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and then what can be construed out of them. A student first learns the definitions of subject and predicate. Similarly in logic he first learns the elements and their properties, and then constructs syllogisms, etc. Molinaeus observes that one does not know beforehand what it is to speak congruously and to reason correctly. This is the reason many youngsters dislike the study of logic and grammar. In logic and grammar, learning is by construction, a view later advocated by Thomas Hobbes. Franco Pieti Ruggenbeck rejected this idea of a difference in method between logic and grammar and the other arts.

In his *De cognitione Dei*, Molinaeus advocates a version of natural theology. True knowledge of God is the absolute perfection of the mind. Here Molinaeus seems to follow not Aristotle, but John Calvin. Man has an inherent notion of God, as is clear from the testimony of countless people over many centuries. Molinaeus qualifies man’s natural knowledge by saying that the infinite cannot be grasped by the finite. Moreover, man cannot will the good on his own account. Even an atheist can learn how to honour God and to study God’s wisdom in the phenomena of nature and find the way to live his life according to God’s direction. This natural knowledge of God is necessary to restrain sin, but it will always be imperfect and restricted. Man must find a way between the two extremes of neglect and harmful curiosity.

The *Eléments de la philosophie morale* is of an Aristotelian character as well. The structure of the work follows the Nicomachean *Ethica*; and the distinction between the two kinds of virtues of the mind, viz. those of the intellect and those of the will, is conceded. Moral virtue is a disposition of right willing, and is perfected by the study of morals. The will is free and not compelled by fate — interestingly, Molinaeus refers to Vergil. The ultimate goal of morality, however, is the vision of God. Molinaeus shows no sign of Stoicism. His Leiden predecessor Jan van Linschoten, for instance, concentrated on steadfastness (*constans*), which he defined as the virtue of a soldier, i.e. as an immovable strength. According to him, everything outside the soul was irrelevant.

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The occasion of his polemic with Cardinal Bellarmine (1542–1621) was the political situation in England, where the state and Roman Catholic Church were in conflict. The *De monarchia temporalis pontificis Romani* begins with the statement that God can be compared to the sun, which breaks that which resists and spares those who concede. The Pope, however, acts in the opposite way. The result was that, contrary to Queen Elizabeth I of England, neither happy nor rich. The Roman Catholics in England wished to seize power, but God prevented it. Some people advised King James of England to give the Roman Catholics liberty of religion.Fortunately, he saw the danger. In his *De monarchia*, Molinaeus repeatedly says that one must realize that his opponent, Bellarmine, uses the principle that the higher order should command the lower, just as the spiritual should be in command over the corporeal order. Molinaeus replies that this is true not universally, but only within its own sphere. The Pope advises the king as pastor, so within his own sphere, but is subservient to the king as civil subject. State and Church should be separated. Molinaeus advanced three arguments for this thesis: (1) If the Pope were able to liberate the subjects from a king, he would also be able to liberate children from obedience to their parents, or make an order to end a marriage, etc. (2) Nobody may be punished for the guilt of another, e.g. a son for the transgression of his father. (3) Experience teaches us that transfer of power leads to trouble. It is clear that Molinaeus denies any secular power to the Church of Rome.

In his *Anatome Arminianismi*, Molinaeus attacks the thesis of the Arminians, who advocate the doctrine of free will with respect to salvation. He says that a man has a truly free will only if he is born again. Molinaeus takes an orthodox stance. His arguments are based on evidence from the Bible, evidence of the senses, and experience. Whatever is without faith, is sin, says the gentiles. The gentiles are capable only of external works; they do not have an inward correspondence in their heart with God’s law. They cannot fulfill it. If someone cries from his pitiful position, he starts his renewal, however, acts in the opposite way. The result was that, contrary to Queen Elizabeth I of England, neither happy nor rich. The Roman Catholics in England wished to seize power, but God prevented it. Some people advised King James of England to give the Roman Catholics liberty of religion. Fortunately, he saw the danger. 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—, Tractatus theologico-politicus, continens dissertationes aliquid, quibus ostendit libertatem philosophandii non tantum salva pietate et republicae pace posses concedi, sed omandem nisi cum pace republicae ipsaque pietate tolli non posse (Amsterdam, 1670; English trans. in Samuel Shirley (ed.), Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Leiden, 1989).

—, Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata, in Opera posthuma (Amsterdam, 1677; English trans. in Edwin M. Curley (ed.), loc. cit.).

Further Reading

Bunge, Wiep van, Monnikhoff, Deurhoff en Spinoza (Guest-Lectures and Seminar Papers on Spinozism, vol. 5, Rotterdam, 1988).


Other Relevant Works

Deurhoff, Willem, Overnatuurkundige en schriftuurlyke zamenstellingen van de H. Godgeleerden, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1715).

MORTERA, Saul Levi (c. 1596-1660)

Born in Venice to a family of Jews of German origin, Saul Levi Mortera (Morterâ) studied Talmud and rabbinical literature with Leon Modena, one of the most important rabbis of Italy at that time. In his youth, he made the acquaintance of the physician Eliahu Montalto, a New Christian from Portugal who became a Jew. When the latter was invited to Paris in 1612 by Maria de Medicis, to serve as a physician in her court, he took Mortera with him as his personal secretary and teacher of Hebrew and Judaism. They received permission to live openly in France as Jews, although Jews were then forbidden to live in that country.

After Montalto’s death in 1616, Mortera accompanied the late physician’s family, who had him buried in the cemetery of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam in Ouderkerk. Although Mortera was an Ashkenazi Jew, he integrated into the Portuguese community of Amsterdam. He married a young woman from that community named Ester Sores and remained in Amsterdam until the end of his life. He joined the Beth Jacob (House of Jacob) congregation, which was the older of the two Portuguese Jewish congregations in the city. In 1618, when that congregation split, following a controversy between the rabbis, Joseph Pardo, and some of the syndics, led by Dr David Faraz, Mortera supported the latter faction. When Pardo joined the splinter group that established a third congregation known as Beth Israel (House of Israel), Mortera was appointed the rabbi (Haham) of the veteran congregation. Mortera shared his teacher’s reservations about the Kabbalah, thus finding a common language with Faraz, who adopted a rationalistic approach to the Talmudic tradition.

Around 1624, Mortera wrote a treatise on the immortality of the soul in Hebrew. This has not been preserved, but passages from it are mentioned in his extant sermons. Although this treatise was not meant to be a polemical response to the views of Uriel da Costa, but rather a systematic presentation of orthodox Jewish views on the nature and destiny of the soul, it included indirect refutations of the latter’s heresy. In 1635–6, Mortera engaged in a controversy with his colleague, the rabbi and Kabbalist Isaac Aboab da Fonseca. In a