

A HUMANIST CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTELLECT/WILL DEBATE IN THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENCE: ALAMANNO DONATI'S "DE INTELLECTUS VOLUNTATISQUE EXCELLENTIA" (1482-1487)

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A HUMANIST CONTRIBUTION  
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ALAMANNO DONATI'S *DE INTELLECTUS  
VOLUNTATISQUE EXCELLENTIA* (1482-1487)

AMOS EDELHEIT

SUMMARY

The focus of this article is Alamanno Donati's *On the Excellence of Intellect and Will* (1482-1487). This short treatise provides further evidence for the connection between humanist and scholastic thinkers in Renaissance Florence, and their common interest in philosophical and theological questions which were part of the medieval heritage. Because of his untimely death, Donati cannot be regarded as a figure of major importance; nonetheless, his significance lies in the fact that he was able to bridge the gap between a humanist-oriented philosopher such as Marsilio Ficino and contemporary scholastic thinkers such as Vincenzo Bandello and Giorgio Benigno Salviati. This article attempts to show how, according to Donati, self-reflexivity becomes both the condition through which man can make use of his highest powers – the intellect and the will – and the instrument through which he becomes closer to God; thus, it is essential to both theology and ethics.

1. HUMANISTS AND SCHOLASTICS IN THE LIGHT OF THE DEBATE  
CONCERNING THE INTELLECT AND THE WILL

THE intellectual history of the fifteenth century has attracted scholarly attention, for the most part, to a new trend represented by a heterogeneous group of lay intellectuals who were professional men of letters: the humanists, who dedicated themselves to the *studia humanitatis* and the *artes sermonales*, developing new scholarly methods (philological and historical approaches) and using them in their efforts to recover ancient Greek and Latin texts.<sup>1</sup> The humanists were regarded as precursors of modernity,

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<sup>1</sup> For the beginnings of the humanist movement in Italy see R. G. WITT, 'In the Footsteps of the Ancients'. *The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni*, Leiden, Brill, 2000. For some detailed studies of humanists in many different contexts and an appreciation of their achievements see the works of E. GARIN, *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, Bari, Laterza, 1954 (repr. 1973); *L'umanesimo italiano. Filosofia e vita civile nel Rinascimento*, Bari, Laterza, 1952 (repr. 1970); *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano – ricerche e documenti*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1961. See also the works of P.

sharp critics of traditional viewpoints, pioneers of the scientific revolution, rationalism, and secularization in the West.<sup>1</sup> Although it is easy to criticize these historiographical assumptions, I would like to focus in the present study on another issue, still relatively neglected by many scholars of the Renaissance: the humanist approach to traditional questions which were discussed in the scholastic schools. I shall present a case-study concerning one particular question, which concerns the intellect and the will as the two dominant faculties in the human soul. By doing so, I hope to clarify the relations between humanists and scholastics and to offer a contextualized perspective from which to appreciate both groups.

The question concerning the intellect and the will – one of the most disputed subjects by late scholastic thinkers, Thomists and Scotists alike – seems to have received a new impetus during the fifteenth century. It is enough to mention here the debate on this question between Lorenzo de' Medici and Marsilio Ficino, which took place in Careggi in 1474, and the scholastic reaction to this dispute by a leading Dominican theologian, Vincenzo Bandello,<sup>2</sup> or an important treatise by a leading Franciscan thinker,

O. KRISTELLER, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969; *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, ed. M. Mooney, New York, Columbia University Press, 1979; IDEM, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, III, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1993. On the different approaches of Garin and Kristeller, see J. HANKINS, *Two Twentieth-Century Interpreters of Renaissance Humanism: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller*, in *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols., Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003-2004, I, pp. 573-590; and C. S. CELENZA, *The Lost Italian Renaissance. Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins U.P., 2004, chap. 2. And see also *Renaissance Humanism. Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. A. Rabil jr., 3 vols., Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988; *Le filosofie del Rinascimento*, ed. C. Vasoli, Milano, Mondadori, 2002.

<sup>1</sup> For one influential example see P. O. KRISTELLER, *Marsilio Ficino and his Work after Five Hundred Years*, Firenze, Olschki, 1987, p. 16. See also R. G. WITT, *The Humanism of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, in *Kristeller Reconsidered. Essays on his Life and Scholarship*, ed. J. Monfasani, New York, Italica, 2006, pp. 257-267; and P. F. GRENDLER, *Paul Oskar Kristeller On Renaissance Universities*, *ibid.*, pp. 89-130.

<sup>2</sup> See P. O. KRISTELLER, *A Thomist Critique of Marsilio Ficino's Theory of Will and Intellect*, in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, English section II, Jerusalem, American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965, pp. 463-494. This article was the first modern discussion, with a partial edition of Bandello's critique, of this event; for the full text, see P. O. KRISTELLER, *Le thomisme et la pensée italienne de la renaissance*, Paris, Vrin, 1967, pp. 187-278. For Lorenzo's account see L. DE' MEDICI, *L'altercazione*, in IDEM, *Opere*, 2 vols., ed. A. Simioni, Bari, Laterza, 1914, II, pp. 35-65. For Ficino's account see M. FICINO, *Quid est felicitas, quod habet gradus, quod est eterna* [1473?], in IDEM, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols., Torino, Bottega d'Erasmus, 1962, I, pp. 662-665; and see the critical edition of this letter in IDEM, *Lettere I. Epistolarum familiarium liber I*, ed. S. Gentile, Firenze, Olschki, 1990, pp. 201-210. The complicated textual and contextual relations as well as the broader political and intellectual implications of Lorenzo's *L'altercazione* or *De summo bono*, and Ficino's *Epistola de felicitate* and his *Oratio ad Deum theologica* are discussed, with further references, in J. HANKINS, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003-2004, II, pp. 317-350. For a detailed discussion of the

Giorgio Benigno Salviati, which was written during the 1470s and presented the Scotist approach to this question,<sup>1</sup> to make this point clear. The impetus derived both from internal developments in fifteenth-century scholasticism and from the humanist penchant for bringing recently recovered ancient philosophical texts into traditional discussions. This created complicated relations between scholastic and humanist philosophers on issues common to both groups, such as human dignity and the place of man in nature.<sup>2</sup>

Discussions of whether the intellect or the will is the better or superior faculty and of the precise relationship between them, as well as a detailed account of their moral psychology and of voluntary actions, cannot be found in ancient classical sources and are essentially the creation of the medieval philosophical schools. The notion of will was not often explicitly discussed in ancient thought; and it was Augustine who first described the will as an independent faculty of the human soul.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, we should not assign the over-simplified labels of 'intellectualist' and 'voluntarist' to Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, or other scholastic thinkers.<sup>4</sup> If we consider the different formulations of this question by Thomas, in many different contexts, a much more complicated picture emerges. He treats the will as an intellectual appetite (*appetitus intellectivus*) in his commentary on Aristotle's

dispute between Ficino and Bandello see A. EDELHEIT, *Vincenzo Bandello, Marsilio Ficino, and the Intellect/Will Dialectic*, «Rinascimento», XLVI, 2006, pp. 299-344.

<sup>1</sup> See P. Z. C. ŠOJAT O.F.M., *De voluntate hominis eiusque praeceminentia et dominatione in anima secundum Georgium Dragišić (c.1448-1520), studium historico-doctrinale et editio Tractatus: 'Friedericus, De animae regni principe'*, Roma, Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1972, pp. 139-219. For a discussion of this text see A. EDELHEIT, *Human Will, Human Dignity, and Freedom: A Study of Giorgio Benigno Salviati's Early Discussion of the Will, Urbino 1474-1482*, «Vivarium», XLVI, 2008, pp. 82-114.

<sup>2</sup> A famous example is Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's 1486 oration, in which we find a clear connection between human dignity and freedom of choice; see his *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scripti vari*, ed. E. Garin, Firenze, Edizione Nazionale dei Classici del Pensiero italiano, 1942, pp. 104-106. It is important to note that Pico does not use *voluntas* or *libertas* here, but only *arbitrium* and *arbitrarius*. For a general evaluation of the humanists' contribution to this issue, especially that of Coluccio Salutati, see C. TRINKAUS, *In Our Image and Likeness. Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970, 1, pp. 51-102, and his *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1983, pp. 263-273.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, AUGUSTINE, *De trinitate* IV, 21, where he sets out an analogy between three mental qualities of memory, intellect and will and the three persons of the Trinity. See also A. DIHLE, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, chap. 6 for Augustine; and R. SORABJI, *The Concept of the Will From Plato to Maximus the Confessor*, in T. PINK, M. W. F. STONE, eds., *The Will and Human Action From Antiquity to the Present Day*, London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 6-28.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, the fourteenth-century Franciscan FRANCIS OF MARCHIA, *Commentarius in IV libros sententiarum Petri Lombardi. Quaestiones praecambulae et prologus*, ed. N. Mariani O.F.M., Grottaferrata, Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 2003, pp. 518-519.

*De anima*.<sup>1</sup> In his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, however, he provides further details: the intellect and the will belong to the superior part in the human soul; and while the intellect is superior to the will according to its origin, the will is superior to the intellect according to its perfection.<sup>2</sup> For Thomas, the will is that special appetite which follows the intellect's perception.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it is more attached to action than to the intellect, and it is more the ruler of its own activity (and thus truly free) than the intellect, since the intellect is compelled to act always according to the same truth. For this reason, man is regarded as good or evil according to the act of his will, which is identified with moral agency.<sup>4</sup> Yet in Thomas' *Summa theologiae* we find that the will and the intellect contain one another, with no sign of real contrast between them.<sup>5</sup> They differ only in the way they act: the intellect acts thanks to its similarity with the thing which is understood, while the will acts thanks to an inclination towards the thing which is willed.<sup>6</sup> Thomas regarded both the intellect and the will as rational faculties which act in accordance with nature, so that the will is unable to adhere to the good which is its object.<sup>7</sup> This point was sharply criticized by Scotus, who distinguished between liberty and nature and between contingent and necessary activity: each power can act either according to nature or according to liberty. All powers except the will are natural and thus necessary and not free. Therefore, the intellect does not have the power to act more or less firmly: it always acts according to its relation with the truth or the natural principle which moves it. It is within the power of the will, however, to agree more firmly with the good or not to agree with it. Thus, Scotus claims that connecting the truth to the intellect and the good to the will is not important.<sup>8</sup> What is more fundamental for him is to determine how exactly the

<sup>1</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Aristotelis librum de anima commentarium* 2, 5, 288. See also in 3, 15, 824.

<sup>2</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum* I, 1, 1, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 45, 1, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 7, 2, 1. Cfr. the formulation in II, 25, 1, 2, where the will is superior, because it has power over all the faculties of the soul, since the end is its object; Thomas introduces here his notion of freedom.

<sup>5</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* I. q. 16, a. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 27, 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 62, 8.

<sup>8</sup> J. DUNS SCOTUS, *Ordinatio* I, dist. 1, p. 2, q. 1; see *Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera omnia*, ed. P. C. Balić, Vatican City, 1950, II, p. 16. On the notion of the will in Scotus and in Scotists of the fourteenth century, see the studies of G. ALLINEY, *La contingenza della fruizione beatifica nello sviluppo del pensiero di Duns Scoto*, in *Via Scoti. Metodologica ad mentem Joannis Duns Scoti. Atti del Congresso Scotistico Internazionale, Roma 9-11 marzo 1993*, ed. L. Sileno, Roma, Antonianum, 1995, II, pp. 633-660; IDEM, *Fra Scoto e Ockham: Giovanni di Reading e il dibattito sulla libertà a Oxford (1310-1320)*, «Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale», VII, 1996, pp. 243-368; IDEM, *La ricezione della teoria scotiana della volontà nell'ambiente teologico parigino (1307-1316)*, «Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale», XIV, 2005, pp. 339-404; IDEM, *The Treatise on the Human Will in the Collationes oxonienses Attributed to John Duns Scotus*, «Medio-

intellect and the will act, in terms of necessity and contingency, liberty and nature. Epistemology is also involved here, since the act of the will is not described by Scotus as an abstraction of a universal from a singular; instead, many willed things are presented to the will by the intellect, and the will can will each one of the things presented to it.<sup>1</sup> While the intellect, for Scotus, is a natural power which is not free, i.e., it always acts in the same way with regard to an object which effects it – in other words, the intellect is compelled by the object, and there is no element of free choice in its activity<sup>2</sup> – the will is a free power which acts contingently and can, for instance, choose or not choose a sinful act. But it is beyond the power of the will to determine the very nature of an act which is presented to it; the will cannot change the nature of a given object or act, but can only choose between acts.<sup>3</sup> Some interesting implications in the fields of moral psychology and moral theology arise from the fact that it is impossible, according to Scotus, for the same power to act differently in the present life (*in via*) and in the future life (*in patria*). Thus, the will also acts freely and contingently *in patria* towards the supreme good and beatitude, and cannot ‘not will’ it. But ‘not willing’ *in patria* does not imply any evil or offence towards the perfection of the supreme good.<sup>4</sup>

Let us turn now to Alamanno Donati’s discussion concerning the intellect and the will, comparing it whenever necessary with three contemporary discussions – Ficino’s ‘humanist’ account of this issue, and two ‘scholastic’ treatments, by the Scotist Salviati and the Thomist Bandello – as well as with the position of the scholastic schools in general. Donati’s *De intellectus voluntatisque excellentia* was probably written between 1482 and 1487,<sup>5</sup>

evo» xxx, 2005, pp. 209-269. See also M. J. F. M HOENEN, *Scotus and Scotist School. The Tradition of Scotist Thought in the Medieval and Early Modern Period*, in E. P. Bos, ed., *John Duns Scotus. Renewal of Philosophy*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1998, pp. 197-210.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36, n. a.

<sup>4</sup> J. DUNS SCOTUS, *Lectura in librum primum sententiarum* I, dist. 1, p. 2, q. 2; see *Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera omnia*, cit., xvi, p. 100. On this passage, see G. ALLINEY, *La contingenza della fruizione*, cit., p. 639, n. 25.

<sup>5</sup> This short treatise was edited and published (but without an *apparatus fontium*) by L. Borghi in «Bibliofilia», XLII, 1940, pp. 108-115. Borghi presented a biographical and intellectual sketch of Donati in his *praefatio* on pp. 108-109, with references to some archival documents about Donati’s father published in P. O. KRISTELLER, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, 2 vols., Firenze, Olschki, 1937, I, p. 126, and to some letters of Ficino in which Donati is mentioned, in M. FICINO, *Opera omnia*, cit., I, pp. 716-717 (Ficino’s reply to Donati, regarding Platonic love and the powers in the human soul according to Plato), 834 (his letter to Angelo Poliziano on the love of the muses, in which he mentions Donati and recommends him warmly), 848 (another mention of Donati in Ficino’s letter to Lorenzo de’ Medici, telling him about Donati’s translation of the *Historia de duobus amantibus* by Enea Silvio Piccolomini), 894 (Ficino’s letter to Amerigo Corsini, in which he refers to Donati’s death), 936-937 (Ficino’s famous ‘catalogue of friends and students’ in his letter to Martin Prenninger, in which he places Donati in the second group, among his students).

and it provides further evidence for the connection between humanist and scholastic thinkers in fifteenth-century Italy, and for their common interest in philosophical and theological questions which were part of the medieval heritage.

We know very little about Alamanno Donati. He was born in Florence in 1458 and was a student of Giorgio Antonio Vespucci and of Ficino. He died in 1488.<sup>1</sup> He was apparently among Ficino's young students during the 1470s and 1480s, together with Giovanni Nesi, Giovanni di Donato Cocchi, Carlo Marsuppini the Younger, and others.<sup>2</sup>

The style, structure, and sources of Donati's treatise are similar to what one finds in the writings of Ficino, Pico and other humanist philosophers of the fifteenth century, combining classical rhetoric with philosophical arguments. Aristotle is mentioned and cited several times, and it is clear that 'the philosopher' is the main explicit source;<sup>3</sup> but Donati also refers to Pythagoras, Horace, Porphyry, Varro and «divus Plato noster». The only scholastic philosopher mentioned here is Thomas Aquinas, whom Donati refers to with the same formula that he applies to Plato: «divus noster Aquinas». After a short opening section (p. 109), he presents ten arguments for the excellence and superiority of the intellect (pp. 109-111), ten arguments for the excellence and superiority of the will (pp. 111-114), and some concluding remarks (pp. 114-115).

<sup>1</sup> We know this from Ficino's letter dated November 4, 1488, to Amerigo Corsini, in which he laments the death of his young student; see M. FICINO, *Opera omnia*, cit., 1, p. 894. For further biographical information see the entry on Donati in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, XLI, 1992, pp. 6-9. His only literary work, apart from the treatise on the intellect and the will, is an Italian translation of Piccolomini's *Historia de duobus amantibus* (1444), one of the most popular works in the fifteenth century, which is concerned with love, a theme which was also very central in Ficino's circle but dealt with very differently by them. On Giorgio Antonio Vespucci (c.1434-1514) see K. SCHLEBUSCH, *Per una biografia di Giorgio Antonio Vespucci*, «Memorie Domenicane», xxviii, 1997, pp. 152-154, and see also F. GALLORI, S. NENCIONI, *I libri greci e latini dello scrittoio e della biblioteca di Giorgio Antonio Vespucci*, «Memorie Domenicane», xxviii, 1997, pp. 155-359.

<sup>2</sup> On Nesi see C. Vasoli's article cited p. 109, n. 1 below, as well as C. S. CELENZA, *Piety and Pythagoras in Renaissance Florence. The Symbolum Nesianum*, Leiden, Brill, 2001. On Cocchi see A. DELLA TORRE, *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica di Firenze*, Firenze, Carnesecchi, 1902, p. 725. On Carlo Marsuppini the Younger see M. FICINO, *Opera omnia*, cit., 1, p. 937; his brother Cristoforo is mentioned by Donati as one of the participants in a debate on the dignity of the intellect and the will, of which Donati's text is its written account; see A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> On Renaissance Aristotelianism see, for instance, P. O. KRISTELLER, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* III, cit., pp. 341-392; B. P. COPENHAVER, C. B. SCHMITT, *Renaissance Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992; repr. Oxford 2002, pp. 60-126; L. BIANCHI, *Studi sull'aristotelismo del Rinascimento*, Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2003, and his *Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian Tradition*, in J. HANKINS, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 49-71.

It is remarkable to find in this relatively short discussion three accounts of human dignity. Right at the beginning Donati argues that it is self-reflexivity which gives pre-eminence to man:

man's nature is such that only when he knows himself is he superior to other living creatures; when he neglects this, man is necessarily stripped of his own nature. Hence we have this maxim: 'know yourself!', and also that saying by the wisest Pythagoras, 'venerate yourself, man, do not defile the most sacred temple of God'; for in man God erected His own tent.<sup>1</sup>

Donati chooses to open his discussion with two explicit references to pagan antiquity, the famous maxim of Delphi γνῶθι σεαυτόν ('know thyself') and a saying of Pythagoras, combined with an implicit allusion to some biblical verses (e.g., Ezekiel 37, 27: «et erit tabernaculum meum in eis et ero eis Deus et ipsi erunt mihi populus»), in order to lend support to his statement on the importance of self-knowledge or self-reflexivity. The wisdom of pagan antiquity and of the Bible treat man's awareness of his own situation as essential to his dignity. This opening statement, I would contend, already hints at the conclusion of Donati's treatise and indicates its novelty. Self-consciousness or self-reflexivity are central to the relationship between man and God in theology and for the relationship between human beings in ethics. As we shall shortly see in the detailed discussion of Donati's arguments concerning the intellect and the will, he presents two other accounts of human dignity: one focused on the intellect and the other on the will.

Immediately after this opening statement Donati presents his reason for writing this text: just as in Ficino's letter of 1474,<sup>2</sup> here too we have an echo, in the form of a written account, of a debate held during the last days in the house of the Dominican friar and the future bishop of Cortona Guglielmo Capponi (most probably at Altopascio), to whom Donati dedicated his treatise. The other participants in this debate were Guglielmo's brother Bernardo Capponi, and Cristoforo Marsuppini, the son of the famous humanist Carlo Marsuppini.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 109. For another use of the Delphic maxim in contemporary Florence among the same group of young humanist philosophers, some of whom were students of Ficino, see Giovanni Nesi's sermon, delivered in 1476 and published in C. VASOLI, *Giovanni Nesi tra Donato Acciaiuoli e Girolamo Savonarola. Testi editi e inediti*, «Memorie Dominicane», IV, 1973, pp. 103-179, at p. 142. Cfr. one of the theses condemned in 1277, in D. PICHÉ, C. LAFLEUR, eds., *La condamnation parisienne de 1277. Nouvelle édition du texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaire*, Paris, Vrin, 1999, p. 114. For Pythagoreanism in the Renaissance, and especially in Ficino's circle including Nesi, see C. S. CELENZA, *Pythagoras in the Renaissance*, «Renaissance Quarterly», LII, 1999, pp. 667-711; *Piety and Pythagoras*, cit.

<sup>2</sup> M. FICINO, *Lettere I*, cit., p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 109. On Guglielmo Capponi (1449-c.1513) see the entry on him in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, cit., XIX, 1976, pp. 60-62.



The next two sections will explore the two sets of arguments presented by Donati: ten arguments in support of the superiority of the intellect, and ten in support of the superiority of the will. Donati does not seem to have – or at least to wish to demonstrate – a preference for either of the two. The relation between these two sets of arguments and self-consciousness will be discussed at the end of this study. Donati's use of the various sources is important in such a context, since we have here a man who straddles the two camps of scholasticism and humanism, and can read some of the new texts as well as the old ones.

## 2. ARGUMENTS FOR THE SUPERIORITY OF THE INTELLECT

Already in the first set of arguments supporting the superiority of the intellect we find that Donati describes human psychology in terms of powers or faculties (*potentiae* and *vires*), while the virtues are given a relatively marginal role. In the first argument, seeing, knowing, and understanding (the powers of the intellect) are regarded as superior to other powers. These powers are compared to a living body, which is superior to a dead body.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion of this argument presents what can be regarded as an extreme intellectualist position:

But the intellect is of this kind, that it has such a perspicacious power that it would not only know the genus of demons, but indeed somehow it would proceed towards God, as if it were itself God.<sup>2</sup>

The human intellect is thus very powerful and it plays a central role in the relation between man and God. This is already a step towards identifying the essence of man with the intellect.

In the second argument we find for the first time a comparison between the intellect and the will. Self-sufficiency is here the criterion for preferring the intellect, which does not need the will for its operations. The will, on the other hand, cannot act without the intellect, and, therefore, we cannot love things which are unknown to us. It is perhaps important to draw a comparison between Donati's and Salviati's formulation of this argument. For Donati,

there is no doubt that this thing which is by no means sufficient for itself is more insignificant and imperfect than that which is sufficient for itself. Because of this the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* A similar argument can be found in Ficino's letter, supporting the superiority of love and will; see M. FICINO, *Lettere* 1, cit., p. 207. Gentile refers here to the same argument in the *Theologia platonica*; see M. Ficino, *Theologia platonica de immortalitate animorum*, 6 vols., eds. J. Hankins, W. Bowen, trans. M. J. B. Allen with J. Warden, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2001-2006, IV, p. 320.

most perfect thing in nature is regarded as that which is in need of nothing. That is the intellect, which produces its own operation totally without the will, since it can understand without the will. But the will cannot [act without the intellect]; while we [can] love detested things, [we can] never love unknown things.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas Salviati writes that

it is necessary for something to exist together with something else, and to be in need of something else; if there is no mutual coexistence, [that thing] is more insignificant and imperfect: since that which is in need of nothing, is regarded as most perfect. But the act of the will is in need of, and coexists with, the act of the intellect, but the intellect does not coexist with the act of the will (for we can understand without the will, but we cannot will unless we understand: since we are moved through the will only by things which we knew before); thus, the intellect is more noble.<sup>2</sup>

What we have here are two formulations of the same argument, comparing the activity of the intellect and the will on the basis of self-sufficiency. One notices, however, that Thomas for instance was very cautious when he discussed the intellect's sufficiency, emphasizing the insufficiency of the human intellect, its weakness in comparison to the angels and its constant need for divine light (but indeed not in the context of comparing the intellect and the will).<sup>3</sup> Donati's humanistic-inclined formulation, and Salviati's scholastic-inclined one, seem to reflect a later development in the scholastic schools, where the intellect and the will were directly contrasted against one another under the increasing tension between the Thomists and the Scotists, and the argument of self-sufficiency was used.

In the next argument Donati presents the intellect as the power which is peculiar and proper to man, and because of this, it is only through the intellect that man can reach beatitude. The intellect is here contrasted with the appetite, which is identified with the will, and thus regarded as not proper to the intellectual nature and depended on the intellect.<sup>4</sup> This argument depends on one presupposition: the beatitude of an intellectual nature is the supreme good and end (*beatitudo naturae intellectualis potissimum bonum et finis existit*). As in the case of Ficino's letter mentioned in n. 2, on p. 104, in Donati's case, where the scholastic distinction between the present life (*in via*) and the afterlife (*in patria*) and the parallel distinction between worldly

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> G. B. SALVIATI, *Fridericus*, cit., p. 151. See also on p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Scriptum*, cit., II, 7, 2, 2; II, 28, 1, 5.

<sup>4</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., pp. 109-110. Cfr. Salviati's concern regarding the confusion between the appetite and the will: G. B. SALVIATI, *Fridericus*, cit., p. 175. Šojat, the editor of this text, gives, in his footnotes on pp. 175-176, the relevant references and citations from II Cor 5, 4, as well as from Thomas' *Summa theologiae* (1a, q. 41, a. 2; q. 60, a. 2; q. 82, a. 1) and *De malo* (q. 6), against Scotus' discussion in the *Ordinatio* (IV, d. 49, q. 10, n. 2-3). Cfr. Vincenzo Bandello's reaction to Ficino's letter in his *Opusculum*, cit., p. 249. These critical remarks should be referred to M. FICINO, *Lettere I*, cit., p. 208.

happiness (*felicitas*) and divine happiness (*beatitudo*) are not presented, we would have, in terms of contemporary scholastic thinking, an admixture of nature and super-nature, human and divine: an unacceptable situation for a scholastic thinker.<sup>1</sup>

But a closer look at Donati's treatise reveals an important difference between his text and Ficino's: it seems that Donati, to some extent, is more willing to embrace, not always in a fully consistent way, certain philosophical terms, expressions, and modes of thought which can be classified as 'scholastic'. While in the third argument just referred to in n. 4, p. 111, we had expressions like «sibi peculiare et proprium est, pro suae naturae captu», or «simpliciter et maxime proprius est», we shall have in the next arguments some more examples for this tendency.

The next two arguments are focused on the superiority of the intellect's operation, i.e. speculation (*speculatio*), and its object, i.e. worldly happiness (*felicitas*).<sup>2</sup> In the fourth argument Donati claims that the most perfect operation is self-sufficient, and it does not require external matter, as fabricating does.<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning of the sixth argument we have an echo of Ficino's letter to Donati concerning the different powers of the single soul.<sup>4</sup> We also have here the first explicit reference to Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

In the seventh argument Donati discusses the intellect's virtue, i.e. wisdom, which he defines as «the knowledge of human and divine matters», and which is the key for tasting «the sweetness of supreme happiness even during this present life». <sup>6</sup> We may note that here Donati does relate the present life («hac vita») to worldly happiness («felicitas»), but the emphasis «even (*vel*) during this present life» is again an indication of his awareness of confusing worldly happiness and divine happiness (*beatitudo*), or at least of his awareness that there is a tension here with regard to the basic Christian dogma of supernatural grace. After another reference to Scripture, Donati

<sup>1</sup> On the terms *foelicitas* and *beatitudo*, the first was usually more related to the classical Aristotelian notion of *eὐδαιμονία* (worldly happiness in regard to human life and ethics), while the second presents the Christian notion of eternal afterlife happiness, see A. J. CELANO, *Act of the Intellect or Act of the Will: The Critical Reception of Aristotle's Ideal of Human Perfection in the 13<sup>th</sup> and Early 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, «Archives d'Histoire et Littéraire du Moyen Âge», LVII, 1990, pp. 93-119.

<sup>2</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Cfr. one of the condemned 1277 theses in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, cit., p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* See M. FICINO, *Opera omnia*, cit., I, p. 717. It is perhaps important to point out that Ficino in this letter presents what he regards as Plato's opinion regarding the powers of the soul, in which *ratio* is considered as unique to man, while the other two powers, *ira* and *libido* are not: «Nempe in bestiis cum sit ira, nulla est ratio [...] Cum vero tam ira, quam libido a ratione different, libido tamen magis ira videtur a rationis dignitate discedere». Cfr. the references to Thomas in nn. 2 and 3, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

clearly presents wisdom as essential for the relation between man and God, and even as that which grants man, a mortal animal, immortality.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, such a notion of wisdom is strongly connected to religion and theology.

Donati's discussion of *sapientia* in the last argument is to some extent close to Ficino's notion of *docta religio* presented in his *De Christiana religione* (1474) and contrasted to what Ficino regarded as the contemporary decline of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> But we should notice that Ficino is discussing wisdom as such and not as the intellect's virtue, and that in his discussion there is an essential distinction between human wisdom and divine wisdom, upon which Christianity is founded.<sup>3</sup> Donati's argument here is thus closer to one of the condemned theses of 1277.<sup>4</sup> It should remind us of the need for a detailed study of the status of these theses two hundred years after Tempier's condemnation. From what we have seen so far we can say that this condemnation does not hold much authority for Donati. This is also how another contemporary humanist philosopher, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, regarded this condemnation in his *Apologia* (1487):

Secondly, as is certain, and those Parisians [Doctors] themselves admit, these articles do not oblige all believers nor are we obligated to believe in them, except to the extent that they rely on the Holy Scripture or on the decisions of the universal Church. Whence the English are accustomed to say that these articles do not cross the sea; therefore we can also say – if it is allowed to joke about such a serious issue – that these articles do not cross the Alps. Wherefore though my conclusion is against the article, let those who condemned me remember that they were entirely mistaken in my condemnation, because they said that my conclusion was against the Apostle's Creed, when they should have said that my conclusion was against the Parisian creed, although also this is a lie as we have presented before.<sup>5</sup>

Apparently, this joke regarding the Parisian articles was already commonplace in contemporary discussions.<sup>6</sup>

But let us return to Donati. Next, following Aristotle's discussion of the common internal sense, he presents a logical argument according to which, if an object of a power is included in another object of another power, this power is superior to that power,<sup>7</sup> and thus:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> M. FICINO, *Opera omnia*, cit., I, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, cit., p. 126.

<sup>5</sup> G. PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *Opera omnia*, Basel 1557; repr. Hildesheim, G. Olms, 1969, p. 130.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, in G. B. SALVIATI, *De natura angelica* (1499) III, 7; IX, 5. These examples are cited in C. DIONISOTTI, *Umanisti dimenticati?*, in *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, IV, 1961, eds. G. Billanovich, A. Campana, C. Dionisotti, P. Sambin, Padova, Antenore, 1961, pp. 287-321; see p. 296.

<sup>7</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 110. But notice that in none of the places in Aristotle referred to by Donati (*De anima* 425a27-b11 and 428b22-30; *De sensu* 442b4-10; *De memoria* 450a9-12) the *sensus communis* is taken to be *praestantior*.

Indeed, who will deny that the object of the intellect, that is being qua being, includes the object of the will, that is the good? Since, although neither being nor the good could be properly defined, yet if it should be defined, the good would be defined according to being and not being according to the good, because nothing is missing from the account of being itself, which contains everything.<sup>1</sup>

Although he is not entirely happy with the use of definitions in this context, Donati is still willing to present it as another argument concerning the superiority of the intellect. With regard to the expression «ens est quatenus ens», it reflects typical scholastic logic and *formulae* coming from the methodological discussion concerning the object of the intellect and the subject of metaphysics. In these discussions we find the distinction between *reduplicative* and *specificative*, the first representing a weaker and a more general way, the latter a more specific and defined way.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the word *quatenus* here should be understood as *reduplicative*, and so, the object of the intellect according to Donati is being in general, i.e., all being (and not being qua being taken in a *specificative* sense, which is the object of metaphysics). This becomes very clear from the last sentence of the argument just quoted above, where Donati explains that being includes everything.

In the last two arguments concerning the superiority of the intellect Donati claims, first (in the ninth argument) that the intellect is more pure, genuine and abstract than the will, and thus it is more noble and perfect. The same goes for its operation: the operation of the intellect is regarded as a movement of a thing towards the intellect, while the will is regarded totally inferior. Donati is citing here Aristotle's saying, according to which truth and falsehood are in the soul (*ἐν διανοίᾳ*) while good and evil are in the things (*ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν*).<sup>3</sup> Secondly (in the tenth argument) Donati compares the intellect's operation, i.e. obtaining the supreme good which is beatitude, with the operations of the will, i.e. desiring, loving and delighting, each of which have some relation with the end, but none of which obtain the end, which is beatitude.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that in both

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111. Cfr. the reference to Scotus in n. 8, pp. 106-107 and context. For the identification of the object of the intellect with being see e.g., THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, 1a, q. 5, a. 2. But this view was criticized by, for instance, FRANCIS OF MARCHIA, *Commentarius*, cit., pp. 331-332.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, J. BURIDAN, *In metaphysices Aristotelis lib. III, q. v, Fo. XVI*. For a contemporary fifteenth-century discussion see G. ZERBUS, *Questiones metaphysice*, Circa lib. 1, q. 2, *Utrum ens simpliciter sumptum commune quiditati et modo sit scientie metaphysice subiectum primum primate adequationis, an ens solum commune deo et creature, Propter quatuor*, Bononie: Per Johannem de Nordlingen et Henricum de Harlem socios, 1482, f. (not numbered) a10vb. I would like to thank Dr. Marco Forlivesi for his helpful remarks on this issue.

<sup>3</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Compare these last two arguments of Donati with Vincenzo Bandello's critique of

arguments Donati uses the same formula («ut ita dixerim») just after using some scholastic phrases («est enim intellectio quidam» and «summi boni adeptio formaliter»), as though he were apologizing for using such terms. The conclusion of argument ten presents once again an extreme intellectualist position according to which the whole of beatitude is obtained by the operation of the intellect, that is understanding.<sup>1</sup> This is followed by the conclusive remarks to the first ten arguments, in which Donati is relying on Aristotle's *Ethics* for identifying human dignity with the intellect, which is also regarded as an essential instrument for man's association with the angels, and his ability to contemplate God and divine matters.<sup>2</sup> This is of course a Christian and an intellectualist reading of Aristotle.

Just before moving on to present the ten arguments in favour of the will Donati remarks that the first set of arguments in support of the intellect are according to his own judgment most valid arguments.<sup>3</sup> I see no reason why we should not take this remark seriously. Thus, we are not dealing here with a more rhetorical exercise, but rather with a philosophical and a theological discussion which was taken seriously by the author and his friends who participated in the oral debate.<sup>4</sup> If this is indeed the case, a further study is required with regard to the theological context of the intellectualist position among scholastic and humanist thinkers in the last decades of the fifteenth century.

### 3. ARGUMENTS FOR THE SUPERIORITY OF THE WILL

It is striking to find right at the beginning of the first argument in support of the will the words «liberior» and «libertas».<sup>5</sup> The essential relation between freedom and the will was of course a commonplace among scholastic thinkers, certainly after John Duns Scotus and among the Scotists during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> But in Ficino's letter in support of

Ficino's letter; V. BANDELLO, *Opusculum*, cit., pp. 211-212. Ficino's argument is in *Lettere I*, cit., p. 206.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Scriptum*, cit., IV, 49, 2, 1; *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, q. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* 2a-2ae, q. 180, a. 6. But Thomas is very cautious in his response to this argument, sharply distinguishing between the human intellect and that of the angles. Donati's remark regarding the dignity of man and his status in nature cannot be found in Thomas in this context.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Doubts regarding the seriousness of such debates were raised in E. RUMMEL, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 1-18.

<sup>5</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 111. Cfr. P. LOMBARDI, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae* II, 25, 8, 6. As we shall see in n. 4, p. 116, this opinion is contrasted to Scotus' sharp distinction between nature and will.

<sup>6</sup> On the notion of the will in Scotus and among the Scotists in the fourteenth century

the will to which we have already referred several times this term is not even mentioned. Donati in this opening sentence not only mentions the term freedom, but he also defines it as a faculty of acting or not acting in this or that manner («libertas enim quae facultas est agendi sic aut non agendi»). This definition, I would contend, already bears a Scotist influence which is not found in Ficino's letter and which represents Donati's greater familiarity with contemporary scholastic discussions.<sup>1</sup>

Freedom is thus inseparable from the will in the Scotistic discussions. Donati contrasts it to seeing, knowing and understanding, i.e., the powers of the intellect described in the first argument supporting the intellect. Freedom is now the faculty through which a power can be regarded more perfect and be identified with the good. Horace and Aristotle are quoted in support of this argument.<sup>2</sup> But we do not have in Aristotle a clear-cut preference for voluntary instead of necessary.<sup>3</sup> Such a clear-cut distinction is basically the product of scholastic philosophy, mainly emphasized by Scotus and developed by his followers in the context of human agency. Thus, when Donati claims that Aristotle prefers a voluntary factor to a natural factor («Aristoteles... agens voluntarium agenti naturali praeponit») he is in fact following the Scotists in contrasting the will with nature.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to find a reference to the same place in Aristotle's *Physics* in both Donati and Scotus (see notes 2 and 4). Donati may have read this passage of Scotus or of some Scotists referring to it. But it is important to stress the fact that Aristotle's context here is physics and not ethics, and that we only have in Aristotle a distinction (without contrasting and preferring) between things which are in accordance with intention and those which are not (τὰ μὲν κατὰ προαίρεσιν, τὰ δ' οὐ κατὰ προαίρεσιν), and these things are regarded as falling outside what is necessary (παρὰ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον), but still some of them are done for the sake of something (τὸ ἐνεκά του). Among things which are done for the sake of something, another distinction is introduced, between thought and nature (ἔστι δ' ἐνεκά του ὅσα τε ἀπὸ διανοίας ἢν παραχθείη καὶ ὅσα ἀπὸ φύσεως).<sup>5</sup> All this is very far from the

see the detailed studies of Alliney and Hoenen mentioned in n. 8, pp. 106-107. For a fifteenth-century Scotist discussion of the will and freedom see G. B. SALVIATI, *Fridericus*, cit.

<sup>1</sup> On this see G. ALLINEY, *La contingenza della fruizione beatifica*, cit., p. 639, especially the references to, and discussion of, Scotus' *lectura prima* on pp. 634-645. And see also the references to Scotus in nn. 8, p. 106; 1-4, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., pp. 111-112.

<sup>3</sup> The problem of the will in Aristotle and in ancient philosophy in general has been the subject of many discussions in recent years. See the references to the detailed discussions of Dihle and Sorabji in n. 3, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> J. DUNS SCOTUS, *Lectura*, I, dist. 1, p. 2, q. 2; in *Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera omnia*, cit., xvi, p. 90. This is cited also in G. ALLINEY, *La contingenza della fruizione beatifica*, cit., p. 635, n. 11.

<sup>5</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Physica* 196b17-22. We do not have any sign of the will in the Latin translation of this passage either; see *Physica, Translatio Vetust*, eds. F. BOSSIER and J. BRAMS, Leiden, Brill,

Scotistic theory of the will and its implications in moral psychology, ethics, theology, and metaphysics, to which we have an echo in Donati's first argument in support of the will.

Donati continues by using typical Scotistic rhetoric:

Indeed, who will deny, unless he is mad, that freedom should be ascribed only to the will which moves everything, while the rest of the faculties exercise their own operations according to the will's command?<sup>1</sup>

Donati describes an epistemological process which is completely dependent upon the will: first the intellect gently understands at least something, then the will directs it towards matters which should be perfectly understood, and determines those matters which should not be considered. Many times, Donati claims, the will restricts the intellect which tends to regard false matters as if they were true; the will invents reasons through which it would be possible to examine these matters. Thus, this epistemological process reveals the great servitude of the intellect and the endless freedom of the will.<sup>2</sup> It is exactly at this point that we find the first mention of Thomas Aquinas. It is urgent for Donati to explain that Thomas, who is of course the main authority among the Dominican 'intellectualists', did not mean that reason or the intellect form freedom in reality («revera»), but only emphasized that *ratio* precedes *libertas* on the logical and epistemological level,<sup>3</sup> as shown in the epistemological process outlined above.

In the second argument we find a clear echo of Ficino's letter. The criterion presented here for a superior power is that the operation of which can never be wrongly used or misused. This is of course love (*amor*), the operation of the will, which is regarded as essential for the proper relation between man and God, partly due to the weakness of the human intellect and to human arrogance. Thus, *cognitio* and *scientia* are contrasted to *caritas* and *bonitas*.<sup>4</sup>

The third argument is a response to arguments eight and nine in support of the intellect, where being and truth were regarded as superior to

1990, VII 1, p. 68. We have an interesting distinction in the Latin, between the intellect and nature, which is totally contrasted to the Scotistic distinction between nature (including the intellect) and will.

<sup>1</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 112. Cfr. G. B. SALVIATI, *Fridericus*, cit., p. 178. We can find in Thomas the relation between self-movement, liberty, and free choice, but without involving the will, and with a clear Aristotelian emphasis on cognition, intellectual judgement, and causes; see, e.g., in his *Summa contra gentiles* II, 48. Liberty, will, and self-movement are all present in Thomas' *Scriptum*, cit., III, 17, 1, 1. This is still not enough for the Scotist position.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Cfr. the reference to Scotus in n. 1, p. 107, and with THOMAS AQUINAS, *Scriptum*, cit., III, 23, 2, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Cfr. the reference to Thomas in n. 2, p. 106. I could not find such formulation in Thomas.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Cfr. M. FICINO, *Lettere I*, cit., p. 205.



the good. The object of a power is here the criterion for its superiority, and so the good which is the will's object is regarded as more noble than the intellect's object, i.e. the truth.<sup>1</sup> No further reason is presented here since, apparently, Donati dedicated a book to the nature, quality, and perfection of the good according to the Platonists.<sup>2</sup> We know nothing of such a book by Donati.

In the fourth argument, the term «imperium» is mentioned: according to a common opinion the power of commanding should be given to that which is more noble.<sup>3</sup> We have here also for the first and only time in this treatise the phrase «voluntatis arbitrium», which is regarded as the driving force of the intellect, without which the intellect invest itself in investigating matters and speculating about them.<sup>4</sup> It is important to notice that the term «liberum arbitrium», free choice or free will, one of the most central terms in the debates concerning the intellect and the will, is not mentioned or discussed at all by Donati.

An activity which is desirable for its own sake is presented in argument five as the criterion for the more noble power.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Donati contrasts «gaudium», the operation of the will, with «visio», the operation of the intellect.<sup>6</sup>

In the sixth argument another common opinion of learned men (the origins of which can be traced back to Aristotle, *De caelo* 295a2-4, 301a20-22, 302b5-8) is presented: it is better to be moved by natural movement and by one's own movement, which is also regarded as internal, than by violent and foreign or outside movement.<sup>7</sup> Then, Donati presents an analogy between the soul which is more noble than the body also because it grants the body its movement (the origins of which can be traced back to Aristotle, *De motu animalium* 700b6-11), and the will, which is regarded as the self-moving driving force of the intellect, directing itself towards intellectual and sensual powers.<sup>8</sup> Here we face a crucial difference between Donati and the Scotists: while the Scotists, as has already been noted contrasted the will with nature or with natural powers, Donati has no problem in comparing the will with

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* Cfr. the reference to Scotus in n. 8, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* This common opinion is a commonplace in classical literature but terms presenting political power were also popular in the discussions of the intellect and the will. See, for instance, the title of Salvinati's dialogue *Fridericus, de animae regni principe*, and the argument on p. 180. See also V. BANDELLO, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 278. Cfr. the reference to Thomas in n. 4, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 113. Cfr. the second argument in support of the intellect cited and discussed in n. 1, p. 111, and context.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Cfr. M. FICINO, *Lettere 1*, cit., p. 206; BANDELLO, *Opusculum*, cit., p. 259.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* This Aristotelian principle can be found in *De caelo* 301a20-22.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* For the last image of the heart Cfr. G. B. SALVIATI, *Fridericus*, cit., p. 182. And see THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* 1a-2ae, q. 56, a. 3.

«naturalis et proprius motus». The only explicit authority mentioned here for the idea of the will as the source of all movement is Thomas.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, we have here only a partial reception of the Scotistic position regarding the will. Donati accepts the importance of freedom in defending the superiority of the will, but he does not mention *liberum arbitrium*, nor does he contrast the will with nature. On the other hand, he follows the Scotists' device of using also the Angelic Doctor as an authority in their discussions of the will.<sup>2</sup> We should keep in mind that Donati's aim is not to prove the superiority of either the intellect or the will, but rather, to prove the importance of both as the most important faculties in the human soul, as explicitly implied in the title of his treatise.

By the end of the sixth argument Donati presents what he regards as a false syllogism: it does not follow that if the intellect holds the end, which moves the will, then the intellect is either the will's end or that it moves the will. He points out that although the intellect should first know the end, by which the will is moved, it is not because of the act of understanding itself but rather because of the end that the understanding is moved. Therefore the conclusion here is that the will is superior to the intellect because of movement.<sup>3</sup> This part of the argument corresponds to argument eight in support of the intellect: in both cases Donati is willing to use 'scholastic' methods like definitions and syllogisms in order to prove his point.

In the beginning of argument seven we have a typical humanistic remark, in which Donati admits to preferring Plato to Aristotle.<sup>4</sup> But in fact, as we have already seen and as is also evident in this argument (where we find the only reference to Plato), Donati's treatise is full of explicit and implicit references to Aristotle. The main line of this argument taken from Aristotle is that priority in time does not imply priority in substance but quite the opposite: in nature we find progression from a modest beginning of imperfect and incomplete things towards perfect and complete things.<sup>5</sup> Varro and Plato are mentioned as the authorities for a methodological remark according to which harmonious presentation of examples is the most outstanding form of instruction. This remark is indeed followed by two examples from nature: leaves are prior in time to flowers and flowers to fruits, but with regard to their importance it is the opposite order: fruits, flowers, leaves. The same goes for the human offspring, in which we notice a progression from

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* 1a-2ae, q. 9, a. 1; q. 10, a. 2; q. 79, a. 2; q. 81, a. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. G. B. SALVIATI, *Fridericus*, cit., pp. 168 and 175.

<sup>3</sup> A. DONATI, *De intellectus...*, cit., p. 113. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* 2a-2ae, q. 2, a. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* On the Plato-Aristotle controversy see J. MONFASANI, *Marsilio Ficino and the Plato-Aristotle Controversy*, in M. J. B. ALLEN, V. REES, M. DAVIES, eds., *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, Leiden, Brill, 2002, pp. 179-202.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

the vegetative towards the sensual and finally towards the intellectual life. All this shows, Donati claims, that although the will is posterior to the intellect in nature, it is prior in its importance.<sup>1</sup>

In the eighth argument Donati returns to the theme of the 'dignity of man', this time claiming in a rather personal tone that he believes that the most noble power in the human soul is that to which God, Whose wisdom is endless and Who cannot err, gave the responsibility to take care of all the other powers. This power is of course the will, «our queen who moves, chooses, and commands all matters».<sup>2</sup> The personal tone expressed by the word *credo* right at the beginning of the argument may reflect Donati's own preference for this argument. We may also note the emphasis on the divine origin of the will's superiority. The will is related to the very essence of man:

And it is indeed not wrong [to say] that only through this will man would be rewarded and would sin. Since by taking away the will, you find in us nothing worthy of either praise or disgrace. Through this [will] we are praised, blamed, raised; because only thanks to this [will] or at least mainly thanks to it man exists.<sup>3</sup>

Matters theological and ethical, as well as the existence of man, are all mainly dependent upon the will. On this point Donati is again very close to the Scotists.

In the penultimate argument Donati returns to the Aristotelian idea of *sensus communis* which we have seen in argument eight in support of the intellect. The criterion presented here for a superiority of something is self-existence, i.e., things which hold the principle of their own existence in themselves and are not dependent upon some external principle. Such things are regarded as more perfect, since their end is regarded as more noble.<sup>4</sup> The example given is that of the five external senses, which are inferior to the internal common sense since they are dependent upon this internal sense for their perfection.<sup>5</sup> This is compared with the intellect, which is in fact or in reality («re vera») inferior to the will, and, though it precedes the will, it is still dependent upon the will which is the queen of our soul.<sup>6</sup>

In the last argument in support of the will, Donati presents the relation between the will and *caritas*: from the will, which is the supreme power, arises the supreme virtue, which is *caritas*.<sup>7</sup> The rest of this argument contains a praise of both the will and *caritas*.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* Notice that the words *adductio* and *vegetalis* which appear here are not classical. Cfr. the reference to Thomas in n. 2, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114. Cfr. n. 4, p. 92 and n. 3, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114. Cfr. the reference to Thomas in n. 4, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* We have seen this image in nn. 4, p. 106; 3, p. 118; 1, p. 120.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

## 4. DONATI'S CONCLUDING REMARKS

Donati opens his concluding remarks by emphasizing that he has discussed the excellence of humankind, which is the excellence of the mind or the intellect and of the will.<sup>1</sup> These faculties of the soul are contrasted with «inanimatae suppellectilis possessio», because of which proper and true goods are neglected, and many people most unfortunately hold temporary things, which are not really their own, as more important than their innate faculties.<sup>2</sup> The final accord of the treatise is focused on the supernatural divine light upon which human dignity depends, and here it is contrasted even with the worldly powers which stood at the centre of the whole discussion, i.e. the intellect and the will, as part of an elegant rhetorical self-reference and critical account of the author regarding his own work.<sup>3</sup>

But what is the relation between Donati's three different accounts of human dignity? In other words, what is the relation between self-reflexivity or self-consciousness, the intellect, and the will? Self-reflexivity becomes both the condition through which man can make use of his best powers – the intellect and the will – and the instrument through which man becomes closer to God; thus, it is essential to both theology and ethics. In Donati's text there is a tension between two conflicting tendencies: on the one hand, to show the excellence of both the intellect and the will, and on the other, to show which of these powers in the human soul should be regarded as better or stronger. But Donati's contribution to the discussion of this issue is in presenting self-reflexivity as the key for proper use of the powers in the human soul, including both intellect and will. It is evident that Donati shows here greater awareness of the rich scholastic tradition than his teacher Ficino regarding the philosophical and psychological complexities of the intellect/will debate which had originated in the scholastic schools. In this regard, perhaps, he was more a student of Giorgio Antonio Vespucci, an important figure in Florentine intellectual history who joined the Dominicans at San Marco under the influence of Savonarola during the 1490s. Because of his untimely death, Donati cannot be regarded as a major influential figure; but nonetheless, his importance lies in the fact that he somehow bridged the gap between a humanist thinker like Ficino, and some contemporary scholastic thinkers like Vincenzo Bandello and Giorgio Benigno Salviati.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.