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## **AVERROES ET LES AVERROÏSMES JUIF ET LATIN**

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BREPOLS

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***AVERROICA SECTA :***  
**NOTES ON THE FORMATION OF AVERROIST**  
**MOVEMENTS IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY**  
**BOLOGNA AND RENAISSANCE ITALY**

In several publications of the 1960s and 1970s, Fernand Van Steenberghen has developed the thesis that Latin Averroism originated not in the thirteenth, but in the fourteenth century with John of Jandun. He argued that John of Jandun was the first of a series of philosophers who conceived of themselves as disciples of Averroes and who embraced a larger set of doctrines by Averroes<sup>1</sup>. Siger of Brabant and the group of philosophers around him in thirteenth-century Paris were not Averroists, in the eyes of Van Steenberghen, but radical followers of Aristotle<sup>2</sup>. It is true that Thomas Aquinas' attack against contemporary « *Averroistae* », who adopt Averroes' theory of the unicity of the intellect, was probably directed against Siger of Brabant, but this does not allow us to call Siger an « Averroist », says Van Steenberghen : Averroes always remained a secondary source for Siger<sup>3</sup>.

Recent scholars have continued to discuss the validity of the label « Averroism » and the character of Averroism as a movement, but have not reached a consensus<sup>4</sup>. One problem is that the discussion is based on a weak

<sup>1</sup> F. Van Steenberghen, *Introduction à l'étude de la philosophie médiévale*. Recueil de travaux offert à l'auteur par ses collègues, ses étudiants et ses amis, Louvain-Paris, Publications universitaires-Béatrice Nauwelaerts, 1974, p. 531-554 (« L'averroïsme latin »), esp. p. 553 : « L'averroïsme latin proprement dit est né au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle avec Jean de Jandun ou peu avant lui » ; id., *Maître Siger de Brabant*, Louvain-Paris, Publications universitaires-Vander Oyez, 1977, p. 394-395.

<sup>2</sup> F. Van Steenberghen, *Introduction...* (as in preceding note), p. 544.

<sup>3</sup> F. Van Steenberghen, *ibid.*, p. 553-554.

<sup>4</sup> R.-A. Gauthier has argued for the existence of a « first Averroism » in the early 13th century in « Notes sur les débuts (1225-1240) du premier "averroïsme" », *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*, 66 (1982), p. 321-374 (and other publications), but was countered with good arguments by B. C. Bazán, « Was There Ever a "First Averroism" ? », in J. A. Aertsen and A. Speer (eds.), *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 27), Berlin-New York, W. de Gruyter, 2000, p. 31-53. M.-R. Hayoun and A. de Libera advocate the usage of the term « Averroism » in a broad sense in *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1991, e.g. p. 99 : « Chaque époque a ses averroïstes » ; de Libera's emphasis is on the current of

philological basis : key texts remain accessible in early prints only, such as the commentaries of John of Jandun and Agostino Nifo, or in manuscript, such as Nicoletto Vernia's pro-Averroist treatises ; there is not enough textual research on non-psychological texts, for instance on the commentary tradition in physics and metaphysics, and on followers of Averroes outside France and Italy ; there is no systematic inventory of references to « *Averroistae* » in medieval and Renaissance texts. But scholarship on Averroism not only faces philological, but also historiographical problems, such as that the label « Averroism » may run the risk of annihilating important differences between thinkers of the same « current »<sup>5</sup>.

The present paper is meant as a small contribution to the historiographical understanding of Averroism as a movement. In what follows, I will briefly rehearse the external evidence for the existence of Averroism as a movement in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, that is, references to « *Averroistae* », or self-descriptions of Averroists. I then turn to the internal evidence for Averroist movements : whether their protagonists share a doctrine or a philosophical practice. This evidence may be enough to convince us of the existence of doctrinal traditions, but not yet of doctrinal currents or movements. Traditions may bridge large gaps of time and place, movements are characterized by some form of group coherence. The paper therefore continues by pointing to the evidence of such a coherence within Averroism, especially with respect to teacher-student relations among Averroists. In the final section it is argued that Averroism became a movement in the fullest sense in the decades around 1500, when, in addition to all internal and external evidences, there is testimony of a doctrinal debate about the correct interpretation of Averroes.

« ethical Averroism ». From L. Bianchi comes a warning against the anachronistic features of the modern label « Averroism » (« Les aristotélismes de la scolastique », in L. Bianchi and E. Randi, *Vérités dissonantes. Aristote à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Fribourg (Suisse)-Paris, Éditions universitaires-Éditions du Cerf, 1993, p. 1-37). Z. Kuksewicz has tried to establish a set of theses characteristic of Averroists in « Some Remarks on Erfurt Averroists », *Studia Mediewistyczne* 32 (1997), p. 93-121, here p. 93-96. J.-B. Brenet has argued against F. Van Steenberghen that to call John of Jandun's standpoint « Averroist » amounts to a simplifying reduction of a complex philosophy (*Transferts du sujet. La noétique d'Averroès selon Jean de Jandun*, Paris, Vrin, 2003, esp. p. 21-22). For further literature see J.-B. Brenet's rich bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> As L. Bianchi has argued ; see his « Les aristotélismes » (as in n. 4), p. 18. On historiographical problems see also J.-B. Brenet, *Transferts* (as in n. 4), p. 23.

## I.

When we turn to the external evidence for the existence of « *Averroistae* »<sup>6</sup>, it is noteworthy that many scholastic authors attack and refute Averroes, often with drastic rhetoric, but that very few explicitly refer to the followers of Averroes. Thomas Aquinas, Aegidius Romanus, Roger Bacon, and Raymundus Lullus are among the few who directly criticize not only the philosophy of Averroes, but also his partisans. Thomas, in *De unitate intellectus*, speaks of « *multi* » who have adopted Averroes' mistaken intellect theory, and « *aliqui* » who believe that Averroes' intellect theory is shared by all Greek and Arabic philosophers<sup>7</sup>. And, probably for the first time in history, Thomas uses the term « *Averroyste* » : « The Averroists, on the basis of some of the following words (*in Aristotle's De anima, 429a13ff.*), want to maintain that, in the opinion of Aristotle, the intellect is not the soul which is the actualization of the body, nor a part of the soul; therefore, we have to study carefully the ensuing passages in Aristotle. »<sup>8</sup> In modern times, Thomas' treatise is usually called *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, but one ought to bear in mind that the text, in all likelihood, began to circulate without a proper title and that the phrase « *contra Averroistas* » became popular in the fourteenth-century

<sup>6</sup> On the meaning of « *Averroista* » cf. H. Riedlinger, « *De auctoritate Averrois et de Averroistis* », in *Opera Parisiensia anno MCCIX composita*, edidit H. Riedlinger, Palmarum Maiorcarum, 1967 (*Raimundi Lulli Opera Latina*, edenda curavit F. Stegmüller, vol. V), p. 22-34; F. Van Steenberghen, *Introduction* (as in n. 1), p. 542-546; Z. Kuksewicz, « *Some Remarks* » (as in n. 4), p. 94-96.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Aquinas (Thomas de Aquino), *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, in *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, vol. XIII, Rome, Editori di San Tommaso, 1976, p. 291, l. 7-12 : « *Inolevit siquidem iam dudum circa intellectum error apud multos, ex dictis Averrois sumens originem, qui asserere nititur intellectum ... esse quandam substantiam secundum esse a corpore separatam ...* », and p. 314, l. 393-396 : « *Unde mirum est quomodo aliqui, solum commentum Averrois videntes, pronuntiare presumunt quod ipse dicit hoc sensisse omnes philosophos Grecos et Arabes, preter Latinos* ». The text is reprinted and translated into French in Thomas d'Aquin, *L'Unité de l'intellect contre les averroïstes, suivi des Textes contre Averroès antérieurs à 1270*, texte latin, traduction, introduction, bibliographie, chronologie, notes et index par A. de Libera, Paris, GF-Flammarion, 1994, p. 76-77 and 194-195.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, p. 294-295, 307-312 : « *Sed quia ex quibusdam verbis consequentibus Averroyste accipere volunt intentionem Aristotilis fuisse quod intellectus non sit anima que est actus corporis, aut pars talis anime, ideo etiam diligentius eius verba sequentia consideranda sunt.* » (cf. ed. de Libera, p. 94-95)

manuscript tradition<sup>9</sup>. A witness to the usage of « *Averroista* » in the Thomistic tradition is Pseudo-Thomas Aquinas *Concordantiae « Pertransibunt »* of the late thirteenth century, where the unicity thesis is called a « mistake into which the Averroists in Paris lapsed in our time ; against them we have written *De unitate intellectus* »<sup>10</sup>. Aegidius Romanus, in his *De plurificatione intellectus possibilis* and in his commentary on the *Sentences*, concentrates on refuting Averroes' intellect theory, but also attacks his followers, among them a *magister magnus* in Paris, who try to defend the commentator, but in fact misinterpret him<sup>11</sup>. Roger Bacon, in a treatise written in 1292, the last year of his life, attacks Averroes and unnamed « *Averroistae* » for holding that form gives being to the composite and that therefore the name of a thing is more principally said of the form than of the composite. Bacon concludes his criticism by rioting against the « madness of Averroes and his multifaceted nonsense, which drives foolish ones in many ways into error »<sup>12</sup>. Raymundus Lullus, towards the end of his life in 1309-1311, composes several treatises

<sup>9</sup> See the introduction to the Leonina edition (as in n. 7) of *De unitate* published 1976, p. 247-248 and p. 251-254 (list of manuscripts). Among the 20 some manuscripts of the late 13th or early 14th century, most are without title and colophon ; one manuscript (no. 21) has « liber contra averroistas » in the title, one (no. 2) « De pluralitate intellectus contra averroistas », one (no. 20) « contra magistrum Sogerum de unitate intellectus » ; the following phrases appear in colophons : « contra errores auerroys et quorundam aliorum ipsum sequencium » (no. 22), « liber de intellectu pluralitate contra auerroistas » (no. 29), « contra dicta auerroys et sequentium ipsum » (no. 32).

<sup>10</sup> Pseudo-Thomas Aquinas (Thomas of Sutton?), *Concordantiae « Pertransibunt »*, here quoted from L. Bianchi, « Guglielmo di Baglione, Tommaso d'Aquino e la condanna del 1270 », *Rivista di storia della filosofia*, 39 (1984), p. 503-520, here p. 513n : « in hunc defectum venerunt Averroistae Parisiis nostris temporibus, contra quos scripsimus de unitate intellectus. »

<sup>11</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *De plurificatione intellectus possibilis*, ed. H. Bullotta Barracco, Rome, Fratelli Bocca, 1957, p. 33 : « Isti autem sic solventes tripliciter deficiunt : primo..., secundo..., tertio, quia cum hoc faciant ut Commentatorem defendant, Commentatoris positionem non retinent. » Aegidius Romanus, *In secundum librum Sententiarum Quaestiones*, Venice, 1581 ; repr. Frankfurt a. M., Minerva, 1968, 2<sup>nd</sup> part, dist. XVII, q. 2, art. 1, p. 48 : « Nos cum adhuc essemus baccalaureus, vidimus quendam magistrum magnum in philosophia maiorem, qui tunc esset Parisiis, volentem tenere opinionem Commentatoris concedentem quod homo non intelligit nisi sicut celum intelligit quia intelligit motor celi, sic etiam homo intelligit, quia intelligit ille intellectus separatus. » On these passages see B. Nardi, « Note per una storia dell'averroismo latino. III. Egidio Romano e l'averroismo », *Rivista di storia della filosofia*, 3 (1948), p. 8-29, esp. p. 17-18 and p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Bacon (Rogerus Bacon), *Compendium studii theologiae*, ed. T. S. Maloney, Leiden, Brill, 1988, cap. 3, p. 80 : « Nec Averroistae impedire possunt haec, licet sentiunt cum eo quod forma dat esse aggregato ... », and p. 82 : « Sic igitur patet insania Averrois et multiplex eius fatuitas, quae stultos cogit multipliciter in errorem » (the translation is T. S. Maloney's). I am grateful to Luca Bianchi for drawing my attention to this passage.

against the Averroists, in order that : « the errors of Averroes are erased from the city of Paris » (« *errores Averrois a civitate Parisius extirpentur* »)<sup>13</sup>. The terms *Averroim haereticum imitantes* (« following the heretic Averroes »)<sup>14</sup>, *Averroista christianus*, or simply *Averroista* that appear in Lullus' texts possibly refer to John of Jandun and other Parisian masters of arts<sup>15</sup>. Lullus assigns to the Averroists a large set of doctrines, all of them somehow related to the Parisian condemnations of 1270 and 1277 ; only some of them can be attributed to Averroes. The term « *Averroista* » here comes close to meaning « heterodox philosopher ».

The condemnations of 1270 and 1277 and the accompanying polemical texts (such as by Bonaventure, Albertus Magnus and Aegidius Romanus) which are very critical of Averroes, are indications that there existed masters of arts in Paris who adopted a number of contentious theses from Averroes. The condemnations themselves, however, do not link any errors to followers of Averroes, nor even to Averroes himself<sup>16</sup>.

In the course of the fourteenth century, the polemics against Averroes continue, but references to Averroists remain scarce. A notable exception is William of Alnwick, the English Franciscan and theologian, who died in 1333. In 1322-23, William of Alnwick was teaching in Bologna. The fruit of his teaching are *Determinationes* which often refer to anonymous « followers of the opinion of the commentator », among them a *respondens* who participates in the Bologna disputations<sup>17</sup>. « It is strange », William of Alnwick says, « that some persons put so much effort on maintaining the

<sup>13</sup> Raymundus Lullus, *Sermones contra errores Averrois*, in id., *Opera latina, Parisiis anno MCCCXI composita*, edidit H. Harada, O. F. M., Turnhout, Brepols, 1975, p. 246-262, here p. 246.

<sup>14</sup> Raymundus Lullus, *Liber natalis*, *ibid.*, p. 30-73, here p. 69.

<sup>15</sup> See R. Imbach, « Lulle face aux Averroïstes parisiens », in *Raymond Lulle et le pays d'Oc*, Toulouse (Cahiers de Fanjeaux, 22), 1987, p. 261-282 (here p. 275), with references to the various treatises of this period in which Lullus attacks the Averroists. Cf. also F. Van Steenberghen, *Introduction* (as in n. 1), p. 538-541.

<sup>16</sup> To cite one example, the condemned thesis 32 on the unicity of the intellect : « Quod intellectus est unus numero omnium, licet enim separetur a corpore hoc, non tamen ab omni », in *La condamnation parisienne de 1277*, texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaire par D. Piché, Paris, Vrin, 1999, p. 88 (art. 32/117).

<sup>17</sup> A. Maier, « Wilhelm von Alnwicks Bologneser Quaestionen gegen den Averroismus (1323) », *Gregorianum* 30 (1949), p. 265-308, (reprinted in ead., *Ausgehendes Mittelalter I*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1949, p. 1-40), here p. 277 : « aliqui sequaces opinionis commentatoris. »

sinful and arrogant opinion of Averroes on the unicity of the intellect »<sup>18</sup>.

There is a long line of humanist attacks on Averroes, from Petrarca to Vives, but again, in the early phase of the humanist movement, testimonies to an Averroist current are very difficult to find. This changes remarkably in the late fifteenth century. An indirect witness is the condemnation of the teaching of Averroes' unicity thesis by bishop Pietro Barozzi of Padua in 1489: « We decree that none of you by threat of excommunication, which you undergo as soon as you act against this very sentence, dare or presume to discuss publicly the unicity of the intellect, whatever pretext may be found; even if this <thesis> had been <derived> from the opinion of Aristotle – according to Averroes, a clearly learned, but criminal man »<sup>19</sup>. Note that the edict, in contrast to the condemnations of 1270 and 1277, attacks Averroes directly as the *spiritus rector* of erroneous teaching. The primary target of this decree was the philosopher Nicoletto Vernia, who had propagated the unicity thesis in his teaching. In 1513, the fifth Lateran council issued the bull *Apostolici regiminis*, which condemned the teaching of the unicity thesis without naming Averroes directly<sup>20</sup>. It is obvious that the church, by way of these decrees, indirectly testifies to the existence of Averroist teachers in Italian universities. Another witness to the existence of an Averroist current was Marsilio Ficino, who in 1492 complained: « Almost the entire world is occupied and divided between two sects of Peripatetics, the Alexandrians (*that is, the followers of Alexander of Aphrodisias*) and the Averroists. The one sect think our intellect is mortal, the other contend that it is unique. Both alike are wholly destructive of religion ... »<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> A. Maier, *ibid.*, p. 275: « Et mirum est quod aliqui homines tantum laborant ad tenendum iniquam et frivolum opinionem Averrois de unitate intellectus. »

<sup>19</sup> Pietro Barozzi, *Edictum contra disputantes de unitate intellectus*, ed. P. Ragnisco, in « Documenti inediti e rari intorno alla vita ed agli scritti di Nicoletto Vernia e di Elia del Medigo », *Atti e memorie della R. Accademia di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti in Padova* N.S. 7 (1890/91), p. 275-302, here p. 279: « Mandamus ut nullus vestrum sub poena excommunicationis latae sententiae quam si contrafaceritis ipso facto incurratis, audeat vel praesumat de unitate intellectus quovis quaesito colore publice disputare; et si hoc ex Aristotelis sententia fuisse secundum Averroin hominem doctum quidem sed scelestum. »

<sup>20</sup> On Barozzi's decree and the Lateran council's bull see P. F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, Baltimore-London, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2002, p. 283-285 and 289-290, with further literature.

<sup>21</sup> In the preface to his translation of Plotinus; see the quotation in J. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, Leiden-Boston-Cologne, E. J. Brill, 1994, p. 274: « Totus enim ferme



In the decades around 1500, the term « *averroista* » was used by a larger number of writers, for instance by Antonio Trombetta<sup>22</sup>, Antonio Alabanti<sup>23</sup>, Caietan de Vio<sup>24</sup>, Pietro Pomponazzi<sup>25</sup>, Agostino Nifo<sup>26</sup>, Marcantonio Zimara<sup>27</sup>, or Pedro Fonseca<sup>28</sup> – to cite only a few examples. There is an

terrarum orbis a Peripateticis occupatus in duas plurimum sectas divisus est, Alexandrinam et Averroicam. Illi quidem intellectum nostrum esse mortalem existimant, hi vero unicum esse contendunt. Utrique religionem omnem funditus aequae tollunt, praesertim quia divinam circa homines providentiam negare videntur, et utrobique a suo etiam Aristotele defecisse. »

<sup>22</sup> Antonio Trombetta, *Tractatus singularis contra Averroistas de humanarum animarum plurificatione ad catholice fidei obsequium Patavii editus*, Venice, 1498.

<sup>23</sup> Antonio Alabanti in a letter to Nicoletto Vernia of 1492, as quoted by B. Nardi, *Saggi sull' Aristotelismo Padovano del secolo XIV al XVI*, Florence, Sansoni, 1958, p. 103 : « Ad igitur libellus noster confugit : tu eum ... censeas si dignus est ut in claram lucem professoribus perypathzeticis ad doctrinamque Averrois aspirantibus emergere possit ... Quod si feceris ..., non minus tibi et Urbanus noster, operis conditor, quam Averrois et qui eius doctrinam sequuntur, inter quos ego quoque minimus accedo, ingentem immortalemque super gratiam habemus. » Alabanti is referring to the *Physics* commentary by Urbanus de Bononia O. Serv. (fl. first half of the 14th century), on whom see C. Lohr, « Medieval Latin Aristotle Commentaries. Authors Robertus – Wilhelmus », *Traditio* 29 (1973), p. 93-197, here p. 193-194.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Caietan de Vio (Thomas de Vio), *In De ente et essentia divi Thomae Aquinatis commentaria*, ed. M.-H. Laurent, Turin, Marietti, 1934, cap. V, p. 140 : « Ad septimum dicitur primo quod argumentum procedit ex malo intellectu articulorum Parisiensium; illi enim sunt contra Averroistas, qui animam intellectivam non multiplicabilem numero dicunt, quia est forma immaterialis. »

<sup>25</sup> Pietro Pomponazzi (Petrus Pomponatius), commentary on the *Physics* of 1518, as quoted in B. Nardi, *Studi su Pietro Pomponazzi*, Florence, Felice le Monnier, 1965, p. 239n : « Alterum notandum est quod multi Averroistae, de quorum numero ego sum, <dicunt> quod secundum ipsum <Averroem> deus continue conservat mundum et quod deus est causa efficiens totius mundi et finalis, ut apparet expresse ab ipso in Destructionibus. »

<sup>26</sup> To cite one of many passages : Agostino Nifo (Augustinus Niphus), *Metaphysicarum disputationum dilucidarium ...*, Venice, 1559 ; repr. Frankfurt am Main, Minerva, 1967, lib. 12, disp. 7, c. 3, p. 323b : « Sugerius et Baccho, viri magni in schola Averroica ... opinantur primum motorem et caeteras intelligentias, quae movent caeteros orbis, omnes moveri, saltem per accidens motu orbium quos movent ... Haec Averroici. » The reference is to Siger of Brabant and John Baconthorpe. A number of references to Averroists in Nifo's works are collected in Bruno Nardi's seminal study *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del Rinascimento italiano*, Rome, Edizioni Italiane, 1945, e.g. p. 13-33, 40-45.

<sup>27</sup> Marcantonio Zimara (Marcus Antonius Zimara), *Solutiones contradictionum in dictis Aristotelis et Averrois super duodecimo Metaphysicorum*, in *Aristotle/Averroes, Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis*, Venetiis, apud Junctas, 1562 ; repr. Frankfurt am Main, Minerva, 1962, vol. VIII, contr. 14, f. 420vb : « Defensores Averrois in quaestione de unitate intellectus ... devenerunt ad hoc ut dicerent animam intellectivam esse veram formam dantem verum esse substantiale homini ad intentionem Averrois ... » ; *ibid.*, p. 423va : « Et illud maximo argumento est quod omnes Latini nostri, sicut Albertus cognomento Magnus ... et beatus doctor, insuper

important difference between medieval and Renaissance references to Averroists. In the Renaissance, Averroists are much more frequently referred to by name. John of Jandun is the most frequently named Averroist in the Renaissance<sup>29</sup>; he is occasionally called « *averroistarum princeps* »<sup>30</sup>. This term is also applied to John Baconthorpe, the English Carmelite theologian of the early fourteenth century<sup>31</sup>. Other « Averroists » that are referred to by name are (in chronological sequence): Albertus Magnus<sup>32</sup>, Siger of Brabant<sup>33</sup>,

subtilissimus Scotus et Egidius Romanus ... voluerunt Averrois sententiam fuisse animam intellectivam non esse formam substantialem hominis. Taceo Gregorium Ariminensem, Iohannem de Gandavo, Gaetanum et Paulum Venetum et multos praeclaros Averroistas ex viventibus, qui tenuerunt hanc fuisse Averrois sententiam.» For Zimara's term « *antiqui Averroistae* » see n. 32 below.

<sup>28</sup> Pedro Fonseca, *Commentariorum in Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae libros*, Cologne, 1615-29; repr. Hildesheim, Olms, 1964, lib. VII, cap. 12, q. 1, sect. IX, p. 375bE: « Alii partim nominales, partim Averroistae volunt materiam sub quantitate dici corpus, verum non eodem modo id intelligunt quod accipiunt ex ea Averrois opinione quae existimat quantitates interminatas esse coevas materiae. »

<sup>29</sup> E. g. Agostino Nifo, *De sensu agente*, in id., *In librum Destructio destructionum Averrois commentationes*, Venice, 1497, f. 124r: « Quia tamen ante me temporibus habitis unus homo satis famosus, qui dicitur Ioannes Iandonus de civitate Gandavensi, fecit tractatum de hoc (*i.e. de sensu agente*) et quaestionem longam in libro De anima, ubi scripsit firmiter suam opinionem esse intentionem Averrois et Aristotelis. Et scio quod multis fuit occasio errandi propter eius famam, intantum quod homo non putabatur Averroista nisi qui erat Gandavensis », here quoted from J.-B. Brenet, *Transferts* (as in n. 4), p. 11; see *ibid.*, p. 11-32 for information on the medieval and modern image of John of Jandun. Cf. also A. Nifo, *In via Aristotelis de intellectu libri sex*, Venice, 1554, lib. 5, cap. 41, f. 52vb: « Et mirum est quomodo Ioannes Iandonus vir famosus in doctrina Averroica sic cespitaverit ... »; *ibid.*, lib. 6, cap. 36, f. 60rb: « Ioannes ergo Iandonus, qui aliquando in Averroica familia habitus est praecipuus ... »

<sup>30</sup> By the editor of John of Jandun's commentary on Averroes' *De substantia orbis* in 1514: *Caietanus super anima*, Venice, 1514, f. 105r: « Incipit aurea expositio Joannis de Gandavo, Averroistarum principis, super libro Averrois De substantia orbis ». The title is repeated at the end of the volume.

<sup>31</sup> Agostino Nifo, *De immortalitate anime Libellus*, Venice, 1518, cap. 4, f. 1v: « Joannes Bacconitanus meo iudicio ceterorum Averroistarum princeps tradit ad Averrois mentem intellectum nobis bifariam copulari ... » Cf. the following titlepage: *Ioannes Bachonus Averroistarum princeps theologusque celeberrimus ac canonista precipuus Super quatuor sententiarum libros opus ...*, Venice, 1526.

<sup>32</sup> Marcantonio Zimara, *Quaestio de speciebus intelligibilibus ad mentem Averrois*, quoted from E.P. Mahoney, « Albert the Great and the *Studio Patavino* in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries », in J. Weisheipl (ed.), *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute, 1980, p. 537-563, here p. 558-559: « omnes antiqui Averroistae ut Albertus Magnus. »

<sup>33</sup> Agostino Nifo's *De intellectu* (as in n. 29) contains the precious quotations from Siger's lost

Thomas Wilton (Thomas Anglicus)<sup>34</sup>, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola<sup>35</sup>, Alessandro Achillini<sup>36</sup>, Pomponazzi<sup>37</sup>, Marcantonio Zimara<sup>38</sup>, and Francesco Vimercato<sup>39</sup> – this, of course, is only a preliminary list.

One conclusion from this brief survey is that the external evidence for the existence of « Averroists » and thus also for the existence of an Averroist current is much more convincing around 1500 than in the Middle Ages. This result has to be modified by two caveats : first, that there may have been other forms of reference towards Averroists, which are difficult to detect for the historian ; it is possible, for instance, that medieval refutations of Averroes were in fact directed not so much against Averroes, as against contemporary followers of his; and second, that the term « *Averroista* » may refer to a person who is an admirer not of Averroes as a philosopher, but of Averroes'

treatise *De intellectu*, which address Siger as « Suggestus vir gravis secte Averroisticae fautor » (Nifo, *De intellectu*, f. 33ra). In other works, Nifo refers to Siger as one of the two great men of the Averroist family (see n. 29 above). The evidence is collected and discussed by B. Nardi, *Sigieri* (as in n. 26). The authenticity of Siger's *De intellectu* is well defended by C. Steel, « Siger of Brabant versus Thomas Aquinas on the Possibility of Knowing the Separate Substances », in J. A. Aertsen, K. Emery, A. Speer (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 28), Berlin-New York, de Gruyter, 2001, p. 211-231.

<sup>34</sup> Conimbricenses, *In tres libros De anima Aristotelis*, Cologne, 1600, In II. lib., cap. 1, q. 7, art. 1, col. 108 : « Et hoc quidem argumentum permovet etiam ad praedictam intellectus unitatem in Aristotelis doctrina asserendam non paucos e recentioribus Peripateticis, in quibus sunt Thomas Anglicus, Achillinus, Odo, Iandunus, Mirandulanus, Zimara, Vicomercatus, et quidam alii. » Thomas Wilton's intellect theory is discussed for instance by Nifo, *De immortalitate* (as in n. 31), cap. 4, f. 1vb : « Viltoniensis vero acutissimus doctor intellectum unum omnium, animam intellectivam numeratam pro hominum numero asserens dicit ... », and by Francesco Vimercato, *In tertium librum Aristotelis De anima Commentaria. De anima rationali peripatetica disceptatio*, Venice, 1574, f. 48a : « Est et Thomas Anglicus in hac eadem opinione ... »

<sup>35</sup> See n. 34 above.

<sup>36</sup> See n. 34 above. Cf. Vimercato, *De anima rationali* (as in n. 34), p. 36b : « ... nonnullis unicum in hominibus omnibus intellectum, ut Alexander Achillinus, et multo antea, iuxta ipsius Achillini et aliorum quorundam sententiam, commentator Averrois ... ponentibus. » Cf. also the references to Achillini by Pomponazzi and Zimara which are collected by Nardi, *Saggi* (as in n. 23), p. 231-233.

<sup>37</sup> See n. 25 above.

<sup>38</sup> See n. 34 above.

<sup>39</sup> See n. 34 above. Note that Vimercato also quotes passages from the works of Cardinal Bessarion and Guillaume Budé to substantiate the Averroist position : Vimercato, *De anima rationali* (as in n. 34), p. 47b : « Hoc argumentum ... multos ex modernis ad hanc unitatem ex Aristotelis sententia tuendam traxit, inter alios vero est Bessarion Cardinalis ... » ; *ibid.*, p. 48b (on Budé).

commentaries as a secondary source on Aristotle. In rare cases, « *Averroista* » is also employed to refer to Averroes himself<sup>40</sup>.

Another conclusion is that « *Averroista* » is a term used to characterize a person by those outside the movement. Apart from Pomponazzi, who refers to « many Averroists, among whom I count too »<sup>41</sup>, the term « *Averroista* » is hardly ever used as a self-description. This, however, is probably true also of other medieval labels for philosophical schools, such as « *Scotista* ». Since the Averroists were associated with doctrines that are in conflict with Christian faith, the term « *Averroista* » occasionally has a pejorative connotation, as when Raymundus Lullus accuses an anonymous Averroist of holding heterodox theses<sup>42</sup>. But it also is used as a recommendation, for instance, when it appears on the title-page of an early print advertising a medieval author (« *Joannes Bachonus Averroistarum princeps theologusque celeberrimus* »), or when Marcantonio Zimara invokes the authority of « many excellent Averroists among the contemporaries » on the proper interpretation of Averroes<sup>43</sup>. Note, finally, that there are Latin terms which correspond to the historiographical concept of an Averroist movement or school: « *Averroica familia* » (Nifo), « *secta Averroica* », « *secta Averroistica* » (Ficino and Nifo), and « *schola Averroica* » (Nifo)<sup>44</sup>. This finding shows that the historiographical description of Averroism as a movement is problematic, but not entirely anachronistic.

It has long been observed that the term « *Averroista* », since its first occurrence in Thomas Aquinas' *De unitate intellectus*, was linked to a specific

<sup>40</sup> As M. Bouyges has pointed out; see his « Attention à "Averroista" », *Revue du moyen âge latin*, 4 (1948), p. 173-176. M. Bouyges draws attention to the following passage in ms. Paris BnF 15453 of Averroes' *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, f. 347v, lib. 12, comm. 34, where the term « *Averroista* » is inserted to distinguish Aristotle's text from Averroes' commentary, thus taking the place of the usual abbreviation « *AV* » for Averroes: « ... primum igitur celum est eternum. Averroista. Per hoc igitur quod dixit ... » In fact, the term appears again in the colophon on f. 354r: « Explicit liber Metaphysice Aristotelis cum commento Averroiste. » In ms. Paris BnF 6504 the term is used several times to mark the beginning of Averroes' commentary on a chapter of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

<sup>41</sup> See n. 25 above.

<sup>42</sup> Raymundus Lullus, *De syllogismis contradictoriis*, in id., *Opera latina*, ed. Harada (as in n. 13), p. 170: « Tu, Averroista, inducis quadraginta quattuor, etiam plures, propositiones contra deum sive contra sanctam fidem catholicam ... »

<sup>43</sup> See nn. 27 and 31 above.

<sup>44</sup> See nn. 21, 26, 29, 33 above.

philosophical position : Averroes' unicity thesis. It is obvious, however, that « Averroists » were associated with more theses, predominantly in psychology, physics and metaphysics : such as the (Aristotelian) thesis of the eternity of the world, the denial of God's infinite power, the denial of God's knowledge of particulars, the theory that first matter is characterized by an indeterminate dimensionality, which is coeval with it, or the theory of happiness as reached through knowledge of the separate substances<sup>45</sup>. While there are modern studies concerned with the history of the unicity thesis and its association with « *Averroistae* » from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, there is a lack of diachronic studies for the other theses. It remains to be investigated for a large body of medieval and Renaissance texts whether these theories were attributed to Averroes and not to Aristotle and whether they were in fact adopted by medieval followers of Averroes.

For the present purpose of analyzing the character of Averroism as a movement, the focus is on adherents of the unicity thesis, since, in the present state of scholarship, there does not seem to be firm ground for extending the analysis to physical and metaphysical issues.

## II.

With respect to the internal evidence, the principal question is: when and where do meet with a group of philosophers who maintain the unicity thesis ? There are, at least, five candidates for Averroist groups of this kind : first, Siger of Brabant and possibly other masters of arts in thirteenth-century Paris ; second, in the early fourteenth century, another Parisian group of scholars around Thomas Wilton, John of Jandun and John Baconthorpe ; third and fourth the so-called Bologna and Erfurt<sup>46</sup> schools of Averroism in the fourteenth century ; and finally the Paduan or Northern Italian current of Averroists from Paul of Venice (d. 1429) to Antonio Bernardi (d. 1565).

Two candidates, it seems to me, come closest to the formation of a group : the Bologna masters of arts of the fourteenth century, and the Italian

<sup>45</sup> Examples for non-psychological issues are in nn. 12, 25, 26 and 28 above. For a list of « Averroist » theses in medieval philosophers and modern historians of philosophy see Z. Kuksewicz, « Some Remarks » (as in n. 4), p. 93-96.

<sup>46</sup> See Z. Kuksewicz, *ibid.*, p. 93-121. For further articles by Z. Kuksewicz on Erfurt and Bologna see the comprehensive bibliography in J.-B. Brenet, *Transferts* (as in n. 4), p. 477-481.

philosophers around 1500. The reason is that in the case of these two groups there is testimony of a sufficient number of philosophers of the same time and region who in fact maintained the unicity thesis in explicit adoption from Averroes, and that there is evidence that they were related to each other either personally or by textual references in their works. Saying this does not preclude the possibility that the Parisian and Erfurt followers of Averroes could also be said to belong to a movement. I leave this to the specialists for Paris and Erfurt. I expect, however, that the existence of a movement will be more difficult to prove than for Bologna and Renaissance Italy<sup>47</sup>.

In Bologna between 1315 and 1350, there were at least four philosophers who clearly maintained the unicity thesis (as is known since the work of Anneliese Maier and Zdzisław Kuksewicz)<sup>48</sup>: Taddeo da Parma, Angelo d'Arezzo, Matteo da Gubbio and Giacomo da Piacenza.

Taddeo da Parma is the first of these. In his *Quaestiones de anima* he follows Averroes on the question *utrum intellectus sit unus numero*, adding that he believes that this is also the position of Aristotle. At the end of this *Quaestio* he inserts a short declaration of faith apparently in order to avoid accusations of heresy: « Nobody should think that what has been said was said in an affirmative way – in fact, it was expressed as a citation. Because, in truth, the intellect is pluralized, just as the human bodies are pluralized. »<sup>49</sup> Such declarations become conventional among later Averroists: in truth, that is, from the higher vantage point of Christian faith, the unicity thesis is false. Angelo d'Arezzo adopts the unicity thesis in his commentary on the *Isagoge*: « One should know that according to the opinion (*intentio*) of the

<sup>47</sup> New light on the Parisian « Averroism » of the early 14th century and its presumed protagonists John of Göttingen, Antonius of Parma, Thomas Wilton, Hugh of Utrecht, Maino of Manieri, Peter of Modena, John of Jandun and John Baconthorpe is to be expected from the new edition of Z. Kuksewicz's classic *De Siger de Brabant à Jacques de Plaisance* (first published Wrocław et al., Ossolineum, 1968), which is about to appear.

<sup>48</sup> See A. Maier, « Die italienische Averroistenschule aus der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts », in ead., *Die Vorläufer Galileis im 14. Jahrhundert*, Rome, Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1949, p. 251-278, and ead., « Wilhelm » (as in n. 17); Z. Kuksewicz, *Averroïsme bolonais au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, édition des textes, Wrocław-Varsovie-Cracovie, Ossolineum, 1965, and id., *De Siger de Brabant* (as in n. 47).

<sup>49</sup> Taddeo da Parma (Thaddeus de Parma), *Quaestiones tertii libri De anima*, ed. S. Vanni Rovighi, Milano, Società Editrice « Vita e pensiero », 1951, q. 5, p. 63: « Videte non cogitet quis quae dicta sunt fore dicta asserendo sed recitando. Rei enim veritas est intellectum esse plurificatum sicut et humana corpora sunt plurificata. »

Commentator and of Aristotle the intellect is one numerically in all human beings, even though this is against faith. » Angelo proceeds by basing his conclusion on Averroes' theory<sup>50</sup>. Matteo da Gubbio, in *Quaestiones de anima* attributed to him by modern scholarship, professes the thesis that the intellect, according to Aristotle and Averroes, is not the substantial form of the body and therefore is immaterial<sup>51</sup>. Finally, Giacomo da Piacenza writes a commentary on *De anima* and combines it with *Quaestiones*. In answer to the question *Utrum intellectus possibilis sit forma corporis* he states that : « it is thus apparent with respect to the opinion of Aristotle and Averroes that the possible intellect is one numerically in all human beings and that it is not the form of the body ... »<sup>52</sup>. At the same time, he makes clear that this position, which he once also attributes to Averroes only<sup>53</sup>, diverges from the *opinio fidei*<sup>54</sup>.

Of course, much more could be said about the specific philosophical position taken by each of these authors. For the present investigation, it suffices to note that these four authors share a theory: that the possible intellect is one in all human beings and that this is the philosophical position

<sup>50</sup> Angelo d'Arezzo, *Scriptum super libro Porfirii de quinque praedicabilibus*, quoted from M. Grabmann, « Der Bologneser Averroist Angelo d'Arezzo (ca. 1325) », in id., *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, Munich, Hueber, 1926, vol. II, p. 261-271, here p. 267 : « Propter quod est sciendum quod secundum intentionem Commentatoris et Aristotelis intellectus est unus numero in omnibus hominibus licet hoc sit contra fidem. »

<sup>51</sup> Matteo da Gubbio (Matthaeus de Eugubio), *Quaestiones de anima*, ed. A. Ghisalberti, Milano, Vita e pensiero, 1981, p. 187 : « Dicendum secundum mentem Aristotelis et Averrois, etiam magistri Thaddaei, quod intellectus non est forma substantialis corporis, et per consequens immaterialis est. »

<sup>52</sup> Giacomo da Piacenza (Iacobus de Placentia), *Lectura cum Quaestionibus super tertium de anima*, ed. Z. Kuksewicz, Wrocław-Varsovie-Cracovie, Ossolineum, 1967, q. IV, p. 68 : « Et sic patet de mente Aristotelis et Averrois quod intellectus possibilis est unus numero in hominibus omnibus et quod non sit forma corporis dans sibi esse inhaerenter, sed tantum per viam appropriationis. »

<sup>53</sup> Giacomo da Piacenza, *ibid.*, q. X, p. 111 : « Ad probationem: 'quia de mente Averrois unus est intellectus in omnibus' conceditur ... »

<sup>54</sup> Giacomo da Piacenza, *ibid.*, q. IV, p. 65 : « Tertia opinio est opinio fidei, quae licet verbis et ore potest negari, non tamen mente, et est talis quod intellectus possibilis est forma corporis ... Etiam differt a ... opinione Aristotelis et Averrois qui posuerunt in tali forma aeternitatem a parte ante et a parte post, sed fides non ponit ipsam aeternam a parte ante, sed ponit eam esse creatam. »

of Averroes and apparently (*credo*, « I believe so », says Taddeo)<sup>55</sup> also of Aristotle ; and finally that it is in conflict with Christian faith.

This is less trivial than it sounds. As Thomas S. Kuhn has observed, searching for a scientific « community's shared beliefs », « accepted principles and rules » is a « source of continual and deep frustration »<sup>56</sup>. In contrast, paradigms – in the sense of accepted examples of actual scientific practice, which are fundamental for a community – are much easier to detect for the historian<sup>57</sup>. In the case of the Bologna masters of arts, it is possible to detect one shared belief, one accepted principle, without much frustration : the unicity thesis. And it is exactly this thesis which would make them « Averroists » in the eyes of the above-mentioned contemporary observer William of Alnwick, who disputed with an Averroist *respondens* in Bologna in 1322/23.

But the Bologna masters of arts not only share a theory, but also follow a paradigm, namely the philosophical practice of John of Jandun : that is, the practice of doing philosophy by expounding Aristotle with the principal help of Averroes. The Bologna masters of arts assume the problems and methods of philosophy from their paradigm, as well as the format of the *quaestiones* commentary, but – since it is only a paradigm – it would be frustrating to search for a large set of common standpoints. What we find instead is a network of overlapping resemblances. This appears to be a typical phenomenon of late medieval doctrinal currents : that a group shares one or two hard beliefs, combined with a paradigm of philosophical practice. Examples are the Scotists, who are recognized by the principle of *distinctio formalis* of divine attributes, and the Thomists, who are identifiable by the rejection of the parallelism of thinking and being (as Maarten Hoenen has shown)<sup>58</sup>. Both groups follow certain patterns of philosophizing established by the example of their masters Scotus and Thomas.

<sup>55</sup> Taddeo da Parma, *Quaestiones* (as in n. 49), q. 5, p. 53 : « In contrarium est expresse Commentator, et credo fuisse de mente Aristotelis. »

<sup>56</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago-London, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996<sup>3</sup>, p. 43-44.

<sup>57</sup> T. Kuhn, *ibid.*, p. 10 and 43.

<sup>58</sup> M. Hoenen, « Thomismus, Skotismus und Albertismus. Das Entstehen und die Bedeutung von philosophischen Schulen im späten Mittelalter », *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter*, 2 (1997), p. 81-103 ; id., « Being and Thinking in the "Correctorium fratris Thomae" and the "Correctorium corruptorii Quare" : Schools of Thought and Philosophical Methodology », in *Nach der Verurteilung* (as in n. 33), p. 417-435.



In Renaissance Italy, the number of scholars who adopt the unicity thesis is larger than in the fourteenth century. Among them count in chronological order from ca. 1400 to ca. 1550 : Paul of Venice, Niccolò Tignosi (Tignosi is a pupil of Paul and a teacher of Ficino), Nicoletto Vernia, Alessandro Achillini, Agostino Nifo, Luca Prassicio, Francesco Vimercato and Antonio Bernardi. Not all of these authors are Averroists to the bone; some of them change their mind and turn away from the unicity thesis in later writings. Also, many of them signal that the unicity thesis is in conflict with Christian faith<sup>59</sup>.

To these authors one might like to add Pietro Pomponazzi, who in his lectures in Padua in 1503-1504 desperately tried to avoid Averroes' thesis, but did not see a philosophical alternative :

If the light of faith is taken away, I am very confused on this matter (that is, the problem of the immortality of the intellective soul). Against Alexander of Aphrodisias (and his theory of the soul's complete dependency upon the body) there is the very valid argument about (the problem of) universal (intellection). With regard to Averroes' opinion, it seems to me that it was that of Aristotle. However, I cannot by any means adhere to it, and it seems to me the most flagrant nonsense<sup>60</sup>.

Pomponazzi faces two obstacles in his attempt to avoid the unicity thesis : first, that it appears to be the opinion not only of Averroes, but also of Aristotle, and second, that it gives a more convincing explanation of universal

<sup>59</sup> For the evidence that these authors in fact adopt the unicity thesis, see D. N. Hasse, « The Attraction of Averroism in the Renaissance : Vernia, Achillini, Prassicio », in P. Adamson, H. Balthussen, M. W. F. Stone (eds), *Philosophy, Science and Exegesis in Greek, Arabic and Latin Commentaries*, 2 vol., London, Institute of Classical Studies, 2004, vol. II, p. 131-147, and id., « Aufstieg und Niedergang des Averroismus in der Renaissance : Niccolò Tignosi, Agostino Nifo, Francesco Vimercato », in J. A. Aertsen and M. Pickavé (eds), *"Herbst des Mittelalters" ? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 31), Berlin-New York, de Gruyter, 2004, p. 447-473.

<sup>60</sup> Pietro Pomponazzi, *Questio de immortalitate anime*, ed. P. O. Kristeller, « Two Unpublished Questions on the Soul of Pietro Pomponazzi », *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 9 (1955), p. 85-96, here p. 93 : « Remoto lumine fidei ego valde perplexus sum in materia ista. Contra Alexandrum multum valet argumentum illud de universali. De opinione autem Averrois mihi videtur quod fuerit opinio Aristotelis, tamen nullo pacto possum illi adhaerere, et videtur mihi maxima fatuitas. Dicat autem quisque quicquid vult, ego magis abhorreo opinionem Averrois quam diabolum. » Note that the text survives only as reported by a student of Pomponazzi ; the same lecture is reported by another student in different wording, ed. by A. Poppi, *Corsi inediti dell'insegnamento padovano*, 2 vol., Padua, Antenore, 1966-70, vol. II, p. 41-42.

intellection. Twelve years later, in 1516, when Pomponazzi published his famous treatise *De immortalitate*, he had found a solution to Alexander's problem of how to explain universal intellection<sup>61</sup>. As a consequence, he finally dropped Averroes' position altogether.

One can conclude that the internal evidence for a group of Renaissance philosophers adopting the unicity thesis agrees very well with the numerous external references cited above which in the decades around 1500 were made to an « *Averroica secta* ». As in fourteenth-century Bologna, the unicity thesis is the key thesis to identify partisans of Averroes. To a certain extent, the Renaissance movement also follows a paradigmatic example of philosophical practice : that of Paul of Venice. The Averroist authors adopt Paul's declaration of faith, they ask his questions. The practice, which Paul hands on to his successors, has a stronger emphasis on logic and a weaker emphasis on metaphysics than John of Jandun's. The paradigmatic force of Paul of Venice, in general, is significantly weaker than John of Jandun's had been in the fourteenth century, even with respect to textual formats : the psychological treatises of the fifteenth century (by Gaetano, Tignosi, Vernia, Nifo and Achillini) show a wide variety of formats – which contrasts with the fixed tradition of a typical set of *Quaestiones* inaugurated by John of Jandun.

### III.

As was noted above at the opening of this article, it is important to add further criteria for the existence of a movement or school in order to distinguish movements from mere traditions. Movements are characterized by some sort of group coherence, that is, by the members' activity in the same time and region, and by personal relations between their members – at least, by the awareness of one's immediate predecessors and cognates in mind.

The four Bologna Averroists were all teaching in the arts faculty : Taddeo da Parma from at least 1318 to 1321<sup>62</sup> ; Angelo d'Arezzo around 1325<sup>63</sup> ;

<sup>61</sup> For Pomponazzi's solution that universals are not grasped *simpliciter*, but only in the phantasmata of the faculty of imagination, see Pietro Pomponazzi, *Tractatus de immortalitate animae*, ed. B. Mojsisch, Hamburg, Meiner, 1990, ch. IX, p. 110 : «... quare <homines> neque universale simpliciter, ut aeterna, neque singulariter tantum, ut bestiae, sed universale in singulari contemplantur. »

<sup>62</sup> C. Lohr, « Authors Robertus – Wilhelmus » (as in n. 23), p. 151-152.

<sup>63</sup> C. Lohr, « Medieval Latin Aristotle Commentaries : Authors A-F », *Traditio*, 23 (1967), p. 313-413, here p. 360, with further literature.

Matteo da Gubbio from 1334 to 1347<sup>64</sup>; Giacomo da Piacenza in the 1340s<sup>65</sup>. Their texts show awareness of and dependency upon previous Averroists. Taddeo da Parma's *Quaestiones de anima* depend directly, often literally upon John of Jandun's *Quaestiones de anima*<sup>66</sup>, but there is no indication that Taddeo studied in Paris. Kuksewicz has shown that Giacomo da Piacenza's *Quaestiones* depend heavily upon the *Quaestiones* of John of Jandun and Taddeo da Parma<sup>67</sup>; Giacomo once refers directly to John of Jandun<sup>68</sup>. Matteo da Gubbio cites and follows Taddeo da Parma as an authority on the question of whether the intellect is the substantial form of the body. Matteo's debt to the tradition of *Quaestiones* inaugurated by John of Jandun and Taddeo da Parma is obvious<sup>69</sup>. We thus witness a notable dependence of the later Bologna Averroists upon the earlier ones and upon John of Jandun.

In the Renaissance, many Averroists are connected to each other by teacher-student relations; in fact, there is a veritable line of Averroist teachers in Padua who succeed each other on the same chair. Niccolò Tignosi was a student of Paul of Venice at Padua University, as was Gaetano da Thiene (who was counted by some Renaissance authors as Averroist, but, in the end, did not embrace the unicity thesis, of which he gives a lengthy presentation); Gaetano was Paul's direct successor<sup>70</sup>. He in turn was succeeded by his student Nicoletto Vernia in 1468<sup>71</sup>. Vernia was the teacher both of Agostino Nifo and Pietro Pomponazzi. Pomponazzi became Vernia's successor, when the latter died in 1499. Vimercato

<sup>64</sup> See A. Ghisalberti's introduction to Matteo da Gubbio, *Quaestiones* (as in n. 51), p. 42.

<sup>65</sup> C. Lohr, « Medieval Latin Aristotle Commentaries: Authors Jacobus-Johannes Juff », *Traditio*, 26 (1970), p. 135-216, here p. 145-147.

<sup>66</sup> As has long been pointed out by S. Vanni Rovighi in his introduction to Taddeo da Parma, *Quaestiones* (as in n. 49), p. XIII.

<sup>67</sup> See Z. Kuksewicz's introduction to his edition of Giacomo da Piacenza, *Quaestiones* (as in n. 52), p. 22-24.

<sup>68</sup> Giacomo da Piacenza, *ibid.*, p. 170: « secundum quod exponit Johannes de Ganduno. »

<sup>69</sup> A. Ghisalberti, introduction to Matteo da Gubbio, *Quaestiones* (as in n. 51), p. 35-37.

<sup>70</sup> See C. Lohr, « Authors A-F » (as in n. 63), p. 390-392.

<sup>71</sup> See *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vol, ed. E. Craig, London-New York, Routledge, 1998, s.v. « Vernia, Nicoletto (d. 1499) », by E. P. Mahoney.

und Bernardi studied philosophy in Padua. Achillini and Prassicio are exceptions : they were living and teaching in Bologna and Naples respectively <sup>72</sup>.

But what is most distinctive of Renaissance Averroism is a wealth of textual interconnections in the writings of the protagonists. This leads me to the main point of this article : in the decades around 1500, the *doctrina Averrois* becomes a matter of several disputes. And this means, first, that Averroes is now fully emancipated from his role as a commentator and treated as a philosopher of his own right, and, second, that Averroism as a movement reaches its culmination in the Renaissance, because it begins to share an important feature with other movements of history : a discussion among its members about its proper direction.

#### IV.

In drawing attention to the Renaissance controversies about the correct interpretation of Averroes, I pick up a thread of Edward Mahoney, who has studied the dispute between Antonio Trombetta and Agostino Nifo on Averroes' theory of intelligible species. I will discuss four major controversies, but it is likely that they were more : between Trombetta and Nifo (1497/1498), between Nifo and Zimara (1497/1508), between Pomponazzi and Nifo (1516/18), and between Nifo and Prassicio (1518/1521).

The origin of these debates is a growing scepticism among Italian Averroists about the validity of John of Jandun's interpretation of Averroes. Paul of Venice takes a first step by distinguishing John's interpretation of Averroes on the relationship between intellect and body from Averroes' own opinion <sup>73</sup>. Nicoletto Vernia, in his early *Quaestio* on the unicity of the intellect of ca. 1480 calls John of Jandun the best defender of Averroes, «*suus optimus defensor Ioannis*

<sup>72</sup> On the university careers of Nifo, Pomponazzi, Vimercato, Bernardi, Achillini and Prassicio, see the entries in C. Lohr, *Latin Aristotle Commentaries. II. Renaissance Authors*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki, 1988.

<sup>73</sup> Paulus Venetus, *Commentum de anima*, Venice, 1481, cap. III, 8, f. u7ra, quoted from Z. Kuksewicz, « Paul de Venise et sa théorie de l'âme », in L. Olivieri (ed.), *Aristotelismo Veneto e scienza moderna*, 2 vol., Padua, Antenore, 1983, vol. I, p. 297-324, here p. 302 : « Secunda opinio fuit Averrois ... Tertia opinio fuit Joannis de Ianduno. Dicit quod intellectus secundum Commentatorem unitur corpori humano non ut forma dans esse ... »

*Gandunus* »<sup>74</sup>, and his main strategy is to improve upon John of Jandun's defense. But, occasionally, Vernia also criticizes John of Jandun for positions which do not agree with the mind of Averroes : which are not « *ad mentem Averrois* »<sup>75</sup>. A few years later, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his *Conclusiones* of 1486, attacks John of Jandun in a sweeping statement for corrupting the doctrine of Averroes on almost all philosophical matters : « *non solum in hoc, sed ferme in omnibus quesitis philosophiae doctrinam Averrois corrumpit omnino et depravavit.* » The context is the theory of conjunction between active and possible intellect<sup>76</sup>. This tradition culminates in Agostino Nifo. Nifo's critique of John of Jandun pervades his entire oeuvre : « This man's deficient knowledge of the works of Averroes makes him commit errors. »<sup>77</sup> In Nifo's eyes, John's reading of Averroes' *De anima* commentary is « *contra textum* »<sup>78</sup>, or, as Nifo also puts it : « *haec expositio non est consona litterae* »<sup>79</sup>, it is not in agreement with Averroes' original words. « John of Jandun has been the cause for many errors, because he is so famous, to such a degree that nobody was thought to be an Averroist if he was not a *Gandavensis* »<sup>80</sup>.

The issue which triggered the first of the four controversies concerns the need for intelligible species in cognition. In one of his earliest works, the commentary on Averroes' *Destructio destructionum (Tahāfut at-tahāfut)* of 1497, Nifo criticizes John of Jandun for holding that in the moment of cognition intelligible species are created from the phantasms in the intellect<sup>81</sup> ; he replies

<sup>74</sup> Nicoletto Vernia, *Utrum anima intellectiva ... eterna atque unica sit in omnibus hominibus*, MS Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Cod. Lat. VI, 105, ff. 156r-160v, here f. 156rb. Extracts from this treatise are published in D. N. Hasse, « The Attraction » (as in n. 59), p. 133-137.

<sup>75</sup> Vernia, *ibid.*, f. 157bis va : « Ex quibus sequitur Io(hannes) Gan(davensis) male dixisse ... » Cf. also f. 157vb : « hoc videtur expresse contra intentionem Averrois ... » (not directed against John of Jandun).

<sup>76</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (Ioannes Picus de Mirandola), *Conclusiones sive theses DCCCC: Romae anno 1486 publice disputandae, sed non admissae*, ed. B. Kieszowski, Geneva, Droz, 1973, p. 34, art. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Agostino Nifo, *In librum Destructio destructionum* (as in n. 29), dub. 2, f. 84rb : « Paucitas enim exercitii huius hominis in libris Averrois fecit istum hominem errare » ; here quoted from E. P. Mahoney, *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance : Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, art. IX, p. 8n. On Nifo's attitude towards John of Jandun see also articles VIII and XII in Mahoney's volume.

<sup>78</sup> Agostino Nifo, *Super tres libros de anima*, Venice, 1503, sig. n5r.

<sup>79</sup> Nifo, *ibid.*, sig. o1r.

<sup>80</sup> This passage is from Nifo's *De sensu agente* ; for the Latin text, see n. 29 above.

<sup>81</sup> On John of Jandun's theory of intelligible species see E. P. Mahoney, « Themes and Problems in the Psychology of John of Jandun », in J. F. Wippel (ed.), *Studies in Medieval*

with Averroes that the quiddity of a thing is known without the mediation of intelligible species. One year later, Antonio Trombetta, a senior Padua professor of metaphysics in *via Scoti*, publishes a treatise *Contra Averroystas* in which he defends the theory of intelligible species and attributes it to Averroes: « The possible intellect has an intelligible concept only by receiving it from the phantasm, as is hold unanimously by all those who understand correctly the opinion of the Commentator ... Those (*others*) are perverting the opinion of the Commentator as well as that of the Philosopher, and, what is most pernicious, they are stirring up the most pestilential errors against faith and truth »<sup>82</sup>. Note that Trombetta maintains that it is not Averroes himself, but his interpreters who are to be blamed for promulgating heretic doctrines.

The second controversy was a follow-up to the first<sup>83</sup>. Marcantonio Zimara, a younger Paduan colleague of Nifo, entered the debate on intelligible species by writing a *Quaestio* on the topic, which dates before 1508. Zimara attacks a number of self-proclaimed Averroists for denying that Averroes held the theory of intelligible species. It is very probable that Zimara's principal target was Nifo. « All ancient Averroists such as Albertus Magnus » (« *omnes antiqui Averroistae ut Albertus Magnus* »), Zimara claims, attribute this theory to Averroes<sup>84</sup>. Zimara disagrees with Nifo's interpretation of Averroes also on other issues, such as on the question of whether for Averroes the active intellect is also the active cause of sense-perception<sup>85</sup>, and whether Averroes holds that the intellect is the substantial form of the body<sup>86</sup>.

*Philosophy* (Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 17), Washington D.C., Cath. Univ. of America Press, 1987, p. 273-288, here p. 282-286 ; J.-B. Brenet, *Transferts* (as in n. 4), p. 135-194.

<sup>82</sup> Trombetta, *Tractatus* (as in n. 22), art. 1, f. 12va : « Presupponendo ex ista opinione quod intellectus possibilis non habet intentionem intellectam novam nisi per hoc quod recipit eam a fantasmate, ut communiter tenent omnes recte sentientes de opinione Commentatoris ... Et hi quidem sicut sententiam Commentatoris pervertunt, ita et philosophi, et quod perniciosissimum est, contra fidem et veritatem pestilentissimos excitant errores. » See E. P. Mahoney's comments in *Two Aristotelians* (as in n. 77), art. IX, p. 22-24.

<sup>83</sup> On this controversy see E. P. Mahoney, « Albert the Great » (as in n. 33), p. 558-559.

<sup>84</sup> Nifo, *Questio de speciebus intelligibilibus*, here quoted from E. P. Mahoney, *ibid.*, p. 558-559.

<sup>85</sup> See E. P. Mahoney, *ibid.*, p. 557. On Nifo's position on this issue see E. P. Mahoney, *Two Aristotelians* (as in n. 77), art. VIII.

<sup>86</sup> See n. 27 above.

The third and fourth controversies concern Averroes' unicity thesis. An important feature of these later disputes is that the opponents are referred to by name. In 1516, Pietro Pomponazzi published his provocative treatise *De immortalitate animae*, in which he rejects Averroes' unicity thesis. Nifo countered with a refutation of Pomponazzi's treatise, which was printed in 1518 as *De immortalitate animae libellus*. In this work, Nifo accuses Pomponazzi of misunderstanding Averroes. When Pomponazzi says that according to Averroes human beings consist of a double soul : an immortal intellectualive soul, which is one for all human beings, and a mortal *anima sensitiva*, he does not present the opinion of Averroes, but of John of Jandun, argues Nifo<sup>87</sup>. He continues to demonstrate that John's interpretation is very controversial by pointing to the many diverging positions of *Averrois sectatores* and *interpretes* on the issue, and he surveys the different interpretations of Siger of Brabant, John Baconthorpe and Thomas Wilton<sup>88</sup>. Nifo's own interpretation of Averroes' intellect theory had changed throughout his career. In his early *De anima* commentary he accepted an interpretation based on Siger of Brabant<sup>89</sup>, who, Nifo says, attempted to find a middle course between the *Latini* (i.e. Thomas Aquinas and others) and the *Averroici*<sup>90</sup>. In the later *De intellectu* (printed 1503), he refuted both Siger's and John of Jandun's reading of Averroes. Now, in *De immortalitate*, Nifo argues that for Averroes the intellectualive soul is both separate and the *forma informans* of the human body<sup>91</sup>. His main target is John of Jandun's exposition, which presents Averroes as holding that the intellect is the form of the body only insofar as the form assists the body<sup>92</sup>. Note that in

<sup>87</sup> Nifo, *De immortalitate* (as in n. 31), cap. 4, f. 1vb : « Postea Pomponatius ... de mente Averrois animam in homine dupliciter constituit ... Que quidem opinio non Averrois sed Gandavensis est ... » ; and f. 2ra : « Inconsulte ergo Pomponatius protulit opinionem Averrois cum non sit omnium qui Averroem interpretantur, sed Gandavensis. »

<sup>88</sup> Nifo, *ibid.*, cap. 4, f. 1vb-2ra.

<sup>89</sup> See the passages quoted in B. Nardi, *Sigieri* (as in n. 26), p. 15-17.

<sup>90</sup> This is how Nifo describes Siger's standpoint in *De intellectu*, lib. 3, cap. 16, f. 30rb : « Ecce quomodo mediat inter latinos et Averroicos; ab Averroicis enim accepit intellectus impartibilitatem, immaterialitatem et unitatem, a latinis autem quod sit forma constituens hominem. »

<sup>91</sup> Nifo, *De immortalitate* (as in n. 31), cap. 18, f. 4va : « Potest ergo secundum Averroem intellectus esse forma informans humanum corpus et separata; informans quidem quia illud inesse formaliter constituit; separata vero quia ab eo non dependet. »

<sup>92</sup> Nifo, *ibid.*, cap. 18, f. 4vb : « Secundo sequitur hominem formaliter intelligere secundum utramque opinionem, quoniam intelligit per intellectivam que est informans essentialiter corpus humanum, non autem per formam, que humano corpore assistit, ut putat Gandavensis ; quod haec sit opinio Averrois ... nemo est qui dubitat. »

1518 Nifo had long distanced himself from Averroism in the sense that he himself did not accept the unicity thesis anymore. But the correct interpretation of Averroes remained an issue of the greatest concern to him.

Nifo's text provoked a response from within the Averroist camp: Luca Prassicio's *Questio de immortalitate animae intellectivae* of 1521<sup>93</sup>. With this text, we have arrived at the fourth controversy. Prassicio's treatise is a contribution to the Italian-wide controversy about immortality which followed upon Pomponazzi's treatise of 1516. Prassicio criticizes Pomponazzi's interpretation of Averroes, but his real target is Nifo. He does not miss any opportunity of scolding Nifo for misinterpreting Averroes' Long commentary on *De anima*. When Nifo argues that there are two kinds of intellection according to Averroes, Prassicio replies that Nifo reads Averroes with the eyes of Thomas Aquinas<sup>94</sup>. When Nifo claims that the proper activity of the human soul is to know God, Prassicio censures this as a diversion from Averroes' theory of conjunction with the active intellect<sup>95</sup>. When Nifo maintains that he is the first to interpret Averroes correctly on the unicity of all celestial spheres in one primary sphere, Prassicio criticizes this as a great mistake<sup>96</sup>.

But the most important difference of opinion concerns the union of intellectual soul and body :

It is astonishing that Agostino <Nifo> holds that the intellectual soul is the lowest of the intelligences and that he maintains that there is an additional union in <the intellectual soul>; this means nothing else but breaking heretically with the doctrine of Averroes ("*non est aliud nisi apostetare in doctrina Averrois*") ... <Averroes' true> position in fact was admirably swallowed and tasted by John of Jandun. What a madness, what a melancholical humour or spirit would have gripped Averroes, had he designed such an obvious nonsense: that the intellect or the intellectual soul, as the lowest of the intelligences, which is essentially and in reality separate and incorruptible, would be united as a form <to the body>, as is held by Agostino <Nifo> ... From Averroes' words very clearly emerges that according to him the soul in no way is united with us in a formal and univocal

<sup>93</sup> On Prassicio see D. N. Hasse, « The Attraction » (as in n. 59), p. 141-144.

<sup>94</sup> Luca Prassicio, *Questio de immortalitate anime intellectivae secundum mentem Aristotelis a nemine verius quam ab Averrois interpretati*, Naples, 1521, sig. C1vb.

<sup>95</sup> Prassicio, *ibid.*, sig. C4va.

<sup>96</sup> Prassicio, *ibid.*, sig. D1rb.



way, as Agostino <Nifo> claims, who together with Siger of Brabant and Roger <Bacon><sup>97</sup> has to be condemned on this matter<sup>98</sup>.

Prassicio continues to censure Thomas Wilton's and John Baconthorpe's positions, as cited by Nifo. Prassicio presents Thomas Wilton as holding that the intellect is a *natura communis* related to all individuals, and he rejects it as Platonizing; and he argues that Baconthorpe's idea of a double conjunction (*copulatio bifaria*)<sup>99</sup> between intellect and body is compatible with Christian religion, but not with Averroes. Prassicio instead adopts the interpretation that the soul is unique and united to the body only *per assistentiam ad phantasmata*<sup>100</sup>.

## V.

Did doctrinal controversies exist also in medieval Averroism? There certainly is some evidence that the proper understanding of the unicity thesis was a matter of dispute. John of Jandun in *Quaestio quinta* on book III of *De anima* refutes a series of misinterpretations of Averroes on the relation between intellect and body. John does not name his opponents; he simply refers to « *aliqui* ». And he replies: « The Commentator has never said this, nor has it ever been his intention, as is obvious to everybody who knows his

<sup>97</sup> The combined mentioning of Roger (Bacon) and Siger is inherited from Nifo, *De immortalitate* (as in n. 31), cap. 4, f. 4vb: « quam opinionem Suggestus et Rogerius uterque Baconitanus ad Averrois mentem tradunt. » Cf. Nifo, *De anima* (as in n. 78), f. 83: « ut Rogerius et Suggestus uterque Baconitanus, Thomeque coetanei », here quoted from Nardi, *Sigieri* (as in n. 26), p. 43-44.

<sup>98</sup> Prassicio, *Questio de immortalitate anime intellective...*, sig. B2vb-B3ra: « ... mirandum est de Augustino acceptante animam intellectivam esse intelligentiarum infimam et ponente aliam compositionem in illa, quod non est aliud nisi apostetare in doctrina Averrois ... Quam positionem revera Ioannes Candavensis mirum in modum ebibit ac pergustavit. Modo que demencia quisve melancolicus humor seu spiritus Averroim arripisset hanc publicam fatuitatem excogitare intellectum seu anima intellectivam ut intelligentiarum infimam per essentiam secundum remque separatam et incorruptibilem uniri formaliter, ut tenet Augustinus, comiscerique cum re corruptibili utpote cum sensitivo et vegetativo ... Ex quibus verbis clare constat secundum Averroim animam nullo modo nobis formaliter et univoce uniri, ut dicit Augustinus, qui cum Suggesto et Rogerio in hac re condemnandi sunt. »

<sup>99</sup> On this concept see J. P. Etzwiler, « Baconthorpe and the Latin Averroism: The Doctrine of the Unique Intellect », *Carmelus*, 19 (1971), p. 235-292, esp. p. 266-269.

<sup>100</sup> Prassicio, *Questio de immortalitate anime intellective...*, sig. B3ra-vb.

commentaries » (« *sicut patet scientibus commenta eius* »)<sup>101</sup>. Taddeo da Parma adopts one of these references to “*quidam*” into his own commentary<sup>102</sup>. His younger colleague Giacomo da Piacenza, in his super-commentary on Averroes’ Long Commentary on *De anima*, continues the practice of discussing varying interpretations of Averroes anonymously<sup>103</sup>. The sole exception to the trend of anonymous references is John Baconthorpe. In his commentary on the Sentences, which was written in Paris in the 1320s, Baconthorpe challenges Thomas Wilton’s interpretation of Averroes’ intellect theory – because it is the only interpretation, Baconthorpe says, which makes Averroes hold that the intellect is the *forma informans* of the human being<sup>104</sup>. Baconthorpe also discusses Siger of Brabant’s intellect theory, but only with respect to the understanding of Aristotle, not of Averroes<sup>105</sup>.

It is obvious, therefore, that the Renaissance Averroists were continuing what was begun in the fourteenth century, especially by John of Jandun and John Baconthorpe : a discussion of the proper interpretation of Averroes. The scale of the Renaissance discussion, however, is entirely different. Prassicio does not simply give references to earlier interpretations, he enters into a heated debate with his contemporary Agostino Nifo. Prassicio’s critique of Nifo pervades his entire treatise, and it concerns many details of Averroes’ intellect theory, not only the problem of substantial form. In a similar manner, Nifo’s critique of Pomponazzi’s understanding of Averroes covers many folios of his treatise on immortality.

<sup>101</sup> John de Jandun (Ioannes de Ianduno), *Super libros Aristotelis de anima subtilissimae quaestiones*, Venice, 1587 ; repr. Frankfurt am Main, Minerva, 1966, lib. III, q. 5, col. 242 : « Sed indubitanter, salva pace illorum, nunquam illud dixit Commentator nec fuit eius intentio, sicut patet scientibus commenta eius ». *Ibid.*, col. 245, John refers to Siger of Brabant : « Et debes scire quod istam solutionem huius rationis qualiter homo intelligit quantum ad aliquid posuit reverendus doctor philosophiae magister Remigius (?) de Brabantia in quodam suo Tractatu de intellectu, qui sic incipit : “Cum anima sit aliorum cognoscitiva” ». For context, see E. P. Mahoney, « The Psychology » (as in n. 81), p. 275.

<sup>102</sup> Taddeo da Parma, *Quaestiones* (as in n. 49), q. 4, p. 45 : « Ad primam respondent quidam quod species imaginatae movent intellectum et quia intentiones imaginatas in nobis habemus, hinc est quod formaliter sumus intelligentes ; et hanc viam dicunt esse de mente Commentatoris. Sed isti imponunt Commentatori id quod Commentator numquam asserit. »

<sup>103</sup> Giacomo da Piacenza, *Lectura* (as in n. 52), e. g. p. 181-184.

<sup>104</sup> J. P. Etwiler, « Baconthorpe » (as in n. 99), p. 258 : « Sequitur de secundo articulo, an scilicet Commentator voluit salvare quod intellectus esset forma informans hominem ... Ubi dicit singulariter unus doctor, Wiltonensis, quod sic. »

<sup>105</sup> J. P. Etwiler, *ibid.*, p. 241-244.

The controversies about the proper meaning of Averroes' texts clearly indicate that Averroes was taken very seriously not only as a commentator, but as a philosopher. But do they also witness to the liveliness of Averroism as a movement? It is true that some of the protagonists were not Averroists in the strict sense: Trombetta, Zimara, the older Pomponazzi and the older Nifo did not adopt the unicity thesis. It is clear, however, that the debate was so fierce precisely because the young «Sigerian» Nifo and the young Pomponazzi had been followers of Averroes. It was the young Nifo who prompted the response by Trombetta and Zimara, and it was Pomponazzi's desertion of Averroes which incited Nifo to write his reply. In addition, philosophers such as Achillini<sup>106</sup>, Prassicio, Vimercato and Bernardi continued to hold the unicity thesis. All external and internal evidence points to the existence of a veritable Averroist movement in the Renaissance, which is embedded in an Italian academic climate very sympathetic towards Averroes. At the centre and at the fringes of this movement there developed fervent debates on Averroes' true doctrine, and thus also about the true direction of the movement. These debates are the result of a long development of Averroism since the thirteenth century. But they form, in my view, the culminating point of Latin Averroism<sup>107</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> On Achillini see D. N. Hasse, «The Attraction» (as in n. 59), p. 137-141.

<sup>107</sup> I am grateful for criticism and advice by Luca Bianchi, Friedemann Buddensiek, Stefan Georges, Zdzisław Kuksewicz and David Twetten.