

Roman DAROWSKI

**GIUSEPPE (JOSEPH) ANGIOLINI, S.J. (1747-1814)
PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY AT
THE POLOTSK ACADEMY**

Summary

Biography

Joseph Angiolini was born on 14 October 1747 in the region of Piacenza in Northern Italy. He joined the Society of Jesus in the Venice Jesuit Province on his fifteenth birthday in 1762. He was ordained in 1773. He had four brothers who also became Jesuits.

After the suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1773, Angiolini worked in Italy. On hearing of the existence and activity of the Jesuits in Belarus, he travelled there in 1783 with two of his brothers, Francesco and Gaetano. His third brother Luigi soon joined them and entered the Jesuit noviciate in Polotsk in 1784. Joseph quickly mastered the Polish language to the level enabling him to work as a priest in Polotsk.

Angiolini taught philosophy and mathematics in the Polotsk College between 1785 and 1794. He then taught theology and canon law at the same college until 1806. During his time at the Polotsk College he was also appointed a prefect of studies and a prison chaplain. He served as a rector of the Jesuit College in Saint Petersburg between 1806 and 1809 after which he returned to the Polotsk College, where he resumed his post as professor of theology. Soon after he was promoted to serve as vice-rector of the Academy and was also appointed a consultor to the Belarussian Jesuit Province.

On the same day the Polotsk Academy was inaugurated, 10 June 1812, Angiolini received his doctor's degree in theology and canon law from Bishop Jakub Ignacy Dederko. He was the first chancellor of the Polotsk Academy.

Angiolini was also talented in the sciences, in particular mathematics. He was committed to the priesthood and always eager to help others. For example, during Napoleon's expedition against Moscow, Angiolini tended wounded soldiers. He died on 28 March 1814 in Polotsk.

Writings

Angiolini wrote a 450-page philosophy study text: *Institutiones philosophicae ad usum studiosorum Academiae Polocensis* [Philosophical Lectures for the usage of students of Polotsk Academy], published posthumously, Polotsk 1819, Typis Academicis [Academic printing house], 8°, p. 450 (subsequently reprinted in Turin, Italy).

The archive of the Society of Jesus in Cracow retains two manuscripts of this book. It also retains two more of Angiolini's manuscripts of *Theologia naturalis*. Furthermore, the Philosophical Library *Ignatianum* in Cracow houses Angiolini's manuscript, *Metaphysica*. Angiolini is believed to be the author of the manuscript *Brevis introductio ad philosophiam*, kept by the Archive of the Society of Jesus in Cracow (No. 201).

Philosophical views

Angiolini understood philosophy as 'science obtained through reason'. He defined science as unquestionable and self-evident knowledge which is proven and justifiable.

According to Angiolini, philosophy consists of five branches:

- *logic*, which teaches man how to think in a reasonable, logical way;
- *metaphysics*, which contemplates the being and universe in general, in particular immaterial substance;
- *mathematics*, which measures quantity;
- *physics*, which examines natural phenomena and their causes; and
- *ethics* or rather *philosophy of morality*, which aims to form man's habits according to the rules of righteousness.

Logic is the first branch of philosophy and is divided into two subsections: *Logica instituens* and *Dialectica seu logica disputans*. The first – as presented in the book – is formed of questions and answers. It depicts the following issues: *De quatuor mentis operationibus* (Four actions of the mind: idea-notion-term, judgment – proposition, reasoning – syllogism, the method); *De fine logices, sive de veritate logica* (the aim of logic, which is logical truth).

Dialectics (*Dialectica seu logica disputans*) describes two main 'exercises' (*exercitationes*): *De Criteriis Veritatis* (The Criteria of Truth) and *De Principiis*

generalibus demonstrationis (General rules of argumentation). Both of the exercises depict, describe and justify by means of eight propositions (*propositio*).

The second branch of philosophy is metaphysics, comprising *Metaphysica generalis* and *Metaphysica particularis*, which in turn comprises psychology and natural theology. *Metaphysica generalis* comprises three sections: ontology (the science of the being), aetiology (the causes and the causality) and cosmology (the science of the world).

It is understood that Angiolini wrote about ethics, which was outlined when depicting his categorising of philosophy. Unfortunately no documentary evidence has been discovered. Neither do we know if such book was published.

As for Angiolini's philosophical doctrine, the following points need to be mentioned:

Within dialectics, Angiolini places and justifies, among others, the following theses: the criterion of truth is self evidence; the common sense of nature (*sensus naturae communis*), presenting the criterion for argumentation relating to the moral life, exists; sensory perception is the criterion of truth for the objects that affect man's ability to touch, taste, see, smell, hear; the principle of not-contradiction is the first rule of argumentation.

In metaphysics Angiolini wrote: 'Being is something that is in unspecified manner possible and Non-Being (*non ens*) is something that is totally impossible'. Thus his understanding of Being has a wide remit: he allows into his categories of being also intellectual beings and every possible being. According to him essence differs from existence not factually (*realiter*) but mentally. He also accepts *moduses*; for instance, the accidents are in his opinion the *moduses* of substance.

In the cosmology, Angiolini takes side of creationism. He wrote: 'God created the universe out of nothing. There is no obstacle to the statements the world was created in a time. Indeed nature supports this thesis too'. The universe is in its own way perfect (p. 273) but it is not the best out of the possible ones (p. 280).

Explaining the relationship between soul and body Angiolini in his psychology leans towards so called theory of physical influence (*theoria influxus physici*). Of course, he defends the free will (*libertas indifferentiae*), emphasising the fact that the basis of man's freedom is reason.

In the appendix to psychology, *About animals' soul* (*De anima sensitiva*), he insists that animals are not automatic creatures (*automata*), but they also have soul. Their soul is truly immaterial, but, lacking intellect (*facultas superior intelligendi*) it is lower than man's soul.

Conclusions

From the formal point of view, the first part of Angiolini's logic (*Logica instituens*) is formed – as we have seen – of questions and answers. In the second part (dialectics) and in all other parts of his philosophy he uses the thetical method (theses-propositions) and syllogistic form. He placed in his writings plenty of *corollaria* (immediate conclusions) and *scholia* (marginal notes and commentaries). Not only did he explain and justify his own propositions, but also sought solutions (*Solutio Objectionum*) for the possible difficulties that might appear in understanding his message.

Angiolini did not elaborate on the history of the issues explained. Instead he directed the reader to the Introduction (*Introductio*), by Siegmund Storchenau SJ (1751-1797). From time to time he cross-referenced other authors. For example, Angiolini rejected some theories of Leibniz and Kant. In doing so he borrowed heavily from John Ivancics SJ (born 1722) and Jakob Anton Zallinger SJ (1735-1813) and occasionally from Christian Wolff.

Some ideas of 'essentialism' are discernable in Angiolini's philosophy. Essentialism mainly consists of emphasising how important the essence in the structure of the reality is. Angiolini insists, for example, that the existence of the being is nothing more than its actual, real, factually existing essence. He also accepts, as mentioned above, a certain form of modalism.

The whole philosophy represented by Angiolini is in line with the Italian Catholic philosophy of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, which was influenced by traditional Jesuit *Collegium Romanum*, of which the heir is now the Gregorian University.

The philosophy of Angiolini contains certain Suarezian ideas. This was influenced by the Jesuit tradition, as shown by the above mentioned opinions, esp. mental difference between essence and existence and modalism.

It should be pointed out that Angiolini's book was in use and copied for forty years after its publication (cf. *Writings*).

Sebastiano Ciampi in his *Biblioteca critica* (Florence 1834-1839) supports an anonymous opinion that the volume and diversity of Angiolini's output, which covered not only philosophy but also theology, 'testify his extraordinary literary and philosophical talent and multilateral education'.

Translated from Polish by Alaksandra Macintosh

Dodatek: J. Angiolini, *Institutiones philosophicae*,

De Ente ejusque essentia ac existentia, s. 155-160, w oryginalne łańciskim i przekładzie polskim.

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