



HAL
open science

Salvation and Sir Kenelm Digby's philosophy of the soul

Niall Dilucia

► **To cite this version:**

Niall Dilucia. Salvation and Sir Kenelm Digby's philosophy of the soul. *History of European Ideas*, 2022, 49 (3), pp.506-522. 10.1080/01916599.2022.2084635 . hal-04370697

HAL Id: hal-04370697

<https://hal.science/hal-04370697>

Submitted on 3 Jan 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Salvation and Sir Kenelm Digby's philosophy of the soul

Niall Dilucia

To cite this article: Niall Dilucia (2023) Salvation and Sir Kenelm Digby's philosophy of the soul, *History of European Ideas*, 49:3, 506-522, DOI: [10.1080/01916599.2022.2084635](https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2022.2084635)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2022.2084635>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 14 Jun 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1071



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Salvation and Sir Kenelm Digby's philosophy of the soul

Niall Dilucia 

ABSTRACT

The English Catholic philosopher Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–1665) has enjoyed a recent spate of scholarly attention as a prodigious traveller, political figure, and man of diverse intellectual interests. This article contributes to this scholarship by assessing the commentary on salvation at the heart of Digby's philosophy of the soul and the historical contexts in which it was produced. It argues that Digby's thinking on the soul was a meditation on the worldly interactions a Catholic must undertake or avoid in order to achieve salvation. As such, our intellectual historical understanding of Digby is much improved when he is viewed as a scholar who constructed an identity as a thinker adept at advising others on the correct path to beatitude. This article also makes the broader argument for salvation as an important conceptual tool for early modern intellectual historians wishing to accurately map the complex relationship between theology, scholarly argument, and scholarly ambition in the seventeenth century.

KEYWORDS

Kenelm Digby; Catholicism; salvation; recusant; philosophy

1. Introduction

Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–1665) was a seventeenth-century aristocrat, Catholic philosopher, alchemist, and privateer whose exceptional scholarly acumen and diversity of interests was such that he was labelled by an Oxford friend, the Elizabethan scholar Thomas Allen (1593–1676), as 'the [Pico de] Mirandola of our Age', thus crediting him as an outstanding descendant of the Renaissance humanist tradition.¹ Born to the Catholic Digby family (his father Everard was executed for his role in the 1605 Gunpowder Plot), he authored manuscript and printed works on myriad topics whilst in England; throughout youthful 'Grand Tour' sojourns; later exilic journeys across continental Europe as a 'banished' Royalist; and natural philosophical research trips in old age. The most systematic of these works is the 1644 *Two Treatises*, Digby's *magnum opus*, in which he examines the metaphysical and natural philosophical relation between body and soul to prove the latter's incorporeality and immortality.

Digby has been the subject of a recent spate of scholarly attention. A historiographical reinvigoration aided primarily by Joe Moshenska's scholarship means that we have begun to move away from the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century studies of Digby by Robert Petersson and Evelyn Bligh indicative of an overall trend towards speculative, romanticised notions of Digby's gallant exploits.² Moshenska has painted a vivid portrait of Digby as a politically and intellectually engaged Catholic whose travel and writing was designed to satiate an immense intellectual curiosity and, importantly, to curry favour with diverse countries and audiences. This favour, Moshenska shows, was calculated to remove the 'stain in the blood' caused by the disadvantages his notorious father Everard and popish religion bequeathed him.³ Moshenska has also valuably documented

CONTACT Niall Dilucia  nd372@cam.ac.uk

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Digby's adeptness at self-fashioning within his literary memoir the *Loose Fantasies* (c. 1628) and engagement with Edmund Spenser (c. 1552/53–1599) as efforts to assuage criticism of him in English society.⁴ Moshenska's work has been complemented by further work on Digby's natural philosophy which has helpfully placed his qualified embrace of 'new' philosophical thinking on bodily divisibility and (particularly Galilean) ideas of motion alongside his continuing allegiance to a reformed Aristotelianism. These very welcome studies have not, however, gone beyond the *Two Treatises* in their focus nor linked Digby's natural philosophy to his theological concerns.⁵

Most recently, the French-language monograph on Digby by Anne-Laure de Meyer has carried out an extensive and much-needed philosophical analysis of the recusant's thought through the prism of the 'baroque'.⁶ She argues that Digby was a thinker highly conscious of the spiritual and epistemic crises caused by contemporary developments in natural philosophy (which emphasised the instability and unpredictability of the world's material processes) and contemporary epistemology (which promoted a renewed scepticism and the impossibility of attaining certain knowledge). For de Meyer, these factors, alongside the ever-present war and death of the seventeenth century, coalesced into a baroque sensibility. This sensibility motivated Digby in his manuscript and printed works not only to seek stability in atomistic disorder, but also to offer a *memento mori* to his readers which obligated them to think about their death and ideal devotional practices. De Meyer's argument that Digby's scholarship conveys, on one level, anxiety about the dangers of the 'profoundly chaotic' world around him is persuasive.⁷ (This anxiety manifests in all of the writings I consider below.) However, in this article I argue that the notion of a theoretical intellectual crisis being at the heart of Digby's philosophy must be interrogated and qualified by a greater emphasis on the personal and contextual motivations for *why* Digby communicated his philosophical warnings and advice to varying audiences in various formats. If Digby's thought was on the conceptual level (which de Meyer prioritises) designed to combat intellectual crisis, it was (more obviously but no less importantly) on a biographical level also designed to further its author's position and intellectual standing. Both aspects of Digby's thought—theoretical and contextual—need to be weighed alongside each other if we are to continue to successfully map his significance within seventeenth-century intellectual culture.

Studying the role of salvation in Digby's early and later thought is imperative to this intellectual historical balancing act. The attainment of salvation had a role in the early modern Christian mindset as a vital but constantly endangered objective. As Jonathan Willis writes, salvation was one of the 'twin motors' which motivated early modern efforts to pour 'so much effort, energy, and resources' into their piety (the other being fear of sin).⁸ But if the centrality of salvation to contemporary religiosity is on one level clear, what is more opaque and a continuing subject of historical investigation is its fundamental instability as both a subject of confessional debate and 'transcendent' concept which had to be in some way accommodated to believers' experiences of the 'everyday'.⁹ Investigating this liminality has long been seen as a fruitful endeavour by religious historians, particularly French historians working in the *histoire des mentalités* (such as Jean Delumeau) who were always alert to the complexity of early modern efforts to grapple with the demands of redemption.¹⁰ More recently, there have been two interesting trends within scholarship on early modern salvation. The first has been to demonstrate the importance of debates over soteriology (i.e. theories of salvation) in assessing continuity and change within early modern confessional identities. This is most evident in the work of historical theologians such as Richard A. Muller (on Reformed soteriological debates after Calvin) and R.J. Matava (on Jesuit and Dominican disagreements about soteriology and grace within the *de Auxillis* controversy).¹¹ The second has been to examine the relationship between salvation and wider intellectual and cultural historical questions. Here, the work of Han van Ruler on the dynamic between salvation and 'pagan' (i.e. non-Christian) moral philosophy and David Hillman's investigation of how salvation and salutation interacted in early modern Protestant theology, 'constantly pressurizing one's existence', stand out as important contributions.¹² The in-depth study of Digby's soteriology that this article provides develops this scholarship in two important ways.

First, concerning Digby specifically, it demonstrates that salvation is a vital conceptual lens through which to view his writings and life. As he wrote to Lady Purbeck (1602–1645, daughter of Sir Edmund Coke, 1552–1634) in a work designed to convert her to Catholicism: ‘it is by nature ingrafted in the soules of all mankinde to desire beatitude’; for him, we constantly seek to fulfil this desire.¹³ We therefore cannot hope to accurately understand Digby’s scholarly attitudes towards philosophical innovation, the Catholic Church, or the immortality of the soul without seeing these as part of an overarching concern with individual redemption. Further, whilst scholars such as de Meyer have correctly noted Digby’s emphasis on ‘personal responsibility’ in attaining beatitude, what has not been remarked upon—and what I will examine throughout this article—is how he deployed the abstract soteriology of his philosophy of the soul in a ‘forming of the self’. Digby, I argue, self-fashioned as a knowledgeable and pious English Catholic scholar able to communicate to numerous correspondents in different intellectual contexts the ways in which they should act in this life to have the best chance at redemption.¹⁴

Second, I use this interrogation of Digby’s intellectual history to evidence the broader benefit studying philosophers’ salvific visions has as a means to better understand the role of theology in seventeenth-century debates about intellectual innovation. Recognising that Digby understood his philosophy not only as theologically legitimate but as actively useful to the Church in aiding his readers’ beatitude offers just one example of the importance of salvation as an interpretative tool with which greater understanding of the religious motivations behind early modern philosophical writing can be attained.

In arguing this, I will first set out Digby’s life and historical-intellectual context. I will then demonstrate the role salvation played in three of Digby’s intellectual endeavours: his youthful philosophical orations; his more mature philosophical letter to the Carmelite Père Hilaire; and his large, primarily natural philosophical, work the *Two Treatises*. The first two documents have thus far not been examined as fruitful ways of mapping the development of Digby’s lifelong interest in salvation. I will also argue that extant scholarship on the *Two Treatises* requires revision based upon my interpretation of Digby’s theory of the soul as constituting a reflection on natural philosophical dangers to eternal beatitude.

2. Digby’s life and context

Entering Oxford in 1618 at the age of thirteen, Digby spent time within but did not matriculate at the papist-sympathising college of Gloucester Hall (doing so would have required him to sign fealty to the Church of England).¹⁵ Nevertheless, the young Digby evidently found Oxford an intellectually stimulating environment given that, as we will see below, his first formal foray into original philosophical writing delivered in Siena, Italy bears the imprint of contemporary Oxford’s intellectual climate. Further, Digby was to receive the bequest of Allen’s extensive library in the latter’s will which he then in turn donated to the fledgling Bodleian Library between 1634 and 1639, clear evidence of a productive and mutual scholarly affinity.¹⁶

Digby’s diverse intellectual interests ranged between the systematic natural philosophy of the *Two Treatises*; literary commentary on Edmund Spenser in the 1620s; extended confessional debate with his cousin George Digby in the 1630s; and the alchemical theory of *A Late Discourse on the Powder of Sympathy* (1658), in which he put forward his argument for a ‘weapon-salve’ through which a wound can be treated at a distance via the salve’s application to the offending weapon.¹⁷ His political positioning is also particularly noteworthy: despite suffering from the commonplace distrust and condemnation of recusants and Royalists by Protestants and Parliamentarians, he remained remarkably adept at creating and maintaining social ties expedient to his continued survival and prospering. He was able to utilise the selective sharing of knowledge accumulated on his extensive travels and general skill with establishing epistolary ties to maintain a strong intellectual reputation well into the 1660s. For example, he was a vociferous supporter of King Charles I (1600–1649) for whom he engaged in piratical voyages throughout the Mediterranean in the 1620s and

accompanied on the ill-fated ‘Spanish Match’ of the young prince to the Infanta Maria Anna of Spain (1600–1646). But after a period of imprisonment and exile abroad in the 1640s, he returned to England during the Protectorate and established close ties with figures as diverse as Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) and Samuel Hartlib (1600–1662); Digby was also a founding member of the Royal Society in 1660 and had his *Discourse Concerning the Vegetation of Plants* (1661) accepted as its first publication.¹⁸ In short, the detail of Digby’s complex philosophical interests combined with his considerable social and financial capital as an aristocrat—which provided him opportunities for diverse travels and social interaction—make him an ideal candidate for understanding the relationship between intellectual argument and scholarly ambition in the seventeenth century.

I begin by charting the young Digby’s philosophical grappling with salvation under the guise of a long-standing question proceeding from early humanist debates on the obligations of the ideal scholar: how does one achieve the proper balance between engaging in necessary social interaction (in humanist terms, *negotium*) and seeking solitude for proper scholarly and devotional contemplation (*otium studiosum*)?¹⁹

3. The Sienese orations

The youthful Digby possessed a strong desire to present himself as a competent and original scholar able to traverse national boundaries and academic cultures with ease. In 1620 he began his first ‘grand tour’ of Europe, travelling through France into Italy where he spent time in Florence and Siena.²⁰ Alongside allowing him to obtain works such as a 1616 manuscript copy of Galileo’s *Discorso* on the tides and a medieval manuscript on divination to supplement what became a formidable personal library, Italy offered the young Catholic the opportunity to join one of the new Italian academies established in the manner of Plato’s Athenian original and its Renaissance counterpart headed by Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499).²¹ As is well known, these academies, dedicated to the discussion and discovery of diverse types of knowledge, were numerous in Italy during the seventeenth century.²² Digby joined the *Accademia dei Filomati* (Academy of Philomaths) under the pseudonym of *Il Fiorito* (‘the flowery one’).²³ He utilised the philosophical, literary, and theological knowledge (and skill in Italian), presumably gained from his youthful studies with his childhood tutor and famed astrologer-occultist Richard Napier (1559–1634); the Digby family chaplain and Jesuit John Percy (1569–1641, who perhaps imparted his Italian gleaned from years in Rome to Digby); and Thomas Allen to deliver four orations before its members. These are impressive displays of youthful erudition, only existing in manuscript amongst Digby’s extant papers at the British Library. Whilst the first three are autographic, the fourth is written in another scribal hand, suggesting Digby wished to have it drawn up for posterity. The Italian is without emendation and is highly idiomatic in contrast to the skillful yet heavily amended autographic orations, indicating that these were important scholarly achievements for Digby which he committed to scribal memorialisation, and which were perhaps useful for reference when composing his later theory of the soul. Indeed, annotated on the reverse side of the fourth oration’s final folio in Digby’s hand is the text ‘my last oration att my depature att Siena’, further suggesting memorialisation.²⁴

The first oration consists of a discussion of the arcane mysteries of human language; the second an argument for the emotional happiness of the rich miser; the third a study of secret modes of ancient communication; the fourth and final an early study of the human soul’s relationship with the body. Much of the space of these discourses is taken up by treatments of classical and humanistic references undoubtedly familiar to Digby’s academician audience: these range from emphases on the Platonic ancestry of the Italian academy in the fourth oration to the invocation of Petrarch on the subject of avarice in the second.²⁵ For my purposes, the orations are important as they are all advisory in their different ways. The first details how to glean secrets from language and the attendant benefits to our knowledge; the second extolls the positives of miserliness to our salvation and soul; and the third and fourth explicitly contemplate the soul’s nature. Taken together they all demonstrate that Digby used his time before the Filomati to act in an advisory capacity and

achieve a novel ambition: to propose an understanding of the soul's development which was equally a commentary on how a gentleman should navigate life to achieve eventual beatitude. I will now discuss exactly how he does this.

The first oration introduces a Neoplatonic image of God as the sun whose rays must 'enter into our soul' if we are to spiritually progress. God is at the apex of a hierarchy of created things ranging from Himself down to the 'elemental'; it is our obligation to seek to ascend to Him. But Digby does not see this ability as universal: 'the eyes of the souls of the common people could not well support ... divinity'.²⁶ Digby concludes this from his position that fully approaching God's light is only possible through intellectual contemplation, such as that he undertakes by examining the 'sacred secrets' of philosophy and theology within ancient language.²⁷ His subsequent consideration of, for example, the mysteries of the Talmudic language and the Kabbalah implicitly signals to the Filomati his adeptness at improving the state of his own soul and his desire that they share in this contemplation, thereby continuing in their own journeys towards beatitude.

The social aims of Digby's addresses to the Filomati become even clearer in his fourth and second orations. He begins the former with exhortation to the academicians to seek the 'objects of the mind' which would place them amongst the spiritually 'wealthy' if discovered. Digby places such riches well above the 'particular and small' sensations of the material world.²⁸ He admonishes those who would follow material objects at the expense of cultivating 'interior beauty' via the philosophy and learning modelled by Plato.²⁹ Yet, this unsurprisingly Neoplatonic abnegation of materiality is made more interesting by Digby's concurrent and less predictable argument in his second oration that the ideal practices of the pious Catholic can and should accommodate the accumulation of excess wealth. He does this by defending the idea of the happy miser—a concept he acknowledges that will be against 'universal opinion' on the nature of felicity—by specifically noting the concordance of miserliness with the interests of classical civilisation, positioning for example the miser as the natural heir to Pythagoras' numerical interests. Ultimately, Digby is clear that 'miserliness is a model ... of all the wonders ... so much exalted by philosophers'.³⁰

To understand exactly what Digby is doing here requires us to study his activities in Siena. In 1621, one Bonaventura Pistofilo dedicated his *Oplomachia*, a treatise on arms published in Siena, to Digby by citing him as 'joining splendour in arms with worth in letters'; fittingly, in the same year Digby duelled at a Sieneese banquet.³¹ These are valuable reminders that a duality existed in Digby's personality between academic and worldly pursuits. Of course, this was by no means uncommon for the travelling aristocratic youth on the Grand Tour. But the idiosyncrasy and significance of Digby's case lies in how he engaged fully in worldly passions and then deployed his philosophy to either legitimate them (as he did concerning the accumulation of wealth) or offset them by characterising them as the unfortunate yet unavoidable consequence of leaving a privileged academic space. This latter practice is most evident at the end of the fourth oration: when Digby turns to consider his imminent departure, he writes that though he is leaving, the Academy will retain the 'best part' of his soul.³² Whilst highly rhetorical, this language is not just an indulgence in customary seventeenth-century hyperbole. In the final pages of the fourth oration, Digby notes the ideal effects of the membership of the academy—which disposes the soul to intellectually flourish and achieve 'immortal fame' through following the Filomati's excellence in scholarship—but pairs this with an acknowledgement that the private passions elicited by the 'internal movements' of his imperfect soul upon exiting such surroundings still persist.³³ Thoughts of his departure 'disturb' his mind and have caused his understanding to be 'obscured'.³⁴ As a transient emotional youth, he simultaneously acknowledges his indebtedness to an idealised model of neoclassical academic sociability through which the devotion necessary for beatitude might be obtained alongside the ineradicable, persistent influence of worldly passions.

Studying Digby's Sieneese orations through the lens of salvation thus not only nuances our understanding of Digby's own intellectual history, but brings an important case study to broader scholarship on civil and gentlemanly conduct in early modern Europe. Scholars such as Peter Miller and Brian Vickers have reminded us that a central concern in the humanist intellectual culture of the

time (from the sixteenth century onwards) was to ensure a gentleman could engage in intellectual discourse without succumbing to his passions. An extensive and widely circulated literature of 'self-mastery' by Italian humanist writers existed to tackle this problem.³⁵ Works like Stefano Guazzo's (1530–1593) *La Civil Conversazione* (1574), of which Digby owned a copy alongside other civility texts like a 1613 Siense edition of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, promoted the need for learned academies as a way of mediating between the extremes of scholarly isolation and constructive social interaction.³⁶ Being well-read in such works and a keen active participant in contemporary Italian academic culture, Digby was surely cognisant of this middle way as a legitimate Italian theory of civility; it is not surprising, then, that his earliest semi-public meditation on the soul should be read as contribution to this debate in favour of civil conversation as salutary to salvation. He presents himself as a philosophically original Englishman combining (amongst other things) arcane Hebraic, Greek, and Ethiopian knowledge with classical texts and Italian poetry to advise the Filomati that the only way to attain beatitude is through the continuation of a notion of 'civil conversation' predicated upon the Neoplatonist understanding of the soul he offers. His unique contribution is the addition of a directly theological and metaphysical imperative (absent in, for example, Guazzo's work) which he also accommodated to the tastes of his contemporary Italian audience and their neoclassical Academy, by combining it with classically-inflected arguments for wealth being no obstacle to salvation. What motivated Digby to formulate such an imperative, I posit, was his particular desire to display and develop his Catholicism and erudition in an accepting space through novel demonstration of the knowledge gained from his earlier studies. For example, Digby's theological argument for the soul's improvement in the first oration quotes from the astrological imagery of the soul in Manilius' *Astronomica* (c. 30–40 AD) and Boethius' *Consolations of Philosophy* (c. 524), which he would have probably learnt and discussed with his mentor and famed astrologer Thomas Allen. (As Mordechai Feingold notes, Digby was in Oxford in 1618 when Patrick Young (1584–1652), a likely friend of Thomas Allen, and Caspar Gervatius (1593–1666) were attempting to produce an edition of the Roman poet's work.) Digby would therefore almost certainly have been attentive to Manilius' thinking and his importance in Oxford circles.³⁷

To summarise, the particular perspective Digby offered in these orations on how the pious Catholic gentleman should live can be seen as a youthful attempt to contribute to a contemporary Italian debate on the effects of worldly interactions upon necessary scholarly meditation. This attempt utilised this particular debate as the basis upon which to compose and publicise a series of didactic orations advising on the correct pathway to salvation. Treating the question of salvation thus also permitted Digby to perform philosophical knowledge in a foreign setting and shore up his nascent position in European Catholic intellectual culture. These orations are, to expand upon Liesbeth Corens' work, an intellectual mechanism of positive 'confessional mobility' in which philosophical knowledge gathered in the setting of English Catholic intellectual culture (specifically for Digby the Catholic-centred contexts of Gloucester Hall and Gayhurst) is assimilated into its European Catholic counterpart to facilitate acceptance into a culturally distinct, though Catholic, scholarly milieu; something we might term 'intellectual-confessional mobility'.³⁸ Digby's use of the soul in Siena as a means of addressing the question of the way to salvation is something which is, I will now argue, equally present in his more mature body of work.

4. Salvation and Catholic pedagogy

Digby's youthful public addresses demonstrate his crafting of a theory of the soul, and therefore an idea of salvation, designed to mediate between necessary youthful engagement in society and a rhetoric of scholarly asceticism. I now wish to foreground an example of how his more mature writing deployed his thinking on the soul to address what he saw as vital institutional and pedagogical issues within the Catholic Church. In his 1637 letter to Father Hilaire (a Carmelite *Lector*), Digby outlines the implications his philosophy of the soul has for remodelling theological and scholastic debate. The letter is, ostensibly, an elaboration on a prior disputation between Digby and Hilaire on

the question of how angels occupy place. This disputation was held at Tours before the Madame de Chevreuse (Marie de Rohan, 1600–1679). Both medieval and late scholastics agreed that angels, who are immaterial but not omnipresent like God, necessarily inhabit a place (*ubi*). The contested question was exactly how they exist in such a place. Digby, following Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*, holds that angels are only in a place by their operation (i.e. their angelic intellect and will) and not there definitively as upheld by the medieval Church (which condemned Aquinas' idea of angelic place in 1277) and, on this occasion, Father Hilaire.³⁹

Father Hilaire proves a difficult figure to identify. There does not appear to be an extant record of a Father Hilaire installed at the only convent of Carmelite nuns in Tours (founded in 1608) at the previously Benedictine Marmoutier Abbey. However, contextual details and the text of the letter suggest a potential identity. Consultation of the *Bibliotheca Carmelitana* (1752) reveals only one Hilaire contemporaneous with Digby: a Father Hilaire de St Augustin (1578–1653). This Father Hilaire was a significant intellectual presence in Carmelite life in the first half of the seventeenth century, who 'applied himself with zeal to philosophical and theological work'.⁴⁰ Alongside publishing extensively on ecclesiology, philosophy, and theology, Hilaire was an important force in expanding Carmelite education across Europe. Himself the master of novices at a new convent in Brussels, he requested that Anne of Saint Bartholomew (who was later to found the Carmelite convent at Tours) move to Antwerp to establish a Carmelite presence; their amicability is further underlined by Hilaire having received Anne's last confession.⁴¹ Hilaire de St Augustin, then, had both the intellectual presence and links with the personnel of the Abbey of Tours to be a viable candidate for the role of Digby's disputation partner. Examining the letter's detail is also persuasive. Digby begins the exchange with flattery which particularly highlights Hilaire's pedagogical skill and generosity: 'young and weak souls like mine', he writes, are 'overjoyed' when Hilaire opens his 'treasuries' to enrich them.⁴² Digby goes on to say that Hilaire shows one can learn as much by teaching others as 'speculating by himself'.⁴³ When this is taken with Hilaire's signature at the end of his reply to Digby, which no one has yet noted appears to read (faintly) 'Père Hilaire de S.A.', the identity of Digby's correspondent appears almost certain.⁴⁴

I now turn to the exchange's philosophical significance and the importance of Hilaire's identity in comprehending Digby's aims. Digby's defence of Aquinas' position that angelic immateriality is only safeguarded if they are present not definitively but intellectually permits him to move into a more general, polemical treatment of Scholasticism. In treating angelic place as wholly intellectual, Digby criticises the 'abstruse speculation' of the academic doctors who unacceptably accommodate themselves to the capacities of the 'vulgar' in proposing that angels are physically within the world.⁴⁵ In doing so, they illegitimately substitute the reductive language of quantity and human physics for higher order reflection on angelic position in the 'symmetry' and 'ordination' of the universe.⁴⁶ Digby then proceeds to set out in Neoplatonic imagery how angels occupy a middle ground in this hierarchical 'chain of diverse links', existing between the 'pure spirits' exempt from time and matter subject to all 'mutation'.⁴⁷ This ranking having been established, Digby undertakes a particularly clever argumentative move in extrapolating a subsequent need to consider the central concern of his philosophy: how humans can ascend such a hierarchy. Reiterating advice previously given to the Filomati, Digby emphasises to Hilaire how the soul must attain beatitude through contemplating God through theology and philosophy, detached from 'ignorance and obscurity' inherent in the material world.⁴⁸ Digby then polemically frames this idea of the soul's betterment as, unlike the unpractical School philosophies, directly purposive: he emphasises to Hilaire that he is concerned with how his speculations 'could serve' the individual in discerning the 'end' of our journey towards death.⁴⁹ In doing so, Digby proposes an altered way to think about pressing questions of soteriology: one which, unlike the Schools' abstract and often purposeless debates, balances sharing knowledge vital to individual salvation with inward, personal reflection on such knowledge. This is further confirmed in Digby's characterisation of the letter's philosophical argument as being a 'quiet and profound meditation' unable to be subject to 'grand' scholastic 'abstractions'.⁵⁰ The performative intimacy afforded by the letter format, in being outside the formal Church teaching structures he

criticises, provides a way for Digby to showcase the benefits of his superior model of academic interaction for Catholics' redemption to a potentially influential teacher who came from a Carmelite intellectual tradition—which from the medieval influences of John Baconthorpe (c. 1290–1347) onwards had been more eclectic and less dogmatically adherent to Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and other rival camps of scholastic thought. Indeed, Digby notes he has chosen to write this letter as a remedy to the deficiencies of their previous disputation where Hilaire was only just able to begin 'instructing his [Digby's] ignorance'.⁵¹

In response, Hilaire intimates that he understands his correspondent's insistence on using this exchange to posit a more sophisticated way of intellectual debate with significant benefits for salvation. He writes that Digby's meditations are extremely 'profound' when opposed to his own in which matters are treated 'more succinctly' and with less philosophical rigour. However, Hilaire is clear that doing full justice to such abstract and important philosophy cannot, as Digby seems to believe, be achieved through the epistolary; he concludes that such complex matters are better discussed through a future meeting and not 'in writing'.⁵² This partial acceptance and partial disagreement with Digby's anti-scholastic idea of Catholic pedagogy is important but not surprising. The Carmelites' founding narrative, as Andrew Jotischky has detailed, was predicated on the early solitude of their biblical founder Elijah and his twelfth-century monastic descendants on the Palestinian Mount Carmel. Equally essential to their institutional identity, however, was the ability to mediate such hermeticism with the required social and educational demands of mendicant living.⁵³ Coming from an order prioritising salvation via personal introspection, Hilaire was an ideal potential supporter of Digby's philosophy of the soul. However, as a high-ranking mendicant teacher, he was unable to do away with the orthodox scholastic mechanisms of teaching and discussion Digby saw as ultimately inhibiting proper scholarly interaction and personal devotion.

In summary, Digby's correspondence with Father Hilaire evinces his understanding of his theory of the soul and its salvation as useful in correcting Catholic education. Alongside further demonstrating the necessity and accuracy of a reading of Digby which views his soteriology as inextricably bound up with his scholarly ambition, Digby's correspondence with Father Hilaire also underlines the fascinating ways Digby viewed the early modern philosophical letter. The epistolary afforded Digby a chance to demonstrate to Hilaire how Catholic scholarly interaction should be done: through intimate, shared self-reflection on the soul and theology which circumvented the hollow performativity of the public disputation. For Digby, the letter format was not just a neutral vehicle for sharing philosophical detail, but rather a purposive genre in which his recommendations were simultaneously advertised and enacted. I now demonstrate how viewing Digby's *magnum opus*, his *Two Treatises*, as being part of this wider scholarly endeavour requires us to reappraise its role within Digby's intellectual project.

5. The Two Treatises

In 1643, Digby was banished from England by Parliamentary authorities after imprisonment for circulating Royalist materials; he consequently established himself in the scholarly crucible of mid-seventeenth-century Paris. He was already in close contact with French supporters of the 'new' philosophy such as the Minim intellectual broker Marin Mersenne (1588–1648), Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655, referred to as 'noble and learned' in the *Two Treatises*), and René Descartes (1596–1650, then living in Egmond, Holland).⁵⁴ For instance he wrote to Descartes in 1637 enclosing a refutation of his argument for God's existence in the *Discours* (1637). Descartes did not reply directly but elsewhere noted Digby's superior abilities to Princess Elisabeth (1618–1680) and Mersenne in philosophising about the soul and, in less positive terms, his strong adherence to Aristotelianism.⁵⁵ This 'new' philosophical context, it has been widely noted, greatly influenced Digby's interest in and agreement with the mechanistic position that all natural phenomena are explicable in terms of matter and its physical interactions; though, more idiosyncratically, he squared these with his ongoing commitment to a revised Aristotelianism.⁵⁶ The resulting product of an

‘Aristotelian atomism’ was most clearly and publicly expressed in his 1644 *Two Treatises*, a bipartite work (comprising the sections ‘Of Bodies’ and ‘Of Man’s Soul’) dedicated to proving the immortality of the soul through a natural philosophical treatment of the body. This treatment incorporated an idiosyncratic synthesis of Aristotelianism with an understanding of the universe as governed by the mechanistic operations of atoms. Drawing on the Aristotelian *minima naturalia* tradition, Digby argued for the harmony between his newly adopted mechanistic philosophy and Aristotelian orthodoxy: Aristotle, he writes, expressly teaches ‘that mixtion (which he delivereth to be the generation or making of a mixt body) is done *per minima*’.⁵⁷

The significance of the *Two Treatises* to the history of atomistic philosophy in Britain has long been recognised. John Henry has viewed it as ‘genuinely original’ amongst mechanistic treatises of the period in being a quasi-Aristotelian, atomistic proof of the soul’s immortality motivated by a ‘Roman Catholic philosophy’.⁵⁸ Yet there has been a recent argument that Digby’s motivations for writing the work, and its intended significance, have been misunderstood. Dmitri Levitin has persuasively argued that Henry’s assessment of the *Two Treatises* is partly unsatisfactory.⁵⁹ For Levitin, Digby composed the *Two Treatises* not primarily because of any overarching, predictable Catholic allegiance to Aristotle, but as a more specific response to earlier sixteenth-century debates on whether natural philosophy or metaphysics was the legitimate way to prove the immortality of the soul. This debate had been instigated by Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525) whose *De immortalitate animae* (1516) rejected the idea that the immortal soul could be proved by philosophical means; its immortality could only be taken on faith.⁶⁰ This is because Aristotle required the soul to be studied as part of physics, and given that physics can only deal with mortal bodies, Aristotle could not be used to prove the soul’s immortality. The potential heterodoxy of this conclusion, especially in light of the Fifth Lateran Council’s 1513 injunction that philosophical proofs of the soul are valid, led to varying challenges to Pomponazzi by late scholastics. As Levitin sets out, the two main camps of challenge were those who saw proofs of the immortal soul as part of *metaphysica* (such as the Coimbra Jesuits) and those who saw it as part of *physica* (such as the Spanish scholastic Francisco Suárez, 1548–1617).⁶¹ Digby’s clear intervention into this was his argument that the ‘Christian Schooles’ incorrectly explained the soul’s immortality when they assigned it to metaphysics; it leads to the irrefutable charge that the immortality of the soul might in fact be a ‘corporeall occult quality’ not based in reality. As such, Digby set out prove that one might evidence the immortal soul through the most ‘simple and radical’ physical principles.⁶² From consultation of these principles, namely the rarity, density, and divisibility of quantity in bodies, Digby concludes that a destructible mortal body must have atomistic parts and local motion. Logically, as a soul has none of these, it cannot be either a body or any other divisible (and therefore destructible) entity; it is therefore immortal.

I largely agree with Levitin’s revisionist position on Digby’s motivation for the *Two Treatises*, and his conclusions are clearly textually supported: Digby stresses that he is acting in the work to counter Pomponazzi’s claim that the ‘soul perisheth when the man dyeth’ through demonstrating the soul’s immortality via natural philosophical principles.⁶³ But in light of my previous argument that Digby’s correspondence evidences a long trajectory of thinking of his explication of the soul in pedagogical terms as a way of instructing readers in a ‘science of governing a man in order to Beatitude’, a new motivation can be discerned to sit alongside those detected by Henry and Levitin.⁶⁴ Digby wished in his *Two Treatises* to place his consideration of the correct practices to achieve salvation onto natural philosophical footing. Digby was, as Moshenska has detailed, a writer who had the particular characteristics of his desired readers uppermost in his mind. As Moshenska has convincingly argued regarding Digby’s letters, this characteristic translated into an ‘unusual self-consciousness’ with the formatting of correspondence. Digby composed letters, for example, to suit apologetic rhetoric to Thomas Browne (1605–1682), presented in cramped and ‘breathless’ script covering the page to give the impression of embarrassment at his draft *Observations* on Browne’s 1643 *Religio Medici* being published).⁶⁵ Complementing Moshenska’s argument, we have seen throughout this article how Digby’s concern with the varying characteristics of his

audience and correspondents led him to alter his presentation of the relationship between salvation and worldly pursuits. His earliest arguments before the Filomati were couched in Neoplatonic language, classical erudition, and an apologia for wealth, all of which were well suited to the neo-classical interests, aristocratic backgrounds, and Catholicism of his Sieneese audience.⁶⁶ His later letter to Father Hilaire evoked a Neoplatonic philosophy, epistolary intimacy, and student-like humility designed to convince a sympathetic Carmelite educator of the superiority of epistolary reflections over that of the scholastic disputations in considering matters of the soul. It is not surprising but intellectually significant, then, that an older Digby would believe that his soteriology should be now be put into vernacularised physical terms to publicly communicate with his compatriots traumatised by the civil war and the ‘calamity of this time’ about the immortality of the soul and how his philosophy permitted them to attain their ‘best being’, which should be the ultimate purpose of the ‘government of a society of men’.⁶⁷ This interpretation is given further support by considering the compositional context and intended audience of the *Two Treatises*.

Regarding composition, in February 1640 Digby was clear to Mersenne that he was composing a work on the soul with the express aim of remedying understandings of the body that were too abstract in nature. Digby advertises that he is working on an ‘entire body of all philosophy’ which treats bodily quantity properly in physical terms, unlike the unprofitable position that the body is a metaphysical structure which uses quantity as an ‘escape route’ for scholastic ignorance.⁶⁸ That Digby intended the book’s argument to eventually have the widest possible audience, and be of tangible philosophical benefit for that audience, is also clear. He petitions Mersenne for the ‘approbation of a Father Mersenne, of a Galileo, and of a Monsieur des Cartes’ and later criticises Mersenne and his followers’ focus on proving the soul’s immortality through mathematics, not the ‘common notions’ preferred by Digby and understandable to the non-specialist.⁶⁹

More specifically on the question of audience, the strict demarcation in the *Two Treatises* between the first treatise ‘Of Bodies’ and the second ‘Of Man’s Soul’ ostensibly suggests that Digby is communicating to his reader a rhetoric of the immortal soul’s absolute difference from the material body. This looks even more probable when his preference for martial imagery of the atomistic passions attacking reason and discussion of the ‘contagion’ of imagination upon the soul’s rationality are highlighted. We might therefore conclude that his stated desire to teach his reader how to ‘weane himself from ... worldly impediments’ confirms that he finally decided academic seclusion from the material world to be the only proper practice.⁷⁰ However, a more nuanced reading is preferable.

Early on in the work, Digby relates his book’s ability to advise the busy ‘statesman’ unable to understand the proper way to improve their soul himself, being caught up in worldly government and therefore requiring advice from the ‘Metaphysitian or Divine’ on how to improve his subjects’ souls.⁷¹ Further, its dedicatory is addressed to his son, Kenelm, with the aim of teaching him to weather the unavoidable political upheaval of the Civil War and to comprehend how the ‘government of a society of men’ must be attuned to the demands of salvation; alas, Kenelm the Younger was to die fighting for the Royalists at the Battle of St Neots in 1648. The dedicatory is also explicit in conveying Digby’s aim to ‘lay groundes for such knowledge’ which the individual needs to know ‘solidely the maine end of what he is in the world for’.⁷²

Thus, a crucial aim of the *Two Treatises* was to advise on the individual’s proper self-government in society and aid their redemption: ‘the end of that government and all a mans aymes is ... beatitude’ which is the prime objective of any society.⁷³ It stands to reason, then, that Digby must detail how beatitude should be protected from sabotage in this life. The justification for Digby’s belief that such sabotage is ever-present and that his reader must be alerted to its dangers results not just from a general theological anxiety about the sinfulness of post-lapsarian society but Digby’s particular natural philosophical argument. As detailed above, on the atomistic understanding of the world Digby sets out in ‘Of Bodies’, all natural philosophical operations are governed by atoms of relative rarity and density which ‘goeth through all bodies whatsoever, and beateth upon every sensible part of them’.⁷⁴ The psychological consequences of these atoms beating upon human bodies are

specifically considered in the second treatise. Digby explains how all rhetoric effectively works through a principle of atomistic sympathy in which ‘we may persuade our Auditory, such passions raigne in us, as we seeke to stirre up in them’.⁷⁵ Such rhetoric has a material effect on the atomistic processes of the listener’s mind, who often remains unaware of ‘the subtil spirits motions that by a kind of contagion rise and swell in their hartes’ when someone’s speech succeeds in manipulating their passions. Further proof that Digby saw atomistic exchanges as being foundational to and an inevitable result of social interaction also appears in his correspondence. In a 1637 letter to an anonymous Parisian ‘Madame’ who foresaw his riding accident and sent him a scarf in order to recuperate, Digby postulates that an atomistic theory of sympathy might be the cause of her peculiar foreknowledge: one body contemplating another attracts by sympathy atoms from the body considered, which carry with them all the ‘dispositions, temperaments and qualities’ of their host. As such, these atoms allow the receiving person’s reason to ascertain knowledge about the contemplated body’s current and potential health and moral state.⁷⁶ Digby in his later 1658 *Discourse* on the ‘powder of sympathy’ will confirm and discuss in more general terms his belief in this theory of sympathetic atomistic interaction.⁷⁷ But he is already using it in the *Two Treatises* to communicate to his reader a previously mooted theory that individuals are constantly subject to atomistic influences which, unfortunately, might overcome their reason (and thus their ability to move towards beatitude).

To combat this danger, Digby advises in martial terms that ‘the army of thoughts on reason’s side should be increased in number to battle with the rebellious adversary’ ‘by good conversation’, contemplation of beatitude, and the emulation the acts of ‘worthy persons’. Importantly, he is also clear that the reader must carefully observe the ‘motives and wayes of our passions and animall desires’ by trial and error: sometimes moderating them, sometimes giving them ‘diversions’, and sometimes avoiding ‘occasions’ for their fulfilment in order to achieve redemption.⁷⁸ He therefore acknowledges that one cannot always practice absolute solitude or always be free from material distractions, an acknowledgment Moshenska has detected elsewhere in Digby’s earlier work.⁷⁹ The *Two Treatises* is therefore clearly a work which, alongside demonstrating the immortality of the soul, proposes to a socially active reader (ostensibly his son enlisted as a Royalist soldier) knowledge and advice by which one can mitigate risks to the soul—risks created by the sometimes malign natural philosophical processes of worldly social interaction and sensual gratification. Indeed, the strength of Digby’s belief in the importance of this message is underlined by the fact that the work’s conclusion takes the form of a personal address to Digby’s own soul in which it is urged to avoid sallying into a ‘perverse disposition’ which will lead it to an ‘eternity of misery’.⁸⁰ It is also important to note that the strength of this soteriological warning was recognised by Thomas White (1593–1676, Digby’s friend and intellectual influence) in his interpretation of the book. In a dialogic theological work, entitled *Rushworth’s Dialogues*, White has the wise uncle recommend to his young Catholic nephew that he read the *Two Treatises* in order to best understand the importance of acting in this life to achieve salvation in the next, holding Digby as the premier philosophical authority on this question: his arguments convince us theologically that ‘our actions here ... [are] dispositions of our soul ... to the sight of God hereafter’.⁸¹

As I have demonstrated throughout this article, Digby used his letters pedagogically to work out the ways in which one could engage within early modern society without imperilling salvation, and then advertise his conclusions to his readers. We should therefore interpret a central purpose of the *Two Treatises* to be a printed, vernacular, and natural philosophical iteration of this objective which moves away from the mystical language of Neoplatonism (Digby is adamant that his argument is specifically intended as ‘plaine and easy’ and that he will only discuss metaphysics when absolutely necessary⁸²) to stress to the reader in specifically atomistic language how the world endangers salvation and what can be done to mitigate such dangers.

Recognising this overarching motivation behind the *Two Treatises* both supports and nuances Levitin’s thesis. Digby was indeed responding to a specific debate on the immortality of the soul through deploying the Aristotelian *minima naturalia* tradition, but he was also using it to further

his long-running theological purpose of demonstrating to his readership how to achieve salvation. So too must Henry's argument be partially revised: it was not just a general allegiance to Aristotle as the underpinning of Catholic theology which motivated Digby to write his quasi-Aristotelian work. It was also his particular desire to theorise the proper relationship between the individual's soul and their social practices first evidenced at Siena.

Levitin is also right to note that Digby takes up against wholly metaphysical explanations of the soul in the *Two Treatises*. As we have seen, Digby's thinking on how to understand and explain the relationship between worldly interaction and salvation in his natural philosophy moves away from the earlier themes present in the letter to Hilaire and orations to the Filomati, which centred on a metaphysical understanding of the soul as progressing up a Neoplatonic hierarchy of being of which God is the apex. But studying Digby's soteriology permits a more sophisticated understanding of his gradual intellectual development by recognising that he did not always view metaphysics as an illegitimate way to explain the soul's immortality. This move away from Neoplatonism was a gradual one done for reasons of argumentative clarity and Digby's realisation that the demands of salvation are better served by interrogating the world's atomistic operations rather than communicating in chiefly metaphysical rhetoric. Indeed, Digby displays in the *Two Treatises* a mature desire to set himself apart from Platonic philosophers' belief in the omniscience of the soul before birth and the soul's immutability: he writes that no 'rationall philosopher' can agree with these conclusions when they understand that the amount of knowledge the soul gains in this life determines the degree of bliss its immortality affords. This acquisition of knowledge inevitably requires that the soul changes its being in the process: for Digby, no one can doubt the soul 'changed from not *being* to *being*; so, may she likewise be changed from lesse knowing, to more knowing'.⁸³ When this position is connected to the argument of the treatise 'Of Bodies' that attainment of knowledge is an atomistic process whereby atoms emanating from bodies strike the 'seate of knowledge' (i.e. our brain)—causing it to obtain understanding and exercise judgement depending on the 'particular nature' of their strikes—it becomes clear that Digby has recognised that Platonic metaphysics cannot provide the natural philosophical foundation upon which to build an irreproachable case for the soul's immortality or to fulfil his theological aim of detailing how to achieve its redemption.⁸⁴ Our understanding of Digby's intellectual history is consequently much enhanced by comprehending his persistent desire to be seen by readers as a premier authority on the attainment of salvation. This desire necessitated a gradual shift away from an early Neoplatonic metaphysics towards a vernacular, atomistic natural philosophy better able to communicate the urgency and means of thinking about beatitude.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, viewing Digby's theory of the soul as bound up with a gradually developing soteriology greatly enriches our intellectual historical understanding of his thought and scholarly development. It paints a portrait of a thinker who saw his orations, letters, and books as spaces in which, via fraught question of salvation, he could cement his scholarly reputation (both in England and on the continent) by working out, refining, and tailoring his understanding of redemption to particular social and cultural contexts. More broadly, Digby stands as a reminder to early modern intellectual historians of the imperative to give 'new' philosophers' theological, and particularly soteriological, concerns proper attention. For Digby, 'new' philosophy was not just theologically legitimate but theologically *indispensable* to clarifying the ways in which salvation could be attained. That Thomas White's *Rushworth's Dialogues* enthusiastically directed his readers to consult the *Two Treatises'* soteriology is just one example of how this attitude was not unique to Digby. By design, this article has exclusively focused on one fascinating philosopher whose conception of the soul demonstrates the gravity and utility of salvation as an intellectual historical lens. Many fruitful opportunities nevertheless remain for future work to further recover how early modern scholars of all confessions saw the numerous innovations of seventeenth-century natural philosophy and metaphysics as potential pathways to absolution in the life hereafter.

Notes

1. Allen's description of Digby as such is attested to by the seventeenth-century biographers John Aubrey and Anthony à Wood: see John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. A. Clark (Oxford: Henry Frowde, 1898), vol. 2, 224–9 and Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (London, 1692), vol. 2, 351–4.
2. English language biographies are: Thomas Longueville, *Sir Kenelm Digby* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1896); Eric W. Bligh, *Sir Kenelm Digby and his Venetia* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1923); John Fulton, *Sir Kenelm Digby, Writer* (New York, NY: Peter & Katherine Oliver, 1937); Robert T. Petersson, *Sir Kenelm Digby: Ornament of England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956); John Fulton, 'Sir Kenelm Digby, F.R.S., 1603–1665' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 15 (1960): 199–200; a brief biography is also provided by Noel Malcolm in his 'Biographical Register' of Hobbes' correspondents: see 'Sir Kenelm Digby 1603–1665' in *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), vol. 2, 828–32. Laudable, scholarly accounts of Digby are Vittorio Gabrieli, *Sir Kenelm Digby, un inglese italianato nell'età della Controriforma* (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1957) and Vittorio Gabrieli, 'La Missione di Sir Kenelm Digby alla Corte de Innocenzo X' *English Miscellany* 5 (1945): 247–88.
3. See generally Joe Moshenska, *A Stain in the Blood: The Remarkable Voyage of Sir Kenelm Digby* (London: Penguin, 2016).
4. Joe Moshenska, "'Sir Kenelm Digby's Interruptions': Piracy and Lived Romance in the 1620s' *Studies in Philology* 113 (2012): 424–83; and Joe Moshenska, "'Spencerus istic conditur': Kenelm Digby's Transcription of William Alabaster' *Spenser Studies* 27 (2012): 315–28. The only surviving MS of the *Loose Fantasies* is, BL Harley MS, 6758, London, British Library. It is undated but I follow Gabrieli in dating it to his period on the Aegean island of Milos in 1628, on which see Kenelm Digby, *Loose Fantasies*, ed. V. Gabrieli (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1968), xvii.
5. See Han Thomas Adriaenssen and Sander de Boer, 'Between Atoms and Forms: Natural Philosophy and Metaphysics in Kenelm Digby', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57 (2019): 57–80; Stephen Clucas and Timothy J. Raylor, 'Kenelm Digby's Two Treatises and the Reception of the Galilean Science of Motion' *Galileana: Journal of Galilean Studies* 17 (2020): 91–116; and Martine Pécharman 'Kenelm Digby on Quantity as Divisibility' *Vivarium* 58 (2020) 191–218.
6. See Anne-Laure de Meyer, *Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–1665): Un Penseur à L'Age du Baroque* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2021).
7. de Meyer, *Sir Kenelm Digby*, 39.
8. Jonathan Willis, 'Introduction' in Jonathan Willis, ed. *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England* (London: Routledge, 2015) 1–20, 6.
9. Willis, 'Introduction', 6.
10. See Jean Delumeau, *Rassurer et Protéger: Le Sentiment de Sécurité dans l'Occident d'Autrefois* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).
11. See Richard A. Muller, 'Union with Christ and the Order Salutis: Reflections on Developments in Early Modern Reformed Thought', in Richard A. Muller, ed. *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 202–43; R.J. Matava, *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
12. See Han van Ruler, 'Beatitude and the Scope of Grace: Early Modern Morals and the Paradoxes of Felicity' in Alberto Frigo, ed. *Inexcusabiles: Salvation and the Virtues of the Pagans in the Early Modern Period* (Netherlands: Springer, 2020), 107–23. Frigo's introduction to the volume (1–12) is also useful in understanding the early modern conceptions of salvation and non-Christian culture; David Hillman, 'Salutation and Salvation in Early Modern Theology' *Renaissance Quarterly* 73 (2020): 821–65, 856.
13. Kenelm Digby, *A Conference with a Lady about a Choice of Religion* (Paris, 1638), 7.
14. de Meyer, *Sir Kenelm Digby*, 393; this idea of self-fashioning and a 'forming of the self' is, of course, taken from Stephen Greenblatt's classic *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), see 2 and more generally 1–11 ('Introduction').
15. See the 'Digby' entry in Aubrey's *Brief Lives*.
16. On this bequest see Michael Foster, 'Thomas Allen, Gloucester Hall, and the Bodleian Library' *The Downside Review* 399 (1982): 116–37, esp. 130–32.
17. On Digby's idea of a 'weapon-salve' see Elizabeth Hedrick, 'Romancing the Salve: Sir Kenelm Digby and the Powder of Sympathy' *The British Journal for the History of Science* 41 (2008): 161–85 and Seth Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy* (Yale, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 36–68.
18. On Digby's relationship with Cromwell and contemporary comment on it see Andrew Kippis and Joseph Towers, eds. *Biographia Britannica* (London, 1793), vol. 5, 193–4, esp. f.n. 'L'. For further contemporary anecdotes of their closeness see also e.g. Mary Anne Everett Green, ed. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Interregnum, 1655–6* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1882), 'Volume 125: March 1656', 209.
19. For contemporary debate and practice concerning the proper balance between learned solitude and scholarly communication with the world see Peter Miller, *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth*

- Century* (Yale, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), e.g. 50, 75 and *passim*. Also helpful is Marc Fumaroli, 'The Republic of Letters' *Diogenes* 36 (1988): 129–52.
20. On Digby's time in Siena see Dennis E. Rhodes, 'Sir Kenelm Digby in Siena' *The British Museum Quarterly* 23 (1958): 61–8.
 21. For this 1616 manuscript copy of the *Discorso* see MS Digby 133, Oxford, Bodleian Library, and for the medieval manuscript on divination, entitled *Tractatus de arte geomantiae*, see MS Digby 50, Oxford, Bodleian Library.
 22. On Italian and European academics during the early modern period see generally Ginette Vagenheim, Marc Deramaix, Jean Vignes, Perrine Galland-Hallyn, eds., *Les Académies dans l'Europe Humaniste: Idéaux et Pratiques* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2008).
 23. This pseudonym is included in the full title of the final oration Digby gave at Siena: 'Ultimata oratione da me detta nel'academia de Filomati di Siena quando me haveano dato per nome *il fiorito* ...', for which see BL Add. MS 41846, London, British Library, 140r (my emphasis). All translations in this article are my own unless otherwise specified.
 24. See BL Add. MS 41846, 141v.
 25. See BL Add. MS 41846, '2nd oratione', 127v.
 26. BL Add. MS 41846, 'Prima oratione', 119r.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. BL Add. MS 41846, 'Ultimata oratione', 140r.
 29. *Ibid.*
 30. BL Add. MS 41846, '2nd oratione', 124r, 126r, 125v.
 31. See Bonaventura Pistofilo, *Oplomachia di Bonaventura Pistofilo nobile ferrarese dottore, e caualiere* (Siena, 1621), dedicatory epistle. On this duel see Joe Moshenska, *A Stain in the Blood*, 78.
 32. BL Add. MS 41846, 'Ultimata oratione', 141r.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. *Ibid.*, 141v.
 35. See Miller, *Peirese's Europe*, 55 and generally chap. two ('Constancy, conversation, and friendship: 'The civil life of private men'), pp. 49–76; Brian Vickers, 'Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of Otium' *Renaissance Studies* 4 (1990): 107–54.
 36. On Digby's ownership consult the auction catalogue of his posthumously sold library: George Digby, *Bibliotheca Digbeiana* (London, 1680), e.g. 88.
 37. See BL Add. MS 41846, 'Prima oratione', 121r; a catalogue of Allen's own manuscripts reveals his ownership of an edition of Boethius' Consolations: see William D. Macray, ed. *Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae Pars Nonae Codices a Viro Clarissimo Kenelm Digby* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), 264; Mordechai Feingold, *The Mathematician's Apprenticeship: Science, Universities and Society in England 1560–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 134–5.
 38. See Liesbeth Corens, *Confessional Mobility and English Catholics in Counter-Reformation Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
 39. For a discussion of the issues and historical context of the debate on angelic place see Kuni Sakamoto, *Julius Caesar Scaliger, Renaissance Reformer of Aristotelianism: A Study of his Exoteric Exercises* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), e.g. 93.
 40. Cosme. de St. Etienne, *Bibliotheca Carmelitana, notis criticis et dissertationibus illustrata: cura & labore unius e carmelitis provinciae Turoniae Collecta* (Orléans, 1752), vol. 1, 660.
 41. On Père Hilaire's visit to Anne of St Bartholomew see Louis de Sainte Thérèse, *Abrégé de l'establissement des Carmélites de Bordeaux* (Paris, 1662), 121. For her death and last confession see Pierre de la mère de Dieu, *Les fleurs du Carmel Cueillies du Parterre des Carmes Déchaussez de France* (Antwerp, 1670), 470.
 42. Digby to Hilaire (Paris, 8th Jan. 1637) in BL Add. MS 41846, 1r.
 43. *Ibid.*, 1v.
 44. See Hilaire to Digby (Tours, 8th Feb. 1637) in *ibid.*, 13r.
 45. Digby to Hilaire in *ibid.*, 2v, 4v.
 46. *Ibid.*, 3v.
 47. *Ibid.*, 4r.
 48. *Ibid.*, 5v.
 49. *Ibid.*, 5r, (Digby's emphasis).
 50. *Ibid.*, 8r.
 51. *Ibid.*, 1v.
 52. Hilaire to Digby (Tours, 8th Feb. 1637) in *ibid.*, 13r.
 53. See Andrew Jotischky, *The Carmelites and Antiquity: Mendicants and their Pasts in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) e.g. 15 and chap. three ('The Ignea Sagitta (1270): The First Defence of Carmelite Tradition'), 79–105.
 54. See Kenelm Digby, *Two Treatises in the One of Which the Nature of Bodies, in the Other, the Nature of Mans Soule is Looked Into in Way of Discovery of the Immortality of Reasonable Soules* (Paris, 1644), 145; on Digby's

- time amongst the French ‘new’ philosophers see Michael Foster, ‘Sir Kenelm Digby I’ *The Downside Review* 106 (1988): 35–58, see 50–51, and Sarah Hutton, *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 83–85; on his time with Descartes see Desmond Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 279–81.
55. For evidence of Digby sending Descartes this refutation see Descartes to Mersenne (Santpoort, 23rd August 1638) in Cornelis de Waard, ed. *Correspondance de P. Marin Mersenne* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1964), vol. 8, 64. For Descartes’ praise of Digby’s notions of the soul see Descartes to Princess Elisabeth (Egmond, 3rd Nov. 1645) in Charles Adam and Paul Tanner, eds. *Oeuvres de Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), vol 4, 333. For Descartes’ dim view of Digby’s Aristotelianism see Descartes to Mersenne, (Sandpoort, 11th Oct. 1638) in de Waard, ed. *Correspondance*, vol. 8, 113.
 56. On the natural philosophical theory behind Digby’s Aristotelian atomism see Antonio Clericuzio, *Elements, Principles and Corpuscles* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2000), 82–88 alongside Adriaenssen and de Boer, ‘Between Atoms and Forms’.
 57. Digby, *Two Treatises*, 343.
 58. John Henry, ‘Sir Kenelm Digby, Recusant Philosopher’, in Graham A.J. Rodgers, Tom Sorrell, and Jill Kraye, eds. *Insiders and Outsiders in Seventeenth Century Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 43–75, 43. Henry also makes a similar claim in his seminal article: John Henry, ‘Atomism and Eschatology: Catholicism and Natural Philosophy in the Interregnum’ *The British Journal for the History of Science* 15 (1982): 211–39, see 233.
 59. See Dmitri Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science: Histories of Philosophy in England c. 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 246–49.
 60. On Pomponazzi and critical reactions to him see Paul R. Blum, ‘The Immortality of the Soul’, in James Hankins, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 219–27.
 61. See Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom*, 247.
 62. Digby, *Two Treatises*, preface.
 63. *Ibid.*, 429.
 64. *Ibid.*
 65. Joe Moshenska, ‘*Mise-en-page*: Editing Early Modern Letters’ in Claire Loffman and Harriet Phillips, eds. *A Handbook of Editing Early Modern Texts* (London: Routledge, 2020), 176–81, 178.
 66. For the specifics of these aristocratic backgrounds and neoclassical interests see François Quiviger, ‘A Spartan Academic Banquet in Siena’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54 (1991): 206–25.
 67. Digby, *Two Treatises*. dedicatory.
 68. Digby to Mersenne (London, 24 February 1640) in de Waard, ed. *Correspondance*, vol. 8, 64, 123.
 69. *Ibid.*, 121.
 70. Digby, *Two Treatises*, 381, dedicatory.
 71. *Ibid.*
 72. *Ibid.*
 73. *Ibid.*
 74. *Ibid.*, 95.
 75. *Ibid.*, 381.
 76. Digby to ‘Madame’ in (London, Sept. 1637) in BL Add. MS 41846, 99r.
 77. See Kenelm Digby, *A Late Discourse Made in a Solemne Assembly of Nobles and Learned Men at Montpellier in France Touching the Cure of Wounds by the Powder of Sympathy* (London, 1658), e.g. 89–90.
 78. Digby, *Two Treatises*, 380, 392.
 79. See Joe Moshenska, ‘Double Conversion: The Sensory Autobiography of Sir Kenelm Digby’ in Robin Macdonald, Emilie K. Murphy, and Elizabeth L. Swann, eds. *Sensing the Sacred in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 2018), 81–98, 88.
 80. Digby, *Two Treatises*, 456.
 81. See T. White and W. Rushworth, *Rushworth’s Dialogues or the Judgement of Common Sence in the Choice of Religion* (London, 1654), 234.
 82. Digby, *Two Treatises*, 7.
 83. *Ibid.*, 434.
 84. *Ibid.*, 275.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge Dr Michael Edwards, Dr Richard Serjeantson, Ella Sbaraini, and Gregory Serapio-García for their helpful feedback on earlier versions of this article. The author would also like to acknowledge the support of the Cambridge Trust and Robinson College, Cambridge in helping fund the research from which this article originated.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Niall Dilucia  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4033-573X>

Bibliography

Unpublished Manuscript Sources

MS Digby 133, Oxford, Bodleian Library.
MS Digby 50, Oxford, Bodleian Library.
BL Harley MS, 6758, London, British Library.
BL Add. MS 41846, London, British Library.

Secondary Literature

- Adam C. and Tannery, P. eds. *Oeuvres de Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), vol. 4.
- Adriaenssen, H.T. and de Boer, S. 'Between Atoms and Forms: Natural Philosophy and Metaphysics in Kenelm Digby' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57 (2019): 57–80.
- Aubrey, J. *Brief Lives*, ed. Clarke, A. (Oxford: Henry Frowde 1898), vol. 2.
- Bligh, E.W. *Sir Kenelm Digby and his Venetia* (London: Sampson Low Marston and Co., 1923).
- Blum, P. R. 'The Immortality of the Soul' in Hankins, J. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 219–227.
- Clarke, D. *Descartes: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Clericuzio, A. *Elements, Principles and Corpuscles* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2000).
- Clucas, S. and Raylor, T.J. 'Kenelm Digby's Two Treatises and the Reception of the Galilean Science of Motion' *Galileana: Journal of Galilean Studies* 17 (2020): 91–116.
- Corens, L. *Confessional Mobility and English Catholics in Counter-Reformation Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
- de La Mère de Dieu, P. *Les fleurs du Carmel Cueillies du Parterre des Carmes Déchaussez de France*, (Antwerp, 1670).
- de Meyer, A. *Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–1665): Un Penseur à L'Age du Baroque* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2021).
- de St. Thérèse, L. *Abrégé de l'establissement des Carmélites de Bordeaux* (Paris, 1662).
- de St. Etienne, C. *Bibliotheca Carmelitana, notis criticis et dissertationibus illustrata: cura & labore unius e carmelitis Provinciae Turoniae collecta*, (Orléans, 1752), vol. 1.
- de Waard, C. ed. *Correspondance de P. Marin Mersenne* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1964), vol. 8.
- Delumeau, J. *Rassurer et Protéger: Le Sentiment de Sécurité dans l'Occident d'Autrefois* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).
- Digby, K. *A Conference with a Lady about a Choice of Religion* (Paris, 1638).
- Digby, K. *A Late Discourse Made in a Solemne Assembly of Nobles and Learned Men at Montpellier in France Touching the Cure of Wounds by the Powder of Sympathy* (London, 1658).
- Digby, G. *Bibliotheca Digbeiana* (London, 1680).
- Digby, K. *Two Treatises in the One of Which the Nature of Bodies, in the Other, the Nature of Mans Soule is Looked Into in Way of Discovery of the Immortality of Reasonable Soules* (Paris, 1644).
- Digby, K. *Loose Fantasies*, ed. Gabrieli, V. (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1968).
- Feingold, M. *The Mathematician's Apprenticeship: Science, Universities and Society in England 1560–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- Foster, M. 'Sir Kenelm Digby I' *The Downside Review* 106 (1988): 35–58.
- Foster, M. 'Thomas Allen, Gloucester Hall, and the Bodleian Library' *The Downside Review* 399 (1982): 116–37.
- Frigo, A. 'Introduction' in Frigo, A. ed. *Inexcusables: Salvation and the Virtues of the Pagans in the Early Modern Period* (Netherlands: Springer, 2020), 1–12.
- Fulton, J. 'Sir Kenelm Digby, F.R.S 1603–1665' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 15 (1960): 199–200.
- Fulton, J. *Sir Kenelm Digby, Writer* (New York, NY: Peter & Katherine Oliver, 1937).
- Fumaroli, M. 'The Republic of Letters' *Diogenes* 36 (1988): 129–52.
- Gabrieli, V. 'La Missione di Sir Kenelm Digby alla Corte de Innocenzo X' *English Miscellany* 5 (1945): 247–88.
- Gabrieli, V. *Sir Kenelm Digby, un inglese italianato nell'età della Controriforma* (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 1957).

- Green, M. ed. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Interregnum, 1655-6* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1882).
- Greenblatt, S. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- Hedrick, E. 'Romancing the Salve: Sir Kenelm Digby and the Powder of Sympathy' *The British Journal for the History of Science* 41 (2008) 161–85.
- Henry, J. 'Atomism and Eschatology: Catholicism and Natural Philosophy in the Interregnum' *The British Journal for the History of Science* 15 (1982): 211–39.
- Henry, J. 'Sir Kenelm Digby, Recusant Philosopher' in Rodgers, G.A.J, Sorrell, T. and Kraye, J. eds. *Insiders and Outsiders in Seventeenth Century Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 43–75.
- Hillman, D. 'Atomism and Eschatology: Catholicism and Natural Philosophy in the Interregnum' *The British Journal for the History of Science* 15 (1982): 211–39.
- Hutton, S. *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- Jotischky, A. *The Carmelites and Antiquity: Mendicants and their Pasts in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Kippis, A and Towers, J. *Biographia Britannica* (London, 1793), vol. 5.
- Levitin, D. *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science: Histories of Philosophy in England c. 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- Lobis, S. *The Virtue of Sympathy* (Yale, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).
- Longueville, T. *Sir Kenelm Digby* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1896).
- Macray, W.D. ed. *Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae Pars Nona Codices a Viro Clarissimo Kenelm Digby* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883).
- Malcolm, N. ed. *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), vol. 2.
- Matava, R.J. *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
- Miller, P. *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (Yale CT: Yale University Press, 2000).
- Moshenska, J. 'Double Conversion: The Sensory Autobiography of Sir Kenelm Digby' in Macdonald, R. Murphy, E.K. and Swann, E.L. eds. *Sensing the Sacred in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 2018), 81–98.
- Moshenska, J. 'Mise-en-page: Editing Early Modern Letters', in Loffman, C. and Phillips, H. eds., *A Handbook of Editing Early Modern Texts* (London: Routledge, 2020), 176–81.
- Moshenska, J. 'Sir Kenelm Digby's Interruptions: Piracy and Lived Romance in the 1620s' *Studies in Philology* 113 (2012): 424–83.
- Moshenska, J. 'Spencerus Isthic Conditur': Kenelm Digby's Transcription of William Alabaster', *Spenser Studies* 27 (2012): 315–28.
- Moshenska, J. *A Stain in the Blood: the Remarkable Voyage of Sir Kenelm Digby* (London: Penguin, 2016).
- Muller, R.A. 'Union with Christ and the Order Salutis: Reflections on Developments in Early Modern Reformed Thought' in Muller, R.A. ed. *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 202–43.
- Petersson, R.T. *Sir Kenelm Digby: Ornament of England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956).
- Pécharman, M. 'Kenelm Digby on Quantity as Divisibility' *Vivarium* 58 (2020) 191–218.
- Pistofilo, B. *Oplomachia di Bonaventura Pistofilo nobile ferrarese dottore, e caualiere* (Siena, 1621).
- Quiviger, F. 'A Spartan Academic Banquet in Siena' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54 (1991): 206–25.
- Rhodes, D.E. 'Sir Kenelm Digby in Siena' *The British Museum Quarterly* 23 (1958): 61–8.
- Sakamoto, K. *Julius Caesar Scaliger, Renaissance Reformer of Aristotelianism: A Study of His Exotericae Exercitationes* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
- Vagenheim, G., Deramaix, M., Vignes, J., and Galland-Hallyn, P. eds. *Les Académies dans l'Europe Humaniste: Idéaux et Pratiques* (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 2008).
- Vickers, B. 'Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of Otium' *Renaissance Studies* 4 (1990): 107–54.
- White, T. *A Contemplation of Heaven* (Paris, 1654).
- White, T., and Rushworth W. *Rushworth's Dialogues or the Judgement of Common Sense in the Choice of Religion* (Paris, 1654).
- Willis, J. ed. *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England* (London: Routledge, 2016).
- Wood, A. *Athenae Oxonienses* (London, 1692), vol. 2.
- Van Ruler, H. 'Beatitude and the Scope of Grace: Early Modern Morals and the Paradoxes of Felicity' in Frigo, A. ed. *Inexcusables: Salvation and the Virtues of the Pagans in the Early Modern Period* (Netherlands: Springer, 2020), 107–23.