

# Introduction

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## 1 Preview

In the early 1670s, the Roman Holy Office ordered a series of investigations into the spread of mechanical philosophy and atomism in Paris, Brussels, and Naples, regarding in particular the dissemination of the philosophies of Gassendi and Descartes.<sup>1</sup> Notably, in Naples the members of the *Accademia degli Investiganti* (1663-70) had been much taken by these new ideas. After the official closure of the academy, this circle enlarged, began to meet in less secluded places and discussed its ideas more openly, thereby attracting a new generation of intellectuals to the ‘new philosophy’. A series of books and manuscripts testifies to the ever broader appeal of corpuscular theories, among which Leonardo di Capua’s *Parere* (1681), and Francesco D’Andrea’s widely circulated manuscript *Apologia in difesa degli atomisti* (1685) are worth mentioning. The Church responded to this situation with unseen determination. Prominent Church leaders delivered fiery sermons condemning a doctrine that, according to them, denied the existence

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<sup>1</sup> See the letter, dated 21 November 1671, by Francesco Barberini, Secretary of the Holy Office in Rome, to Innico Caracciolo, Archbishop of Naples, in BNN, XI.AA.22, fol. 71rv; cf. Amabile 1892, 2: 53-4.

of God, the immortality of the soul and the possibility of miracles, including the liquefaction of the blood of San Gennaro, the patron saint of Naples.

Control over intellectual activities increased after 1686, and in particular on the occasion of the arrival of the new minister of the Holy Office Giuseppe Nicola Giberti, bishop of Teano. On March 21, 1688, Giberti accepted the 'spontaneous' deposition of Francesco Paolo Manuzzi, a young practicing lawyer, who confessed to conversations about heretical ideas and mentioned other young persons, namely, Basilio Giannelli, Giacinto De Cristofaro, and Filippo Belli. Manuzzi argued that the latter endorsed the 'philosophy of the atoms' and thus had lost their faith. When we look at Manuzzi's deposition, we encounter a series of extraordinary claims purportedly made by the 'atomist' Neapolitans, including the existence of pre-Adamitic humans, errors and abuses committed by Christ and the popes, the inexistence of God, Hell, Purgatory, Paradise, and the uselessness of the sacraments.

It is clear from both Manuzzi's indictment and later interrogations that the supposed heretical and otherwise heterodox opinions and ideas were never disseminated in written word or print but only expressed during discussions, strolls in the street with colleagues, in encounters at friends' houses, and in bookshops or chemists' shops. Indeed, searches carried out by the local Holy Office that aimed at finding incriminating books or manuscripts did not uncover any evidence to support the accusations. The interrogations of the four main suspects reveal that the significance of these discussions was estimated and assessed differently. While Manuzzi and Giannelli admitted to embracing heretical ideas and entertaining heretical views for varying durations, De Cristofaro and Belli, in contrast, emphasized that their deliberations on matters and problems related to natural philosophy were purely theoretical in nature. They stated that these discussions were primarily inspired by their readings of ancient poets and philosophers. Furthermore, De Cristofaro explicitly defended the legitimacy of philosophical discussions '*remota fide*', meaning the possibility of a free exchange of ideas detached from the framework of Catholic doctrine, without, however, questioning or challenging the latter.

Giuseppe Nicola Giberti's investigation into the group of researchers was limited to a few interrogations, and to a general report (*informo*) on their activities and the spread of their 'heresies'. Then, in June 1688, a powerful earthquake occurred, causing significant disruption, and slowing down the progress of the investigation, because numerous potential suspects sought refuge outside the city. Additionally, Giberti's health was precarious, further impeding the proceedings for over a year. Consequently, the investigation faced significant delays. In 1690, the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office, responsible for overseeing the inquiry, appointed Giovanni Battista Giberti as the new minister of the local Holy Office, replacing his namesake. Prior to his appointment, Giovanni Battista had been serving as the bishop of Cava since 1683.

Under the leadership of this Giberti, the trial against Manuzzi, Giannelli, De Cristofaro and Belli was revived, and a series of trials was also started against a group of persons who, under the leadership of Antonio Bara, studied atomism and corpuscular philosophy, summoning a significant number of individuals to testify.<sup>2</sup> Giberti also submitted an official request

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<sup>2</sup> See section 6.

to the Roman Congregation, ultimately resulting in the arrest of Manuzzi and Giannelli in Spain in December 1691. However, prior to their arrests, the situation in Naples rapidly deteriorated following the apprehension of Giacinto De Cristofaro in August 1691. In response to this event, the political representatives of the nobility and middle class elected to the city Council lodged an official appeal with the Viceroy, condemning the Holy Office's arrest of laymen without having informed the political authorities beforehand. They viewed this action as unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of the Kingdom. In September 1691, the nobility and middle class joined forces in a unified effort against the inquisitorial activities by forming a permanent Deputation of the Holy Office, basically re-establishing the same organization that had been active in 1661. They successfully secured substantial assurances from the Viceroy regarding the safety of lay intellectuals. Towards the end of September, Giberti was compelled to go into exile, and the prisoners in the Inquisition jail were relocated to the archbishop's prison. Meanwhile, the charge of Minister of the Holy Office was assumed *ad interim*, first by the Apostolic Nuncio Lorenzo Casoni, and in August 1692 by the Archbishop Giacomo Cantelmo.

In December 1691, the Spanish Inquisition began a trial against Manuzzi and Giannelli, who had both arrived in Madrid just a couple of months earlier. They underwent multiple interrogations, faced trial, and in the following spring, they were sentenced to abjuration. It is worth noting that despite the gravity of the accusations against them and their own confessions, they received relatively lenient penances as part of their sentencing. They were released in March 1692, and shortly afterwards returned to Italy. On 11 November of this year, archbishop Cantelmo arrested Nicola Galdieri, Matteo Vitale, Giovanni De Magistris, and Carlo Rosito, who were already suspected of atheism in 1690. Then, on 26 November, Filippo Belli was arrested in Campagna (near Salerno).

In February 1693, Cantelmo took resolute action against Rosito and De Magistris, compelling them to a public abjuration in Naples' cathedral. This humiliation and act of force provoked a strong reaction from the Deputation of the Holy Office, which in June of the same year sent a delegation to Rome with the intention of permanently abolishing the Inquisition Tribunal in Naples. However, despite engaging in two years of negotiations with a delegation of the cardinals of the Holy Office and the Pope, no substantial progress was made, as anticipated. In the meantime, the trials of De Cristofaro and Filippo Belli persisted and eventually concluded in 1695 and 1697, respectively. Both defendants were compelled to formally renounce their alleged heresies through abjuration.

Following a prolonged and arduous struggle that spanned nearly a decade, the Holy Office found itself compelled to primarily target lesser-known members of the group of innovators, refraining from involving leading figures such as Leonardo Di Capua, Francesco d'Andrea, and Lucantonio Porzio. Nevertheless, the Church not only succeeded in preserving the practice of regular inquisitorial activities within the Kingdom but also established a precedent through a series of imprisonments and abjurations, serving as a cautionary measure and deterrent to those engaged in innovative research endeavors.

Since the publication of Luciano Osbat's seminal study, *L'Inquisizione a Napoli. Il processo agli ateisti 1688-1697* (Rome 1974), the overall framework of the trial has become known. However, numerous aspects pertaining to

the interplay between philosophy, theology, politics, and culture, as well as various aspects and issues, have yet to be thoroughly examined. This aims to provide a comprehensive reconstruction of events (in the Chronology section) while presenting a substantial collection of pertinent documentation related to the atheism trial. Some remarks on the selection of documents and data used are due.

The chronology is primarily based on the two main manuscript sources kept in the Diocesan Historical Archive in Naples and the National Library in Naples. The codex kept in the Diocesan Archive has the shelf mark Sant'Ufficio, *Processi*, 265, 4030 (ex ms. 761) and is entitled: *Spontanea comparitio utriusque iuris doctoris Francisci Pauli Manutij nec non Processus originales contra utriusque iuris doctores Hyacinthum de Cristofaro et Philippum Belli ubi etiam contra Basilium Janelli* (The spontaneous appearance of Francesco Paolo Manuzzi, doctor of canon and civil law, as well as the minutes of the trials against the doctors of law Giacinto De Cristofaro and Filippo Belli, including [the trial] against Basilio Giannelli). It contains the official proceedings of the trial, the correspondence between the local Holy Office and the central seat in Rome, and the depositions and petitions of defendants and witnesses. Codex I.AA.32 of the National Library in Naples contains copies of the depositions by defendants and witnesses of the trial against Giacinto De Cristofaro, which were used by the latter to prepare his defense. In addition, it contains drafts and definite versions of petitions and declarations written by De Cristofaro and Filippo Belli. Furthermore, the documentation now available in the historical archive of the Inquisition in Rome preserved in the Archive of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith provides essential information not only concerning the decisions taken in the meetings of the Congregation of the Holy Office, and recorded in the series *Decreta*, but also regarding the exchange of letters between Naples and Rome. This includes not only the correspondence between the minister of the Neapolitan Holy Office and the central Roman seat, but also that between the Nuncio in Naples and the Secretary of State in Rome, who was included via correspondence to the assessor of the Holy Office. Finally, the Neapolitan journals kept by Tiberio Carafa, Domenico Confuorto, and Antonio Bulifon offer a glance at how daily developments in the case were assessed in the public sphere.

By contrast, the extensive documentation of the polemics regarding the Holy Office in Naples has not been considered. In the Appendix, I have indicated the main writings on debates over the Holy Office in Naples, including the re-foundation of the Deputation of the Holy Office (see also section 3) in Naples in 1692-93, and the mission of its deputies Pietro Di Fusco and Mario Loffredo in Rome in the period from June 1693 to July 1695.<sup>3</sup>

With few exceptions all documents date back to the period between 21 March 1688, when Francesco Paolo Manuzzi appeared 'spontaneously' before the Inquisition Court and denounced himself and his accomplices Giacinto De Cristofaro, Basilio Giannelli, and Filippo Belli to the minister of the Holy Office in Naples, and 16 June 1697, when the trial was concluded with the solemn abjuration by Giacinto De Cristofaro. As a rule, only documents relevant to the case against the group of 'atheists' have been taken into consideration. Information on the wider historical context has been

<sup>3</sup> A large part of the correspondence of Di Fusco and Loffredo with the Deputation in Naples is in the codices BNE, ms. 974-976.

kept to a minimum. Many notes concern the meetings and decisions of the so-called '*piazza/sedili/seggi nobili*' (noble seats) and the '*Piazza del Popolo*' (popular seat), that is, the representative organs for the nobility and the middle sort, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

The inquisitorial processes conducted against 'atheists' in Naples between 1688 and 1697 hold significant importance as a reference point for understanding the philosophical culture of late seventeenth-century Southern Italy. These trials were a crucial part of a comprehensive strategy aimed at controlling and ultimately impeding the cultural transformations associated with the emergence and dissemination of innovative intellectual, scientific, juridical, and political ideas that had begun to flourish in the 1650s.<sup>5</sup> This transformative period found support among the emerging bourgeoisie and was characterized by a remarkable expansion of intellectual curiosity and philosophical freedom, a characteristic not commonly observed in many other Catholic nations.

Through the study of these trials, we can gain valuable insights into how the authorities in power sought to monitor and regulate this cultural transformation. By examining the strategies employed, the actions taken, and the individuals targeted in these trials, we can better understand the mechanisms put in place to suppress and maintain control over the evolving intellectual landscape of the time. This allows us to delve into the intricate dynamics between power, ideology, and the pursuit of philosophical inquiry during this significant period of history.

Manuzzi's denunciation was remarkable as it signalized a nearly total denial of Christian faith. However, none of these claims is found in any other early modern atomistic or corpuscular philosophy, which suggests that atomism here is a vehicle or stand-in for other criticism against the Church. This raises some questions. How did Catholic censorship assess early modern natural philosophy and science? How did the specific political and cultural situation in the Kingdom of Naples shape the reception of modern philosophy and science? In addition, by categorizing the intellectuals interested in atomism as atheists, censors attempted to diminish the connection between philosophy and civil ideology. This point raises the question of how, in Naples, the pursuit of innovation – both political and juridical, as well as philosophical and scientific – transcended disciplinary and institutional boundaries. Such engagement in innovative knowledge and practices included, among others, lawyers and ministers of the viceregal government, as well as philosophers and physicians.

In section 2, I briefly summarize the different theses developed in earlier studies of the trial against atheism in Naples, thus outlining an initial orientation regarding the issues at stake. Section 3 explains *in nuce* the reasons why early modern natural philosophy and science became liable to theological censure, with particular attention to atomistic and corpuscular strands.

In the fourth section I turn to the broader ideological and political context, indicating how the trials regarding faith in Naples fell under the competence of two courts, namely the local representative of the Roman Holy Office and the Curia of the Archbishop. To aid in the interpretation of the Inquisition documents, section 5 of this introduction offers a concise overview

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed explanation of these representative bodies, see section 8.

<sup>5</sup> For discussion, see Fisch 1953; Torrini 1981; 2022; Girard 2016.

of the rules and criteria governing the proceedings of the Roman Inquisition, the 'supreme' ecclesiastical court since the late sixteenth century.

Next, in section 6, I provide a brief reconstruction of the interrelationships among the various lawsuits involving atomism and atheism during this period. I pay particular attention to the groups that drew scrutiny from Catholic doctrinal authorities in Naples. In the seventh section, I outline recurring defense strategies employed by the defendants in these inquisition trials, including some noteworthy approaches.

The two final sections are devoted to a brief explanation of the Neapolitan administrative and juridical institutions, and to a consideration on the broader ideological context of the drive for cultural innovation in late seventeenth-century Naples.

## 2 *Status Quaestionis*: Interpretations of the Trial

At the end of the nineteenth century, Luigi Amabile was the first to draw attention to the Neapolitan trial against the atheists. Amabile had at his disposal the codex I.AA.32 of the National Library in Naples, in which the documents available to and produced by De Cristofaro had been collected, in addition to many favorable declarations by friends and colleagues. Amabile, who also collected other materials that he later donated to the National Library of Naples,<sup>6</sup> offered a succinct view of some stages of the process and focused on the conflict that arose in 1693 between the City of Naples and the Roman Curia over the legal procedures used in trials of faith. The Roman Congregation pushed for the '*via extraordinaria*', which entrusted the trial to the local representative or minister of the Holy Office, included torture, and kept the names and surnames of witnesses inaccessible to the defense. By contrast, the political representatives of Naples – of both the noble and popular seats – insisted on the '*via ordinaria*'.

By entrusting the trials of faith, by *via ordinaria*, to the bishop, there could be a departure from the secretive nature of traditional inquisitorial trials. This could involve allowing witnesses to testify openly and removing the veil of secrecy that often shrouded such proceedings. The intention behind this shift may be to promote a more inclusive and accessible judicial process, ensuring that the trial and its outcome are perceived as fair and just by the broader community. However, it is essential to note that this method would represent a departure from established practices within the inquisitorial system. The role of the local bishop in such trials would need to be clearly defined, and mechanisms would have to be in place to ensure impartiality, accountability, and protection of the accused's rights.<sup>7</sup>

In his study *L'Inquisizione a Napoli. Il processo agli ateisti 1688-1697* (Rome 1974), Luciano Osbat was able to use for the first time the original documents of the trial preserved in the Diocesan Historical Archive of Naples. Osbat interpreted the trial in the context of the political situation in the Kingdom of Naples in the second half of the seventeenth century, which was marked by a conflict between the divergent interests of feudal lords and viceregal functionaries. The barons were keen on preserving their power,

<sup>6</sup> See the codices BNN, XI.AA.22-23, entitled *Raccolta di scritture di Santo Officio*.

<sup>7</sup> Amabile 1892, 2: 54-75.

privileges, and wealth, while the viceroy's ministers aimed to centralize power and bolster the authority of the monarchy by generating more revenue. By supporting the viceroy, they hoped to break the power of the landed gentry to pave the way for a far-reaching reform of the social and economic order of the time. In addition to seeing in the trial "a real campaign of reaction against modern philosophies", <sup>8</sup> Osbat formulated the hypothesis that Manuzzi's denunciation was somehow linked to the contemporary struggle between a turbulent feudal lord, that is, the employer of Manuzzi, Giulio Acquaviva, Count of Conversano, and viceregal officials (Neapolitan jurists and lawyers) who supported the authority of the viceregal government against the arrogance of the barons.

In a review of Osbat's book, <sup>9</sup> Giuseppe Galasso criticized Osbat's interpretation of the trial as overly reductionist, framing it as a mere power struggle. <sup>10</sup> Galasso argued instead that the trial should be interpreted from another perspective. In papal Rome the Kingdom of Naples had always been seen as a kind of privileged 'hunting reserve', linked to the Church by a particular bond <sup>11</sup> which granted the Ecclesiastical State a primary role in the control of Neapolitan public life. In Galasso's view, this explains why, starting from the sixteenth century, resistance by the Neapolitan population against Rome frequently manifested as a conflict related to the Inquisition. The citizens were defending one of the few remaining spaces where they could assert some autonomy. Generally, the Spanish Crown, being well-aware of this situation, neither openly combated nor supported this resistance, maintaining a delicate balance of power. While Osbat emphasized the class and social distinctions in seventeenth-century Naples, Galasso highlighted the consensus between the political representatives of the nobility and the middle class, as well as the inter-state relations between Rome and Naples in this ongoing struggle. The trial for atheism was merely a new episode within it. There was an important difference, however, because this time the conflict was also conditioned by the spread of modern (corpuscular and atomistic) philosophy and by the coming into being of a new jurisdictional culture. Indeed, we find an entire society undergoing transformation as it collided with traditional forces and restraints. Galasso's interpretation is in fact confirmed by other episodes during the trial, such as the request by the noble seats that trials regarding faith be public and not secret, the prompt condemnation of the poisonous anti-modernist pamphlet *Turris fortitudinis* in 1696 by the local political authorities, and the detailed refutations of Benedetto Aletino's *Lettere apologetiche* – written in defense of Aristotle and "against libertines and atheists" – by Francesco d'Andrea and Costantino Grimaldi in the 1690s and in the first decades of the following century.

In the second expanded edition of his study on Italian libertinism released in 1983, Giorgio Spini defined the trial as

<sup>8</sup> Osbat 1974, 47.

<sup>9</sup> In *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani*, 5, 1975, 163-8.

<sup>10</sup> In his *Napoli Spagnola dopo Masaniello* (first edition: 1972), Galasso had devoted a chapter to the atheism trial, but his analysis was merely based on contemporary journals and diaries, such as those by Bulifon, Carafa and Confuorto. See Galasso 1982, ch. 19.

<sup>11</sup> See also section 9, for the alleged feudal bonds between the Ecclesiastical State and the Kingdom of Naples.

a clamorous clash between papal Rome, well-determined to obtain victory, and Naples, by now pervaded by the tremors of that anti-curialism which in the following century would find its champion and its martyr in Pietro Giannone. (Spini 1983, 359)

Spini drew attention to the essentially 'traditional' nature of Manuzzi's accusations (denial of incarnation and divinity of Christ, papal authority, afterlife, sacraments, miracles), qualifying these as "very old stuff, of which not even one iota can be traced back to Descartes or Spinoza, Gassendi or Hobbes". He therefore claimed that both Manuzzi first and the inquisitorial judges later obviously resorted to the libertine *loci communes* attributing these to De Cristofaro, Giannelli and Belli, without checking whether such views were still entertained or not by contemporary modern philosophers. As for Giannelli, the only one who after Manuzzi's denunciation actually confessed having professed the incriminating doctrines, Spini maintained that his confession was most likely coerced by the Spanish Inquisition. De Cristofaro and Filippo Belli's constant refusal to plead guilty therefore deserve to be taken seriously. Spini concluded that even if it was very probable that De Cristofaro and his friends were not at all followers of libertine ideas, it was undeniable at least that such ideas were buzzing in their ears, not only in the ears of Manuzzi, but also in those of the ecclesiastical censors. And thus, it can be concluded that in late seventeenth-century Italy there was still sufficient space for a considerable circulation of the idea that monotheistic religions were founded by impostors, and that religion served mainly to keep the people in line and force them to obey.<sup>12</sup>

In a recent essay by Vittoria Fiorelli, emphasis is placed on the concerns of the Roman Inquisition regarding the erosion of authority within both secular and ecclesiastical spheres. Consequently, the Inquisition aimed to exert control over various expressions of religious and intellectual dissent in Naples. According to Fiorelli's analysis, the Roman Inquisition recognized the potential threat posed by the growing dissenting voices and divergent intellectual currents in Naples. These dissenting ideas and perspectives were seen as challenging the established authority of both the Church and the secular ruling powers. To counter this perceived threat, the Inquisition sought to maintain a tight grip on religious and intellectual spheres, ensuring their continued control and dominance.<sup>13</sup>

This brief overview of key studies reveals that the enthusiasm for new science and philosophy often coincided with efforts for broader political and cultural reform. Therefore, it is not surprising that the persecution of alleged atheists in Naples was not solely a matter of disciplinary measures against heterodox religious doctrine or heresy (as discussed in sections 3 and 5). The persecution also held substantial political and institutional significance (as outlined in sections 4 and 9).

<sup>12</sup> Spini 1983, 361-2.

<sup>13</sup> Fiorelli 2021.

### 3 Heterodoxy in Natural Philosophy and Science: The Case of Atomism

Until recently, it was a common place to see the activity of the Roman Congregations of the Inquisition and the Index as the principal cause of the downturn of modern science and innovative philosophical culture in Italy in the period from the second half of the sixteenth until the end of the nineteenth century. The trials against Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei have been labeled time and again as highly emblematic for this process of intellectual decay. Historians, especially those from the Risorgimento period that paved the way for the unified Italian State in 1861-71, frequently highlight these trials as emblematic of a broader erosion of intellectual freedom and progress. In both trials, Copernican astronomy and the new world view were usually seen as elements of the most typical clash between the Catholic Church, on the one hand, and modern science and philosophy, on the other. However, in the period from the rise of the Congregations to the end of the eighteenth century the points of friction were numerous, and they were surely not limited to cosmology only.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, ecclesiastical assessment and censorship of science and natural philosophy underwent some remarkable changes. A few examples may clarify this issue. First, many authors of works which can be viewed as 'scientific' in a modern sense were not prohibited (or prosecuted) for specific scientific or philosophical views, but rather because of their religious creed<sup>14</sup> or else for their involvement in disciplines now regarded as pseudo-scientific, such as astrology and magic. Second, as a rule ecclesiastical censorship did not ban technical scientific works, but rather popularizations and philosophical extrapolations. Newton's *Principia* were not placed on the Index, while expositions of his ideas, such as Voltaire's *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton mis à la portée de tout le monde* (Amsterdam 1738) and Algarotti's *Newtonianismo per le dame* (Naples 1737), were promptly contested or immediately forbidden. Third, the criteria for condemnations were not everlasting.<sup>15</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century exponents of the Roman Curia started to realize that traditional geocentrism had become groundless. The influential consultor Pietro Lazzeri proposed removing the condemnation of heliocentrism from the Index. His view was adopted by the Index issued under Benedict XIV in 1758 which tacitly removed the general condemnation, but not that of the individual works banned in 1616. Finally, many scientific and philosophical works were not condemned *tout court*, but with the *donec corrigatur* or *expurgetur* proviso. This meant that these works could be permitted either in an emended edition or else that reading permits could be granted for current editions as long as they were corrected according to expurgatory *censurae* approved by the central bodies of doctrinal control.

Philosophical and scientific views became liable to theological censure when they contradicted or questioned the Holy Scripture, conciliar decrees, papal bulls, and the authority of the Fathers and schoolmen.<sup>16</sup> This meant that some disciplinary fields and doctrinal issues were more 'sensitive' than

<sup>14</sup> See also Carolino 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Baldini, Spruit 2009, "Introduction", 62-9.

<sup>16</sup> See Castro 1549, fols. 17r-22v.

others. Sixteenth-century proceedings regarding natural philosophy and science focused on heterodox interpretations of Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, on early modern versions of naturalism and materialism, and on the intricate implications of magic and astrology. As we will see below, with the rise of modern philosophy and science in the seventeenth century this scenario radically changed.

Points of frictions between modern science and natural philosophy, on the one hand, and Catholic theology and doctrine, on the other, in the period running from sixteenth to the seventeenth century included: cosmology (Neoplatonic and post Copernican views contradicting the scholastic world picture), psychology (materialism; deviations from Aristotelian hylo-morphism; the denial of the organic hierarchy of souls or of the substantial nature of the intellect; assumption of universal principles, including the world soul or a unique intellect; metempsychosis), medicine (non-Galenic theories; its connection with astrology and, in recipes and cures, to magic), chronology (the extension of the traditional chronology on the basis of scientific and philological arguments), physics (the rejection of the distinction between substance and phenomenal appearance; the denial of secondary qualities and final causality; atomism). For present purposes, the censorial assessment of atomism requires some explanation.

Atomism emerged in ancient Greece as a metaphysical thesis, purporting to establish claims about the nature of material reality. The key feature of ancient atomism was the extent to which it proposed a framework in which to speculate about the nature of reality behind appearances. Leucippus and then Democritus, in the second half of the fifth century BC, argued that permanent reality consisted of beings each characterized by unchanging shape and size. Medieval authors were acquainted with ancient atomism through Aristotle's criticism. The interest in ancient atomism had a strong revival in 1417 when Poggio Bracciolini brought the manuscript of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* to Italy.<sup>17</sup>

Versions of atomism or corpuscularianism that developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were revivals of ancient Greek atomism, including Epicureanism, with the important difference that they were presumed to apply only to the material world, and not to the mind, the soul, the angels and so on. These theories were based on diverse approaches, such as René Descartes' corpuscularianism and Pierre Gassendi's atomism. A distinction should be made between mechanical philosophy, atomism, and corpuscularianism, because not all mechanical philosophers were mechanical atomists and because not all corpuscularists embraced mechanical philosophy. Descartes, for example, could be depicted as a mechanical philosopher, but he rejected the void and held that particles of matter could be broken down into smaller particles.<sup>18</sup>

The term 'doctrine/philosophy of the atoms' was commonly used by Inquisition sources to refer to this collection of theories. The trial against atheism in Naples is a case in point. Despite their differences, contemporaries, particularly opponents of atomism, viewed these systems as significant due to their common goal of challenging the Aristotelian concept of

<sup>17</sup> Poggio found the manuscript in a German monastery (never named, but probably Fulda), in January 1417. See Lüthy, Nicoli 2023, "Introduction".

<sup>18</sup> See Garber, Roux 2013.

matter. Ultimately, atomism was seen as a threat to traditional philosophical and theological frameworks, and thus to the scholastic edifice of learning.

The atomistic conception of matter encountered fierce ecclesiastical and theological resistance. Atomism had been associated with materialism since ancient times and therefore with atheism. Moreover, since the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church framed central elements of faith with the help of Aristotle 'anti-atomistic' matter theory, including transubstantiation. Based on the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accident, it was declared that the accidents (outer aspects) of bread and wine remained intact in the Eucharist, while the substance itself changed in the body and blood of Christ. This distinction between substance and accident was rejected in atomistic and corpuscular philosophy. When in the early modern period, ancient atomism was revived, it therefore got quickly embroiled in theological controversies. Much more seemed to be at stake than merely the structure of matter: the revival of atomism touched upon the relation of soul and body as well as ecclesiastical authority.

During the seventeenth century in Naples, as in most southern European and Catholic countries, the dominant academic, philosophical, and scientific discourse was influenced by the scholastic tradition of philosophy and theology. The teachings of Aristotle and his respected followers, whether they were schoolmen or lay philosophers, served as the fundamental conceptual framework for a wide range of scientific disciplines. The only exceptions were mathematics and mixed mathematics (optics, mechanics, astronomy), for which no foundation was found in Aristotle, and which had developed in the Hellenistic period. Within the walls of the universities, therefore, any research or debate was very much book-centered: it mainly concerned the interpretation of texts by Aristotle and by followers considered orthodox. However, from the early 1650s an alternative circuit arose that was open to the Hellenistic disciplines and to modern, non-Aristotelian scientific and philosophical movements. These discussions, beyond the control of the universities and schools of the religious orders, took place in salons centered around prominent cultural personalities of the time. A case in point is the *Accademia degli Investiganti*, which began its activities in 1663 under the patronage of Andrea Concublet, Marquis of Arena. Then, in 1670, the academy was closed by the viceroy Pedro Antonio de Aragón, to put an end to the disputes with the *Accademia dei Dissonanti*. After its dissolution, members continued to meet informally until about 1683, but after Cornelio's death in 1684 the activities seemed to have ended.

Meanwhile, as we will see in the following sections, corpuscular and atomistic philosophy and science had started to be used as an ideological and political crowbar. To understand this point, we must examine the place of the Inquisition within the political and ecclesiastical power dynamics of the seventeenth-century Kingdom of Naples.

#### **4 One City – Two Inquisitions: Conflicts and Actors Involved**

In the Middle Ages, the Inquisition did not exist as a centralized and universally recognized tribunal. Instead, it operated on an ad hoc basis, primarily addressing emergencies and specific cases of heresy. Examples of such situations include the suppression of the Cathars or the response to the radical Franciscan Fraticelli movement in the fourteenth century. Consequently,

condemnations and prohibitions were frequently issued and enforced at a local level, with inconsistent and sporadic application over time.

However, a significant development occurred in 1478 when the Inquisition in Spain came under the control of the Crown. This marked a transition from the previous medieval Inquisition, which had been under the authority of the Pope. With this shift, the Spanish Inquisition replaced its predecessor and gained greater centralized control and authority.

In 1542, Pope Paul III founded the modern Roman Inquisition with the Bull *Licet ab initio*. The modern Inquisition did not merely aim to block the rapid spread of religious dissent in Italy. With the bull which created the modern Inquisition the Pope entrusted a commission of six cardinals with the protection of orthodoxy in every part of the world, conferring upon them ample juridical powers. Under the pontificate of pope Paul IV, the collaboration between Rome and the peripheral seats increased notably, and the Holy Office became an important weapon against internal dissent. However, although, the two Roman Congregations were intended as universal bodies of doctrinal control, in fact their jurisdiction only extended to the Ecclesiastical State (including Avignon), to most other Italian states and to Malta. The Inquisition's authority in Naples was the result of a hard-won compromise.

After the closure of the Council of Trent, other Catholic nations adopted the Inquisition as an instrument for the control of religious movements and for the conversion to Roman orthodoxy of all the administered dioceses. Also, in the Kingdom of Naples, then a Spanish viceroyalty, the foundation of an ecclesiastical Tribunal of Inquisition was proposed several times, proposals duly rejected by the local aristocracy and the city population. The first rebellion against the attempt to establish the Inquisition of Spain took place in 1509.<sup>19</sup> In 1546-47, a new attempt by the emperor Charles V to introduce the Spanish Inquisition in the viceroyalty, albeit with all possible precautions, caused riots and clashes with over three hundred victims among soldiers and civilians. As a result, in Naples there was no official local delegate inquisitor of the Roman Holy Office in Naples, as there was in North and Central Italian cities, but only a representative, first qualified as 'commissioner' (from 1553), and then as 'minister' (from 1585) of the Roman Holy Office. In trials regarding faith this minister was supposed to collaborate with the archbishop of Naples. Such imposed cooperation did not always run smoothly. This led to the well-known situation of one city and two inquisitions.<sup>20</sup>

In 1661 the resolute and firm action of Camillo Piazza, then minister of the Holy Office in Naples, met the opposition of the Neapolitan population, organized in a permanent Deputation of the Holy Office which asked that the processes of faith be entrusted to the archbishop alone. The members of this Deputation were delegated by the several noble seats and the popular seat, and their chief objective was to eliminate the Inquisition, or at least to limit its activities and authority as much as possible – a rather unique situation for a Catholic Kingdom and its 'most faithful city'.<sup>21</sup> The violent clash

<sup>19</sup> Amabile 1892, 1: 105-9.

<sup>20</sup> Romeo 1988; Scaramella 2002.

<sup>21</sup> In treatises on the Inquisition, Naples was usually qualified as '*città fedelissima*'. See the Appendix.

between the city and minister Piazza resulted in a victory for the former, the latter being forced to leave the city.

During the trial against the atheists, two episodes sparked the resurgence of anti-Inquisition sentiment in the City of Naples. The first happened after the arrest of De Cristofaro in August 1691, and resulted at the end of September of that year in the exile of the minister of the Holy Office, then Giovanni Battista Giberti. The other episode occurred in 1693, when on February 15, Carlo Rosito and Giovanni De Magistris – probably duped by the promise of an immediate release – were induced by Archbishop Giacomo Cantelmo into a public abjuration in front of a large audience in the Cathedral of Naples. Following the events, in the subsequent week, the Deputation for the Holy Office initiated discussions regarding a direct rebuke aimed at the archbishop. Such action would be taken in response to the perceived infringement upon legal principles in the trials concerning matters of faith. Subsequently, in April, the Deputation reconvened and made the decision to appeal to the Pope, requesting the abolition of the inquisitorial tribunal in Naples. And after the meetings of the six noble seats and that of the civil class, the Deputation decided in May to delegate Pietro Di Fusco and Francesco Capece Mercadante, marquis of Pontelatrone (later substituted by Mario Loffredo), to present their requests to the Roman Curia.

Both episodes, in 1661 and 1693, triggered a vigorous debate over possible implications. Discussion was ‘semi-public’ in that only a few contributions were printed and formally published, but the number of manuscript copies in which they survive suggests that they circulated extensively among those most concerned.<sup>22</sup> In the 1690s, the debate focused initially on the jurisdiction of the Inquisition and the justice of its special procedures. The affair raised the question of the authority of the Church of Rome within the Kingdom, at a time when leading figures in the Kingdom’s government became increasingly conscious that they might soon be free of the Spanish monarchy.<sup>23</sup>

Subsequently, the debate shifted to the philosophical issues underlying the charges against the accused. It had been evident from the beginning that the minister of the Holy Office and the archbishop intended to implicate the teachers of the accused, who included the surviving members of the Accademia degli Investiganti, figures such as, Leonardo Di Capua, Lucantonio Porzio, and Francesca d’Andrea. In *Lettere apologetiche in difesa della teologia scolastica e della filosofia peripatetica* (Apologetic Letters in Defense of Scholastic Theology and Peripatetic Philosophy), published in 1694, Benedetto Aletino – pseudonym of the Jesuit school prefect in Naples, Giovanni Battista de Benedictis – launched an attack on modern philosophy and science. In this work, the connection between the aforementioned authors and skepticism, Descartes, atomism, and Epicureanism was plainly asserted, and the contrary truths of scholasticism reasserted. Francesco d’Andrea replied to these attacks in lengthy manuscript works, namely *Risposta a favore del Sig. Lionardo De Capoa contro le Lettere apologetiche del P. De Benedictis Gesuita* (Reply in favor of sir Leonardo Di Capua Against the Apologetic Letters of Father De Benedictis Jesuit), and *Risposta, seconda parte* (Reply, second part), composed in 1697 and 1698, respectively. He

<sup>22</sup> A select bibliography of contributions is in the Appendix.

<sup>23</sup> Robertson 2005, ch. 3.

defended atomism as the best basis for understanding nature, and with it the Cartesian theory of matter as extension. Atomism, he argued, not only offered a far more convincing account of nature than Aristotelianism but was much less likely to lead its exponents into theological heterodoxy. At the same time, he defended Epicurean morals, contrasting their restraint with the laxity permitted by the Jesuits.<sup>24</sup>

Other factors exacerbated the complex situation in Naples, turning it into a proverbial wasp's nest. While the minister and archbishop engaged in correspondence with the Holy Office in Rome, reports of heterodox phenomena were also relayed to the Secretary of State of the Ecclesiastical State by the Apostolic Nuncio. The Nuncio, in turn, maintained diplomatic relations with the Viceroy, who corresponded with the Spanish Court and the Consiglio d'Italia, a commission responsible for Italian affairs, based in Madrid. Moreover, in Rome, Neapolitan matters were discussed and managed through interactions with the Spanish ambassador and the Nuncio in Madrid.

Consequently, within this intricate web of connections between Naples, Madrid, and papal Rome, an intriguing and complex dynamic unfolded, that is, a most peculiar reverse Bermuda triangle – in which nothing disappeared. The initial arrest of some young lawyers served as a prelude to a multifaceted struggle between ecclesiastical and political forces, with each faction vying for influence and control over the unfolding events. This intricate interplay of various actors and interests further intensified the already volatile situation in Naples.

## 5 A Note on Inquisitorial Procedure: Investigation, Lawyer, and Witnesses

The first part of a 'canonical' inquisitorial procedure,<sup>25</sup> the '*inquisitio*', aimed at obtaining a confirmation of the suspicions of heresy or heterodoxy and at identifying the possible perpetrators of deviant behavior. Characterized by the most absolute secrecy, this first investigative part of the trial culminated in the indictment of the suspect, bringing together evidence of guilt gathered mainly during the interrogations of the defendant and from witness testimony.

After the presentation of evidence through the prosecution witnesses and the completion of the interrogation of the accused, if the latter had neither cleared himself nor confessed to the charges, he was permitted to prepare his defense, receiving a notarized copy made at his expense – free in the case of those who could not afford it – of the entire trial conducted up to that point, with the charges (*articuli*) against him. At this point, the lawyer could weigh the evidence on the suspect and try to undermine the solidity and coherence of the accusation. It is worth pointing out that this was a rather difficult task, because in this period inquisitorial authorities practiced

<sup>24</sup> See BNN, ms. I.D.4 and ms. IX.A.66, respectively.

<sup>25</sup> For an overview of how current inquisitorial procedures developed, see Tedeschi 1991, in particular ch. 5: "The Organization and Procedures of the Roman Inquisition: A Sketch". For further reading, see Errera 2000, ch. 1, and Mayer 2013.

the utmost care so that in the copy of the informative process the names of the witnesses of both the prosecutor and the defendant were eliminated.<sup>26</sup>

The trial of the atheists offers an interesting testimony of the procedural style (the often-mentioned '*stylus*') practiced in the inquisitorial process. After a first round of interrogations, the lawyers of Giacinto De Cristofaro and Filippo Belli obtained copies of the trial. The prosecution witnesses were identified using a letter of the alphabet (A, B, C, D), to withhold their identities. The provision of anonymity was difficult to maintain in practice, and indeed in this case De Cristofaro and his lawyer discovered the names of most of the prosecution witnesses.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, only at the outcome of the investigative phase during which the defendant often had only a fragmentary knowledge of the specific accusations, was the possibility of intervention opened for a lawyer. After the formulation of a detailed accusation, the phase of the so-called 'repetitive process' followed, during which the evidence gathered had to receive explicit confirmation from the witness testimonies to sustain a possible condemnation. The defendant and her or his lawyer were permitted to prepare a series of questions intended to rebut the testimony of the accusers. The questionnaires by De Cristofaro and Belli (see under 6 December 1692 and 1 July 1693) are interesting cases in point. Furthermore, the defendant could call friendly witnesses to testify on his behalf, close relatives excluded.

Despite these provisions, it was difficult for anyone unpracticed in the law to mount an effective defense. Several depositions by the defendants – in the case reconstructed below those made by Giacinto De Cristofaro and Filippo Belli – consist of '*praeventiones*', that is, declarations before the Court which aimed to block future or current proceedings. Obviously, when they had well-founded reasons for suspicion that denunciations were being organized against them, possible defendants reported it to the Court with the aim of preventing unpleasant surprises and/or dismantling the traps that their enemies were preparing. This is a further proof of a very serious and widespread problem in the capital of the Kingdom of Naples, namely of the abundance of false witnesses.

The process of relying on witness testimonies made it challenging to uncover heretical groups. Defendants, when asked about their accomplices, often pointed fingers at those they deemed unfavorable witnesses or enemies, even falsely labeling them as 'malevolents' – individuals with personal motives to testify against them. Inquisitors found themselves dealing with unreliable and sensitive information, requiring them to exercise utmost caution in handling and interpreting the evidence.

Once the charge of heresy had been formally proven and confessed, the conviction generally consisted in an *abiura de formali*. In the frequent cases of suspected heresy, there were various courses of action available. Whenever the suspicion was 'light', the defendant was convicted to an *abiura de*

<sup>26</sup> The possibility of concealing the identity of the accusers from the accused – essentially motivated by reasons of security and protection of their safety – had been established in the inquisitorial trial starting from the Council of Narbonne in 1235 and was confirmed by Innocent IV with the Bull *Cum negotium fidei* (1254). This rule was reconfirmed after the rise of the modern Inquisition in 1542. In 1561, Pius IV expressly reaffirmed the possibility of concealing the names of the accusers to the defendant, while Pius V (*Si de Protegendis*, 2 May 1569) actually tightened the penalties in the event of retaliation or revenge against witnesses in causes of faith. See Tedeschi 1991, 139, 174-6.

<sup>27</sup> See the first unnumbered sheet in BNN, I.AA.32; reproduced below in section 10.2.

*levi*, while in the case of a ‘strong’ suspicion the conviction was to an *abjuratio de vehementi*.

The stake, incarceration, and the galleys were the dramatic forms of punishment generally associated with inquisitorial practice. And even if the final punishment was considerably milder than death or the galleys, the Inquisition could bring to bear serious damage to a person’s reputation and finances. This holds in particular for the first decades of activity of the modern Roman Inquisition. From the mid-seventeenth century the effects of a condemnation by the Inquisition were considerably attenuated. This also holds true for the cases of the main defendants in this trial, that is, Manuzzi, Giannelli, De Cristofaro and Belli, who after abjuration were condemned to salutary penances, and then immediately released. They apparently resumed their careers without difficulties.

## 6 A Web of Accusations: The Mutual Allegations Among the Defendants

The defendants involved in the trial against atheism can be split approximately into two groups, namely Francesco Paolo Manuzzi and those accused by him, that is, Giacinto De Cristofaro, Basilio Giannelli, and Filippo Belli, on the one hand, and the group around Antonio Barra, including Giovanni Legitimo, Carlo Rosito, and Giovanni De Magistris, on the other.

On 21 March 1688, Manuzzi appeared ‘spontaneously’ before the Neapolitan Holy Office, and he abjured in June of the same year. On 14 December 1691, he appeared again ‘spontaneously’, now before the Spanish Inquisition in Madrid. He recanted after several interrogations and was released before the end of January 1692. In the spring of that year, he returned to the Kingdom of Naples and was nominated governor of Nardò.

After the confessions made by Manuzzi in the spring of 1688, the Roman Inquisition ordered the arrest of Basilio Giannelli, but due to the chaos following the earthquake in June 1688, he managed to escape. In 1689 he presented himself spontaneously before the Neapolitan Holy Office and declared himself innocent. In 1690 he accompanied Gennaro d’Andrea on a voyage to Spain, where he met Manuzzi. Both were arrested in Madrid in December 1691. Giannelli delivered a series of detailed depositions, recanted, and at the end of March 1692 was condemned to an abjuration, salutary penances, confiscation of property (then pardoned), and exile from Madrid and Naples. Shortly afterwards he was released, whereupon he returned to Italy and retired to Vitulano.

Giacinto De Cristofaro was involved in Manuzzi’s depositions from the very start. In March 1689, a year after Manuzzi’s ‘spontaneous’ appearance, he delivered a deposition before the Court of the Inquisition in Naples, declaring himself innocent. He was arrested only in August 1691, interrogated extensively in the autumn of 1692, and kept in jail. During his incarceration he wrote many petitions and letters, addressed to local political and religious authorities as well as to the Pope and the Congregation of the Holy Office (including individual cardinals and the assessor) in Rome. On 16 April 1697, he was condemned to an abjuration *de vehementi*,<sup>28</sup> and house

<sup>28</sup> See section 5.

arrest. After being released he was obliged to hear mass on all holidays, to monthly confession, and to spiritual exercises.

Filippo Belli was arrested only in November 1692. Like De Cristofaro, with numerous petitions he developed a detailed juridical defense, but also in his case to no avail. On 18 December 1695, the Neapolitan Holy Office issued the sentence. Belli was condemned to an abjuration *de vehementi*, house arrest (in the house of his uncle Aniello Belli), and to salutary penances (confession, attend the Eucharist, prayers).

Now, for the other group investigations began in 1689. On 20 August 1689, Matteo Vitale was accused of having corrupted Giuseppe Prato (son of Antonio, in whose house he worked as tutor) with discussions about atomistic philosophy. He was arrested on 11 November 1692, with Nicola Galdieri, Giovanni De Magistris, and Carlo Rosito (see below). On 17 January 1693, Fabrizio Spada, Secretary of State in Rome, suggested an abjuration *de vehementi*, in a private session. In July, the cardinals of the Holy Office in Rome asked minister Cantelmo for an integral copy of his trial, but his case was not concluded until the end of that year.

Antonio Barra was a Neapolitan lawyer who made his home available for scientific and philosophical debates, and he also taught a young audience the new corpuscular philosophy. His writings were investigated as of 27 January 1690, and his name is linked to the group of De Magistris, Galdieri, Ricci, and Villamagna in June 1690. In the autumn of 1690, he sought protection from the Spanish army in Naples, but meanwhile the problems surrounding his arrest kept piling up. Indeed, he was not arrested because in February 1691 it was discovered that he had gone out of his mind, and he was thus confined to a mental asylum. He was mentioned in several later documents (1691 and 1692) but due to mental disturbance he was never arrested or condemned.

In January 1690, Giovanni Legitimo, working in the shop of the apothecary Carlo Rosito, was accused of atomism by Ilarione Musaci, who held that Legitimo had convinced him of atheism. He informed the Court that he stuck to this conviction for over 20 days. In May of this year Legitimo was also accused of atomism by Giuseppe Scalona, and in the same month the cardinals of the Holy Office decreed his arrest, which was carried out before 10 June. In his first deposition, on 28 June 1690, Legitimo accused Giovanni De Magistris, Carlo Rosito, Nicola Galdieri, as well as the brothers Gennaro and Francesco d'Andrea. His case dragged on for several years, but eventually, on 2 March 1695, he was condemned to house arrest in the Dominican convent of Santa Caterina a Formelle (Naples), without abjuration.

Carlo Rosito was involved in the case against Legitimo from 3 May 1690. In June of that year, fearing arrest, he fled to Rome and voluntarily presented himself to the Holy Office. He declared that he had adopted atomistic and atheist views under the influence of Giovanni De Magistris, Nicola Galdieri, Giuseppe Ricci, and a certain Gaspare Villamagna, who, in turn, had derived these ideas from Antonio Barra. Rosito obtained permission to return to Naples, on condition that he found a person (preferably an ecclesiastic) who would guarantee his bail. Unable to meet this condition, he was arrested on 11 November 1692, and on 15 February 1693, together with Giovanni De Magistris, he was forced by archbishop Giacomo Cantelmo to a public abjuration in the Cathedral of Naples before a large audience, including several ecclesiastical authorities. In July and August of that year, he requested to be transferred from prison to a convent, but his requests were denied.

On 21 July 1688, Ignazio De Biagio accused himself and Stefano Cusano of atheism, whereupon the cardinals in Rome condemned De Biagio to a formal abjuration and ordered that Cusano be observed. On 10 May 1690, both were mentioned as involved in the case against Giannelli, De Cristofaro, and Belli, but subsequently their names disappeared from the proceedings.

From 4 June 1690 Giovanni De Magistris accused Rosito and Legitimo of atheism and atomism. In turn, during the summer of that year, Rosito accused De Magistris and Legitimo, while the latter accused the other two. De Magistris was arrested on 11 November 1692 with Galdieri, Vitale, and Rosito. With the latter, as said above, he was forced to abjure on 15 February 1693 in the Cathedral of Naples.

Giuseppe Ricci was accused by Rosito in June 1690. His arrest was ordered by the Congregation in Rome in the autumn of that year, but he was arrested only on 10 August 1691. Because of his young age (he was only 17 years old), he asked for house arrest in September, but he remained in prison until at least November of that year, as the medical certificates presented by his father were not accepted as truthful. His case was concluded in December 1693.

Like Ricci, on 20 June 1690, Nicola Galdieri was accused by Rosito of heretical propositions regarding atheism and the doctrine of the atomists. On 14 September the Cardinals in Rome ordered his arrest, but in July 1691, he was still a free man. In August of that year, he escaped arrest by leaving Naples. His case was probably concluded in December 1693.

Domenico Moniaci was said to have been among the students of Antonio Barra. In January 1693, he was mentioned in a group of persons denounced by an unidentified person for entertaining the 'philosophy of the atoms'. Other persons involved were Gaspare Villamagna, Nicola Galdieri, Simone Barra (brother of Antonio), Matteo Vitale, and Francesco Coqui. Later he was said to have taught philosophy in the house of Andrea Sisto, brother of the duke of Ceglie. In 1693, he was kept prisoner in the Roman Holy Office, having been accused of atheism. On 7 January 1694, he was dismissed with an admonition not to entertain similar discourses again in the future.

## 7 Defense Strategies

The procedures of the Inquisition drew significant inspiration from the practices of contemporary penal courts and the evolution of criminal law since the thirteenth century. However, the Roman Inquisition introduced several novel elements into juridical practice. These innovations included the presence of a defense attorney, the requirement of testimony under oath, the possibility of appealing to a higher court, the application of the principle '*unus testis, nullus testis*' (one witness is no witness), the use of imprisonment as punishment rather than physical mutilation, and the provision of a public defender for individuals unable to afford legal representation.

By incorporating these new elements into their procedures, the Roman Inquisition sought to establish a more robust and just legal framework. The introduction of defense attorneys aimed to provide individuals with a fair opportunity to present their case and challenge the accusations brought against them. Requiring testimony under oath enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the evidence provided. The option of appeal to a higher court allowed for the review of decisions made by lower tribunals, ensuring

the possibility of rectifying potential errors or injustices. The principle '*unus testis, nullus testis*' highlighted the importance of corroborating witnesses and discouraged reliance on single witness testimony alone. Substituting physical mutilation with imprisonment as punishment reflected a shift towards less severe and more humane forms of penal consequences. Lastly, providing a public defender for those who could not afford legal representation aimed to safeguard the rights of the indigent and promote a more equitable legal process.

These innovations introduced by the Roman Inquisition represented a significant departure from earlier legal practices and sought to enhance the fairness, credibility, and efficiency of the Inquisitorial proceedings. Based on the available documentation on the trial against atheism in Naples, it is possible to trace the following defense strategies.

First, there was what might be qualified as a 'flight forward', namely the '*spontanea comparitio*': a person who was (not yet) suspected of serious crimes concerning Catholic faith, presented herself to the central or local branch of the Inquisition and delivered a 'spontaneous' deposition.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, there were clear advantages for a (preferably as complete as possible) confession, the most important of which was a reduction in sentence or even full exoneration (also in the case of conviction for serious crimes). Furthermore, if one was sentenced to an abjuration, a *sponte comparens* was often allowed to do so '*coram congregatione*', that is, vis-à-vis the members of the Inquisition only, as in Francesco Paolo Manuzzi's case, without the humiliation of a public revocation of errors in a large church or cathedral, as happened in the case of Carlo Rosito and Giovanni De Magistris in February 1693.

A variation on the 'spontaneous appearance' was a precautionary deposition given to the Inquisition before they called trial. Usually, its purpose was to protect oneself against the risk that other persons – often considered and/or openly qualified as 'hostile' – might file or had already filed a complaint. Both Giacinto De Cristofaro and Basilio Giannelli delivered depositions before the Neapolitan Holy Office in March 1689, '*per viam praeventionem*', that is, to protect themselves against possible accusations made by Francesco Paolo Manuzzi, which obviously had come to their attention. Their depositions also contained a list of 'malevolents', that is, a list of the representatives of the groups that apparently supported the inquisitorial operation. It seems reasonable to suppose that, at least at first, there had been a conflict between groups of intellectuals and that the Holy Office then succeeded, supporting one of the parties over the other, in taking advantage of the opportunity to get hold of initial documentation regarding the heretical speeches of the young intellectuals.

Closely connected with this strategy was the deliberate effort made to discredit the moral character of individuals who had lodged accusations or were called upon as witnesses. This tactic often involved severe forms of denigration. For instance, while in prison, Giacinto De Cristofaro openly accused his adversaries, Francesco Manuzzi and Felice Pisano, of engaging in acts of sodomy.

In addition to denigrating (possible) opponents or enemies, it was also common practice to draw attention to favorable and exculpatory witnesses.

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<sup>29</sup> For discussion, see Brambilla 2007.

For example, De Cristofaro emphasizes time and again that the information that minister Giuseppe Nicola Giberti had obtained in 1689 about his moral stature (the afore mentioned *informo*) had led to his acquittal of all suspicions.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, in August 1693 De Cristofaro drew up a list of other six witnesses, “heard and sworn”, whose depositions had not been officially recorded.<sup>31</sup>

In certain cases, defendants presented medical certificates in an attempt to persuade the central or local Inquisition that the alleged physical condition of the prisoner was incompatible with the constraints and physical discomforts of detention. For example, in the case of Giacinto De Cristofaro, his father submitted certificates following his arrest in August 1691, asserting his son’s poor health. However, these certificates had little impact as they were countered by an examination conducted by a doctor affiliated with the Inquisition, who found no evidence of any life-threatening illnesses. Overall, the use of medical certificates as a defense strategy highlights the broader dynamics between the defendants and the Inquisition, where the accused would employ various means to challenge their treatment, while the Inquisition remained vigilant in scrutinizing such claims to ensure the integrity of their legal proceedings.

As said, defendants were granted a lawyer, even if they were unable to pay the legal fee. The lawyer assisted the prisoner in preparing his defense, which was often preceded by a reconstruction of the trial (charges, arrest, interrogations, motivations). Obviously, the lawyer attempted to bring about a most favorable outcome for the defendant. Despite the inquisitorial rule to hide from the accused the names of the accusing witnesses, he could try to mitigate the prosecutor’s evidence by denying the fact, by lodging exceptions against the witnesses, and by proving the defendant’s good life and Christian beliefs.

Another important part of that defense was the cross-interrogation of witnesses who had already been heard by the prosecution. Both De Cristofaro and Belli drew up a detailed scheme for cross-examination, of which, in De Cristofaro’s case, the preparatory sketches as well as the final version are known. His schedule consisted of sixty-five detailed questions, which were then answered by dozens of witnesses.

In addition, prisoners had the opportunity to draw attention to their case by means of letters and petitions. Many of these writings by De Cristofaro and Belli have been preserved, with a variety of theological and, above all, legal-juridical arguments, addressed to a motley crew of authorities: the local Inquisition, the archbishop and the Nuncio, the Deputation for the Holy Office in Naples, the Viceroy, the Congregation of the Holy Office in Rome, the assessor or a cardinal of the Congregation, down to the Holy Father himself. However, as a rule, the effect of this campaign via correspondence was negligible. Indeed, reactions from the local authorities were quite rare and for the most part negative, while the rulers in Rome often referred the defendant back to the archbishop in Naples or to the minister of the local Holy Office, who in the years between 1693 and 1697 also coincided in the figure of Giacomo Cantelmo.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, BNN, I.AA.32, fol. 272r (dating back to the autumn of 1691).

<sup>31</sup> BNN, I.AA.32, fol. 172r.

Finally, one last point deserves our attention. As stated earlier, the heretical and heterodox ideas and beliefs that most of the defendant were suspected of were the result of exchanges of thoughts in discussions at friends' homes, walking on the street, or encounters in shops. The interrogation of one of the most important witnesses for the prosecution in the trial, namely Paolo D'Acunto, shows that Giacinto De Cristofaro passionately defended the legitimacy of free discussion, that is, discussion unconditioned by theological requirements. Paolo D'Acunto reports in one of his depositions that according to De Cristofaro it was legitimate to discuss scientific and philosophical questions detached from the frame of Catholic dogmatics, that is, *remota fide*. D'Acunto countered that *remota fide* equaled *remota veritate*, to which De Cristofaro reacted fiercely by stating that such an equivalence was an expression of heretical principles.<sup>32</sup>

D'Acunto appealed, at least implicitly, to the obligation of every Catholic to always refute opinions contrary to the Catholic faith,<sup>33</sup> while De Cristofaro explicitly contested the equivalence between *remota fide* and *remota veritate*. Apparently, it all seems like empty debate, but it was not. From the sixteenth century onwards, the *remota fide-remota veritate* distinction was at the center of the controversy between Catholics and Protestants over the position of natural theology. Since the birth of scholastic theology, Catholic theologians had maintained that *remota fide*, i.e., based on philosophical reasoning, it was possible to demonstrate some truths of faith, including the existence of God and some of his central properties. This possibility, however, was harshly contested by Luther and other reformers. According to Luther, the Christian cannot speak of God and of His own individual and collective being (of the world) *remota fide* or *remoto Christo*, that is, disregarding the sacrifice of the Son, in which the unconditionality of divine mercy towards sinful humanity is manifest. Therefore, according to Luther, *remota fide* was equivalent to *remota veritate*. And this explains Giacinto's protest, surprising at first sight, that by following D'Acunto's reasoning one ends up embracing a central point of Protestant theology, namely, the rejection of any natural theology and the acceptance of a purely Christocentric dogmatics.<sup>34</sup> This also explains the insistence by the inquisitors in Naples on this point during the interrogation of 2 September 1692<sup>35</sup> because in stark contrast to scholastic dogmatics, Protestant theology maintained that the certainty of faith could not be conceived without faith itself, because there is no 'external' foundation of faith. In sum, a chat between colleagues and acquaintances on atomism revealed unexpected theological implications and plots, and it offered De Cristofaro an unexpected defense strategy.

<sup>32</sup> ASDN, Sant'Ufficio, *Processi*, ms. 761, fol. 39v.

<sup>33</sup> D'Acunto implicitly appealed to the papal Bull *Apostolici Regiminis*, issued on 19 December 1513 during the Fifth Lateran Council, which obliged university professors to defend Church doctrine, to clarify the truth of faith, and to demonstrate on philosophical grounds that the intellectual soul, form of the body, is immortal. The bull thus aimed to establish the appropriate way to teach philosophical doctrines.

<sup>34</sup> See Edwards 2013; Re Manning 2013.

<sup>35</sup> ASDN, Sant'Ufficio, *Processi*, ms. 761, fol. 146rv.

## 8 Neapolitan Institutions and Officials

The documents on which the chronology is based repeatedly refer to contemporary Neapolitan institutions (often named courts or tribunals),<sup>36</sup> and of officials active in these institutions. As a first guide in this administrative and legal jungle, the most important of these institutions and officials, including their role in public life, are briefly indicated here.

### Institutions

#### *Consiglio Collaterale*

The Collaterale Council held significant political and judicial authority within the viceroyalty of Naples. Originally established in 1506, it officially became known as the Consiglio Collaterale in 1516. This Council took over the judicial functions of the Neapolitan Court and consisted of the viceroy and five Spanish and Neapolitan jurists who served as qualified regents. The Collateral Council performed various functions, including those of a chancellery, legislative body (in conjunction with the viceroy), and administration (including the appointment of judicial officers). It played a pivotal role in the governance and legal affairs of Naples during its existence. However, the Collateral Council was abolished by Charles III of Bourbon in 1735. In its place, the Royal Chamber of Santa Chiara was established, assuming the responsibilities and functions previously held by the Council. This change marked a shift in the administrative and judicial structure of Naples under the Bourbon dynasty.

#### *Gran Corte della Vicaria*

The Grand Court of the Vicaria was established by Charles II of Anjou. It had the principal jurisdictional power for the urban Neapolitan district, and it was the first court of appeal in the Kingdom of Naples for criminal and civil cases. It was structured in four sections, two for civil and two for criminal cases. The Vicaria Court became a secondary court after the creation of the Sacred Royal Council.

#### *Regia Camera della Sommaria*

The Royal Chamber of the Sommaria, which existed from around 1269 to 1806, served as an administrative and judicial institution. Its primary role was to conduct audits and examinations of various financial matters within the Kingdom. This included reviewing the accounts of the royal treasury, provincial receivers, and other officials responsible for handling public funds. The Chamber also scrutinized the accounts of public administrators and monitored the taxation of *universitates* (local communities or corporations). One significant aspect of the Royal Chamber of the Sommaria was its authority in economic and fiscal matters. The viceroy, as the representative of the monarch, was required to consult this court for any economic

<sup>36</sup> I am grateful to Paolo Macry and Giovanni Muto who provided me with valuable information on Neapolitan courts and 'seats'.

or fiscal act or measure. This ensured that decisions related to finances and taxation underwent a thorough review by the Chamber before they could be implemented.

### *Sacro Regio Consiglio*

The Sacred Royal Council was a collegiate judicial body of the Kingdom of Naples. Established in the fifteenth century by the Aragon with consultative functions towards the government, it later became an appeals court for decisions of the Regia Camera della Sommaria. Finally, replacing the old Grand Court of the Vicaria, which was not abolished, it became the Supreme Court of the Kingdom. In the seventeenth century it was the only competent court for disputes relating to fiefdoms and feudal lords, both of a civil and criminal nature.

### *Tribunale di San Lorenzo*

The Court of San Lorenzo was the 'municipal council' of the City of Naples during the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Its members were appointed by the noble and popular seats. Each of them elected a delegate, except the seat of Montagna which elected two, as the ancient seat of Forcella had merged into it; these two delegates, however, could express only one vote in the deliberative seat.

### *Seggi (or: Sedili) nobili*

The Neapolitan nobility was divided into two categories: '*Piazza*' or '*fuori Piazza*'. Until their suppression by Ferdinand IV in 1800, there were five *Piazze* (or *sedili* or *seggi*; here translated as 'seats'): Capuana, Nido, Porto, Portanova, and Montagna. The main difference between '*Piazza*' and '*fuori Piazza*' was the administration of the city. In fact, the nobility of *Piazza* participated in the government of the city, while those *fuori Piazza* were excluded. Together with the Piazza del Popolo the five noble 'seats' formed the deliberative power in the municipal administration. Each seat elected six deputies, except Nido which elected five. The number of families registered between 1569 and 1703 remains unchanged: 132 families. This does not mean that a changeover did not occur in the meantime: between the two dates the seats pass to 148 in 1598, 160 in 1601, 148 in 1607, to then settle back around the starting figure.

The election of the deputy of the popular seat proceeded according to a step-by-step procedure. The twenty-nine 'street captains', who represented the twenty-nine districts (called '*ottine*') into which the City of Naples was divided, called together the heads of the families of the district in a local church. The heads of the families elected, by means of two votes, two *procuratores* for each district, that is, a total of fifty-eight *procuratores*. The latter formed a list of six candidates from which the popular deputy was drawn. However, from 1547 it was the viceroy who chose the deputy from this list. These deputies of the 'seats' remained in office for a year and each seat elected its deputy in the Court of San Lorenzo which constituted the municipal council.

## *Universitates*

With this term are indicated the municipalities of southern Italy, which had already arisen under the Lombard domination and subsequently became fiefs with the conquests of the Normans. Their historical evolution is different from the free municipalities that arose in central-northern Italy in the Middle Ages.

## Officials

### *Avvocato fiscale*

'Fiscal lawyer' or 'fiscal' (*fisco*) was a term used for the public official who defended the interests of the State in Court. It corresponds to the function of the prosecutor in contemporary courts.

### *Avvocato dei rei*

This title was for the person who assisted the defendants in preparing their defense. In the seventeenth century, this position often overlapped with that of *avvocato dei poveri* (translation of *advocatus pauperorum*), the 'lawyer of the poor' who defended those who could not afford to hire a lawyer.

### *Commissario del Sant'Ufficio*

An official of the Holy Office, both in Rome and Naples, who carried out the interrogations, together with the minister of the Holy Office or with the fiscal lawyer. The term is somewhat confusing because in Naples the first, sixteenth-century representatives of the Roman Holy Office were also qualified as '*commissario*', but in the seventeenth century this qualification was changed into 'minister'.

### *Cursore*

The *cursore ordinario* was a court official whose main function was to read out loud the documents presented by the parties during a lawsuit. He was responsible for making sure that all parties had access to the same information, and for keeping a record of the proceedings, including any arguments or objections made by the parties during the trial. From the documents reproduced here it can be inferred that the *cursore* communicated decisions to the prisoners, but that he also worked as a guard in prison.

### *Mastro d'atti*

This term, a translation of the Latin *magister actorum* (literally 'master of acts'), was used for the scribe who drew up the proceedings or depositions in the Holy Office in Naples. He helped to ensure that the judicial process was fair and transparent, and that legal decisions were based on accurate and complete information. His role was like that of a notary, but he was not authorized to certify documents, and so could not provide documents with legal validity and enforceability.

## Ministro

In the seventeenth century the term ‘minister’ had a broader meaning than nowadays and was used for higher-level officials working in the viceregal government. In seventeenth-century Naples, it was also used for the representative of the Roman Holy Office who, due to the recurring resistance by the local population, could not use the official title of ‘inquisitor’, like in other Italian cities.

## Scribano

In the seventeenth-century Italian legal system, *scribano* (also indicated with Latin terms: *scribanus* or *scrivarius*) is the professional figure who assists the judge in drafting legal documents, such as court orders, deeds, and other official acts.

## 9 The Drive for Cultural Innovation in Late Seventeenth-century Naples

The promulgation of the disciplinary resolutions by the Council of Trent brought about a new institutional arrangement for the Catholic Church, initiating a new phase in the relationship between the Church and the individual states. The implementation of the conciliary decrees influenced both State and ecclesiastical politics, resulting in frequent tensions between Rome and the ruling monarchies of Catholic states, including the Kingdom of Naples.

One of the major points of contention in these clashes was the struggle for jurisdictional preeminence. The ecclesiastical side argued for preeminence based on the medieval ethical-legal conception of the State, while opponents sought to resist this revival. Moreover, the privileged status of ecclesiastics was so extensive and significant that it could not be overlooked by civil authorities. The recognition granted by Catholic states to institutions and individuals, along with associated personal and local immunities, carried considerable benefits in terms of judicial and taxation privileges, to the detriment of other citizens.

The relationship between Church and State became even more tense in the Kingdom of Naples because, from the Angevin period onwards, the Roman Curia claimed that the Kingdom was a fief of the Holy See. Indeed, the conquest of the Kingdom of Naples by Charles of Anjou (1266-85), planned by Pope Clement IV and carried out with French forces, had brought important novelties. As the Pope wished, the Kingdom recognized itself as a fiefdom of the Holy See with the obligation of an annual tribute; it abolished all anti-ecclesiastical laws and committed itself to no longer interfere in the elections of ecclesiastics, whom it also exempted from any judicial and financial jurisdiction of the State. However, the *investitura* referred to here, which was already seriously doubted by jurists in the sixteenth century, was strongly contested by Neapolitan jurists in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup> For instance, Vincenzo d’Ippolito argued that this qualification ‘investiture’ had been improperly used since the Angevin period, due to the

<sup>37</sup> Lauro 1974, 128-33.

ignorance of the people who believed that the Pope was the temporal ruler of the world. Therefore, he labeled it as “fictitious, apparent, or masked”.<sup>38</sup>

The Neapolitan movement for civil, political, and cultural independence from Rome inherently involved opposition to the Holy Office, seen as a symbol of Rome’s interference in internal affairs. The dispute with the Holy Office was unique in its ability to unite the social classes of the Kingdom of Naples – the nobility, the middle class, and the common people. The phases of the anti-Inquisition resistance, characterized by varying content and methods but notably frequent in the post-Tridentine period, consistently resulted in political and ideological conflicts.

From the immediate post-Tridentine period onwards representatives of the viceregal judiciary system, driven by the extensive and centralizing interpretation that the Council of Trent had conferred on the Pope’s power even in the Church’s external relations, began to systematically demarcate the limits of the ecclesiastical power’s competence, which was the first symptom of a consolidated legal tradition’s collapse. Against Rome the innovators defended the jurisdiction of the Spanish Crown, but under the flashy and formal guise of regalism there was a gradual yet increasingly assertive shift towards anti-curialist jurisdictionalism. Thus, what manifested initially as a progressive theorization and defense of the rights and prerogatives belonging to the royal power, subsequently took the shape of a broader movement for global political and cultural emancipation.

In the second half of the seventeenth century the perspectives of Neapolitan jurists broadened. Several lawyers, judges, and administrators recognized the need to forge a strong link between law and other cultural values, as well as between legal methods and the innovative approaches of modern, non-Aristotelian science. In an intellectual revival and innovative process, they assimilated and refined the influences and ideal concepts from various currents within contemporary European culture, encompassing both Catholic and non-Catholic perspectives. They attended to Cartesian philosophy, Gassendist atomism, the philosophy of Pufendorf, Hobbes, Malebranche, and Spinoza, the juridical reflection of Cujas, Bodin, Badouin, Vossius, and Grotius. They developed fresh views on the relationships between society and law, between authority and the individual, between conscience and authority, and, finally, between civil and ecclesiastical power.

Lawyers, philosophers, mathematicians, physicists, and men of letters, both lay and ecclesiastical, became involved in a multifaceted debate that varied with differences in education, principles, inclinations, cultural choices, and interests, and that took place within the plurality of social roles occupied by the various actors. In the multiplicity and mobility of political lines intertwined with scientific research, an articulated exchange of views and ideas developed in the public sphere. This debate emphasized the need for an enlightened and more efficient public power, called for a more concrete intellectual freedom and, ultimately, a renewal of the State.

The judicial struggle was not just a legalistic concern of lawyers, intent on asserting the social status of their own caste. Francesco d’Andrea is a case in point. As judge and governor, he suggested specific solutions for addressing legal and administrative questions and problems. For instance, he recommended that the State should assume control of the rights that had

<sup>38</sup> Vincenzo d’Ippolito, *Ragioni per l’investitura del Regno di Napoli*, in BNN, XIII.B.73, part 3, fols. 167-170.

been granted or transferred as fiefs, as well as the royal offices that concessionaires had treated as their own private property. Furthermore, he implemented important innovations to stimulate free trade, such as the abolition of tolls in mountain passes.<sup>39</sup> But in addition to his official charges, he was also seriously involved in the study of contemporary philosophy and science, and in the defense of corpuscular philosophy in the battle against scholasticism.<sup>40</sup>

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the controversy against the Inquisition had several stages, of which the crisis in 1661 and the events occurring during the trial against the atheists were certainly the most important. The revolt against the Inquisition in 1661 was a popular uprising in response to the arrest and imprisonment of many individuals, including prominent citizens. It was led by a group of artisans and common people, lasted for several days, and resulted in the destruction of the Inquisition's offices, the release of prisoners, and the killing of several Inquisition officials. The revolt was ultimately suppressed by the Spanish authorities, and many of the participants were arrested and punished. However, the uprising had a significant impact on public opinion in Naples and contributed to the decline of the Inquisition's power in the city. The reaction of the ecclesiastical authorities in the 1690s (particularly between 1693 and 1697) was due to the presumption of blocking any initiative connected to philosophical principles deemed prejudicial to faith.

The chronology presented below allows us to follow the phases and developments of the complex action carried out between 1688 and 1697 by the ecclesiastical authorities (archbishop, minister of the Holy Office, and Apostolic Nuncio), the political leaders and institutions (viceroy, noble and popular seats), the work and direction of the permanent Deputation of the Holy Office, and the negotiations between Rome, Naples and Madrid (1693-95) in order to glimpse or discover a multifaceted reality, often elusive and contradictory. But apart from these intricate relationships, the guiding thread of the whole story, fundamental and dominant, remains the repressive action carried out by the ecclesiastic courts against the emerging innovative cultural currents in the city, because of the danger they constituted for the faith.

The intransigence demonstrated against the atheists was the last resounding attempt to nullify the demands for cultural, civil, political, social, and economic freedom, claimed with different accents by the associates of an intellectual movement that was trying to free itself from ecclesiastical control. The firm repression exercised by the Church marked the beginning of a crisis that culminated the following century. In 1746, by order of King Charles of Bourbon, trial 'according to the style of the Holy Office' was abolished in every court. Finally, on March 16, 1782, Ferdinand IV of Bourbon signed the decree of abolition of the Holy Office once and for all.<sup>41</sup>

From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Church and its doctrinal monopoly had often been challenged in terms of alternatives to Aristotelian natural philosophy. The trial against atheism was apparently one of the many cases in which Catholicism was forced to reposition itself and

<sup>39</sup> Ascione 1994.

<sup>40</sup> See Spruit 2022.

<sup>41</sup> DSI, 4: 1097-9.

reconsider its association with non-scholastic forms of science and philosophy. However, as we have seen, the Church in Naples did not simply defend its doctrinal monopoly, it became engaged in a struggle against broader political and cultural innovation. Thus, the trial reveals the extent to which the charge of heresy could capture the threatening dimensions of a range of activities extending far beyond the sphere of religious belief and practice. It also reminds us of what it is that charges of heresy said about the influence of networks and the formation of group identities, in a time when the early modern Catholic Church sought to understand how competing ideas spread. As a matter of fact, the trial demonstrates that accusations frequently reveal more about the program of the prosecution than they do about the intentions and actions of the defendants.

The sentence of Manuzzi's trial in June 1688 summarized the heretical views that he had spontaneously denounced. The propositions were coordinated in an organic historical-philosophical and ideological sequence, suggesting a dangerous view of political and religious power. The mention of the Preadamites, "compounds of atoms like all animals", and the hypothesis that "all things are regulated by nature" defined an original natural State of society, in which philosopher-legislators created an initial religion meant as a tool of social cohesion and exercised through a repertoire of myths conceived and disseminated for this purpose. If we look at the examined views, it becomes clear why there is a perceived gap, an unexplained link between the early scholars and Christ. The argument about papal authority rejecting Christ's investiture helps clarify that the entire series of arguments aims to undermine the theological basis of the authority of the Church and the Pope. This is the core of the accusation, serving as a caution to Manuzzi's associates who, thinking as legal scholars, inferred a damaging consequence for the papacy's spiritual and temporal power from the model of the wise ancient leader. The inquisitors understood they were not dealing with isolated heretical statements, despite efforts to portray them as such, but rather with a consistent ideological-political stance seeking to address the historical weakening of the Church's authority.

Thus, this inquisitorial trial not only attempted to eliminate any possible theological and/or philosophical dissent, but it also aimed to dismantle the secular and jurisdictionalist ideology that the civil class was developing at the time, which positioned them as allies of the politically vulnerable Spanish viceroyalty, in opposition to the baronage and ecclesiastical centers of power. By labeling and targeting atomist intellectuals as atheists, the inquisitors sought to undermine this alignment and weaken the theorists of a civil ideology and its philosophical foundations.

## 10 Note on the Text

### 10.1 Transcription

I have adopted an approach that is primarily conservative in the transcription of the texts. The focus has been on regulating upper and lower-case letters based on modern criteria. I have intervened with punctuation when it was necessary to ensure the correct understanding of the text. Additionally, I have standardized the use of apostrophes and accents.

Abbreviations found in the original manuscripts have been expanded for clarity. Any text that was underlined in the manuscripts is indicated by using italics. Square brackets have been employed to denote uncertain readings, while hook brackets have been used to add omitted letters or words.

A philological note device and an annotation device provide additional information and explanations regarding the texts and their content.

Finally, for the Spanish interrogations of Francesco Paolo Manuzzi and Basilio Giannelli, I have opted for an Italian translation in order to reach a broader audience and facilitate comprehension.

The references to page numbers and foliation in the documents written by De Cristofaro as a rule are those of the copy he was given, and which is now preserved in BNN, I.AA.32, fols. 1r-122r.

## 10.2 Abbreviations

### Archives (including sections) and libraries

|          |                                                                  |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AAV:     | Archivio Apostolico Vaticano                                     |
| ADDF:    | Archivio del Dicastero per la Dottrina della Fede (Vatican City) |
| AGS:     | Archivo General de Simancas                                      |
| ASDN:    | Archivio Storico Diocesano di Napoli                             |
| BAV:     | Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana                                   |
| BNE:     | Biblioteca Nacional de España (Madrid)                           |
| BNN:     | Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli                                   |
| BOG:     | Biblioteca Oratoriana dei Girolamini (Naples)                    |
| BSAN:    | Biblioteca Seminario Arcivescovile di Napoli                     |
| BSNSP:   | Biblioteca della Società Napoletana di Storia Patria (Naples)    |
| SO:      | Sanctum Officium                                                 |
| St. st.: | Stanza storica                                                   |

### Abbreviations for the witnesses in the anonymized copies

|     |                            |
|-----|----------------------------|
| A.  | Francesco Paolo Manuzzi    |
| B.  | Domenico Di Tomaso         |
| C.  | Paolo D'Acunto             |
| D.  | Giovanni Battista Giordano |
| E.  | Felice Pisano              |
| F.  | Giovanni Batangelo         |
| G.  | Nicola Savino              |
| H.  | Basilio Giannelli          |
| I.  | Angelo Barone              |
| K.  | Nicola Bagnulo             |
| L.  | Giovanni Battista Gaetano  |
| M.  | Domenico Gaetano           |
| N.  | Domenico Fontanella        |
| O.  | Giovanna Santavenere       |
| P.  | Nicola Di Domenico         |
| Q.  | Lucio Capozzuto            |
| R.  | Caterina Mazzocca          |
| S.  | Antonia Santavenere        |
| T.  | Francesco Antonio Caparro  |
| V.  | Antonio Di Fusco           |
| X.  | Giuseppa Franzese          |
| A2. | Emanuele Ciccattelli       |
| B2. | Giuseppe Di Domenico       |
| C2. | Antonio Maria de Ruggiero  |
| D2. | Sebastiano Biancardi       |
| E2. | Filippo Belli              |

At the first page of the codex BNN, I.AA.32, Giacinto De Cristofaro revealed the names of all witnesses, except for 'N', 'X', and 'E2'. The original document is in the Appendix.

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