

Debating the Stars in the Italian Renaissance: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's "Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem" and Its Reception.

Ovanes Akopyan.

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The *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* (1493, published posthumously 1496) by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–94) has been a controversial work since the manuscript's circulation in the Renaissance. Contemporary authors of Pico, such as Lucio Bellanti (d. 1499) and Giovanni Pontano (1426–1503), who opposed his arguments against astrology, doubted the authenticity of the *Disputationes* because of their apparent contradiction with the initial ideas of their author. Since then, the suspicion that the work was written by Pico under the strong influence of Savonarola (1452–98) or altered by Gianfrancesco Pico (1469–1533) has accompanied its reception.

In *Debating the Stars in the Italian Renaissance*, Ovanes Akopyan proposes a study of the *Disputationes* that dispels this suspicion and allows an approach to this work of Pico as a product of his intellectual development. To show this, Akopyan argues first (chapter 2) that between Pico's pre-Roman dispute writings—the *Commento alla Canzone d'amore* (1486), the *Oratio de hominis dignitate* (1486), the *Conclusiones* (1486)—and those written after Pico's return to Florence—the *Heptaplus* (1489) and the *Expositiones in Psalmos* (1489)—there is an evolution of Pico's thought. He went from a vision of astrology, as an element of *Prisca Theologia*, to the search for conciliation of the idea of Neoplatonic light with the natural philosophy of Aristotle. It was revealed to him as highly problematic and became the precedent for *De Ente et Uno* (1491) and the *Disputationes*.

In the next chapter, Akopyan addresses the analysis of the first book of *Disputationes*, studying the sources that Pico uses to demonstrate that the astrological tradition has distorted the principles of astrology without disqualifying pagan philosophy. This suggests a position properly belonging to Pico, in contrast with that of Gianfrancesco and Savonarola, who disqualify the totality of pagan philosophy. In addition, it shows a continuity with Pico's method in *De Ente et Uno* of seeking to relocate the classical sources to their original meaning.

Akopyan then discusses the twelfth book of *Disputationes* (chapter 4), the most problematic in terms of its authenticity because of the quality of the writing and some statements that contradict claims made in the first book. After doing a careful review of these statements, he argues that despite the evidence against Pico's authorship of the chapter, there are no signs indicating any distortion of what appears to be a draft written by Pico himself.

His next step is to study the arguments developed in the *Disputationes* against Ptolemy's authority as an astrologer and the astrological tradition (chapter 5). Here he stops to look at how Pico debates the incompatibility of astrology with philosophy and religion, where he observes again that Pico maintains a position consistent with his

own argumentative and reflective methods and does not share arguments that will later be put forward by Gianfrancesco and Savonarola in their treatises. Finally, he looks (in chapter 6) at how Pico interprets the influence of the sun and the moon over the earth and argues that this is a development of the concerns already expressed before in the *Heptaplus* and the *Expositiones*, which seek resolution within the framework of natural philosophy.

The book's last section is devoted to the pro and contra reception of the *Disputationes* among Pico's contemporaries. A study of the works of Savonarola (chapter 7) and Gianfrancesco Pico (chapter 8) allows Akopyan to establish that they have substantive differences with Pico's position and that there is also evidence that they were influenced by the *Disputationes*, not vice versa. On the other hand, an analysis of the works of Lucio Bellanti, Giovanni Pontano, and Francesco Zorzi (chapters 10, 11, and 12) serves to contrast Pico's ideas and to broaden our view of the debate over astrology at the time, but also to identify in detail the context in which the arguments that question the authorship of the *Disputationes* arise.

Debating the Stars undoubtedly opens a new horizon to understanding Pico's *Disputationes* as a part of his greater intellectual enterprise. It opens further questions on how his ideas evolved and his philosophical relation to Savonarola and Gianfrancesco. As Akopyan suggests, Pico was a leading philosopher, not a mere follower of Savonarola's ideas.

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Epicure aux Enfers: Hérésie, athéisme et hédonisme au Moyen Âge.
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Only one of the ancient philosophers is relegated by Dante to hell: Epicurus. With this metaphor taken from the *Divina Commedia*, Robert begins a magnificent book dedicated to the analysis of the reception of Epicurus's figure and doctrines from antiquity to the Renaissance. His main thesis argues that the master of the Garden was recovered long before the fifteenth century, and, in the context of the scholarly discussion between continuationists and rupturists about the survival of the classical tradition in medieval times, the author masterfully argues that the transmission of Epicureanism shows lines of continuity up to modernity. Despite being a heterogeneous, complex, and ambivalent reception, in general terms during the Middle Ages Epicurean philosophy was rejected and associated with heresy.

The basis on which medieval authors approached Epicurus was established by the late antique Christian apologists and mediated by their struggle against the