The French Minim friar Jean Lalemandet is sadly not a legendary figure, even by the standards of early modern Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy. As far as we know, he led the kind of blameless and conventional double life typical of most early modern scholastics, as an academic philosopher and theologian and as an ordained member of the Order of Minims.¹ Strongly Peripatetic in philosophical orientation, and mildly peripatetic in his wanderings through central Europe, Lalemandet taught philosophy and theology in a number of colleges in the Holy Roman Empire before his death in Prague in 1647. His compendious Cursus philosophicus was published posthumously at Lyon in 1656.² Like many textbooks of its kind, Lalemandet’s Cursus attempted to present the late scholastic philosophical synthesis in its full glory, ranging from its foundations in logic via natural philosophy to metaphysics. His approach, indicated in the work’s subtitle, was to contrast the Thomist and Scotist positions with nominalism, which he generally favoured. For this reason, Lalemandet has generally been characterized as a relatively rare specimen in the late scholastic menagerie.


² Jean Lalemandet, Cursus philosophicus complectens, lateque discutiens controversias omnes a Logicis, Physicis, Metaphysicisque agitatis solitas, præsertim quæ Thomisticae, Scoticae, et Nominalis Scholis sudorem cident; (Editio novissima, Lyon, 1656, sumptibus Laurentii Anisson).
But the sections of his textbook devoted to the soul are interesting for another reason, since they exhibit a significant trait shared by a large number of his predecessors and contemporaries in the schools. Lalemandet saw *scientia de anima*, the science of the soul, as part of the discipline of natural philosophy: that is, as part of the study of the natural, created, changing world. *Scientia de anima* treated the soul as the first, animating principle of all living bodies, and examined both its powers and functions, and its relationship to those bodies. Its foundational texts were Aristotle’s *De anima* and *Parva naturalia*, and the intricate palimpsest of medieval and early modern commentaries layered upon them. In common with their approach to most other questions, scholastic treatments of the soul typically began with issues of definition. Specifically, commentators on *De anima* often began by asking “what is the soul?”. Lalemandet’s perspective on this standard scholastic question is particularly revealing. In some preliminary remarks, he insisted that “we cannot answer the question *what is the soul?* unless we at least briefly discuss the doctrine of the organic body”, and, more specifically, unless we consider the anatomy and organs of that body. In fact, he went on to discuss them at some considerable length, including what he called a “compendious delineation of the human body”, based on the anatomical and medical treatises of Jean Fernel, Ambroise Paré and André du Laurens (or Laurentius). For Lalemandet, to think about the soul and its relationship with the body was to enter into the realm of the particular—to think about flesh, skin, bones and organs.

The close attention Lalemandet paid to the structure of the body was echoed by many other scholastic authors writing both commentaries on

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4 Lalemandet, *Cursus philosophicus*, p. 629: “Ad complectam rei cuiuslibet notitiam necesse est eius quidditatem, & definitionem integre cognoscere, & quia in animae definitione apponitur Corpus organicum; est enim anima actus Corporis organici &c, non poterit perfecte sciri, quid sit anima? nisi brevis saltem de Corpore organico tradatur doctrina”.

5 Whitmore incorrectly states that “His work of 890pp in-folio makes no mention of any contemporary scientific or medical advances and relies on formal, syllogistic logic and a reiteration of Thomist and Scotist principles.”: Whitmore, *Order of Minims*, p. 171n.