 27.

52. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 18v.

53. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 19r.

adapted" to the opinions of ordinary people and the ideas of previous philosophers.[54] According to Houppelande, only the meanest few philosophers held that the soul is mortal. In this context, for example, Averroes is characterized as "ambidexter" and "wicked." He is refuted by Houppelande for his uncertain and ambiguous reading of Aristotle and for his doctrine of the unity of the intellect.[55] Houppelande was very well informed about the controversial late medieval readings of Averroes, especially the philosophical account of an immortal intellect that has the power to know all things in a unique and separate intellect.[56]

At the end of his treatise, Houppelande presents, without any commentary, the texts of the Holy Scripture that complement the historical and philosophical views depicted in the first two parts. Houppelande claims that the statements of authorities and a sufficient number of philosophical reasons do not contradict what is written in the Scripture about the immortality of the soul.[57]

Conclusions

To summarize, Houppelande attempted to address the complex issue of the immortality of the soul by combining Christian and ancient sources to strengthen the arguments against "the ungodly and the heretics" (*contra impios et hereticos*), among whom he considered Epicurus and Averroes. The extent to which this premise was Houppelande's reaction to the influence of Latin Averroism or the rediscovery of Epicureanism is a questionable matter. For this reason, his work can be considered apologetic, defending the dogma through rich

54. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fols. 19v–20r.

55. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 6r. See Corti, *Dante*, 81–82: "Il vocabolo 'epicureo' è applicabile aqualsiasi posizione filosofica che metta in dubbio l'immortalità dell'anima e, a maggior ragione, all'aristotelismo radicale che ha fra i suoi temi fondamentali quello, averroista in senso stretto, dell'esistenza di un intelletto universale e 'perpetuo'" (The word "Epicurean" is applicable to any philosophical position that questions the immortality of the soul and, even more so, to radical Aristotelianism, which has among its fundamental themes that of, Averroist in the strict sense, the existence of a universal and perpetual intellect; my translation). See also Baranński, "Ethics of Ignorance."

56. Averroes's Aristotle holds that the immortal part of the soul (the agent intellect) is the same in all of us. It is not personal. See Des Chene, *Life's Form*, 1. See also Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 321–39; Mohammed, *Averroes' Doctrine.*

57. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 22v.

references to the ancient and non-Christian world, which was made accessible to him by the rising Platonic Renaissance environment. At the same time, Houppelande follows the traditional scholastic debates on immortality, which were especially influenced by various interpretations of Aristotle's *De anima*. Therefore, he pays considerable attention to Aristotle's problematic statements about immortality, which he primarily finds in the work of Duns Scotus.

Houppelande cannot deny the difficulty of such a complex question as the immortality of the human soul. As a Christian theologian, he does not deny the immortality of the soul, but, as he himself says, finding a truth that would be more obscure and more challenging to prove by human powers and principles of natural reason would be difficult. Given the limits of our rational understanding, we cannot expect demonstrative reasons. The excessive complexity of the question leads to doubt; therefore, faith is more effective than reason. If Houppelande cannot prove and demonstrate this dogma in an effective and obvious manner, then he can at least provide probable reasons (*persuasiones seu rationes*) for its validity, both for Christians and infidels.[58]

I believe that the rational approach to the question of immortality, which Busson and Simone write about, meant for Houppelande the determination of the limits of human reason and simultaneously strengthened his faith and conviction about the immortality of the soul. Houppelande integrated into the space of scholastic thinking the Renaissance spirit of openness towards the ancient heritage. I hope that this short but remarkably rich work, which lies at the juncture of scholastic medieval thought and humanistic philosophy, will soon see a critical edition and will draw the greater attention of connoisseurs of medieval and Renaissance philosophy.

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58. Houppelande, *De immortalitate animae*, fol. 22v.

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