

AVERROISM

It is often taken for granted that the emancipation of human reason coupled with the negation of immortality first took form in the Western World during the period of the Renaissance. The deeper principles of the Renaissance are not of the Renaissance, which is characterized more by particular applications of these principles than by discovery. These principles are already fully articulate in the medieval world, and the full realization of their disastrous import was the occasion of St. Thomas' most vehement polemic writing : De Aeternitate Mundi contra Murmurantes and De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas Parisienses.

These writings were directed against the Parisian Averroists and their leader, Siger de Brabant, and were followed by the condemnation of the doctrines of his school by the Bishop of Paris in 1270. That these doctrines were well entrenched is seen by the fact of an even more severe condemnation in 1277 resulting in the flight of Siger and his ultimate interment in Rome.

That St. Thomas' attack upon them was extremely foresighted is seen in Ernst Cassirer's attribution of Averroism as a fundamental influence in the thought of Renaissance philosophers. "We know the strong influence that Averroism exerted on scholastic thought,

and we know how it gradually conquered the entire scientific world. In 1270 Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, summoned the faculty of masters of theology to condemn thirteen Averroistic theses. But not all the prohibitions following each other in quick succession were able to prevent the spread of Averroism in the universities. ... Averroism ends by appearing, in the form expressed in the School of Padua, as "science" pure and simple. The reason for this lies less in its empirical content of knowledge than in its conceptual form and in the basic theoretical conviction it stood for. For only within the framework of Averroism could there be, under the conditions of medieval culture, anything like an "autonomous" physics, an interpretation of natural phenomena independent of theological presuppositions. It was this function that gave Averroism its meaning, even within the sphere of Christian culture, and secured its exceptional position, despite all the keen criticism directed against it from the side of the real defenders of the Christian faith like Thomas Aquinas. Within its own field Averroism was invincible, as long as it offered the only possibility and the only assurance of a scientific physics." (Ernst Cassirer, Pico della Mirandola, pp. 135-136) In subsequent pages of his essay, Cassirer is at pains to show how Pico remained faithful to Averroism. Thus, according to Cassirer, while following the following the Mosie story of creation in the Heptaplus, and elsewhere the neo-Platonic tradition and the category of emanation, "he always returned to the support of the

Arabian philosophy, and considered it indispensable for the theoretical structure of knowledge." (ibid. p. 136) Elsewhere he emphasizes the Averroistic influence upon such Renaissance Platonists such as Marsilio Ficino and their materialistic counterparts such as Pomponazzi. (Individuum und Cosmos, p. 135) A final confirmation of the pervading influence of Averroism upon the Renaissance is indicated in its renewed condemnation by the Fourth Council of the Lateran. (Denzinger, 738)

The object of St. Thomas in writing the two polemical works above-mentioned was precisely to show the nature of this new "autonomous" physics. According to Cassirer, there is nothing in the principles of Averroism that could raise any problem for the philosophic reason. "The problem only arises and can only continue to exist, if reason makes no use of its basic right, the right of independent critical examination, but surrenders itself to dogma. Within the limits prescribed by the medieval picture of the world, Averroism is the attempt at a rational explanation of nature." (Pico della Mirandola, p. 135) The true significance of and fundamental assumption of what Cassirer is pleased to call "the basic right of independent critical examination" in Averroism is laid bare by St. Thomas and it goes far deeper and has a far greater extension than even Cassirer suspected. To him it is a conception "prescribed by the limits of the medieval picture." Its influence extended through

to the Renaissance but was destined in Cassirer's mind to be superseded by a new conception eliminating the so-called "Subjekt-Objekt" conflict. St. Thomas saw its roots extending back to the primordial revolt of man and its off-shoots becoming a nesting place for a revolt extending indefinitely beyond his own time. He saw farther than Cassirer, although the latter arrived on the scene nine hundred years later.

Averroism, and more particularly Latin Averroism, is only one facet of a more comprehensive drive for the emancipation of mind. In fighting Siger de Brabant, the contemporary leader of the Parisian Averroists, was at once meeting the challenge of modern thought and continuing the work of the Founder of his Order. One of the main occupations of St. Dominic's life was his preaching against the Manichean doctrines of the Albigenses and the Cathari. One of the most significant positions of the Manichaeans was that the electi, those who submitted themselves to all the demands of their religion, were themselves redeemers of their own person. In this the Manichaeans concur with and rejoin Pelagianism.

What were these fundamental tendencies in Parisian Averroism which so aroused the apprehension of St. Thomas and provoked the stern language of his polemics? They are found in the propositions condemned in 1270, themselves contained principally in Siger de Brabant's work, De Anima Intellectiva. They may be resumed under

four headings: Denial of divine Providence in the order of a contingency; eternity of the world; numerical unity of the human intellect; denial of free will. A further elaboration of their contents brings to light the following doctrines: God knows nothing outside Himself. God does not know singulars. Human actions are not subject to divine Providence. The world is eternal. There was no first man. There is numerically only one intelligence for all men. It is false or improper to say that it is man who understands. The soul which is the form of man as such is destroyed by death. God cannot give immortality or incorruptibility to a thing which is corruptible and mortal. The separated soul after death cannot suffer by corporeal fire. All that takes place in the world is subject to the influence of the heavenly bodies. The will of man wishes or chooses under the empire of necessity. Free will is a passive not an active power, and is necessarily moved by its desires. (cf. Mandonnet, Siger de Brabant, Louvain, 1911, p.112)

All these notions can be derived from the notion of the intellect in Averroistic doctrine. It is of such a nature that it supersedes God and assumes the individual responsibility of man. This doctrine is contained in the treaty De Necessitate et Contingentia Causarum. The first cause produces of itself, immediately and necessarily, the first intelligence, which is thus coeternal with it. It is the sole immediate effect of the first cause. The first cause also produces the separated intelligences, the celestial spheres and

their movements, and all that is not subject to generation. This is also produced necessarily but in a certain order. Thus the production of the world and its coexistence with the first cause are necessary and eternal. God produces the world by necessity of nature, not by his knowledge and will, as in Christian doctrine. (Manifestum est autem quod Deus per intellectum suum causat res, cum suum esse sit suum intelligere. Unde necesse est quod sua scientia sit causa rerum, secundum quod habet voluntatem conjunctam. S.T. I, q. 14, a. 8) Furthermore, once God has produced the world, he has no further control over it, since the first cause produces its effects through intermediary causes such as the celestial bodies. The effect of these causes can be impeded and sometimes is. Thus contingency reigns in the world and the only necessity in the world is a necessity which is such only provided that it is not impeded. (cf. Mandonnet, op. cit., pp. 163-164)

God has with the world only a minimum connection. Once he has given it being, it is independent of Him, as eternal and necessary as He is. The creatures become God since they are independent of God. They are subject to no laws since there is no necessity other than the necessity of the world's being. Man is not even created by God, since man can only be produced through generation. (cf. ibid. p. 169) Truth is subject to man, since the universal cannot exist without the singular. Thus the statement : Man is a rational animal, can be true only if man exists. (ibid., pp. 117, 151)

At first sight, the Averroistic strife for the emancipation of man seems to be just the opposite of the emancipation and self-redemption of man, since its teaching of the numerical unity of the human intellect involves the denial of personal immortality and personal responsibility. But, as will be seen, this was merely a logical and wholly reasonable detour during which momentum would be gathered for an ever more bold and open self-assertion. How, then, do the Averroistic positions attacked by St. Thomas contribute to the modern idea of the emancipation of man, and, more particularly, how does the denial of personal immortality function in this emancipation ?

Averroism, at least Latin Averroism, presents a paradox at every step. To say, for instance, that it stands for freedom and autonomy in philosophy is an over-simplification of the question. The natural reason of the Averroists is not at all the natural reason St. Thomas distinguishes from faith, as Cassirer would lead us to believe, and as the Averroists themselves would have us believe. The Averroistic conflict between reason and authority is actually a conflict between the authority of human reason and the authority of supernatural faith. The Averroist's authority of human reason is that of Aristotle, and they argue from Aristotle for their positions concerning the unity of the human intellect and the eternity of the world. It is from human authority that they argue for the absolute

independence of human reason. A few citations from Averroes will suffice to make evident that Aristotle's authority is for the Averroists synonymous with the absolute independence of human reason. Thus his genius is vested with an absolute and inerrant quality.

"Credo enim quod iste homo fuerit regula in natura, et exemplar, quod natura invenit ad demonstrandum ultimam perfectionem in humanis. (De Anima, III, cap. 11, Averrois Opera, Venetiis, 1550, t. VII, fol. 110 v) Aristotelis doctrina est summa veritas, quoniam eius intellectus fuit finis humani intellectus, quare bene dicitur quod fuit creatus et datus nobis divina Providentia, ut sciremus quidquid potest sciri. (op. cit., De Anima III, quoted by Uberweg-Heinze, Grundriss der Gesch. d. Philos., 11, 1908, p. 251) Laudamus Deum qui separavit hunc virum ab aliis in perfectione, appropriavit ei ultimam dignitatem humanam, quam non omnis homo potest, in quacunque aetate, attingere. (op. cit., De generatione animalium, I, cap. XX, t. VII, fol. 195 v) Composuit alios libros in hac arte (physica), et in logica et metaphysica; et ipse invenit et complevit has tres artes (that is, the totality of science in the Aristotelico-Averroist classification). Invenit, quia quidquid invenitur scriptum ab antiquis in hac scientia, non est dignum quod sit pars artis huius, nec ambiguitas etenim, nedum quod principia essent. Complevit, quia nullus eorum, qui secuti sunt eum usque ad hoc tempus, quod est mille et quingentorum annorum, nihil addidit, nec invenit in eius verbis errorem alicuius quantitatis. Et talem virtutem esse in individuo

uno miraculosum, et extraneum extitit. Et haec dispositio, cum in uno homine reperitur, dignus est esse divinus magis quam humanus.

(op. cit., Physica, Proemium, t. IV, fol. 2 v) Et per hanc virtutem divinam, inventam in ipso, fuit ipse inventor scientiae, et complens seu perficiens eam, et hoc raro invenitur in artibus, quaecumque ars fuerit, maxime in hac arte magna. Sed diximus quod ipse fuit inventor et complens, nam dicta aliorum Antiquorum de his rebus non sunt digna ut sint dubitationes in his rebus, et a fortiori ut sint principia.)

(op. cit., Meteorologic. III, summa secunda, cap. 11, ad finem, t. VI, fol. 80) The foregoing citations have been taken from Mandonnet, op. cit. pp. 153-154)

This servile submission to a human authority in matters of natural reason, this rational dogmatism, is extremely significant, both from the point of view of amanoipation and from the polemic point of view. So long as "rerum veritas" is the norm, reason itself is independent of any human authority, and we cannot argue scientifically for the truth from any philosopher no matter how great. But when reason is centered in authority, then reason may claim, in some definite matter, freedom to assert what is or is not, even before it has discovered the true reason for the assertion. Hence, even in the face of a given revealed truth, we would claim the right to hold a contradictory opinion. Thus one is confronted with an absolute right, prior to reason, that is, prior to strictly scientific evidence for the position one might hold. Thus man has to give no other reason

for his positions than this right.

St. Thomas' concept of the freedom of natural reason is wholly opposed to this authoritarianism. A conflict between faith and reason can arise only in the realm of opinion, as distinct from science. Reason must reject its positions only when they are but opinions. This primacy of reason in matters of natural science on the one hand, and the Averroist's primacy of the authority of human reason in the person of Aristotle on the other, explains the difficulty St. Thomas had to cope with and of which one is vividly aware in every page of the De Unitate Intellectus.

One feels that even when St. Thomas shows that the Averroists cannot even invoke the letters of Aristotle in favor of their position, he will fail to impress them. To what St. Thomas calls reason, that reason which is either the "why" of things, or our own reason which is posterior to things and prior to Aristotle, the Averroists substitute the primacy of the letter. St. Thomas supposes that even in reading an author such as Aristotle, reason comes first. The author's positions are to be judged in the light of truth. "Studium philosophiae non est ad hoc quod sciatur quid homines senserint, sed qualiter se habeat veritas rerum." To this is opposed the notion of the authority of the philosopher, and in particular Aristotle, by Averroes. "Quaerendo intentionem philosophorum in hoc, magis quam veritatem, cum philosophiae procedamus." (Mandonnet, op. cit. p. 145)

Hence, in theory, the Averroist prescind from reason as understood by St. Thomas, and any primacy accorded to reason in this sense will be an imposition, a tyranny imposed over and above truth, which lies in the authority of the letter. Logically, then, reason may not be appealed to for the sake of interpreting the letter as to its truth or error. The truth is true a priori, and reason must conform to this truth. What the letter asserts, and what is, are identical. Hence any reason prior to the letter must be wholly subjective. The authority of Aristotle thus frees the Averroist from the "tyranny" of reason, and the use of this reason in the reading of the letter, either to agree with it or to disagree with it, will be interpreted as reading subjective reason into the letter. Whence comes the knowledge of the letter? Necessarily from him who constitutes himself the custodian of the authority of the letter. Whence comes the meaning of the letter? Necessarily from the arbitrary reason of the custodian thus self-constituted. Thus reason and even the reason of Aristotle himself is excluded by the authority of Aristotle, since Aristotle himself is not used in the interpretation of the letter. So much is implied in the supposed power and right of the reason to contradict even supernatural faith which has a necessity, if not based upon human reason, at least consonant with it. In other words, what we would call arbitrariness of interpretation becomes, in the hands of the Averroists, the freedom of reason, the freedom of reason from reason itself. The reason which

contradicts this absolutely independent reason will be called arbitrary. Thus, in the end, the Averroistic freedom of reason will make the latter express what arbitrary reason, the freedom of reason, wants it to express. In the name of freedom from authority, the tyranny of arbitrary reason is imposed, a reason limited by nothing but its own good pleasure, as against the strictures of valid science, and genuine authority which is, if not subject to human reason, at least reasonable.

This arbitrary interpretation of Aristotle in the name of the authority of reason unfettered is further confirmed by what the Averroists actually hold Aristotle to teach concerning the unity, or unicity, of the human intellect, and the truth of a proposition such as : Man is rational. We insist upon the unity of truth, which is the measure of intellect in speculative matters. The divine intellect is the cause of the truth of things and it is one. Our intellect, however, is subject to opinion. For the Averroist, human reason is one and it shines forth so completely in Aristotle that what the letter of Aristotle says becomes the authority for all future thought. Aristotle's letter becomes as the temporal measure for all human learning. Thus, the human intellect becomes prior to the things themselves from which knowledge should come to us, and its unity is substituted for the unity of truth. In making this rapprochement between the divine unity of truth and the unity of the Averroistic intellect, one is only drawing the identical

conclusion that St. Thomas drew in his opusculum, namely, that the Averroistic intellect is not only separated but is God himself.

(De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas Parisienses, ed. Mandonnet, p. 64)

According to the Averroists, that intellect which is the best in man is eternal. Along with the world, it is necessarily co-eternal with God. In this absolutely necessary universe, the separated intellect of man is as secure as God himself. Hence the Averroistic insistence, from the philosophical point of view, on the eternity of the universe. The Thomistic position that, from the viewpoint of philosophy, it is impossible to ascertain whether the world is eternal or not, since this depends upon whether God had freely willed it from all eternity or not, was to the Averroists a blemish both on the being and on the power of the human intellect left to itself. Such uncertainty would mean that, without revealed truth, one cannot determine by oneself the actual condition of what is greatest in man. It is only if the one intellect is both eternal and able to demonstrate its necessity, its eternity, that it can make a complete reditio ad principium to itself as to an absolute self even in the face of God. Whether this intellect is ours in the personal sense or not, the important thing is that it is "in us," and that we can hold up that which is in us as self-possessive in its necessary eternity. The eternity of the world and of the human intellect is thus an emancipation from all contingency, an exaltation

of the self in the uncreated super-self at the expense of God. This emancipation from contingency is thus at the same time an emancipation from the absolutely necessary being that is God. Man cannot raise himself above himself, by himself, without diminishing the divinity itself.

Averroism not only emancipates the intellect and the world as a whole from God by conferring upon them absolute necessity, but it deprives God of the knowledge of singulars and that which is left of contingency in the universe. This too is an emancipation of the world from God. In our necessity, the realm of singulars and contingency is really ours. Divine government does not reach the singulars, nor does it reach human actions. The world of man is thus complete in itself. One is left to wonder why God should be at all. Marxism has nothing to add to this concept, since it postulates that the only necessity in the universe is man-made, the laws of matter being nothing more than contingency itself erected into law. With a certain logic and consequence, it subjects the necessity of man to that contingency of matter, a conclusion already implied in arbitrary, undetermined reason of the Averroists. It seems that only the temporary authority of Aristotle and the temporal authority of the time prevented the "modern spirit" in the Middle Ages from openly eliminating God and boldly asserting the complete independence and self-sufficiency of man.

Since Averroism has been presented as the medieval form

of the seeking for and emancipation of the self, of the exaltation of the absolute dignity of the self, how can such an effort at complete self-possession involve the denial of personal immortality? The coincidence of these two ideas is more logical than first appears. They are a typical illustration of the idea that the exaltation of the self leads ineluctably toward self-destruction, toward intellectual suicide.

Dignity means bonitas per se. The intellectual creature, St. Thomas says, surpasses other creatures both in the perfection of his nature and in the dignity of his end. The intellectual creature surpasses others by the dignity of his end because the rational creature alone by its own operation attains to the last end of the universe, namely by knowing and loving God, whereas other creatures cannot attain to the last end except by a certain participation of His likeness. (III C. G., ch. 111) Hence the true dignity of man comes from his ability to reach this end, and the full achievement of this dignity is accomplished only in the actual attainment of this end.

The Averroistic intellect, however, is entirely self-sufficient. It is not merely incorruptible, it is necessarily eternal. But this very self-sufficiency is accompanied by the destruction of personal immortality. Hence, the exaltation of the first entails the destruction of the latter. Such an attempt is a

true case of the alienation by which Feuerbach explains away God. The one intellect is as a means of escape from any form of subjection to God himself. Whether, in Averroism, the intellect is mine or not is not important. The main point is that there be freedom.

This idea will be pushed to its most logical conclusion in Marxism. So far as my person is concerned, why should not the Averroistic intellect become identified with the necessity of matter, provided that it emancipates my person from God? Why not submit my own actions to the necessity of indetermination, why not subject myself to the indignity of irresponsibility, provided that this frees me from the divine law?

St. Thomas, therefore, in his *Opusculum* attacks the Averroists on the two-fold score of both misinterpreting the letter of Aristotle and of abusing reason itself. The first refutation is completed by the second. For while it is conceivable that a person could honestly misinterpret the letter of Aristotle in an erroneous way and unintentionally contradict the truth, if this interpretation is shown to militate against obvious reason, it is necessarily a deliberate effort to conceal and establish a purely arbitrary interpretation under the authority of an author. The Averroists fully recognized St. Thomas and St. Albert the Great as their Nemesis, since Siger in his writings pays them the unheard-of compliment in medieval writing of naming his two contemporaries explicitly:

Praecipui viri in philosophia, Albertus et Thomas. On what grounds does he attack them? Not on the grounds of reasoning incorrectly, but on the grounds of misinterpreting Aristotle: Isti viri deficiunt ab intentione Philosophi, nec intentum determinant. (Mandonnet, Siger de Brabant, p. 174) In other words, they are accused, not of reasoning incorrectly, but of violating the authority of the letter of Aristotle, which, as interpreted by the Averroists, assumes a truth of its own independent of rational truth or supernatural truth. Quaerendo intentionem philosophorum in hoc, magis quam veritatem, cum philosophice procedamus. (Mandonnet, op. cit. p. 145) That this Averroistically interpreted letter of Aristotle is the norm of all truth is evident from the previously cited words of Averroes.

Thus St. Thomas, in demonstrating that the Averroists pervert the sense of Aristotle, does not attribute to them an honest error, as he does in refuting other authors, but accuses them of deliberate and therefore arbitrary misinterpretation. Thus, after showing that the Averroistic interpretation, involving as it does the erection of the independent mind into God himself and the denial of personal immortality, is not only against the sense of Aristotle, but also against the interpretation of other commentators as equally qualified as Averroes, such as Themistius, Theophrastus, cited by Themistius, and Avicenna and Algazel, concludes: Unde miror ex quibus Peripateticis hunc errorem se assumpsisse gloriantur: nisi

forte quia minus volunt cum ceteris Peripateticis recte sapere,
quam cum Averroes aberrare, qui non tam fuit Peripateticus quam Peri-
pateticae philosophiae deparavator. (Mandonnet, op. cit. p. 50)
Throughout the Opusculum, Averroes is treated to : pervorse exponit.

In refuting the Averroistic interpretation by reason, St. Thomas exposes the manifest absurdities they involve. If the intellect is separated, so also is the will, and morality perishes. Reflecting and making laws becomes vain, and social and civil life is destroyed. (Mandonnet, op. cit. p. 59) Thus those who followed Siger's doctrines could say that if St. Peter was saved, all men were saved and there was no need for any special striving on the part of the individual. Likewise it would be impossible to learn anything from a teacher or from experience, since by the unity of the intellect one would already possess the teacher's knowledge and the separated state of the intellect would dispense with the phantasms of experience. Thus truth becomes independent both of science and experience. The separated intellect becomes God, since all knowledge is one both objectively and numerically. Likewise, since knowledge is a knowledge of species not of things, knowledge is not truly objective, as Kant was later to announce as a great discovery. (ibid. pp. 64-66)

St. Thomas terminates his Opusculum by a famous challenge to the Averroists to come out in the open and refute what he has said

of them. Si quis autem gloriabundus de falsi nominis scientia velit contra haec quae scripsimus aliquid dicere; non loquatur in angulis nec coram pueris, qui nesciunt de causis arduis judicare; sed contra hoc scriptum scribat, si audet : et inveniet non solum me, qui aliorum sum minimus, sed multos alios, qui veritatis sunt cultores, per quos ejus errori resistetur vel ignorantia consulatur. (ibid. p. 69)

That the errors of the Averroists were far from smothered is evident from an attack upon them in a sermon which St. Thomas preached before the University. In it he accuses them of proposing doctrines against the faith and giving the words of Aristotle as justification, without, however, daring to openly admit the implications of the contradiction. Inveniuntur aliqui qui student in philosophia, et dicunt aliqua quae non sunt vera secundum fidem; et cum dicatur eis quod hoc repugnat fidei, dicunt quod Philosophus dicit hoc, sed ipsi non asserunt, imo solum recitant verba Philosophi. The authority of the letter alone must suffice, especially when a clear affirmation would have been extremely dangerous. Aristotle could not be pursued, but a Siger de Brabant could. What does Saint Thomas say of this tactic ? Talis est falsus propheta, sive falsus doctor, quia idem est dubitationem movere et eam non solvere quod eam concedere; quod signatur in Exod. (21 : 35), ubi dicitur quod si aliquis foderit puteum, et aperuerit cisternam et non cooperuerit eam, venit bos vicini sui, et cadat in cisternam, ille qui aperuerit cisternam teneatur ad eius restitutionem. That one of the doctrines attacked was that of immortality is evident from St. Thomas'

citation of it as a source of confusion in pagan philosophy which the Averroists would make coin of to oppose the limpidity of the faith.

Plus scit modo una vetula de his quae ad fidem pertinent, quam quondam omnes philosophi. ...Sed quae vetula est hodie quae non sciat quod anima est immortalis? Multo plus potest fides quam philosophia: unde si philosophia contrariatur fidei, non est acceptanda. (Uccelli P.A., S.Thomae Aquinatis et S. Bonaventurae Balseoregensis Sermones Anecdoti, Mutinae, 1869, p. 71; S. Thomas Opera, ed. Frette, t. XXXII, p.676. Quoted by Mandonnet, Siger de Brabant, p. 109)

The pit opened by the Averroists who proposed the letter of Aristotle as a reason which could without further substantiation oppose faith and natural reason had not been laid open in vain. While Siger did not dare to defend openly its implications, his less cautious followers did it for him. Thus, among the statements condemned by the Papal Legate in 1276 there are the following: Theology is founded on fables. The only wise men in the world are the philosophers. Christianity is an obstacle to science. The only happiness is in this world; death is the end of all. One should not pray. Fornication is not a sin.

This then is what Cassirer calls "an attempt at a rational explanation of nature ... 'science' pure and simple": a reason which does not dare to reason, which seeks to hide behind authority, a reason which denies the very rights of reason. This duplicity is

evident since the Latin Averroists, after concluding that their doctrines are substantiated by reason, promptly assert their readiness to hold the contrary by faith, which is to completely disown the validity of reason, something St. Thomas never did. *Adhuc gravius est quod postmodum dicit: 'Per rationem concludo de necessitate quod intellectus est unus numero; firmiter tamen teneo oppositum per fidem.'* When faith has been supplanted by force, the successors of the Averroists will be equally willing to throw over reason for force. With reason jettisoned in the name of arbitrary authority masquerading as the freedom of reason, that is, freedom to contradict itself, there is nothing left to prevent man from serenely plunging to destruction in the name of emancipation. God and the immortality of the soul are dismissed without regret. The philosopher is then left with the eventually hopeless task of ruling a world he did not make and delighting his soul with the nourishment of worms.

While Siger takes a slavish attitude towards the authority of Aristotle as he sees it through the eyes of Averroes and will even admit manifest absurdities rather than abandon the position to which he has committed himself, St. Thomas maintains a noble independence towards any coercion by philosophical authority not substantiated by reason. While Siger remains stuck in his Averroistic rut, St. Thomas looks ahead enthusiastically to an increasingly richer comprehension and extension of truth laboriously acquired

by man's intellectual labors throughout the centuries. Paulatim humana ingenia processisse videntur ad investigandum rerum originem.

...Licet id quod unus homo potest immittere vel apponere ad cognitionem veritatis suo studio et ingenio sit aliquid parvum per comparationem ad totam considerationem veritatis, tamen illud quod aggregatur ex omnibus coarticulatis, exquisitis et collectis, fit aliquid magnum, ut potest apparere in singulis artibus, quae per diversorum studia et ingenia ad mirabile incrementum pervenerunt. (De Substantiis Separatis and Metaph.II, lect.1. Quoted by Mandonnet, Siger de Brabant, p.146 Compare these enthusiastic words on the solidarity of all men in erecting the greatest possible knowledge of all truth, with the authoritarian rantings and ravings of modern philosophers against all those who timidly suggest any further view of reality than that which they have arbitrarily decreed. What a contrast this makes with the false modesty of those like Descartes, Kant and Hegel, to mention but a few, who have the pretention of creating by themselves all truth and blithely deny and condemn the contributions of their predecessors, as if, to quote St. Thomas, solii sunt homines, et cum eis oritur sapientia. Is this not the epitome of the egotism and subjectivism they denounce, of the arbitrary authority they see everywhere but in themselves? Thus Siger does not hesitate to calmly declare that the philosophers who do not share his ideas belong to an inferior category whose intelligence is to his as that of the brutes is to man. (Mandonnet, op. dit. p.151)

But as St. Paul predicted, the time would come when men "will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned into fables." (II Tim. 4:3,4) Thus, in St. Thomas' time, Averroism, despite repeated condemnation, kept its grip. Cassirer can write: Der Averroismus schien in vierzehnten und fünfzehnten Jahrhundert, trotz aller Angriffe, die er in der klassischen Systemen der Scholastik erfahren hatte, in seinen theoretischen Grundlagen noch unerschüttert zu sein. Lange Zeit bildet er an den italienischen Universitäten die herrschenden Lehre. In dem eigentlichen gelehrten Zentrum der scholastischen Studien, in Padua, hat die Averroistischen Doktrin sich von der ersten Hälfte des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts bis in sechzehnte und siebzehnte Jahrhundert behauptet. (Individuum u. Cosmos p.135)

Thus while men like Ficino and Pomponazzi set out to combat Averroism because of what they considered its affront to the value of the individual, their own stand was already a product of that emancipation of reason and denial of immortality which Averroism involved. Consequently, in the contribution to modern thought attributed to such men as Ficino and Pomponazzi, one can imply the perpetuation of Averroism, that revolt against God and truth in favor of the individual, so prophetically combatted by St. Thomas.

For instance, in Ficino there is that separation of the intellect from the body, that possession of pure knowledge without phantasms which is proper to Averroism, and which leads, as St. Thomas foresaw, to the identification of the human intellect with the divine intellect, as well as to the destruction of the universal validity of knowledge.

On the other hand, in Pomponazzi there is that reduction of all forms in man to material forms necessitated by the Averroistic supposition that a partially immaterial form could not inform a material body and the consequent denial of immortality. There is also that constantly pronounced doctrine of the liberals that virtue is its own reward and thereby any future retribution is rendered illusory. (Siger de Brabant, De Anima Intellectiva, quoted by Mandonnet, op.cit. p.134. Pomponazzi, De Immortalitate Animae, p.120)

Chapter V

THE RENAISSANCE

In the words of Engels, the Renaissance "was the greatest revolution that the world had so far experienced." What was the nature of this revolution? "It was the epoch which brought into being the great monarchies in Europe, broke the spiritual dictatorship of the Pope, evoked the revival of Greek antiquity and with it the highest artistic development of the new age, broke through the boundaries of the old world, and for the first time really discovered the world." (op.cit. p. 184) What was the nature of this world that had finally been discovered, this new objective world? It is none other than man himself as the center of the universe, the singular individual as both the subject and object of all one's interests. This point of view is amply borne out in the words of Jacob Burckhardt in Die Kultur der Renaissance: "Im Mittelalter lagen die beiden Seiten des Bewusstseins - - nach der Welt hin und nach den Innern des Menschen selbst - - wie unter einen gemeinsamen Schleier traumend oder halbwach. Der Schleier war gewoben aus Glauben, Kindesbefangenheit und Wahn; durch ihn hindurchgesehen erschienen Welt und Geschichte wundersam gefärbt, der Mensch aber erkannte sich nur als Rasse, Volk, Partei, Korporation, Familie oder sonst in irgendeiner Form des Allgemeinen. In Italien zuerst verweht

dieser Schleier in die Luft; es erwacht eine objektive Betrachtung und Behandlung des Staates und der sämtlichen Dinge dieser Welt überhaupt daneben aber erhebt sich mit voller Macht das Subjektive; der Mensch wird geistiges Individuum und erkennt sich als solches." (p.76) Thus one is confronted with that strange paradox which endures unabated in modern times, namely, that henceforth to look at the world objectively is to look at it from the central point of view of the human individual, that is, subjectively. To look at man as part of some greater scheme, as part of a divinely ordered universe is precisely, in the words of Feuerbach, to look at the world subjectively: "Der Glaube an das Jenseits ist daher der Glaube an die Freiheit der Subjektivität von den Schranken der Natur." (Das Wesen des Christentums, Leipzig, 1883, p. 202)

In the Renaissance, Pelagianism and Averroism find their full expression: the open cult of the individual, of the "Ego" as the prime factor of existence. From the Renaissance dates the exaltation of personal, independent and unfettered excellence. From the Renaissance also dates the gradual self-debasement of man through his efforts to eliminate anything in himself which would imply dependence upon and accountability to a superior being.

The fruit of the greatest thinking of the Greek philosophers on the nature and position of man as clarified and elevated by the greatest Christian theologians of the Middle Ages, which endowed man

with a genuine excellence unparalleled by any outline of his destiny excogitated by the Renaissance philosophers and their successors up to modern times, can be expressed in the simple formula: Secundum hoc ipsum quod est, alterius est. To them, man and all creatures naturally loved the Creator more than themselves and the basis of all their good was the participation in the infinite good of the Creator, a participation opening up a perspective of unlimited God-given excellence for the creature united to his Creator. In the Renaissance, on the other hand, with that perversion of the excellence to which man has been brought by Christianity, one is confronted with the frank expression of that fatal pride, which by its desire for singularity and independence, leads man to divest himself of all that makes him an image and likeness of God. It now becomes a compliment to call a man uomo singulare, uomo unico, and although such expressions can be benignly interpreted, the calamitous consequences of the striving for singularity and uniqueness that they imply gives them already the ring of impending disaster.

Thus the holiness of Christianity which made the excellence of man to consist in the completeness of the identification of his will with the will of God was replaced by the man of the Renaissance with the cult of the free and unfettered will which bowed to none and was intent only upon being true to the conception of the individual's own personal greatness. "...An die Stelle des christlichen Lebensideals, der Heiligkeit, das der historischen

Grösse trat." (Burckhardt, p. 77) Cardanus lays down as a maxim for his life: "Non poenitere ullius rei quam voluntarie effecerim, etiam quae male cessisset." (cf. Burckhardt, note 1122)

The Christian doctrine of immortality, which presupposes that man will be rewarded after death for faithful service and subjection to God in this life, because it implies dependence for one's good upon another and submission to a will other than one's own, is replaced by the pagan notion of immortality wherein a man creates his own undying fame and immortality by the singularity and divine freedom of his deeds which perpetuate his memory among a dazzled and either adoring or terrified populace. Thus Burckhardt speaks of "dieser Heidenhimmel,...in welchem das Ideal der historischen Grösse und des Ruhmens die Ideale des christlichen Lebens in den Schatten stellte." (Op. cit. p. 319) He also quotes how according to Bernardo Pulci's poem on the death of Cosimo the Elder he is received in heaven by Cicero, the Fabii, Fabricius and other defenders of the fatherland. (Op. cit. p. 320)

In order to attain this self-created immortality it is necessary for a man to marshal all his forces to leave a great name for himself, a name based on the magnitude of one's personal power, wherein one sees that striving of the proud to be like God while yet denying Him. Thus we see the rise of the tyrants and the condottieri in Renaissance Italy, the "rugged individualists"

of the Cinquecento century. As Burckhardt aptly puts it: "Der Geist dieser Leute lernt notgedrungen alle seine innere Hilfsquellen lernen, die dauernden wie die des Augenblickes; auch ihr Lebensgenuss wird ein durch geistige Mittel erhöhter und konzentrierter, um einer vielleicht nur kurzen Zeit der Macht und des Einflusses einen größtmöglichen Wert zu verleihen." (op.cit. p.77) "Das passive und kontemplative Christentum mit seiner beständigen Beziehung auf eine jenseitige höhere Welt beherrschte diese Menschen nicht mehr. (op.cit. p. 321)

While the Medicis, the Sforzas, the Malatestas were occupied with leaving their imprint upon history by the impact of their personal power, the effort of other men of the Renaissance concentrated on the expression of their personalities in other fields. Thus one has the flowering of art, by which man imitates in a created way the omnipotent workings of the Creator, introducing into matter the conceptions of the intellect. Undoubtedly many of the works of the age are superbly beautiful, but yet the art of the Renaissance carried within it the seed of its own decline by the latent tendency to consider all expression as the creation of man rather than fundamentally an imitation of nature. Just as modern philosophy has tended towards the unintelligibility and irrationality of matter as being the peculiar mark of man's singularity, so also has modern art, under the impetus that it is man alone who creates independently of the norms of objective subordination.

But deeper than the need for expression of the tyrants and artists was the investigation of the source of this creative outpouring, the Ego, the prelude to that idealist philosophy which in its expression has become the powerful dialectical materialism of today. To a certain extent the exaltation of the ego of the tyrants contributed to the concentration upon the ego of the doctors, since to resist the tyrants was a task of revolutionary proportions leaving as an only alternative for a man, who felt his powers great but insufficient to attain to temporal domination, the exaltation of and satisfaction in the greatness of his own interior self. Thus the tyrants of the Renaissance could be said to have driven the great minds of the day who resented their domination to concentrating their own lofty and impregnable ivory towers within themselves. However this was at most a contributing factor. Undoubtedly the elation at the recognition of the power of the mind to wring forth the secrets of nature and probe the very depths of the universe, a power painstakingly secured and developed by centuries of Christianity, was the prime mover in the focussing of the humanist's attention upon the complex and mysterious beauty of his own interior self. So great is its power that it does not seem presumptuous for the soul by the contemplation of itself to attain to divine knowledge.

Thus Marsilio Ficino, in his Theologia Platonica: De Immortalitate Animarum is able to say: "The entire effort of our soul is to become God. This effort is as natural to man as that of

flying to the birds. For it is inherent in all men, everywhere and always; therefore it does not follow the incidental quality of some man, but the nature of the species itself." (The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino, Paul Oskar Kristeller, New York, 1943, p. 337)

It seems perhaps unfair to say that Ficino's work which was devoted to showing the immortal nature of the soul was one of the first forerunners of the ultimate negation of immortality, yet it is accepted as such by contemporary scholars such as Kristeller. The same fate was to befall Descartes, Spinoza, Berkeley and Kant, whose defense of the immortality of the soul has precisely provided the weapons with which materialist philosophy denies it.

How can this be true? Undoubtedly the root of these disastrous defenses lies in the attempt of man to possess truth, as to possess all things, by himself alone. The philosophy of Ficino presupposes man's ability to arrive at the greatest truths by the power of his naked intellect without any recourse to the humbling and toilsome elaboration of truth from rigid objective reality. Man is the lowest of the intellectual creatures, his intellect is in pure potency to truth, which must first come from abstraction of the data of the senses. This is humiliating for man, since it implies that he does not possess the knowledge of all things, that he cannot create it within himself, but must humbly elaborate it from the contemplation of objective reality. To wish to possess truth immediately within oneself is to fall prey to that pride

which consists of a creature composed of body and soul aspiring by his own power to attain the perfection of the angels.

What are the consequences of such an endeavor? Man cannot make the divine. If he wants only the divinity he can make, he shall have nothing. As always the result is that man, in seeking an inordinate excellence loses the very excellence which is his by nature. Thus Ficino, by resorting solely to unsubjected internal experience laid the groundwork for the loss of that objective truth which alone can raise man's mind to the divine things to which he aspires. Kristeller defines this internal experience as "a heightened state of mind, experienced independently of and even in opposition to all outward events, bearing in itself its own certainty and having in turn an influence on the form and interpretation of all our other experiences." (op.cit. p.206) Once this has been accepted, one can deny all but one's inner consciousness and this is what is quite logically done. Thus Kristeller disposes of God and the Soul in Ficino's philosophy in the following words: "Hence, having begun this analysis with the fact that the concepts of Soul and God are the two foci of Ficino's metaphysics, we can now understand its basic premises, those two concepts are nothing but the subject and object of contemplation transformed into substances: in other words, the two aspects of inner or spiritual consciousness, developed and made independent." (op.cit. p.350)

It is to be noted that although Ficino makes preponderant use of the argument of the natural appetite of the soul for eternal and immutable things as a proof of its own immortality by affinity, as in the following: "The Soul of man will always exist, because it strives toward eternal things," (op.cit. p.330), this is not to be confused with the utilization of the axiom "Naturale desiderium non est vanum," in Aristotelio Thomistic philosophy. In the latter, the validity of such a natural desire for immortality is based upon the objective and acquired knowledge of immutable and eternal truths. In the former, it is based rather upon the demand of a free and independent mind to create what it desires. Thus Kristeller interprets Ficino: "For the eternity of the Soul is doubtless derived from the eternity of the objects of knowledge; but the existence and immutability of these intelligible objects receives its certainty, as we have seen, from the inner or spiritual ascent of consciousness. The analysis, therefore, accomplishes a cyclical movement as it proceeds first from the subjective experience of consciousness to the establishment of the metaphysical object, and conversely establishes the metaphysical attributes of the subject itself conceived as an objective entity." (op. cit. p. 331) This interpretation is corroborated by Ficino's own words: "The Soul acts by itself when it neither reaches the bodies through the external senses nor recollects the images of bodies through the external sense, but when the pure and incorporeal force of the Soul itself

seeks and finds something incorporeal which is neither a body nor an image of a body, and this action we call pure thought (intelligentia).” (op. cit. p. 219) Thus immortality appears as a consequence of the power of self-possession and self-objectification.

That such a conception of the naked powers of the soul leads directly to the denial of God and objective reality may be seen in all its implication in Feuerbach's Das Wesen des Christentums. Thanks to the mode of thought of which Ficino is accepted as one of the first proponents, it is possible for Feuerbach to consider both immortality and God as mere alienations of the subjective self. "Der Glaube an das Jenseits ist daher der Glaube an die Freiheit der Subjektivität von den Schranken der Natur, -- also der Glaube an die Ewigkeit und Unendlichkeit der Persönlichkeit, und zwar nicht in ihrem Gattungsbegriff, der sich in immer neuen Individuen entfaltet, sondern dieser bereits existierenden Individuen -- folglich der Glaube des Menschen an sich selbst." (op. cit. p. 262) This cannot be considered purely and simply as a perversion of idealistic thought as propounded by Ficino, but rather as a justifiable conclusion once the premises are granted. Far from scoffing at such an attitude, the modern proponents of Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach and Engels commend it as a great contribution to the advancement of mankind, although one not fully realized by its author in all its implications. It would also appear difficult to impugn the devastating correctness of

"Hier berühren sich Anklänge der mittelalterlichen Mystik mit platonischen Lehren und mit eigentümlichen modernen Geiste. Vielleicht reifte hier eine höchste Frucht jener Erkenntnis der Welt und des Menschen um deren willen allein schon die Renaissance von Italien die Führerin unseres Weltalters beißen muss." (p. 321)

However, even during the Renaissance, the very Kraftgefühl which prompted the more intellectual men of the Renaissance to demand immortality as a necessary consequence of their personality, prompted others more attached to "the warm precincts of the cheerful day," to reject it as the more materialistic of the Greeks rejected it, because of the note of dependency and subjection it would imply for them. It would appear ignominious for a strong, domineering man, ruler over his fellows and served by all the pleasures of the senses, to have to face an envisaged future as a bloodless, powerless shade, at the mercy of some shadowy ruler of the spirits. On earth he was master of its destiny. He would go to death with a laugh on his lips, but that exit was to be the end. The prospect of an eternity in which the uomo singolare was to be the helpless prey of some other more powerful than he was to be eliminated. Such a capitulation was in violent contradiction to the vaunted principle of honor which guided the strong man of the Renaissance and whereby in all things man must be true to his own exalted opinion of his personal worth and dignity and which lent

éclat even to licentiousness when undertaken with disregard for aught but the satisfaction of a sublimely intrepid ego.

Consequently it is not astonishing to see the immortality so loftily defended by Ficino attacked by an equally learned doctor such as Pomponazzi with a formidable array of erudition. Although the Averroistic doctrines concerning the unity of the intellect and consequent denial of the immortality of the individual soul had led to a doctrinal decree of the Lateran Council of 1512, Pomponazzi produced his De Immortalitate Animae in 1516, which while asserting on the last few pages an immortality bestowed by Christ, is devoted in all its previous chapters to showing that man is purely mortal and that aspirations to immortality are not in keeping with his nature, although he prudently refrains from committing himself explicitly for either mortality or immortality, it having also been condemned by the Lateran Council to state that it was at least philosophically true to say man was mortal.

Thus Pomponazzi speaks of the human soul as "suprema et perfectissima materialium formarum, ... quare vere est forma simul incipiens et desinens cum corpore, neque aliquo pacto potest operari vel esse sine eo..." (Ed. 1534, p. 62-63) In keeping with Averroistic doctrine, its very materiality is the principle of the multiplication of souls, which thus leaves the single active intellect intact and inhuman, and man mortal since he is not an intellectual

creature... Man has an intellect but it is only an intellect equivocally, rather than analogically, speaking : "...Unde verius ratio quam intellectus appellari dicitur, non enim ut ita dixerim, intellectus est, sed vestigium et umbra intellectus..." (op. cit. p. 65) Since the human soul is primarily an "actus corporis organici," whatever there is in man which is purely intellectual and separable is not strictly human. (p. 66) Thus the human soul "est facta, sed non per creationem, verum per generationem." (op. cit. p. 67)

In this way man assumes his position not as the lowest of the intellectual creatures, but as the highest of the material creatures. "Solus homo inter mortalia maximas Divinitatis est particeps, comparatusque ceteris mortalibus immortalis dici potest." (p. 69) Thus to make man the most excellent and the most superior of beings in his sphere, it is necessary to eliminate from him the true source of his greatness, his spirituality, and consider him as the most perfect of the animals. The capacity of the intellect to know all material things is due primarily, not to its immateriality, but rather to its pure potentiality : "... Intellectus humanus cum eam proportionem habeat in genere intelligibilium qualem habet materia prima in genere sensibilibus, ut etiam Themistius et Averroes confitentur, movebitur ad suscipiendum omnes species ab aliquo quod non est pars eius, neque ei coniunctum, et hoc dicitur intellectus agens..." (op. cit. pp. 84.-85) Because of the necessary connection

between the sense and the intellect in knowledge, the universal must necessarily terminate in the individual : "... Quod homo cognoscitur in aliquo homine, sed non in Socrate, neque in aliquo singulari, istud quidem in primis videtur esse contra experimentum; quoniam quantumcumque immateriale vel universale cognoscamus semper nobis formamus aliquod idolum in cogitativa in quo illud speculamur..." (op. cit. p. 92) Here one sees a beginning of that science of the individual, a kind of parody of man's striving for unity of knowledge, which science of the individual necessarily concentrates in its downward path on matter, the source of material individuality, and from which it will eventually evolve the sole universality. Formal universality, which would constrain all the individuals of a same species to the same essential laws is thus happily dispensed with.

What is the practical conclusion of all Pomponazzi's learned disquisitions ? It can be summed up in two lines from Pope's Essay on Man :

"Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,

"The proper study of mankind is man."

Man's intellect may be considered under three aspects, the speculative, the operative and the factive. The first is too divine, the last is in common with the animals. The only life of man is the operative

life of civic and domestic virtue. The speculative life of man is an unnatural state. One cannot find happiness in it. "... Talis speculatio non videtur posse facere hominem felicem cum fit valde debilis et obscura..." With studious humility he shows that this is not fitting for man : "Neque mortalis immortalis felicitatem appetere debet, quoniam immortale mortali non convenit..." The true life of man is in ruling and possessing his own soul, free from the humiliating labor of striving for divine things, unconstrained to submitting to the laws of material nature, which presuppose subjection to a power other than the human.

All this insistence upon immortality is merely a device of the lawmakers to control by fear or hope of reward those who are not impelled to act well by the sole consciousness of their personal dignity. "Respicens legislator praevidens viarum ad malum, intendens communi bono, sanxit animam esse immortalem, non curans de veritate, sed tantum de probitate; neque accusandus est politicus, sicut namque medicus multa fingit, ut aegro sanitatem restituat; sic Politicus Apologos format, ut cives rectificent; verum in his Apologis, ut dicit Averroes in prologo 3 phys, propria neque est veritas, neque falsitas..." (p. 124) It is understandable that the Marxists should revere the humanists. How similar the Apologi to the modern Commissars, and how similar this passage in Pomponazzi to a passage in Lenin : " (A communist) must be ready to do anything, to make sacrifices, and if necessary, to use every possible deceit, fraud,

illegal method, silence and concealment of truth" - -for the good of the workers, of course. (Radicalism as an Infantile Disease of Communism, Berlin, 1930, p.42)

The free, unbowed and independent man acts by honor alone. "...Praemium essentielle virtutis est ipsamet virtus quae hominem felicem facit, nihil enim maius natura humana habere potest ipsa virtute, quandoquidem ipsa sola hominem securum facit et remotum ab omni perturbatione; omnia namque in studios consonant, nihil timens, nihil sperans, sed in prosperis et adversis uniformiter se habens, sicut dicitur in fine 1.Ethic. and Platone in Critone dixit, viro bono neque vivo neque defuncto potest aliquod malum contingere..." (op.cit. p.120) This point of view is aptly stated by Rabelais in speaking of his Abbey of Thelame: "En leur reigle n'estoit que ceste clause: Fay ce que voudras. Parce que gens libres, bien nays, bien instruits, conversans en compaignies honnestes, ont par nature ung instinct et aiguillon qui toujours les pousse a faictz vertueux, et retire de vice: lequel ils nommoient honneur." (Gargantua, L.1, ch.57) As Burekhardt notes, the deeds to which this natural "instinct et aiguillon" named honor pushed the society of the Renaissance seem to have been anything but virtuous. However the descendance of this concept to modern time is very evident in the prorning of the natural goodness of man apparent in Rousseau, who deposited his children at the Enfants Trouvés in Paris, but who nevertheless inspired these words in Kant:

"Il fut un temps ou je pensais que la recherche de la vérité constituait la dignité de l'espèce humaine...Rousseau m'a tiré de mon erreur... J'apprends à connaître le véritable prix de l'homme." (Picavet, p.310)

This theme is carried through to modern times in the writings of Engels who was inspired by the De l'Homme of Rousseau's contemporary Helvetius: "Si l'homme tire toute connaissance et tout sentiment du monde sensible, l'important est d'organizer le monde empirique de telle manière que l'homme y 'apprenne par expérience ce qui est vraiment humain, qu'il en reçoive des habitudes humaines et qu'il en tire la connaissance de soi et de sa dignité humaine." (La Philosophie de Feuerbach, A. Levy, Paris, 1904, p.289) It is likewise apparent in the school of Dewey which insists upon the child having freedom to express himself and develop his presumably naturally good personality. It is easily the fundamental thesis of our so-called "progressive" education of today, in which the teacher's role consists in benignly catering to the whims of the students. The consequences in the children thus favored are only too apparent, the anecdote concerning Mr. Dewey's son being a case in point, who, when he has flooded the bathroom, met his father's consternation with the words: "Just don't stand there doing nothing, John. Get a mop." Would all the consequences were so harmless.

In this unrestrained and laudable development of the naturally good personality, which assumes astronomic and cataclysmic proportions when it is translated into whole states blissfully

spreading their personalities over the face of the earth by means of destruction, murder and famine, the thought of immortality must be obliterated because of its external coercion upon the bringing to fruition of the unfettered ego. Thus Pomponazzi concludes his disquisition on the immortality of the soul: "Quare perfectius asserentes animam mortalem melius videntur salvare rationem virtutis quam asserentes ipsam immortalem, spes namque praemii, et poenae timor, videntur servilitatem quandam importare, quae rationi virtutis contrariatur." (op.cit. p.139) Such was the cry of the angel who cast away his divine beatitude: "I shall not serve!" Yet this very suicidal pride is set at the base of the new era ushered in by the Renaissance, this very glorying in man's power to be nothing, the reverend admiration before man's indeterminateness as though the power to destroy oneself were a manifestation of divine omnipotence: "...Grande igitur miraculum quidam dixerunt esse hominem, cum totus mundus fit, et in unamquamque naturam vertibilis, cum sibi data est potestas sequi quancumque proprietatem rerum maluerit." (op.cit. p.140)

This therefore was that achievement of the Renaissance, which by vowing itself to the unconditional cult of man's independence and omnipotence, began the downward path towards the void. In its name immortality had either to be within man's control or denied. Its denial in the Christian sense has, in the words of Burckhardt, "the widest and deepest relations with the whole development of the

modern spirit." (Burckhardt, op.cit., English translation, p.335)

Ultimately the blending of the idealistic and the materialistic point of views will be reached since the very assumption of self-created immortality implicit in the idealists will eventually be transformed into the indinite nothingness of the dialectical materialists.

This triumphant synthesis, this supreme "negation of the negation" whereby the highest in man eventually becomes identified with the lowest in him on the road to ultimate annihilation (at least in the intentional order), will be the unwitting task of the successive philosophers in that magnificent effort which a contemporary author can well entitle: "The Anolition of Man." Thanks to them, a learned professor of Columbia can write today with scholarly assurance: "...The concept of a substantial Soul has lost all significance for us." (Kristeller, op.cit. p.203)