



Universalitas & Pervasivitas

il costituirsi e diffondersi della S.J. e suoi echi (1540 - 1773)
di A. Pisani

Schede autori Atti costitutivi, ordinamenti, agiografie, etc.

Luis de Molina

One of the most learned and renowned theologians of the Society of Jesus, b. of noble parentage at Cuenca, New Castle, Spain, in 1535; d. at Madrid, 12 October, 1600. At the age of eighteen, he entered the Society of Jesus at Alcalá, and, on finishing his novitiate, was sent up to take his philosophical and theological studies at Coimbra in Portugal. So successful was he in his studies that, at the close of his course, he was installed as professor of philosophy at Coimbra, and promoted a few years later to the chair of theology at the flourishing University of Evora. For twenty years, marked by untiring labour and devotion, he expounded with great success the "Summa" of St. Thomas to eager students. In 1590 he retired to his native city of Cuenca to devote himself exclusively to writing and preparing for print the results of his long continued studies. Two years later, however, the Society of Jesus opened a special school for the science of moral philosophy at Madrid, and the renowned professor was called from his solitude and appointed to the newly established chair. Here death overtook him before he had held his new post for half a year. By a strange coincidence on the same day (12 Oct., 1600), the "Congregatio de auxiliis", which had been instituted at Rome to investigate Molina's new system of grace, after a second examination of his "Concordia", reported adversely on its contents to [Clement VIII](#). Molina was not only a tireless student, but a profound and original thinker. To him we are indebted for important contributions in speculative, dogmatic, and moral theology as well as in jurisprudence. The originality of his mind is shown quite as much by his novel treatment of the old scholastic subjects as by his labours along new lines of theological inquiry.



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Molina's chief contribution to the science of theology is the "Concordia", on which he spent thirty years of the most assiduous labour. The publication of this work was facilitated by the valuable assistance of [Cardinal Albert](#), Grand Inquisitor of Portugal and brother of emperor [Rudolph II](#).



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The full title of the now famous work reads: "Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiæ donis, divina præscientia, providentia, prædestinatione et reprobatione" (Lisbon, 1588). As the title indicates, the work is primarily concerned with the difficult problem of reconciling grace and free will. In view of its purpose and principal contents, the work may also be regarded as a scientific vindication of the Tridentine doctrine on the permanence of man's free will under the influence of efficacious grace (Sess. VI., cap v-vi; can iv-v). It is also the first attempt to offer a strictly logical explanation of the great problems of grace and free will, foreknowledge and providence, and predestination to glory or reprobation, upon an entirely new basis, while meeting fairly all possible objections. This new basis, on which the entire [Molinistic](#) system rests, is the Divine scientia media. To make clear its intrinsic connection with the traditional teachings, the work takes the form of a commentary on several portions of the "Summa" of St. Thomas (I. Q. xiv, a. 13; Q. xix, a. 16; QQ. xxii-iii). Thus Molina is the first Jesuit to write a commentary upon the "Summa". As to style, the work has little to recommend it. The Latinity is heavy, the sentences are long and involved, and the prolix exposition and frequent repetition of the same ideas are fatiguing; in short, "Concordia" is neither easy nor agreeable reading. Even though much of the obscurity of the book may be attributed to the subject matter itself, it may be safely said that the dispute concerning Molina's doctrine would never have attained such violence and bitterness, had the style been more simple and the expressions less ambiguous. And yet Molina was of the opinion that the older heresies concerning grace would never have arisen, or would have soon passed away, if the Catholic doctrine of grace had been treated according to the principles which he followed for the first time in his "Concordia" and with the minuteness and accuracy which characterized that work. But he was greatly mistaken. For not only was his doctrine powerless to check the teachings of Baius, which began to spread soon after the publication of his work, and to prevent the rise of [Jansenism](#), which sprang from early Protestant ideas, but it was itself the cause of that historic controversy which has raged for centuries between Thomists and Molinists, and which has not wholly subsided even to this day. Thus, the "Concordia" became a bone of contention in the schools, and brought on a deplorable discord among the theologians, especially those of the Dominican and Jesuit orders.

The "Concordia" had scarcely left the press, and had not yet appeared on the market, when there rose against it violent opposition. Some theologians, having gotten a knowledge of its contents, endeavoured by every means in their power to prevent its publication. Molina himself withheld the edition for a year. In 1589 he placed it on the market together with a defence of it, which he had in the meantime prepared and which answered the chief objections made against his work even before it appeared. The defense was published separately under the title "Appendix ad Concordiam, continens responsiones ad tres objectiones et satisfactiones ad 17 animadversiones" (Lisbon, 1589). This precaution, however, was of little avail, and the controversy grew apace. Not only his principal adversaries among the Dominicans, [Bañez](#) and [de Lemos](#), but even his own brothers in religion, [Henriquez](#) and [Mariana](#), opposed his doctrine most bitterly. Soon the whole of Spain rang with the clamour of this controversy, and Molina was even denounced to the Spanish Inquisition. When



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the dispute was growing too bitter, Rome intervened and took the matter into its own hands. In 1594 Clement VIII imposed silence upon the contending parties and in 1596 demanded that the documents be sent to the Vatican. To settle the controversy, he instituted in 1598 a special "Congregatio de auxiliis", which at the early stages of the investigation showed a decided opposition to Molina's doctrine. Doubtless Molina took to the grave the impression that Molinism was doomed to incur the censure of the Holy See, for he did not live to see his new system exonerated by [Paul V](#) in 1607.

Undisturbed by the heat and bitterness of the attack, Molina published a complete commentary upon the first part of the Summa of St. Thomas which he had prepared at Evora during the years 1570-73 (*Commentaria in primum partem D. Thomæ*, 3 vols., Cuenca, 1592). The chief characteristic of this work, which has been repeatedly re-edited, is the insertion where opportunity offered of most of the dissertations of the "Concordia", which thus became an integral part of the commentary. The increasing bitterness and confusion of ideas occasioned by the controversy induced Molina to publish a new edition of the "Concordia", with numerous additions, in which he endeavoured to correct the many misconceptions and misrepresentations of his doctrine, and at the same time to dispel the important misgivings and accusations of his adversaries. This edition bears the title, "Liberi arbitrii cum gratiæ donis etc. concordia, altera sui parte auctior" (Antwerp, 1595, 1609, 1795; new edition, Paris, 1876). Today this is the only standard edition. After a lapse of nearly a century the Dominican Father [Hyacinthe Serry](#), in his "Historia Congregationis de auxiliis" (Louvain, 1700; Antwerp, 1709) accused Molina of having omitted many assertions from his Antwerp edition of the "Concordia" which were parts of the Lisbon edition. But Father Livinus de Meyer, S.J., subjected the two editions to a critical comparison, and succeeded in showing that the omissions in questions were only secondary in moment, and that Serry's accusation was thus groundless. Meyer's work bears the title, "Historia controversiarum de auxiliis" (Antwerp, 1708). De Molina was not less eminent as a moralist and jurist than as a speculative theologian. A proof of this is his work, "De Justitia et jure" (Cuenca, 1593) which appeared complete only after his death. This work is a classic, referred to frequently even in the present time (7 vols., Venice, 1614; 5 vols., Cologne, 1743). On broad lines Molina develops therein not only the theory of law in general and the special juridical questions arising out of the political economies of his time (e.g., the law of exchange), but also enters very extensively into the questions concerning the juridical relations between church and State, pope and prince, and the like. It is a sad fact that, in order to justify the brutal persecution of the Jesuits in France, the Benedictine Clémencet ("Extracts des assertions pernicieuses", etc., Paris, 1672) ransacked even this solid work and fancied he found therein lost principles of morality. This is but one of the many misfortunes which, at that time of unrest, fell so heavily, and as a rule so undeservedly, on the Society of Jesus (cf. Döllinger, "Moralstreitigkeiten", I, Munich, 1889, p. 337). The work, "De Hispanorum primigeniorum origine et nature" (Alcalá, 1573; Cologne, 1588) is often attributed to Molina; in reality it is the work of another jurist of the same name, who was born at Ursaon in Andalusia.



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As a man, priest, and religious Molina commanded the respect and esteem of his bitterest adversaries. During his whole life his virtues were a source of edification to all who knew him. To prompt obedience he joined true and sincere humility. On his death-bed, having been asked what he wished done with his writings, he answered in all simplicity: "The Society of Jesus may do with them what it wishes". his love for evangelical poverty was most remarkable; in spite of his bodily infirmity brought on by overwork, he never sought any mitigation in that matter of either clothing or food. He was a man of great mortification to the very end of his life.

Sources

A biography and bibliography together with a portrait of Molina may be found in the Cologne edition of his *De justitia et jure*, I (1733). It bears the title, *L. Molina, S. J. vitæ morumque brevis adumbratio atque operum Catalogus*. There is no modern critical biography. See MORGOTT in Kirkenlex, s. v.; SOMMERVOGEL, *Bibl. des écrivains de la C. de J.*, V, 1167-70; HURTER, *Nomenclator*, I (2nd. ed.), 47 sqq.

About this page

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“La stesura della *Concordia* procurò a Molina violenti attacchi, soprattutto da parte degli ambienti domenicani: l’opera ottenne l’imprimatur del Tribunale dell’Inquisizione portoghese solo dopo alcune correzioni e innumerevoli difficoltà. La pubblicazione di questo scritto diede il via alla cosiddetta polemica de auxiliis, che si infiammò nel 1595, quando il domenicano Domingo Bañez rispose al gesuita Molina con la *Apología de los hermanos dominicos*: i due teologi si accusarono reciprocamente di eresia; il nostro fu tacciato di pelagianesimo, mentre Bañez fu accusato di aver scritto opere di stampo luterano e calvinista. Solo nel 1607, dopo la morte di entrambi i contendenti, una commissione istituita a Roma dieci anni prima da papa Clemente VIII – la *Congregatio de auxiliis* – stabilì che nessuno dei due testi era da considerarsi portatore di dottrine eretiche.

Secondo Molina, anche dopo il peccato originale, la natura umana è rimasta immutata: l’uomo, come essere naturale, è assolutamente libero e totalmente indeterminato fra bene e male. Ciò che l’uomo ha perso peccando sono i doni e le virtù soprannaturali di cui Dio l’aveva dotato, passando così da uno stato di comunione con il trascendente ad uno stato puramente naturale. Quindi, l’uomo può compiere il bene naturale senza bisogno della grazia, ma col solo concorso generale di Dio; per



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quanto riguarda la salvezza eterna, invece, l'efficacia delle sue azioni dipende ancora dalla grazia divina: nemmeno la fede nella rivelazione, che è il primo passo verso la salvezza, è un atto di pura volontà, ma richiede la vocazione divina della grazia.

Ciononostante, l'efficacia della grazia dipende anche dalla volontà dell'uomo che riceve l'*auxilium* divino. La cooperazione umana è necessaria affinché la grazia divina sia efficace. Benché con le buone opere in quanto tali non sia possibile esigere o meritare la grazia, chi in vita con le sue forze fa il possibile riceve in ogni caso l'*auxilium* di Dio. A tal proposito, Piero Martinetti scrive molto chiaramente che «Dio non accieca e non indurisce i cuori, ma non illumina e non salva se non chi vuole essere illuminato e salvato» (*La libertà*, cap. I). L'azione della grazia non è un impulso irresistibile che determina necessariamente il volere umano (come accade, ad esempio, per il giansenismo), ma un'illuminazione, un aiuto, un'attrazione che volge "lo sguardo" della volontà verso il bene, lasciandola nello stesso tempo libera di scegliere se compierlo o meno: detto altrimenti, l'efficacia della grazia divina dipende in ultima analisi dalla libera volontà dell'uomo, che ha il potere di decidere se accogliere o non accogliere l'illuminazione di Dio. Secondo Molina, «si dice libero quell'agente che, pur essendo posti tutti i requisiti dell'agire, può agire o non agire»: egli riconosce, dunque, il fatto che per agire occorrono dei moventi, cosicché la libertà non nasce mai, per così dire, da un punto zero; al contrario, devono esservi le cause che producono l'azione senza tuttavia essere determinanti. In tal maniera, l'uomo mantiene la sua facoltà (agostiniana) di far sì che le cause diventino attive e producano un effetto oppure di far sì che rimangano inattive. Ogni azione pertanto ha sempre i suoi moventi, cosicché non sono mai io a causare le mie azioni (ed è questa una concessione al determinismo di [Lutero](#)), ma ciononostante sono libero di lasciare che tale causa agisca, il che significa fare una cosa oppure un'altra. Se ne evince che, in siffatta ottica, il libero arbitrio altro non è se non il sospendere alla radice un meccanismo deterministicamente precedente. Per difendere la Provvidenza, poi, senza perciò seppellire la libertà, Molina ricorre ad uno scaltro quanto brillante espediente: il "concorso simultaneo", per cui ogni evento scaturisce dalla intima cooperazione di ben due cause. La prima corrisponde all'intervento di Dio (che di tutte le cose è autore), la seconda riguarda invece l'azione di un agente creato: pertanto, da un lato Dio è il principio della causalità e, in questo senso, è autore di tutto ciò che avviene, ma, dall'altro lato, quale sia la causa specifica che si attiva in un dato momento, ciò dipende dall'intervento di una creatura. Dunque, per i fatti fisici l'azione della creatura è sempre data da un corpo naturale che non può agire altrimenti da come agisce: così il fuoco riesce a scaldare la pietra perché vi è la causalità generale garantita da Dio e, in aggiunta, la specifica proprietà di bruciare peculiare del fuoco. Nel caso dei fatti morali, poi, da una parte c'è sempre l'influsso di Dio come causa generale, ma, dall'altra, c'è la libera volontà dell'uomo, che può applicare la causalità divina o lasciarla inoperante. Ad esempio, se siamo indotti per passione a compiere un delitto, da un lato c'è la possibilità di essere causa di tal delitto (e ciò deriva da Dio), dall'altro però come causa seconda io posso decidere se rendere operante tale causalità (e compiere il delitto) o renderla inattiva (astenedomi dal compiere il delitto).”



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Cfr.: Alessandro Sangalli www.filosofico.net/molina.htm

“...quest’opera del gesuita spagnolo... fece tanto discutere, scatenando la polemica tra Domenicani e Gesuiti, e la divisione tra tomisti e molinisti. Nel secolo successivo il termine ‘molinismo’ venne impiegato dai giansenisti contro i loro avversari, e acquistò un significato spregiativo ingiustificato. ‘C’est cet ouvrage qui fit naître les disputes sur *la grace*... Les Dominicains soutinrent thèses sur thèses pour foudroyer le nouveau système. La Cardinal de Quiroga, grand Inquisiteur d’Espagne, fatigué de ces querelles, le porta au tribunal de Clement VIII, qui forma, en 1597, pour les teminer, la célèbre Congrégation *De Auxiliis*; mais... il ne fut rien de décidé. Paul V... se contenta de donner un décret, en 1607, par le quel il permit aux deux écoles d’enseigner leurs sentiments, et leur défendit de se censurer mutuellement’ (Feller).

Louis de Molina (1536 – 1600), grande teologo gesuita originario di Cuenca, insegnò per un ventennio a Eborac, e infine fu chiamato a Madrid per insegnarvi teologia morale. Con quest’opera aveva cercato di conciliare la teoria della Grazia e della Predisposizione con quella del libero arbitrio. La prima edizione apparve a Lisbona nel 1588, e scatenò polemiche assolutamente inattese. Il cardinale Alberto d’Austria ne proibì la vendita, e la fece esaminare da vari censori; dopo aver rischiato di essere messa all’Indice, ne fu poi autorizzata la ristampa solo con l’aggiunta di una Appendice esplicativa. L’edizione ‘autorizzata’ fu quindi a tutti gli effetti quella di Anversa.”

Fonte: dal catalogo *De Societate Jesu* edito dalla Libreria antiquaria Soave – Torino.
[http://woodstock.georgetown.edu/library/lib_files/De Societate Jesu.pdf](http://woodstock.georgetown.edu/library/lib_files/De_Societate_Jesu.pdf)

Pur convinto dei gravi errori che albergavano all’interno della Compagnia, Juan de Mariana, per prendere distanza dagli oppositori del generale, attaccò con veemenza Molina e la sua “teoria della grazia”. Parimenti [Achille Gagliardi](#), che pur si trovava a occupare una posizione non del tutto ortodossa all’interno della Societas, nel 1602 scrisse al padre generale che le posizioni di Molina facevano “nascere divisione nella Compagnia”.

Di particolare rilievo è la posizione che Molina assunse nella controversia sulla *potestas indirecta* del papa:

“He began by considering what authority Christ had, as a man and as God. As the Imperialist-Papalist and Conciliarist controversies which prefigured this debate had amply demonstrated, this was the critical issue. Christ’s vicar or vice-gerent would almost certainly have less authority than Christ, but could not possibly have more. Molina contended that, as man, Christ was neither King of the Jews nor lord of the world. All power was indeed given to him by the Father, ‘so that he could have taken and can take all the kingdoms of the world, depose kings, and dispose at will... of all temporal things and matters, without any injustice to anyone’. But whatever potestas had as the Son of God, the essential point was that he chose not to use them, and therefore



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no Vicar of Christ could assume them either... The Pope, therefore, is not the *princeps mundi*, and no pope has the right to assume, or has ever assumed, the titles or offices of kings and emperors. According to Molina, 'in the ordinary way'... it is not for the Pope to create or depose kings or other lay powers, but rather for commonwealths themselves; nor does the Supreme Pontiff have any authority to adjudicate 'directly' ... in temporal contentions between princes, or to invalidate their laws ...; the Pope is not even lord of the temporal goods of the Church, but rather their administrator... The point of all this was not to flog a dead horse (although perhaps some popes and even some Jesuits needed to be disabused of illusions), but to reassure rulers: 'so that it will be clear that no Christian prince can rightly accuse the Catholic Church or its doctrine of robbing [temporal authority] of its due authority at will'. More important, papal authority had to be reconciled with the theoretical datum that the *respublica civilis* is a *communitas perfecta* acknowledging no superior, and that temporal and spiritual authority are different in nature and legitimation. But just as it was groundless to assert papal supremacy over the secular world, it was equally groundless to deny that there was some papal authority over that world. According to the Jesuits, such a denial was manifest heresy, advanced only by medieval heretics like (especially) Marsiglio of Padua, or modern ones. By contrast, they described the other, hieratic extreme as erroneous, presumably because a succession of popes had maintained it... Jesuits then produced the Golden Mean. In Molina's words: 'between these two extreme doctrines some mediating position must be embraced', which he attributed to Torquemada, Waldensis, Caietanus, Mair, Vitoria, Soto, Pighius, Azpicuelta, and others. The mediating doctrine is that of *potestas indirecta*. The term itself seems to have crept in without anyone noticing. The older term *potestas ex consequenti*, by entailment, was clearer."

Cfr.: Harro Höpfl *Jesuit Political Thought. The Society of Jesus and the State, c. 1540 – 1630*
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 348-50.

Vedi anche: [profilo biografico di Luis de Molina nel sito dell'Enciclopedia Treccani](#)