

# Who Wants to Live Forever?

Juan Maldonado and Benet Perera  
on the Philosophical (Im/)Possibility  
to Demonstrate the Soul's Immortality<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** In Renaissance philosophy, it is difficult to think of a more debated question than the one revolving around the soul's immortality. Such question constituted a real watershed for philosophers and divided them in two parties: those claiming that the soul's immortality can be demonstrated philosophically, in accordance with the Church's prescriptions formalized by the Papal Bull *De Apostolici Regiminis* (1513), and those claiming, in a more or less nuanced way, that this matter cannot be demonstrated by reason (*lumine naturali*) but belongs to the domain of faith only. This double approach to the truth echoes the 13<sup>th</sup> century most famous discussion around the "double truth", which identified two domains: that of philosophy alone, and that of philosophy and theology as expressing one sole truth. But is it possible to distinguish the two domains in a neat way? This paper aims to study how two 16<sup>th</sup> century Jesuits, Juan Maldonado (1533-1583) and Bento Perera (1535-1610), declined these approaches to the

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truth and defended it in their courses. Their positions are very different. For Maldonado there seems to be no doubt that truths of faith can be demonstrated philosophically, while for Perera, as it is well known to specialists, things are slightly different: the Jesuit philosopher seems to be fascinated by Arabic philosophers, more particularly, by the *absurdissima opinio* of monopsychism, to which he dedicates abundant digressions and explanations. Despite of Perera's reputation as an Averroist, and as a "rebel Jesuit", censored by his superiors, I will contend that at least in some of his numerous elaborations on this precise matter (Roma, Vallicelliana E 50 and 104; Vatican City, Urb. Lat. 1300) his words are more confused than clear, and less original than Maldonado's. Perera in fact does not seem to take a clearcut position on the possibility to demonstrate the soul's immortality, nor does he make a consistent use of the sources he mentions. What kind of account of the human soul did both Jesuits want to transmit in their teaching? What account of the intellect did spring from it? These are two of the main questions this paper aims to reply.

**Keywords:** Renaissance philosophy, Soul's Immortality, Bento Perera, Theory of the Double Truth, Doctrines of the Soul, Renaissance Jesuits.