

TOWARDS A NEW METHODOLOGY FOR NATURAL PHILOSOPHY: LATIN AVERROISM REVISITED

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Abstract

The reception of Aristotelian philosophy with Averroes's commentaries in the thirteenth-century Latin world promoted a new way of understanding natural philosophy and its method. A very special case among the readers of such commentaries, mostly found at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris, are the so-called *averroistae*. What these *averroistae* actually were is still a matter of discussion in current scholarship, whereas there is kind of consensus regarding the main exponents of this philosophical movement, namely Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia. The aim of this paper is to shed light on this topic by providing a re-definition of Averroism in the 13th century. To do this, I will analyse some of the most important works of the aforementioned authors in an attempt to clarify the specificity of their philosophical program.

Key Words

Averroes, Averroism, Siger of Brabant, Boethius of Dacia, Thomas Aquinas.



Averroes's commentaries mediated the reception of Aristotelian philosophy in the thirteenth-century Latin world. These commentaries promoted the emergence of a philosophical movement, Averroism or radical Aristotelianism, whose nature is still problematic in current scholarship, because there is a lack of consensus among scholars regarding what this movement actually was. Besides, the focus of philosophical discussion concerning Averroism has not always been uniform. For a long time, the so-called *double-truth* theory has been seen as the defining feature of this movement. However, scholars now agree that this theory is a later misconception, and the modern philosophical debate has turned to the theses of

Averroes, chiefly the thesis of the unicity of the intellect, as being the main feature of Averroistic thought in the thirteenth century. The lack of agreement concerning the nature of this philosophical movement has made other scholars suggest that the term *Averroism* is no longer accurate and that *radical Aristotelianism* should be the preferred terminology, mostly because the main representatives of this movement aimed to be as faithful to Aristotle as possible. In other words, in order to find an answer to the question *what it is to be an Averroist* in the thirteenth century, scholarship either denies the existence of Averroism as a movement or points towards those who followed Averroes's theses, mainly the thesis of the unicity of the intellect.

Against these views, I will argue that there was a philosophical movement in the thirteenth century that can be called *Averroism*. I will also argue that the question *what is it to be an Averroist* cannot be answered by means of any particular doctrine – not even the unicity thesis –, and that the defining feature of Averroism as a philosophical tendency is to be found in the methodology of the *artistae*, mainly Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia. In addition, I will also argue for the originality of these masters' philosophical projects as one of a kind in the second half of the thirteenth century. My aim is thus to provide a redefinition of this philosophical movement, traditionally formulated in terms of doctrine, by showing how this way of understanding Averroism is problematic. Instead, I will defend that Averroism as a philosophical current is better understood as a methodological movement than as a set of doctrines, meaning that what the so-called Averroists took from Averroes were not doctrinal positions, but a specific methodology for the philosophical enterprise.

In order to argue for this, I will first provide a short introduction to the most important changes in the ways of understanding philosophy that followed the reception of Aristotle's works mediated by Averroes's commentaries. Secondly, I will address the philosophical impact of the reception of Aristotelian philosophy at the University of Paris by focusing on the main readers and subsequent doctrinal reactions to Aristotelian and Averroistic philosophy, as they will serve us to present Latin Averroism in its proper context. Thirdly, I will provide an overview of the historiographical tradition on Averroism and then challenge the idea of Averroism as being a matter of doctrine – defined as the followers of Averroes or as the adherents of the thesis of the unicity of the intellect –, and argue that Averroism was first and foremost a matter of philosophical method. I will do this by analysing the theses of the authors known to be the main representatives of Averroism, i. e., Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia.

I. *The Background of Averroism*

I.1 The Reception of Averroes's Philosophy in the Medieval Latin West

The reception of Islamic philosophy in the Latin West was a consequence of the cultural exchange between Muslims and Christians and of the translations from Arabic into Latin. Some translations of works on astronomical instruments and geometry were made in the tenth century at the Monastery of Santa María de Ripoll in Catalonia. Towards the end of the eleventh century, works on medicine and natural philosophy were translated chiefly by Constantine the African (fl. 1065–1085) who is traditionally placed at the *Schola Medica Salernitana* in Salerno, Italy. However, most of the translations into Latin were made between 1125 and 1200, following the Christian conquests of Toledo (1085) and Sicily (1091). The works of Aristotle were at first preceded by the commentaries of Avicenna in the Latin translations, but around the decades of 1220–1230 the commentaries of Averroes gradually replaced those of Avicenna and would finally be the ones used as a guide to understand Aristotle's teachings, to such an extent that in the Medieval Latin West the Cordovan philosopher would be known as the *Commentator*.¹ The most important translator of Averroes's commentaries was Michael Scot, but Herman the German and William of Luna are to be found among the translators as well.²

Despite the influence of Neoplatonic thinkers on Averroes's thought, such as al-Fārābī or Ibn Bājja, the purpose of the philosopher of Córdoba was to provide a genuinely Aristotelian explanation of Aristotle's philosophy, and his commentaries were used by theologians and philosophers in order to reach a better understanding of Aristotle's teachings. Nevertheless, the reception of both the works of Aristotle and the commentaries of Averroes in the Latin West was not unproblematic, as it soon became obvious that some Aristotelian doctrines were in conflict with Christian faith: the first ban against Aristotelian philosophy occurred already in 1210, even before the transmission of Averroes's commentaries. However, to qualify the relations between philosophy and theology as a purely antagonistic one would lead to a very simplistic account of the reception of Aristotle's natural philosophy, for in fact the first to study the newly rediscovered works were to be found among theologians.

¹ There were translations from Greek into Latin as well in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but since I focus here on the Latin reception of Averroes's philosophy, and there is a huge amount of translations, I will not enter this topic. A list of the different translations of Aristotle's works and the translators can be found in BERNARD G. DOD, « Aristoteles Latinus », in NORMAN KRETZMANN, ANTHONY KENNY, JAN PINBORG (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 45–79.

² See DAG NIKOLAUS HASSE, *Latin Averroes Translations of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century*, Olms, Hildesheim 2010.

The aforementioned ban dating from 1210 serves us as a witness that Aristotelian philosophy was being read before that time, although the references are scarce within this decade. Around 1200, Daniel of Morley (d. c. 1210) quoted Aristotle's *Physica*, *Metaphysica* and *De sensu et sensato* in his *Liber de naturis inferiorum et superiorum*, but he did so by means of the translation of Avicenna's commentary on *De caelo et mundo*.³ Roger Bacon stated that the first to teach the *De Sophisticis Elenchis* was Saint Edmund of Canterbury (d. 1240).⁴ Alexander Neckham (d. 1217), also a theologian, recommended the study of *Metaphysica*, *De generatione et corruptione* and *De anima*.⁵ William of Auvergne, William of Auxerre and Robert Grosseteste are also among the many theologians who read, studied and quoted the works of Aristotle at a relatively early stage. Among them, it is said that Grosseteste was one of the first scholars to read Averroes's commentaries.⁶

This is only a sample to show that presenting the aftermath of the reception of Aristotelian philosophy purely in terms of confrontation with theology does not constitute an adequate picture of the actual course of events. However, the reception of Aristotelian philosophy transformed the ways in which this discipline was conceived, and it soon became clearer that it was necessary to delimitate its scope as a field of knowledge, mainly as far as theology was concerned. This need to either separate philosophy from theology or rather understand philosophy rather as a sub-field of theology would crystallise in three main doctrinal positions among the scholars of the Latin West. The first position was more conservative towards Aristotelian and Averroistic philosophy; the second one was more open and could be called *moderate*; the third one was what we might call a more *radical* position. These different philosophical positions can be better understood by means of their characterisations of the relations between philosophy and theology. First, I will briefly summarise the positions I have addressed as *conservative* and *moderate* and then present the *radical* one in more detail.

I.2 Doctrinal positions towards Aristotelian philosophy

I.2.1. The more conservative position was the one of the Franciscans, and we could say that Bonaventure was one of its main exponents.⁷ It should be said that

³ EDWARD GRANT, *A History of Natural Philosophy. From the Ancient World to the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 147.

⁴ DOD, « Aristoteles Latinus », p. 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁶ Cf. DAVIES LUSCOMBE, « Crossing Philosophical Boundaries c. 1150–c. 1250 », in SPENCER E. YOUNG (ed.), *Crossing Boundaries at Medieval Universities*, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2011 (Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 36), p. 20.

⁷ John Peckham also played a very important role in this regard, but since Bonaventure alone constitutes a great example of the Franciscan attitude towards Aristotelian philosophy, I will

Bonaventure integrated elements from Aristotelian philosophy, but still conceived as a subordinate sphere of knowledge. For Bonaventure, the only truth was the one established by revelation and if philosophy was useful at all, it was so in order to serve as an instrument for theology. Philosophy could not be an independent field of knowledge for the *Doctor Seraphicus*, since true knowledge could only be attained by means of illumination. Around 1260–1265 a more radical tendency became stronger in the intellectual milieu of the University of Paris. In 1267, and in response to its development, Bonaventure delivered a series of sermons in which he was clearly attacking this tendency – the so-called Averroists –, and Averroes as well. In these sermons, Bonaventure criticised the theses of the unicity of the intellect and of the eternity of the world. As a paradigmatic example, we will use Saint Bonaventure's *Collationes de Decem Praeceptis* (*Collations on the Ten Commandments*), although the *Doctor Seraphicus* also criticised some of the Aristotelian views, including the possibility of attaining full happiness within this life in other works.⁸ In the aforementioned sermons, he says:

The errors in the philosophers come from the temerarious presumption of the philosophical investigation, such as to posit that the world is eternal and that the intellect is one for all [human beings]. To state that the world is eternal is to pervert the entire Sacred Scripture and to assert that the Son of God was not incarnate. To posit that it is true that there is only one intellect for all is to say that there is neither truth in faith, nor a salvation of the souls, nor observance of the commandments. And this is to assert that the worst man will be saved, and the best man will be condemned. Accordingly, to assert these proceeds from the temerarious presumption of the philosophical investigation.⁹

If there is one intellect for all, and the intellect is a part of the soul, it follows that there is no room for personal immortality or for any punishments or rewards in

focus on his criticism instead. A good introduction to Pecham's thought can be found in GIRARD J. ETZKORN, « John Pecham », in JORGE J. E. GRACIA, TIMOTHY B. NOONE (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Blackwell, Malden (MA) 2002 (Blackwell Companions to Philosophy, 24), p. 384–387.

⁸ BONAVENTURA, *Collationes in Hexaameron*, coll. VII, 2, in *Opera Omnia*, t. V: *Opuscula Varia*, Typ. Coll. S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi 1891, p. 365.

⁹ BONAVENTURA, *Collationes de Decem Praeceptis*, coll. II, 25, in *Opera Omnia*, t. V, p. 514: «Ex improbo ausu investigationis philosophica procedunt errores in philosophis, sicut est ponere mundum aeternum, et quod unus intellectus sit in omnibus. Ponere enim mundum aeternum, hoc est pervertere totam sacram Scripturam et dicere, quod Filius Dei non sit incarnatus. Ponere vero, quod unus intellectus sit in omnibus, hoc est dicere, quod non sit veritas fidei nec salus animarum nec observantia mandatorum; et hoc est dicere, quod pessimus homo salvatur, et optimus damnatur. Hoc igitur ponere provenit ex improbo ausu investigationis philosophicae ». Unless stated otherwise, all of the translations used in this article are mine.

the afterlife, which makes of these philosophical teachings something false and heretical.

I.2.2. Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, are traditionally considered to belong in the second, or moderate, position towards Aristotle and his Commentator. They distinguished the truth of faith from the certainty of demonstration, which could not invalidate the truth established by the Christian Law. Their Aristotelianism incorporated Platonic elements, mostly Avicennian thought.¹⁰ However, their attitude towards Aristotelian philosophy differs in some respects, so they should be analysed independently. For the purpose of this brief account, I will focus on some of their more relevant attitudes towards Averroes and Averroistic philosophy.

Albert the Great's best-known contribution to the controversy that followed the reception of Aristotle's works with Averroes's commentaries is his *De unitate intellectus contra Averroem* (*On the Unicity of the Intellect against Averroes*). This work, dating from 1256, serves as a testimony of the increasing influence of Averroes at the Parisian University. In this treatise, he addresses this issue from a philosophical point of view, since he makes it explicit that this is a philosophical work and that he will proceed by way of arguments to get a demonstration when approaching this subject.¹¹ However, although Albert wrote this treatise against Averroes, in his *De anima* (1260-61), the *Doctor Universalis* admits that his own position concerning the conjunction of body and soul dissents « in little » from the one held by Averroes.¹²

Thomas Aquinas was the first to write directly against the Averroists in his short treatise *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* (*On the Unicity of the Intellect against the Averroists*) in 1270.¹³ In this treatise, he accused Averroes of perverting

¹⁰ To include all the sources used by Albert the Great, master of Thomas Aquinas, is beyond the scope of this article. As an example, John Marenbon mentions that his intention was « to master and unify the complex, heterogeneous mass of material, genuine Aristotelian, pseudo-Aristotelian-Neoplatonic, Alfarabian, Avicennian and Averroistic »; cf. JOHN MARENBO (ed.), *Medieval Philosophy*, Routledge, London 2010 (repr.) (Routledge History of Philosophy, 3), p. 232.

¹¹ ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroem*, c. 1, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. V, ed. Jammy, Lyon 1651, p. 218: « Oportet nos [...] per rationes et syllogismos videre quid sentiendum sit et tenendum. Et ideo quaecunque dicit lex nostra, non omnino praeterimus tantum ea accipientes quae per syllogismum accipiunt demonstrationem ».

¹² ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *De anima*, III, tr. III, c. 11, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. III, ed. Jammy, Lyon 1651, p. 166: « Nos autem in paucis dissentimus ab Averroee, qui inducit istam quaestionem in commento super librum de anima ». The dating of the *De Anima* can be found in JÖRG A TELLKAMP, *San Alberto Magno. Sobre el Alma*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2012, p. 20. Except for Alain de Libera, who says that this work dates from 1254-1257, there is consensus in this regard (cf. *Ibid.*, fn. 9).

¹³ Hasse points out that the expression « contra averroistas » became popular in the fourteenth century, but it should also be said that Aquinas uses *averroistae* already in the first chapter, and

Aristotle's philosophy and, aside from the problems that the unicity thesis entails for personal immortality, Aquinas's main criticism was that, if we are to support the idea of one single intellect for all men, we cannot properly say *this singular man understands*. Nevertheless, Aquinas did not only write against the Averroists, but also *contra murmurantes*, against those who murmur, the theologians who make a poor argumentation allegedly to defend Christian faith. And there is more to this, since in the *De aeternitate mundi* Aquinas says that the idea of a world created by God as having always existed is not contrary to reason, but we hold that the world had a beginning by faith. As we see, Aquinas entered into this controversy from more than one front, *contra Averroistas* and *contra murmurantes*, and this makes of his a unique position. So unique, that some suggest that Aquinas was in fact an Averroist at the later stages of his thought.¹⁴

As for the relations between philosophy and theology, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas stood for different positions, since according to Aquinas the revealed truth cannot be attained by means of our natural capacities, but philosophy, which provides us with a type of knowledge that is attainable through our natural capacities, is very useful for faith. Philosophy is an excellent tool for demonstrating the *praeambula fidei*, the rational premises on which faith depends in order to be rational – such as the existence of God –, and it is also useful to refute objections to faith. In any case, reason and revelation are ultimately divine gifts and they cannot be in real conflict. They both lead us to the truth, but their methods differ and, in this way, Aquinas gives philosophy a more elevated status than that of a mere handmaid or *ancilla theologiae*.

I.2.3. The third of the main positions towards the philosophy of Averroes and Aristotle is that of the so-called Averroists or radical Aristotelians, who consider philosophy as an autonomous field of knowledge, independent from theology, but yet admit that if there is any conflict, truth is on the side of faith. We can, along with van Steenberghen, place the beginnings of this movement in the years going from 1260 to 1265.¹⁵ The most problematic theses of the Averroist authors have to

in the prologue he says that among many there is an error concerning the intellect whose origin is attributed to Averroes. Thus, the focus of his criticism is established at the beginning of the treatise. See DAG NIKOLAUS HASSE, « *Averroica secta: Notes on the Formation of Averroist Movements in Fourteenth-Century Bologna and Renaissance Italy* », in JEAN-BAPTISTE BRENET (ed.), *Averroès et les averroïsmes juif et latin*, Brepols, Turnhout 2007 (Textes et études du Moyen Age, 40), p. 309.

¹⁴ See MIGUEL ASÍN PALACIOS, « El averroísmo teológico de Santo Tomás de Aquino », in ID., *Huellas del Islam*, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid 1941, and ALFONSO GARCÍA MARQUÉS, « ¿Hay tres Tomás de Aquino? », in HERRERO MONSERRAT et al. (eds.), *Escribir en las almas. Estudios en honor de Rafael Alvira*, Eunsa, Pamplona 2014, p. 277–291.

¹⁵ FERNAND VAN STEENBERGHEN, *Aristotle in the West. The Origins of Latin Aristotelianism*, Nauwelaerts, Louvain 1955, p. 198–199.

do with the nature of the intellect, and thus with that of the soul; with the defence of the possibility of arguing philosophically about the eternity of the world; and with the affirmation that happiness is attainable within this life. The Averroists were to be found among the Parisian masters of arts, who gradually started to conceive their task as a possibility to comment on and teach the now available texts, as well as the theses they contained, regardless of their concordance or discordance with Christian faith. To this, they alleged that the method and the object of philosophy as a discipline were different from those of theology. Traditionally, Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia are taken to be the main representatives of Parisian or Latin Averroism, and they will be presented in greater detail here.

The first documentary evidence of Siger of Brabant dates from 27 August 1266. This document shows the existence of the four *nationes* of the University of Paris: Norman, English, French, and lastly Picard, in which Siger of Brabant was placed.¹⁶ In this context, Siger of Brabant is acknowledged as a master of arts and the document also mentions Simon of Brabant. They both were accused of trying to tear the missals off the hands of the members of the French nation so that they could not recite and sing the liturgy for the master William of Auxerre.¹⁷ It is also said that Siger of Brabant was accused of attempting to kidnap a French master.¹⁸ Nowadays, Siger is considered to be innocent of these charges against him.¹⁹ On 23 November 1276, Siger of Brabant, together with other two masters – Goswin of la Chapelle and Bernier of Nivelles –, was summoned by the French inquisitor, Simon du Val. The accusation, preserved in a manual for inquisitors, was that they were under suspicion of heresy and vehemence in their error.²⁰ For the purpose of this brief account of Siger's life, it is also relevant that he remained at the Faculty of

¹⁶ HEINRICH DENIFLE, ÉMILE CHATELAIN (eds.), *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis (= CUP)*, vol. I, Delalain, Paris 1889, nr. 409, p. 449–458.

¹⁷ *CUP*, vol. I, nr. 409, p. 451: « Sygerus et Simon de Brabant, presente et ratum habente ipsa Picardorum nacione quosdam nacionis magistros Gallicane, ne in vigiliis quondam magistri Guillermi Autisiodorensis, ratione quarum magistri totius Universitatis convenerant in ecclesia fratrum Predicatorum Parisius, sicut alii legerent et cantarent inpedire et propter hoc libros de illorum manibus trahere attemptaverunt et in eorum aliquos clericali milicie ascriptos, ibidem manus injecerunt temere violentas in ejusdeni nacionis Gallicane injuriam et contemptum ».

¹⁸ *CUP*, vol. I, nr. 409, p. 450: « Quodque magister Sygerus de nacione Picardorum, [quia] super hujusmodi ejusdem Guillermi captione ipsum suspectum dicebant, ad ipsorum archidiaconorum arbitrium se purgaret. »

¹⁹ FRANÇOIS-XAVIER PUTALLAZ, RUEDI IMBACH, *Profession: philosophe. Siger de Brabant*, Cerf, Paris 1997, p. 24.

²⁰ « Crimine heresis probabiliter et vehementer suspectos », cf. PUTALLAZ, IMBACH, *Profession: Philosophe*, p. 46–48. Vehemence in error is what constitutes heresy, because the non-pertinacious error could be corrected through penitence. See FRANCISCO LEÓN FLORIDO, FERNANDO RODAMILANS RAMOS, *Las herejías académicas en la Edad Media. Lista de errores en las universidades de París y Oxford (1210-1347)*, Síndéresis, Madrid 2015, p. 15.

Arts until the end of his career, without restricting this period to the two years of the *regentia necessaria*, which was a very common thing to do among the masters of arts in this time.²¹

As for Boethius of Dacia, the information about his life is scarce. The dates of his birth and death are unknown to us. We know that he was a Dane who was in Paris after 1262, that he was a master of arts in the decade of the 1270s, and that he was not summoned by the Inquisition.²² All of his works were written before 1277, which for Bernardo Bazán suggests that his career as a master of arts had come to an end before that date, whereas Sten Ebbesen takes this to mean that the condemnation put an end to Boethius's writing.²³ One of the codices containing the propositions condemned in 1277 includes the name of Boethius after the list, addressing him as one of the main assertors of these theses, and another one mentions Siger and Boethius both as heretics.²⁴

These two masters defended the autonomy of philosophy in regard to theology and the possibility of explaining reality by means of natural causes. In this line of thought, they valued philosophy not as a mean to an end, but as an end itself. For them, the philosopher had a twofold task which was to discover the truth and to determine the opinions of the ancient philosophers without turning them into incontestable authorities. The most immediate consequence of this way of proceeding was that they adduced that their conclusions followed from philosophical demonstrations, and then they were philosophically necessary conclusions, but not *the Truth* in case of conflict with Christian wisdom. Examples of this way of proceeding can be found in Siger of Brabant's *De anima intellectiva*, where he states that « in this we are trying to find the opinions of the philosophers rather than the truth, since we proceed philosophically ».²⁵ This can also be found in Boethius of Dacia. At the beginning of the *De aeternitate mundi*, he presents the purpose of his treatise:

²¹ STEN EBBESEN, « The Paris Arts Faculty: Siger of Brabant, Boethius of Dacia, Radulphus Brito », in John Marenbon (ed.), *Medieval Philosophy*, Routledge, London 2004 (Routledge History of Philosophy, 3), p. 273.

²² BERNARDO C. BAZÁN, « Boethius of Dacia », in JORGE J. E. GRACIA, TIMOTHY B. NOONE (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Blackwell, Malden (MA) 2002 (Blackwell Companions to Philosophy, 24), p. 227; and STEN EBBESEN, « Boethius of Dacia: Science is a Serious Game », in ID., *Topics in Latin Philosophy from the 12th–14th Centuries*, vol. II, Ashgate, Aldershot 2009, p. 153.

²³ BAZÁN, « Boethius of Dacia », p. 227; EBBESEN, « The Paris Arts Faculty », p. 272.

²⁴ MS Paris, BNF, lat. 16533, fol. 60 (*CUP* vol. I, nr. 100, p. 558): « Principalis assertor istorum articularum fuit quidam clericus Boetus appellatus »; and MS Paris, BNF, lat. 4391, fol. 68 (*CUP*, vol. I, p. 556): « contra Segerum et Boetium hereticos ».

²⁵ SIGERUS DE BRABANTIA, *De anima intellectiva*, c. 7, in *Quaestiones in tertium De anima, De anima intellectiva, De aeternitate mundi*, ed. BERNARDO C. BAZÁN, Publications universitaires de Louvain, Louvain-La-Neuve 1972 (Philosophes Médiévaux, 13), p. 101, ll. 5–9.

So that the opinion of the philosophers may be saved, inasmuch as their argument can conclude – for their position contradicts Christian faith in nothing, except among those who lack understanding –: in fact, the opinion of the philosophers is based on demonstrations and on certain possible arguments in those things whereof they speak, but faith in many instances rests on miracles and not on arguments. Indeed, that which is held by means of what is concluded by arguments is not faith, but science.²⁶

To recapitulate, so far we have an overview of the transmission of Aristotelian philosophy and an outline of the most relevant doctrinal positions which emerged after the rediscovery of Aristotle in the mid-thirteenth century. Since the aim of this article is to provide a better understanding of Latin Averroism as a methodological current, I proceed by summarising the traditional views on Averroism as a matter of doctrine – as the followers of Averroes –, and I will then challenge this idea by arguing that Latin Averroism should instead be understood as a matter of philosophical method, as a way of understanding the role of philosophy in the corpus of the sciences.

II. *Latin Averroism Revisited*²⁷

II.1 The Historiographical Tradition on Latin Averroism

Traditionally, Parisian Averroism has been understood as a philosophical movement whose members held theses more or less derived from Averroes which were problematic for Christian orthodoxy. We can place the beginnings of this movement around 1260–1265, at the University of Paris, although there is no consensus among scholars in this regard.²⁸ This movement has also been referred to as Latin Averroism, where *Latin* refers to the cultural milieu in which this

²⁶ BOETHIUS DE DACIA, *De aeternitate mundi*, in *Topica–Opuscula*, pars II: *De aeternitate mundi, De summo bono, De somniis*, ed. NIELS J. GREEN-PEDERSEN, Gad, Copenhagen 1976 (*Corpus philosophorum danicorum medii aevi*, 6.2), p. 335–336, ll. 15–22: « Ut etiam sententia philosophorum salvetur, quantum ratio eorum concludere potest, - nam eorum sententia in nullo contradicit christianae fidei nisi apud non intelligentes: sententia enim philosophorum innititur demonstrationibus et certis rationibus possibilibus in rebus de quibus loquuntur, fides autem in multis, innititur miraculis et non rationibus: quod enim tenetur propter hoc quod per rationes conclusum est, non est fides sed scientia ».

²⁷ An initial and certainly much less developed version of some parts of this section was already published in PILAR HERRÁIZ-OLIVA, « Nuevas consideraciones en torno a la noción de averroísmo », *Enrahonar. An International Journal of Theoretical and Practical Reason*, Supplement Issue (2018), p. 35–44.

²⁸ See, for instance, Kuksewicz, who places Averroism in the first half of the thirteenth century; cf. ZDZISLAW KUKSEWICZ, « L'influence d'Averroès sur des universités en Europe centrale. L'expansion de l'averroïsme latin », in JEAN JOLIVET (ed.), *Multiple Averroès: Actes du Colloque international organisé à l'occasion du 850^e anniversaire de la naissance d'Averroès, Paris 20–23 septembre 1976*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1978, p. 275–281.

tendency arose and also to a specific reception of Aristotelianism.²⁹ As mentioned previously, it is a commonplace to ascribe three main theses to Averroism: (1) the eternity of the world; (2) the unicity of the intellect; and (3) the assertion that happiness is attainable within this life by means of a philosophical way of living. To this, Bazán and van Steenberghe say that if being an Averroist or a radical Aristotelian means something, it is to support the idea of the unicity of the intellect.³⁰ Dag Nikolaus Hasse also points towards doctrine, « a set of theories », as the defining feature of Latin Averroism, although he says that the historically legitimate use of Averroist is that in which this term is understood as referring to the « partisan of or expert on Averroes ». ³¹ As it has been said, Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia are usually taken to be the chief exponents of this philosophical movement.

In modern scholarship, a great variety of terms has been applied in attempts to describe clearly what this movement actually was. According to Omar Argerami, *Latin Averroism* as a terminology was introduced by Ernest Renan in his work *Averroès et l'averroïsme*.³² For James A. Weisheipl, among others, it was Pierre Mandonnet, in his work from 1899, *Siger de Brabant et l'averroïsme latin au XIIIe siècle*, who introduced this term.³³ Others appeal to the use of the term *averroistae* by Raimundus Lullus, who accused some philosophers of following the theses condemned in 1277 by calling them *averroistae*.³⁴ There is no consensus in this regard.

²⁹ Averroes's commentaries were also translated into Hebrew, and, despite the similarities, their reception does not have exactly the same features. An introduction to this issue can be found in OLIVER LEAMAN, « Jewish Averroism », in SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR, OLIVER LEAMAN (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Routledge, London 2003 (Routledge History of World Philosophies, 1), p. 769–782.

³⁰ FERNAND VAN STEENBERGHE, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century*, Nelson, Edinburgh 1955, p. 82–84, and BERNARDO C. BAZÁN, « Radical Aristotelianism in the Faculty of Arts », in LUDGER HONNEFELDER et al. (eds.), *Albertus Magnus und die Anfänge der Aristoteles-Rezeption im lateinischen Mittelalter: Von Richardus Rufus bis zu Franciscus de Mayronis. Albertus Magnus and the Beginnings of the Medieval Reception of Aristotle in the Latin West: From Richardus Rufus to Franciscus de Mayronis*, Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2005 (Subsidia Albertina, 1), p. 602.

³¹ DAG NIKOLAUS HASSE, *Success and Suppression. Arabic Sciences and Philosophy in the Renaissance*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press 2016, p. 189–191.

³² OMAR ARGERAMI, « La cuestión *De aeternitate mundi* », in *Sapientia*, 27 (1972), p. 314.

³³ JAMES A. WEISHEIPL, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Work*, Garden city, Doubleday (NY) 1974, p. 272.

³⁴ For the uses of *averroistae* in Raimundus Lullus, see MIGUEL LLUCH BAIXAULI, « Claves de la antropología y la ética de Ramón Llull en sus *Sermones sobre el Decálogo* », in JOSÉ M^e SOTO RÁBANOS (ed.), *Pensamiento Medieval Hispano. Homenaje a Horacio Santiago-Otero*, vol. II, CSIC, Madrid 1998, p. 1113–1115.

Some scholars also refer to a *first Averroism* and a *second Averroism*, the latter being the one of Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia.³⁵ This has to do with the ways in which Averroes's theses were understood, most importantly the thesis of the unicity of the intellect. To this, Bernardo Bazán shows that the notion *first Averroism* deals with a way of understanding the *De anima* which antedates the reception of Averroes's commentaries, and therefore this terminology is inadequate, since the thesis does not come from Averroes himself. Needless to say, if there was no first Averroism, there is no reason to talk about a second Averroism.³⁶

Other scholars deny the existence of Averroism as such and suggest the term *radical Aristotelianism* instead. Van Steenberghe and Ruedi Imbach are good examples of this position and many scholars prefer this terminology, that is, *radical Aristotelianism*.³⁷ There is yet one more term also coined by van Steenberghe, namely *heterodox Aristotelianism*.³⁸ The problem is that this form of Aristotelianism is *heterodox* in relation to Christian faith and because there are Neoplatonic elements in Averroes's philosophy. The appeal to Christian faith puts philosophy and faith at the same level, as if they had the same status as disciplines or areas of knowledge, and this terminology is thus inadequate. Finally, David Piché, Alain de Libera and Luca Bianchi consider Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia as a new type of intellectuals emerging from the reception of the Greco-Arabic legacy and adopting new epistemological paradigms.³⁹ I will argue along these lines, but I will go further, since I will defend that being an Averroist or not depends entirely on the methodology applied to philosophical problems, so I will address this methodological issue in the following.

³⁵ On *first* and *second* Averroism, see RENE-ANTOINE GAUTHIER, « Notes sur Siger de Brabant », in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*: pt. I, 67 (1983), p. 201–232; and pt. II, 68 (1984), p. 3–49; See also BERNARDO C. BAZÁN, « On 'First Averroism' and its Doctrinal Background », in RUTH LINK-SALINGER (ed.), *On Scholars, Savants and Their Texts. Studies in Philosophy and Religious Thought. Essays on Honor of Arthur Hyman*, Peter Lang, New York 1989, p. 9–22.

³⁶ BERNARDO C. BAZÁN, « Was There Ever a 'First Averroism'? », in JAN A. AERTSEN, ANDREAS SPEER (eds.), *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert*, de Gruyter, Berlin–New York 2000 (*Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, 27), p. 31–32.

³⁷ RUEDI IMBACH, « L'averroïsme latin du XIIIe siècle », in RUEDI IMBACH, ALFONSO MAIERÙ (eds.), *Gli studi di filosofia medievale fra Otto e Novecento: Contributo a un bilancio storiografico, Atti del convegno internazionale Roma, 21-23 settembre 1989*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Roma 1991 (*Storia e letteratura*, 179), p. 191–208. See also VAN STEENBERGHE, *The Philosophical Movement in the Thirteenth Century*, p. 86–92.

³⁸ VAN STEENBERGHE, *Aristotle in the West*, p. 98.

³⁹ See DAVID PICHE, CLAUDE LAFLEUR (eds.), *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, Vrin, Paris 1999 (*Sic et non*), p. 12. An exhaustive analysis of the historiographical debate concerning the idea of Latin Averroism can be found in ANA MARÍA C. MINECAN, « Introducción al debate historiográfico en torno a la noción de 'averroísmo latino' », *Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía*, 27 (2010), p. 77.

II.2 The Historiographical Tradition Challenged

According to van Steenberghe, we should prefer *radical Aristotelianism* to *Latin Averroism* because after the first half of the thirteenth century many scholars quoted Averroes and used his positions to some extent and, in this way, authors as Aquinas and Albert the Great should also be labelled as *Averroists*. This Aristotelianism is *radical* because it deepens its roots into Aristotelian philosophy and because it is not moderate. Bernardo Bazán has questioned whether *radical Aristotelianism* is in fact a problematic term.⁴⁰ Firstly, because the willingness to explain or to understand Aristotle faithfully does not constitute any kind of radicalism; secondly, if we understand *radical* as those who embraced Aristotle's philosophy as the true philosophy, *radical* could also be applied to theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas; thirdly, because the mere ideal of philosophy as an autonomous discipline does not entail a radicalism either, since we would still have to include Aquinas, Peter Hispanus and Albert the Great; and lastly, because the so-called *double-truth* theory is non-existent.⁴¹ To this, Bazán adds: « The focus of their attention shifted, then, from the mere exegesis of Aristotle's texts to the analysis between Averroes' interpretation and its philosophical difficulties. More than *radical* Aristotelians, these masters can be called 'Averroists' ».⁴²

After considering these things, can we call them *Averroists*? I stand on the side of Bazán in this regard. Mainly because we can point towards contemporary authors using the label *averroistae* in this time. Aquinas is the best-known example. We encounter even more references of authors using *averroistae* in this period, such as the one made by Roger Bacon in his *Compendium Studii theologiae*, from 1292, – where he also uses *averroistae* –, in addition to those of Raimundus Lullus, who uses *averroista* as well as *averroista christianus*.⁴³ Perhaps these authors perceived that the new controversial issues discussed in the thirteenth century originated in Averroes's interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy. The arguments of Bazán, in addition to the usage of *averroista* by several authors, lead me to think that we

⁴⁰ BAZÁN, « Radical Aristotelianism in the Faculty of Arts », p. 587–590.

⁴¹ For further reading on *double truth* see PILAR HERRÁIZ OLIVA, « Fundamentación y especialización de los saberes: actualidad filosófica del legado medieval » in ILDEFONSO MURILLO (ed.), *Actualidad de la tradición filosófica*, Ediciones Diálogo Filosófico, Colmenar Viejo (Madrid) 2010, p. 569–574.

⁴² BAZÁN, « Radical Aristotelianism in the Faculty of Arts », p. 624. As for the main features of this *radical* Aristotelianism, Bazán points towards the unicity of the intellect, but the eternity of the world, the idea of happiness attained through philosophy as the most perfect state and intellectual determinism are also pointed out as relevant features of Averroism.

⁴³ HASSE, « *Averroica secta* », p. 310. Hasse is the one pointing out towards Roger Bacon's reference. It should be noted that his arguments in this regard go for little external evidence concerning the existence of Averroism in the Middle Ages, showing that from 1500 onwards there are many more references. It should be also said that Hasse focuses his analysis mainly on the unicity thesis (ibid., p. 317).

should prefer the terminology of the people who lived within this period, before appealing to rather contemporary terminologies which ultimately express the same ideas and turn this philosophical movement into something even more problematic.

On the other hand, for those who question the originality of the philosophical projects led by Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, the answer can also be found in the manuscripts of the condemnations of 1277.⁴⁴ Except for Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, no other authors are mentioned by name in the syllabus of the Parisian condemnations, whose introductory text refers to « some students of arts in Paris ». ⁴⁵ Yet one more medieval source points to the projects of Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia as different from the rest. This source is the *Declaratio Raymundi per modum dialogi edita contra aliquorum philosophorum et eorum sequacium opiniones* from 1298, but collected in a catalogue of the works of Raimundus Lullus dating from 1311 as *Liber contra errores Boetii et Sigerii*.⁴⁶ Since this is the case, here I also appeal to the medieval sources, in which the thought of Siger and Boethius was understood as the main target, rather than to modern judgements on the Middle Ages.

But there is yet one more problematic issue found in the historiographical tradition, which is the presentation of the Averroists as those who followed Averroes's theses, mainly the thesis of the unicity of the intellect. This characterisation of Averroism can be found even in those who say that we should prefer the term *radical Aristotelianism*. This is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, because the main thesis that that allegedly makes of an author an Averroist, that is, the unicity thesis, cannot be found in Boethius of Dacia, and Boethius is, nonetheless, known to be one of the main representatives of Parisian Averroism. We should also consider the fact that Siger is genuinely attempting at explaining the teachings of Aristotle in his *Quaestiones in tertium De anima* and in the *De anima intellectiva*. In his commentary on the *Liber de causis* (1275–1276), Siger himself states that the unicity of the intellect is heresy and that it is not a rational position to sustain philosophically.⁴⁷ Secondly, neither Boethius nor Siger held the thesis of the eternity of the world, which is also traditionally ascribed to

⁴⁴ As it is questioned by IMBACH in « L'averroïsme latin du XIIIe siècle », p. 207–208.

⁴⁵ CUP, vol. I, p. 543.

⁴⁶ MS Paris, BNF, lat. 15450, fol. 80.

⁴⁷ SIGERUS DE BRABANTIA, *In Lib. de causis*, q. 27, *solutio*, ed. ANTONIO MARLASCA, Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain-La-Neuve, Paris 1972 (Philosophes Médiévaux, 12), p. 112, ll. 146–151: « Sed ista positio in fide nostra est haeretica, et irrationalis etiam sic apparet. Intellectu enim existente forma corporis, sicut vult Aristoteles universaliter de anima, satis planum est qualiter oportet intellectum numerari et multiplicari multiplicatione humanorum corporum; sed qualitercumque hoc quis ponat, apparet intellectum non posse unum esse numero hominum omnium ».

Averroism, as seen from their own words if we examine their works closely.⁴⁸ Thirdly, because a more exhaustive treatment of the ethical ideal in terms of a philosophical way of living can only be found in Boethius of Dacia, but not in Siger of Brabant, the Averroist par excellence.

These reasons lead me to think that the question *what is it to be an Averroist* in the thirteenth century cannot be answered by recourse to the different theses followed by these authors, as I hope to have shown. On the contrary, and against traditional views, to be an Averroist is not a matter of doctrine, but of method. This philosophical method has its own features, which are different from those we find in other thinkers such as Aquinas, and it has been misunderstood as *double-truth* and largely attributed to these authors. Even though there is consensus among scholars in this regard, I will also touch on it in what follows.

II.3 The Method: Philosophy as an Independent Field

Previously, even though succinctly, I touched on the different philosophical standpoints held by the main representatives of Averroism. In this section I will rather aim for the similarities and at how they were problematic, since those entailed the accusation of the double-truth theory for these authors. *Double-truth* meaning that they held doctrines which were contrary to faith by saying that something could be true according to philosophy but false according to faith, « as if there were two contradictory truths ».⁴⁹ Nowadays, scholarship unanimously denies that such *double-truth* is imputable to them, but this is a misconception of the method used by these authors.

As we have seen, Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia did not hold exactly the same theses and did not present them in the same way. What they have in common is the defence of the autonomy of philosophy in the whole corpus of sciences as a discipline by its own right, with its own way of proceeding and, most importantly, independent from theology. In these authors we find the assumption

⁴⁸ See, for instance, SIGERUS DE BRABANTIA, *Quaestiones in Physicam*, II, q. 20, in *Écrits de Logique, de Morale et de Physique*, ed. BERNARDO C. BAZÁN, Publications universitaires de Louvain, Louvain 1974 (Philosophes Médiévaux, 14), p. 181, ll. 58–66: « Nevertheless, I believe that everything that has been created is new, and that it is not necessary that all which is made has a principle from which it becomes [what it is]. [...] Either it should be said that it is not necessary that created things have [a principle] from which they come to be, or even better, that the capacity of the most powerful agent suffices for this ». For BOETHIUS DE DACIA, see *Quaestiones super libros Physicorum*, I, q. 31, ed. GÉZA SAJÓ, Gad, Copenhagen 1984 (Corpus philosophorum danicorum medii aevi, 5/2), p. 275, ll. 191–193: « Dico tamen quod motus primus potest esse novus. et huius non potest dari ratio, quia miraculorum non est dare rationem, quia si sic, non esset miraculum », i.e., « I nevertheless say that the first movement can be new, and no argument can be given for this, because about miracles no argument ought to be given, since, if this were the case, they would not be miracles ».

⁴⁹ CUP, vol. I, nr. 473, p. 543.

that natural, observable causes are the only way to deal with natural reality, a demarcation of the limits of philosophy as a discipline, and a clear distinction between concepts pertaining to philosophy and those which are not philosophical. This attempt to show that philosophy and theology are independent and separated disciplines brings about the idea that, if we are to delimit the boundaries of philosophy and theology, the first step is to separate the philosophical discourse from the theological one. This, in my opinion, is what has been misunderstood as *double-truth*. However, if we look closely, we see that they accepted the teachings of faith as the truth, while providing an explanation of which concepts we are allowed to use as philosophers. A good example of this is found in their treatment of the eternity of the world, where *generation* was seen as a concept that philosophers could use, whereas *creation* was more problematic.⁵⁰

Another example of this methodology that constitutes the main feature of Averroism is the differentiation between the natural, philosophical discourse, and the theological one, *loquendo naturaliter* (*speaking naturally*) and *loquendo secundum theologos et secundum veritatem* (*speaking in agreement with the theologians and with the truth*). This distinction can be already found in a guide for students dating from 1230's and it was indeed followed by the Averroists.⁵¹ The separation of the two types of discourse entails a distinction between the truth that can be achieved by means of philosophy – which consists of natural propositions or propositions that are true according to natural principles –, and the truth that is known by revelation, which is 'the truth'. As we have already seen, the Averroists accepted the teachings of Christian faith as true, and when they entered into conflict with the teachings of philosophy they sought for another explanation, since according to the method provided by Boethius of Dacia, one cannot deny such propositions unless one wants to deny the principles of that other field or area of knowledge, which theology is.⁵² In addition, for the Averroist authors the truths of theology and those of philosophy could not contradict one another, since for that to occur they would have to deal with the same issues in exactly the same way, which is what would be required in order to be such a thing as a double-truth, as stated in

⁵⁰ For a more detailed account of this subject see PILAR HERRÁIZ-OLIVA, *Dos tratados averroístas sobre la eternidad del mundo: Siger de Brabante y Boecio de Dacia*, Eunsa, Pamplona (forthcoming).

⁵¹ See CHARLES H. LOHR, « The Ancient Philosophical Legacy and its Transmission to the Middle Ages », in JORGE J. E. GRACIA, TIMOTHY B. NOONE (eds.), *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Blackwell, Malden (MA) 2002 (Blackwell Companions to Philosophy, 24), p. 16–17.

⁵² BOETHIUS DE DACIA, *De aeternitate mundi*, ed. GREEN-PEDERSEN, p. 351, ll. 427–431: « Even though the natural philosopher cannot establish these truths or even know them since the principles of his science do not extend to such difficult and hidden workings of divine wisdom, still he should not deny these truths » (Engl. transl. by JOHN F. WIPPEL, Pontifical institute of mediaeval studies, Toronto 1987 [Medieval Sources in Translation, 30], p. 51).

the syllabus of the Condemnations of 1277.⁵³ Instead, for them philosophy was limited to that which can be concluded and demonstrated by means of arguments and its discourse was therefore limited to natural, observable causes.

Both authors provide us with several examples of this way of proceeding. For instance, in Boethius of Dacia's *De aeternitate mundi*, he postulates the scope of the different sciences, their methods and proper subjects as disciplines. The scope of the philosophical task is depicted as follows:

There can be no question which may be disputed by rational arguments which the philosopher should not dispute and determine concerning where its truth lies, insofar as this can be grasped by human reason. And the reason for this is that all the arguments by which such is disputed are taken from things. Otherwise they would be figments of the mind.⁵⁴

And in *De anima intellectiva* Siger of Brabant states:

Here we seek only for the opinion of the philosophers, and especially [that] of Aristotle, even if the Philosopher has by chance thought differently from the truth which is held and from wisdom, which are achieved by means of revelation, which cannot be concluded by way of natural reason. Yet nothing [be said] to us now concerning the miracles of God, since about natural things we discuss in a natural way.⁵⁵

This distinction between the ways of proceeding in addition to the one between the conclusions of philosophy, on the one hand, and the teachings of faith, on the other, has been misunderstood as *double-truth*. In fact, it is an attempt to separate and delimitate the scope, the object and the principles of the different fields of knowledge, and mainly the limits between philosophy and theology as distinct fields. Philosophy is perceived as a full-time exclusive task for the philosopher and the different fields of knowledge as introduced by each perspective. In this way,

⁵³ CUP, vol. I, p. 543: « Dicunt enim ea esse vera secundum philosophiam, sed non secundum fidem catholicam, quasi sint due contrarie veritates ».

⁵⁴ BOETHIUS DE DACIA, *De aeternitate mundi*, ed. GREEN-PEDERSEN, p. 347, ll. 314–320: « Nulla quaestio potest esse, quae disputabilis est per rationes, quam philosophus non debeat disputare et determinare, quomodo se habeat veritas in illa, quantum per rationem humanam comprehendi potest. Et huius declaratio est, quia omnes rationes per quas disputatur ex rebus acceptae sunt ». (transl. WIPPEL, p. 46–47).

⁵⁵ SIGERUS DE BRABANTIA, *De anima intellectiva*, c. 3, p. 83–84, ll. 44–49: « Quaerimus enim hic solum intentionem philosophorum et praecipue Aristotelis, etsi forte Philosophus senserit aliter quam veritas se habeat et sapientia, quae per revelationem de anima sint tradita, quae per rationes naturales concludi non possunt. Sed nihil ad nos nunc de Dei miraculis, cum de naturalibus naturaliter disseramus ».

each new perspective (*subiectum formale*) introduces a new particularity and thus a new science or field of knowledge (*subiectum materiale*).

Now, are philosophy and theology related at all? Sometimes they deal with the same issues and even by using the same concepts. Siger of Brabant distinguishes between « that theology which is a part of philosophy », in his own words, and compares it to revealed or biblical theology in his *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*.⁵⁶ Among other things, philosophical theology and revealed theology differ in how they consider the different issues – revelation or rational investigation –. Another difference between philosophical and revealed theology is that the principles of demonstration – used by philosophical theology – are known by means of the senses, experimentation and memory, whereas the principles of revealed theology are known to us by divine revelation, and that is why revealed theology does not proceed by demonstration, which is a distinctive feature of philosophy.⁵⁷

This methodological issue has been usually addressed as a matter of conflict between the faculty of theology and the faculty of arts; or between philosophy and theology, clashing after the rediscovery of Aristotelian philosophy. In my opinion, the methodological problem shows that, at this time, the limits between philosophy and theology were not as clear as we tend to think, and the continuous effort made by the Averroists in order to explain the limits and scope of philosophy, and how it was independent from theology, should be seen as evidence for this. Boethius and Siger, while trying to show that philosophy and theology have different methods, scopes and principles, had as a background the attempt to make of them separate, independent fields of knowledge. The problem is that their appeal to the philosophical discourse (*loquendo naturaliter*) as methodologically different from the theological one (*loquendo secundum veritatem*) entailed that the truths attainable by means of philosophy (*veritas secundum quid*) were different from the truth provided by faith (*veritas simpliciter*). To solve this, Boethius of Dacia and Siger of Brabant analysed which concepts could be used by the philosophers in their arguments, and distinguished the propositions founded on natural causes from those whose explanation was supernatural and thus did not pertain to philosophy. However, even though the Averroists' main effort was to make of these two fields distinctly separated areas, philosophy and theology as disciplines shared in fact themes and concepts. How they were related is to be found in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. By explaining the distinctive features of his approach, we will also shed light on the originality of the philosophical projects of Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia.

⁵⁶ SIGERUS DE BRABANTIA, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*, VI, q.1, c. 1, ed. WILLIAM DUNPHY, Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain-La-Neuve 1981 (Philosophes Médiévaux, 24), p. 359, ll. 4–6: « Qualiter differat scientia theologia [...] quae est pars philosophiae et scientia theologia quae non est pars philosophiae sed est sacra scriptura ».

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 359–361.

II.4 The Thomistic Solution

Boethius and Siger are called *radical Aristotelians* since they were believed to have made a *radical*, a faithful interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy. But how is it that Aquinas, for instance, was not a radical or an Averroist, since he does the same in many cases? For example, in *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas says:

The different means through which knowledge is obtained introduce the different sciences. The astronomer and the natural philosopher demonstrate the same conclusion – namely, that the Earth is round – but the astronomer by means of mathematics, that is, abstracting from matter; the natural philosopher [demonstrates] by considering that which is related to matter. Hence, nothing forbids that, for these things which are discussed within the philosophical disciplines as knowable in light of natural reason, that other science discusses them as knowable in light of divine revelation. Whence, theology which pertains to sacred doctrine differs in kind from that theology which is a part of philosophy.⁵⁸

As we see, this is not very different from what Siger of Brabant did in *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam*. In addition, some of Aquinas's theses were also condemned in 1277 and on the day of the third anniversary of his death, but the Doctor Angelicus was nonetheless the one solving the methodological problems of Averroism, in which philosophy and theology were completely independent fields. This is the difference that marks Boethius and Siger as Averroists, but not Aquinas, since Aquinas would be the one reconciling philosophy and theology, despite the accusations of *radicalism*.

Aquinas provides a different characterisation of the relations between philosophy and theology and of how philosophy is related to Christian faith. Furthermore, Aquinas does not recognise himself among the philosophers.⁵⁹ He talks about the Arabs as philosophers, but about himself as a theologian, and he also uses frequently « we », the believers, to distinguish himself from the philosophers.⁶⁰ For Aquinas, philosophy and theology were not independent, but

⁵⁸ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa Theologiae* I^a, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2, in *Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P. M. edita* (= ed. Leonina), t. IV, Typ. Pol. S. C. de Propaganda Fide, Roma 1888, p. 7: « Diversa ratio cognoscibilis diversitatem scientiarum inducit. Eandem enim conclusionem demonstrat astrologus et naturalis, puta quod terra est rotunda, sed astrologus per medium mathematicum, idest a materia abstractum; naturalis autem per medium circa materiam consideratum. Unde nihil prohibet de eisdem rebus, de quibus philosophicae disciplinae tractant secundum quod sunt cognoscibilia lumine naturalis rationis, et aliam scientiam tractare secundum quod cognoscuntur lumine divinae revelationis. Unde theologia quae ad sacram doctrinam pertinet, differt secundum genus ab illa theologia quae pars philosophiae ponitur ».

⁵⁹ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa Theologiae* II^a II^{ae}, q. 19, a. 7 co., ed. Leonina, t. VIII, p. 144: « Cum autem sapientia sit cognitio divinorum, [...] aliter consideratur a nobis et aliter a philosophis ».

⁶⁰ See MARK D. JORDAN, « Theology and Philosophy », in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, NORMAN KRETZMANN, ELEONORE STUMP (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, p. 232–251.

supplementary approaches to the truth, since the truth is one, but the ways in which we attain it are two: that is, he held the thesis of Averroes in this regard. Furthermore, philosophy is a tool for theology – as we have seen when showing the main doctrinal positions – in order to reach a better understanding of revelation: philosophy and theology are related as part and whole and complement one another. In this way, philosophy and theology are not different fields of knowledge, but different modes of knowledge. According to Aquinas, there are questions pertaining only to philosophy; questions which are strictly theological and there are questions shared by both disciplines, since we can even try to find God through creation by means of natural reason (*ST II^a II^{ae}*, q. 2, a. 3). This is how the *Doctor Angelicus* solves the problem of how philosophy and theology share principles or how they are related. For the Averroists, except for philosophical theology – which is in fact a part of philosophy –, these two disciplines did not share any principles at all.

That the method played a very important role was also shown in the Condemnations of 1277, which included 219 theses. Some contradicted one another, and thus it was impossible for one person to hold all of them. Some of the condemned propositions were compatible with Catholic faith. The beginning of the syllabus which points at two contrary truths, and the diversity of the condemned theses show, in my opinion, that the problem was of a methodological kind. And this problem was that the limits of philosophy and theology as disciplines were still vague at this stage. This also shows in the accusation of *philosophantes* to theologians and of *theologizantes* to philosophers, as a kind of warning so that they limited their task to their own field.⁶¹ The condemnations of theses of Aquinas in 1277, or the condemnations themselves, would be too much for this article, but Aquinas's closeness to the Arab philosophers and to the Averroists was not overlooked in that context, just as we, nowadays, still struggle to show the differences between Aquinas and the Averroists in terms of faithfulness to the teachings of Aristotle.

III. Conclusions

In this overview of Averroism, I hope to have shown that neither the thesis of the unicity of the intellect nor any other particular doctrine can be the focus to study this movement. This, not only because the philosophers traditionally labelled as *Averroists* did not defend systematically and unanimously each and every thesis that has been seen as emblematic of the Averroist movement, but most importantly because the thesis which is seen as the defining thesis of Averroism is not in fact embraced by any of them. In addition, neither in Siger of Brabant nor

⁶¹ For the terms *philosophi theologizantes* and *theologi philosophantes*, see PICHÉ, LAFLEUR (eds.), *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, p. 155–156 and p. 175.

in Boethius of Dacia we find an exhaustive, systematic engagement with the positions held by Averroes himself, not even when it comes to the thesis of the unicity of the intellect or the eternity of the world.

By analysing the works of these authors, I have tried to demonstrate in which way the methodology delineated by Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia should be understood as the crucial feature of Averroism and how it differs from a mere treatment of philosophy as an autonomous discipline. The autonomy of philosophy is a very important feature of Averroism, but I hope to have shown that these authors did in fact go further and aimed for a radical separation of philosophy and theology as disciplines. The main representatives of Averroism perceived the philosopher's task as the search for the truth and for the teachings of the ancient philosophers without turning their opinions into something indisputable. In the final analysis, this way of conceiving the task of the philosopher can be traced back to Averroes's commentaries, which promoted a reading of Aristotle's works that brought along a new philosophical reflection separated from theology which, at the same time, struggled to move away from theology. This way of understanding philosophy as a completely independent field had a new type of philosopher as a result, the philosopher who could observe the natural world and its phenomena as relations of cause and effect; the philosopher as an autonomous subject for knowledge, aware of the scope and limits of philosophy in the whole corpus of the sciences. This new way of doing and conceiving philosophy is what we should refer to in order to answer the question *what it is to be an Averroist* in the thirteenth century.

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