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*Ricerche filosofiche e materiali storico-testuali*

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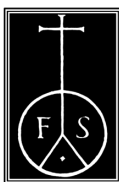
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# AGOSTINO NIFO'S *DE INTELLECTU*: SOURCES AND ISSUES

LEEN SPRUIT

IN 1490s, Agostino Nifo wrote several of his major works: a commentary on Averroes' *Destructio destructionis* (begun in 1494, completed in 1497), the first version of his *De anima* commentary (completed in 1498, published in 1503), and *De intellectu*. In the first two works, Nifo still endorsed Averroes' interpretation of Aristotelian psychology.<sup>1</sup> *De intellectu*,<sup>2</sup> by contrast, which had been completed in 1492, was severely revised in an anti-Averroistic sense for the 1503 edition.<sup>3</sup> The first version of the commentary on *De anima* was not revised until 1520 (published in Venice, 1522). Apparently, then, Nifo changed his mind on the Averroist interpretation of the soul's immortality in the late 1490's, probably between 1498 and 1503. In *De intellectu*, Nifo presented on the basis of a detailed assessment of the views of his predecessors an analysis of the main issues of Peripatetic noetics, namely origin and immortality of the intellect or rational soul, its relation with the body, its unity and parts, the speculative intellect, and intellectual beatitude. I am preparing since a couple of years an annotated edition of this work; in this paper I present some of the issues discussed in the introduction to this edition.

## 1. SOURCES

In *De intellectu*, Nifo draws on a vast number of different sources, discussing a broad range of theories and quoting countless writers. A sample may be found in book I, where he referred to, among others, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Plato, Plotinus, Socrates, Hermes Trismegistus, Macrobius, Avicenna, Albert the Great, Cleanthes, Zeno, Cicero, Ptolemy, Sallustius, Epicurus, Averroes, Themistius, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Gregory the Great, John Damascenus, Thomas Aquinas, Alphonsus Vargas of Toledo, Origen, Porphyry, Avempace (or Abubacher), Parmenides, Melissus, Xenophanes, Theodorus, and Numenius.

<sup>1</sup> One of Nifo's motives for publishing his commentary of Averroes was apologetic, namely, to face the many questions directed against Christianity by Averroes and to analyze the arguments of the philosophers so that they might be shown to lack substance. See AVERROES and AGOSTINO NIFO, *Destructiones destructionum Averrois cum Augustini Niphi de Suessa expositione*, Venetiis, 1497, fol. 2v.

<sup>2</sup> Here the 1554 edition is used: AGOSTINO NIFO, *De intellectu libri sex. Eiusdem de Demonibus libri tres*, denuo post primam impressionem ex proprio typographo autoris recogniti ac noviter summa diligentia excussi, Venetiis, 1554.

<sup>3</sup> In *De intellectu*, cit., Nifo frequently referred to his previous Averroism. See, in particular, book II, chs. 9, 15, 17, 20, 21; book III, chs. 24 and 25; and book IV, ch. 10.

Nifo's work was also marked by the negative aspects of the humanist approach in philosophy. Time and again, his vast erudition stood in the way of a clear and lucid argumentation. The uninhibited display of learning often made it difficult for him, as it now makes it difficult for us, to determine his own philosophical position.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Nifo frequently draws on various authors – Albert the Great and Marsilio Ficino are cases in point – and incorporates their ideas into his own position, often without any admission of his debt to them. And frequently, what is attributed to other authors is actually taken from their texts. This has still another consequence: time and again Nifo happens to cite authors which were cited by earlier sources and of whom nothing is known.<sup>2</sup>

Nifo's sources in *De intellectu* can be classified in two main groups. A first group of more or less famous authors, among which many Greek and Latin classics, for the most historians and literates, which merely illustrate views and opinions that are not essential in Nifo's theorizing or for the formulation of his doctrinal positions. A second group includes authors and systematic texts that are of tantamount importance for the development of his own views, and which can be subdivided in: 1. Aristotle and the Greek commentators, among whom Alexander, Themistius, and Simplicius; 2. Arabic commentators, featuring Averroes; 3. The so-called Latins, that is, medieval authors, in particular Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Siger of Brabant, and John of Jandun; 4. Plato and Neoplatonics, featuring Plotinus and Marsilio Ficino. The role of some exponents of group two and three deserves further delucidation.

Nifo dissociated himself from the Averroist interpretation of Peripatetic psychology after the ecclesiastical enactment of 1489, in particular with regard to the position of the individual soul and its immortality. As said, the dissociation did not take place immediately, however, but developed gradually during the 1490's. The dismissal of Averroes as authoritative commentator had far-reaching consequences for other psychological and epistemological issues as well – a fact that was noted by Nifo himself.<sup>3</sup> Still, Averroes remained an important point of reference in Nifo's psychology: many of the Commentator's followers were attacked with arguments derived from Averroes' own writings. This holds in particular for John of Jandun.

In his works Nifo repeatedly admits that he had at one time been a follower of Jandun's interpretations.<sup>4</sup> But his later rejection, as of 1497, is unmistak-

<sup>1</sup> See also E. GARIN, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, 3 vols., Torino (first edition 1966), 1978, vol. II, p. 536; E. KESSLER, *The intellectual soul*, in *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds. Ch. B. Schmitt and Q. Skinner, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 485-534, on pp. 496-497.

<sup>2</sup> The Stoic Protinus in Albert the Great's *De natura et origine animae* is a case in point. See *De intellectu*, cit., bk. I, ch. 9, fol. 5v.

<sup>3</sup> See *De intellectu*, cit., bk. v, ch. 41; see also fols. 247b, 17vb, 30r-v, and 37ra.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, AVERROES-NIFO, *Destructiones destructionum Averrois*, cit., fols. 19r, 52r; *De intellectu*, cit., bk. II, ch. 17, fol. 21v. For discussion, see E.P. MAHONEY, *Agostino Nifo's De Sensu Agente*, «Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie», LIII, 1971, pp. 119-142; IDEM, *Nicoletto Vernia on the soul and immortality*, in *Philosophy and Humanism. Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. E. P. Mahoney, Leiden, 1976, pp. 144-163; IDEM, *Jandun of Jandun and*

able.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, Nifo reveals that his sole motive for writing *De sensu agente* was to refute Jandun, and he suggests as a proper title of the work, *Tractatus de errore Joannis de sensu agente*.<sup>2</sup> Two characteristic stances of Nifo's philosophising are already to be found in this early work, namely his respect and reverence for the authority of Albert the Great<sup>3</sup> and his opposition and scorn for John of Jandun. It is noteworthy that while Nifo judges Albert's views to be worthy of an attempted gloss, he refuses to gloss Jandun.<sup>4</sup> However, the very phrasing he adopts betrays his close knowledge of Jandun's writings. Also in *De intellectu*, Jandun's views are frequently discussed and most of the times harshly criticized. He rejects Jandun's conception of the intellectual soul as essentially composed of the agent intellect and the possibile intellect.<sup>5</sup> He attacks Jandun and other medieval authors for having attributed to Aristotle and Averroes the doctrine of intelligible species.<sup>6</sup> He rejects Jandun's view that the operational unity of man and possible intellect is to be explained by a phantasm causing an intelligible species in that intellect.<sup>7</sup>

Nifo displays also a vivid interest in the works of Thomas Aquinas<sup>8</sup> and Giles of Rome.<sup>9</sup> Duns Scotus is not mentioned in *De intellectu*, but some of his views are (indirectly) discussed.<sup>10</sup> In book III, he appears to accept a modified version of Thomas' theory of individuation.<sup>11</sup> However, unlike Thomas, Nifo expresses lack of interest in whether the agent and potential intellects are distinct from one

Agostino Nifo on human felicity (status), in *L'homme et son univers au Moyen Age*, ed. Ch. Wenin, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1986, pp. 465-477.

<sup>1</sup> AVERROES-NIFO, *Destructiones destructionum Averrois*, cit., fol. 84r.

<sup>2</sup> AVERROES-NIFO, *Destructiones destructionum Averrois*, cit., fol. 129r.

<sup>3</sup> See, in particular, *De intellectu*, cit., bk. IV, ch. 14, fol. 38r: «Albertus autem Latinorum primus».

<sup>4</sup> Mahoney has shown that the attitudes which he shows toward them in his early works (*De sensu agente*, commentary on *Destructio destructionum*) will reappear in many of his later works and will dominate much of his thought. In like fashion, Nifo's emphatic rejection of any sort of real distinction, whether it be between essence and existence or between psychological faculties, and his adoption of a distinction according to the mode of our reasoning, which were to be identifying characteristics of his later philosophy, are already prefigured in his early opusculum. Cf. Mahoney, *Agostino Nifo's De Sensu Agente*, cit., p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. I, ch. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. V, chs. 5, 7-9.

<sup>7</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. V, ch. 16. For discussion, see MAHONEY, *Jandun of Jandun and Agostino Nifo on human felicity (status)*, cit., pp. 470-471; L. SPRUIT, *Species Intelligibilis. From Perception to Knowledge*, vol. II: *Renaissance Controversies, Later Scholasticism, and the Elimination of the Intelligible Species in Modern Philosophy*, Leiden, 1995, ch. VII, section 3.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas is mentioned in *De intellectu*, cit., bk. I, ch. 3, fol. 1v: «Thomas expositor integerrimus Aristotelis»; cf. bk. I, ch. 16, fol. 8v: «Primus Latinorum expositor, Thomas scilicet». See also bk. II, ch. 17, fol. 16r.

<sup>9</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. I, ch. 3, fol. 1v.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *De intellectu*, cit., bk. I, chs. 7-10, where the opinion of those who view the immortality of soul as neutral issue is discussed. Cf. bk. I, ch. 17, fol. 9r, where he mentions the concept of «haecheitas»; cf. E.P. MAHONEY, *Duns Scotus and the School of Padua around 1500*, in *Regnum hominis et regnum Dei*, vol. II, Roma, 1978, pp. 215-227, on p. 222.

<sup>11</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. III, ch. 32, fols. 34v-35r.



and another and prefers instead Albert's conception of the soul as a 'potestative whole'.<sup>1</sup> He maintains against Thomas that we can have an intuitive knowledge of the separate substances in this life, that is through their essences.<sup>2</sup> He shows special interest in the arguments and authorities against the unity of the intellect to be found in Thomas's *De unitate intellectus*. However, against Thomas and on the basis of Ermolao Barbaro's translation of Themistius, he argues that Themistius really had maintained the unity of the intellect and the rational soul, and that Averroes had correctly recounted his position. Although Nifo's major assault on Averroes, which emphasizes the moral harm of his doctrine, is constructed from ideas borrowed from Ficino, Nifo appears to depend on Aquinas' *De unitate intellectus* for his argument that Averroes' doctrine destroys the principles of natural philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

Nifo appears to be the first Aristotelian commentator of the Renaissance to compare in detail the Platonics, especially Plotinus, both with Themistius and Simplicius and also with Averroes. However, his remarks about Platonics, and even about Plato, are often inspired by statements that can be found in the works of Albert.<sup>4</sup> From his early writings in the 1490s, the commentaries on Averroes' *Destructio destructionum* and Aristotle's *De anima*, down to his late humanistic *De pulchro et amore*, Nifo also shows a strong interest in the writings of Marsilio Ficino. Nifo had a direct acquaintance with Ficino's translations of Plato and with his translations and commentaries of Plotinus' *Enneads*.<sup>5</sup> In *De intellectu*, book I, Nifo presents the Platonic 'demonstrationes' for the immortality of soul as Plotinus's, but in fact they are derived from Ficino's commentary on the *Enneads*.<sup>6</sup> Later, he compares Plotinus with Themistius and attributes to both the doctrine that there is a single rational soul for all men which extends an 'animation' into individual human bodies.<sup>7</sup> Nifo's debt to Ficino is particularly evident in his discussion of the unity of the intellect, in particular as to the appeal to the freedom of the individual soul's will and the stress on the moral harm of denying immortality.<sup>8</sup>

As is clear from the considerations above, it is problematic to assume that Nifo rejected all of the Commentator's tenets, even if he expressly said so. Equally problematic is the claim that Nifo substituted Averroes with Greek commenta-

<sup>1</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. iv, ch. 24, fol. 41v.

<sup>2</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. vi, ch. 66.

<sup>3</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. ii, ch. 19; iii, chs. 20, 27-29.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, book I, ch. 8. For discussion, see E. P. MAHONEY, *Pico, Plato, and Albert the Great: The testimony and evaluation of Agostino Nifo*, «Medieval Philosophy and Theology», II, 1992, pp. 165-192, on pp. 180-181.

<sup>5</sup> See E. P. MAHONEY, *Marsilio Ficino's influence on Nicoletta Vernia, Agostino Nifo and Marcantonio Zimara*, in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone. Studi e documenti*, ed. G.C. Garfagnini, 2 vols., Firenze, 1986, pp. 509-531.

<sup>6</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. i, ch. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. i, ch. 7, and bk. iii, ch. 12. See THEMISTIUS, *Paraphrasis de anima*, I, cap. 23, in IDEM, *Paraphrasis in Aristotelis Posteriora, et Physica, in libro de Anima, Memoria et reminiscencia, Somno et vigilia, Insomnijs, et Divinatione per somnum*, Hermelao Barbaro Patricio Veneto Interprete, Venetiis, 1570 (first edition Venetiis, 1499); cf. *Ficino's commentary on Plotinus, Enneades*, I.1.1 and 7, in MARSILIO FICINO, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols., Basileae, 1576 (reprint Torino, 1983), pp. 1548-1549, 1551-1552.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *De intellectu*, cit., bk. iii, ch. 28.

tors and Scholastic authorities,<sup>1</sup> without specific regard to the issues involved. Finally, it would be a serious mistake to take Nifo's (incidental) praise for Thomas Aquinas<sup>2</sup> as a sign either that Thomas is the prime authority in this work or that Nifo has become a Thomist.

## 2. SIGER OF BRABANT'S 'LOST' WORKS

As early as 1945 Nardi argued on the basis of Nifo's *De intellectu* for the existence of two unknown works by Siger of Brabant that had gone lost in the meantime.<sup>3</sup> Siger is indeed quoted several times explicitly in *De intellectu*, and his works are introduced as a treatise *de intellectu*, «misso Thomae in responsione ad illum Thomae» and as a book *de foelicitate*. Let us now first take a closer look on these quotes.

1. In book III, ch. 18, Nifo refers to Siger's treatise *de intellectu* for the position which steers a middle course between Averroes and the Latins: the material intellect is not a material form and it is one for mankind, but nonetheless it informs the body in cooperation with the *cogitativa*.<sup>4</sup>

2. In book III, ch. 26, Nifo reports Siger's view that the intellect is the form of individual men through the copulation of imagined intentions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is the opinion of E. P. MAHONEY, *Albert the Great and the Studio Patavino in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries*, in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, ed. J. A. Weisheipl, Toronto, 1980, pp. 537-563, on p. 551, and of KESSLER, *The intellectual soul*, cit., p. 498. See also E. P. MAHONEY, *The Greek commentators Themistius and Simplicius and their influence on Renaissance Aristotelianism*, in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. D. J. O'Meara, Albany, 1982, pp. 170-177 and 261-282, on pp. 171-173; IDEM, *Saint Thomas and the School of Padua at the end of the fifteenth century*, «Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association», *Thomas and Bonaventure. A Septicentenary Commemoration*, XLVIII, 1974, pp. 277-285, on pp. 279-280.

<sup>2</sup> See above.

<sup>3</sup> See B. NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante nel pensiero del rinascimento italiano*, Roma, 1945, pp. 13-38; B. NARDI, *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI*, Firenze, 1958, pp. 313-320.

<sup>4</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 30r: «Sunt et alii viri in philosophia praeclari, qui voluerunt quasi mediare inter Latinos et Averroem, ut Suggestius contemporaneus Thomae in quodam Tractatu misso Thomae in responsione ad illum Thomae, qui opinatur cum Averroicis intellectum materialem esse formam perpetuam, ex utroque latere, et quod non est forma materialis, hoc est educta de facultate materiae generabilis aut corruptibilis, et quod sit unus numero omnibus hominibus. [...] Et addit, nec potest intellectus informare materiam non informantem cogitativa quia non stat materia sine forma constituta in esse per eam, et non potest intellectus formare sine sua proxima dispositione et ultima quae est cogitativa. Propter quod inquit cogitativam ordinari intellectivam quamvis cogitativa non sit forma generica, nec potest cogitativa informare materiam, non informantem intellectu. [...] Et postremo addit intelligentias esse individua eadem cum earum quidditatibus, propter quod intellectus materialis cum sit infima intelligentiarum erit ipsa ut individuum sua quidditas. [...] Intellectus ergo materialis erit individuus et singularis et per consequens non repugnat intellectum dare esse hoc, quamvis sit etiam quidditas universalis. Et sic individuum humanum, ut Sortes habet esse hic ab intellectu, sed a materia divisa informabili cogitativa informantem. [...] Ecce quomodo mediat inter Latinos et Averroem [...]».

<sup>5</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 32v: «Ad secundam quaestionem Suggestius vir gravis sectae Averroisticae fautor etate expositoris discipulus Alberti, persolvit in suo *De intellectu* tractatu. Et

3. In book VI, ch. 12, Nifo cites Siger's book *de foelicitate* for the view that human beatitude coincides with God.<sup>1</sup>

4. In book VI, ch. 21, Nifo attributes to Siger the view that if the human intellect is unable to grasp the intermediate intelligences, it is equally incapable to know God.<sup>2</sup>

5. In book VI, ch. 49, Nifo refers again to Siger's *de intellectu* for the view that the copulation of the material intellect with man regards the latter's being.<sup>3</sup>

Other explicit references to similar views of Siger's treatise *de intellectu* are to be found elsewhere in *De intellectu*<sup>4</sup> as well as in other works by Nifo.<sup>5</sup> The same holds

imaginatur quod intellectus est aeternus, et natura humana est aeterna, et quod intellectus non est forma Sortis aut Platonis, nisi per copulationem intentionum imaginatarum secundum Averroem». Subsequently, also Geronimo Taiapietra calls Siger a follower of Albert; cf. GERONIMO TAIAPIETRA, *Summa divinarum ac naturalium difficultum quaestionum Romae in capitulo generali fratrum minorum... publice discussarum*, Venetiis, 1506, fol. A4v.

<sup>1</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 55r: «Ex his Subgerius vir gravis ac maximus Peripateticus, et in secta Averroica familiaris, in libro De foelicitate, dedit foelicitatem esse Deum, quoniam assumpta diffinitione illa pro maiori parte». NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante*, cit., p. 78, notes that the same view was held by Achillini, *Quodlibeta de intelligentiis*, q. IV, dub. 2: «utrum felicitas sit deus»; see ALESSANDRO ACHILLINI, *Opera omnia in unum collecta*, Venetijs, 1545, fols. 16va-17ra.

<sup>2</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fols. 56v-57r: «Alij ut Subgerius et multi sui sequaces deducunt consequentiam ex parte earum, et accipiunt primo, quod si intellectus potentiae non potest intelligere superiores intelligentias, illae non possunt intelligere Deum. ... Secundo accepit Subgerius quod nulla intelligentia media potest intelligere mediam, nec aliquam infra primam, si non potest intelligere primam. Arguitur ergo, nulla intelligentia quae non potest intelligere supremam potest intelligere aliquam mediarum vel infimam secundum Averroem. Sed ex primo accepto nulla intelligentiarum potest intelligere superiorem, ergo nec mediam vel aliquam infra primam. Ex his arguit intellectus potentiae non potest intelligere Deum, ergo nulla mediarum potest intelligere Deum. Nulla mediarum potest intelligere Deum, ergo nulla mediarum potest intelligere mediam. Nulla mediarum potest intelligere mediam, ergo nulla potest intelligere se. Nulla potest intelligere se, ergo sunt simpliciter ignoratae. Quoniam nulla potest intelligi ab aliquo intellectu quia vel a primo, vel ab infimo, vel a seipsis. Non a primo, quoniam nihil intelligit extra se, nec ab infimo, quia non intelligit illas, nec a seipsis, ergo a nullo intellectu comprehenduntur. Et sic natura egisset ociose, hoc dicit Subgerius in tractatu suo De intellectu, tertio loco inscripto, qui fuit missus Thomae, pro responsione ad tractatum suum contra Averroem». NARDI, *Saggi*, cit., p. 314, proposes a correction stating that «*tertio loco inscripto* potrebbe intendersi di un volume di scritti sigeriani, ove il "tractatus de intellectu" si trovasse trascritto al terzo posto fra altre opere dell'averroista belga».

<sup>3</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 63r: «Adest explicare tertium modum, est ergo tertius modus copulationis, qua copulatur intellectus materialis cum homine et apud Averroem est duplex, scilicet secundum naturam et acquisita ex placito. Et sensere quidam, ut Subgerius in tractatu De intellectu, quod copulatio intellectus materialis cum homine est secundum esse, quoniam intellectus constituit hominem in esse hominis apud eos secundum Averroem, ut declaratum est in libro predicto. Dicit enim Averrois in 3. De anima commento 20. in principio, quod intellectus materialis copulatur prius nobis quam intellectus agens. Et non potest loqui de copulatione secundum operationem, quoniam 3. De anima commento 36. dicit quod copulatio agentis cum homine prior est copulatione intellectus potentiae cum homine».

<sup>4</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 58r: «Haec sunt quae ex libello Subgerii viri gravissimi excipiunt, vel quaedam horum, et nos labore nostro hoc modo declaravimus».

<sup>5</sup> AGOSTINO NIFO, *In Averrois de animae beatitudine commentatio ad sanctum Maurum patri-*

for the book *de foelicitate*.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Siger is cited with other (presumed) Averroists in Nifo's *De immortalitate animae*: «Suggerius et Rogerius uterque Baconitanus ad Averrois mentem tradunt». <sup>2</sup> A similar, quite peculiar, 'group' is in Nifo's commentary on *De anima*. <sup>3</sup> Also the «Rogerius» mentioned by Francesco Silvestri in his commentary on Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles*, concerning the knowledge of separate substances, is most probably to be identified again as Siger. <sup>4</sup>

Nardi also called attention to other texts and views which, according to him, were derived from Siger's works, such as the doctrine of the «semi-animae», <sup>5</sup> and the idea that God is the agent intellect of all intermediate intelligences. <sup>6</sup> He also individuated other texts in Nifo that were inspired to Siger, <sup>7</sup> or where Siger was mentioned. <sup>8</sup> Eventually, Nardi even found other lost works by Siger that were referred to in still other works by Nifo. <sup>9</sup> For present purposes we concentrate on the explicit quotes in *De intellectu*.

*tium venetum*, Venetiis, I, t/c 53, fol. 13rb: «Suggerius in libro de intellectu, quem misit divo Thome»; cf. II, t/c 21, fol. 20rb: «Suggerius vir in Peripatetica secta clarissimus: ut dicemus in libro de intellectu».

<sup>1</sup> In his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; see AGOSTINO NIFO, *Dilucidarium Metaphysicarum disputationum*, in *Aristotelis decem & quatuor libros Metaphysicorum*, Venetiis, 1559, fol. 81rb.

<sup>2</sup> AGOSTINO NIFO, *De immortalitate anime libellus adversus Petrum Pomponacium Mantuanum ad Leonem X<sup>m</sup> pontificem maximum*, Venetijs, 1518, cap. 4, fol. 1v.

<sup>3</sup> AGOSTINO NIFO, *Expositio subtilissima collectanea commentariaque in III libros Aristotelis De anima*, Venetiis, 1553, II, t/c 32, fol. 83vb: «[...] ut Rogerius et Suggerius uterque Baconitanus, Thomeque coetanei».

<sup>4</sup> In THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles, ad codices manuscriptos praesertim sancti doctoris autographum exacta: liber tertius cum commentariis Francisci de Sylvestris Ferrariensis*, cura et studio fratrum praedicatorum, Romae, 1926 [editio Leonina, vol. XIV], ch. 45, n. IV, 2, p. 119: «Alii, ut Rugerius in tractatu suo *de intellectu*, misso Beato Thomae pro responsione ad tractatum suum contra Averroistas, illam consequentiam, sic deducit. Intellectus noster non potest intelligere substantias separatas. Ergo sunt simpliciter ignoratae. Ergo natura otiose egit. – Probatur prima consequentia. Intellectus noster non potest intelligere Deum. Ergo nulli mediarum potest illum intelligere; quia, si non est Deus receptibilis in maximo receptivo in genere abstractorum, cuiusmodi est intellectus noster, nec in minus receptivo illius generis. Ergo nulla mediarum potest intelligere mediam; et per consequens nec seipsam. Ergo sunt simpliciter ignoratae; quia neque sunt intellectae a primo intellectu, cum nihil intelligat extra se; nec a seipsis; nec ab intellectu nostro. Ergo sunt otiosae».

<sup>5</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. II, ch. 8, fol. 17v. Cf. NIFO, *De immortalitate animae*, cit., cap. 4; NIFO, *Expositio subtilissima collectanea commentariaque in III libros Aristotelis De anima*, cit., III, t/c 5, fol. 159ra. For discussion, see B. NARDI, *Studi di filosofia medievale*, Roma, 1979 (first edition 1960), pp. 151-161. <sup>6</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. IV, ch. 10, and bk. VI, ch. 27.

<sup>7</sup> NIFO, *Expositio subtilissima collectanea commentariaque in III libros Aristotelis De anima*, cit., III, t/c 14, fol. 171va, on the knowledge of separate substances.

<sup>8</sup> See his commentary on Averroes' *De substantia orbis*, in AGOSTINO NIFO, *Commentationes in librum De substantia orbis*, Venetijs, 1519 (first edition 1509), fol. 19va.

<sup>9</sup> NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante*, cit., p. 41, individuated a «de motore primo et materia celi», in Nifo's *De primi motoris infinitate*, cap. 9; the text is in AGOSTINO NIFO, *Interpretationes atque commentaria librorum Aristotelis De generatione & corruptione nuperrime ab ipsomet auctore recognite: & castigate... Eiusdem Questio de infinitate primi motoris*, Venetijs, 1526. Nifo refers to this

First of all something needs to be said about the availability of Siger's works at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. After his violent death Siger became famous because Dante placed him along with such illustrious minds as Albert the Great, Dionysius the Areopagite, and Thomas Aquinas in the fourth heaven described in the *Divina Commedia*.<sup>1</sup> However, during the Renaissance no printed editions of his works were available, the first dating back to the twentieth century, while the now known manuscripts of Siger's psychological texts are held in Paris, Vienna, and Oxford.<sup>2</sup> Nardi hypothesizes the presence of Siger's works in the library of a certain Giovanni di Viridario,<sup>3</sup> but it cannot be proved that Nifo was acquainted with that collection. Many of Siger's – then more famous – thirteenth contemporaries had a rich manuscript tradition and became available in print in the early days of the printing press, such as Bonaventure, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, but in general they do not make any explicit references to Siger or to his works.<sup>4</sup>

Nardi's hypothesis of Siger's lost works has been accepted by several scholars,<sup>5</sup> but in a 1987 note Adriaan Pattin formulated serious objections to the very existence of these treatises.<sup>6</sup> His arguments can be summarized as follows. First, already during the fourteenth century Jandun, in his commentary on *De anima*, uses the title *De intellectu* as an equivalent of for Siger's treatise *De anima intellectiva*: «Et debes scire, quod istam solutionem huius rationis qualiter homo intelligit quantum ad aliquid posuit Reverendus doctor philosophiae magister Remigius<sup>7</sup> de Brabantia in quodam suo Tract. De intellectu, qui sic incipit. Cum anima sit aliorum cognoscitiva». <sup>8</sup> The text referred to in the final phrase is, in effect, in *De*

passage in his commentary on *Metaphysics*; cf. NIFO, *Dilucidarium Metaphysicarum disputatorium*, in *Aristotelis decem & quatuor libros Metaphysicorum*, cit., p. 323.

<sup>1</sup> DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Divina Commedia*, Paradiso, canto x.

<sup>2</sup> See B. Bazán in SIGER DE BRABANT, *Quaestiones in tertium de anima, De anima intellectiva, De aeternitate mundi*, ed. B. Bazán, Louvain-Paris, 1972, «Introduction», pp. 7\*-12\*.

<sup>3</sup> NARDI, *Saggi*, cit., p. 316, refers to a manuscript of Giovanni Montesdoch, active in Padua during the first decades of the sixteenth century: «Sed ante eos fuit Rogerius; fuit magnus vir, cuius opera non habentur impressa, nec vidi ea nisi in bibliotheca Ioanne de viridario».

<sup>4</sup> Cf. SIGER DE BRABANT, *Quaestiones in tertium de anima, De anima intellectiva, De aeternitate mundi*, cit., pp. 68\*, 70\*-72\*.

<sup>5</sup> Bazán in SIGER DE BRABANT, *Quaestiones in tertium de anima, De anima intellectiva, De aeternitate mundi*, cit., pp. 74\*-75\*; E. P. MAHONEY, *Saint Thomas and Siger of Brabant revisited*, «Review of *Metaphysics*», xxvii, 1973-1974, pp. 531-553, on pp. 532, 537-538.

<sup>6</sup> A. PATTIN, *Notes concernant quelques écrits attribués à Siger de Brabant*, «Bulletin de philosophie médiévale», xxix, 1987, pp. 173-177.

<sup>7</sup> Other manuscripts of this work suggest that Siger is meant; cf. NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante*, cit., p. 21, note 1: «[...] ma il codice laurenziano, Fesul. 160, legge correttamente "Segerus de Brabantia"; il cod. Vat. Reg. 1908, "Segerus de Barbancia"; il Vat. Lat. 2156, "Sirges de Barbancia"». Cf. also A. PATTIN, *Notes concernant quelques écrits attribués à Siger de Brabant*, cit., on p. 176, who refers to the ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 6532, fol. 132va, where Siger's name is spelled as «Segerus».

<sup>8</sup> IOANNES JANDUN, *Super libros De anima subtilissimae quaestiones*, Venetiis, 1587, III, q. 5: «An anima intellectualis sit forma substantialis corporis humani», col. 245.

*anima intellectiva*, because it has the same *incipit*.<sup>1</sup> Second, as far as concerns the expression «qui fuit misse Thome», it is unknown on which sources Nifo drew, but this affirmation seems to reflect more or less the current fifteenth-century view of the relations between Thomas' and Siger's treatises written during the conflict of the years around 1270. Third, apparently the doctrine of Siger's *de intellectu*, as expounded by Nifo, is different from the central views of Siger's *De anima intellectiva*. However, it should be kept in mind that the fragments in Nifo's *De intellectu* are not literal quotes and that the gist can be found in Siger's *Quaestiones in tertium de anima*.<sup>2</sup> Fourth, also the book entitled *De foelicitate* probably never existed. In effect, it surprises that Nifo in his commentary to Averroes' *De animae beatitudine* never refers to this work, but once again to Siger's *De intellectu*.<sup>3</sup> Fifth, in his commentary on *De anima*, Nifo apparently refers again to Siger's *De foelicitate*,<sup>4</sup> but this treatise might be Siger's commentary of the *Liber de causis*, in particular as far as the question dealing with the issue «utrum essentia causae primae intelligatur ab intellectu nostro» is concerned.<sup>5</sup> Sixth, also the doctrine of the «semi-animae», which Nifo did not attribute to Siger, but which Nardi traces back to Siger, is also known from other (preserved) works by Siger.<sup>6</sup>

In turn, however, one might object against Pattin that (some of) the views developed in the Siger quotes that Nifo reports are not to be found in the now known works, at least not in this specific guise. This entails that the issue cannot be solved until more information becomes available about the spread of Siger's works and of works by others that presented more or less ample elaborations of his views.

In his aforementioned study Nardi has attempted to prove that several medieval masters were acquainted with Siger, among whom Peter Aureoli, Thomas Wilton, John of Jandun, and John Baconthorpe.<sup>7</sup> However, besides Jandun (see above), only Baconthorpe mentions Siger explicitly, and it should be noted that he did not indicate any specific work.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Nardi traced the central views of Siger's treatise *de intellectu* in the works of Paul of Venice and in those of Pico della Mirandola, but unfortunately without indicating passages where Siger's

<sup>1</sup> SIGER DE BRABANT, *Quaestiones in tertium de anima, De anima intellectiva, De aeternitate mundi*, cit., p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the doctrine «ad secundum quaestionem Subgerius persolvit in suo de intellectu tractatu»; the union of the intellect with the body through the phantasms was abandoned by Siger in his *De anima intellectiva*, but resumed in his commentary on the *Liber de causis*. See SIGER DE BRABANT, *Quaestiones super Librum de causis*, ed. A. Marlasca, Louvain-Paris, 1972, pp. 28-29.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. NIFO, *In Averrois de animae beatitudine commentatio*, cit., fols. 13vb, 14vb, and 20rb.

<sup>4</sup> NIFO, *Expositio subtilissima collectanea commentariaque in III libris Aristotelis De anima*, cit., fol. 171va: «sed Subiegius clarus vir in quodam tractatu intelligentiarum et beatitudinis [...]».

<sup>5</sup> SIGER DE BRABANT, *Quaestiones super Librum de causis*, cit., pp. 117-120.

<sup>6</sup> *Quaestiones in tertium de anima*, q. 1; cf. SIGER OF BRABANT, *Quaestiones in tertium de anima, De anima intellectiva, De aeternitate mundi*, cit., pp. 1-3.

<sup>7</sup> NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante*, cit., pp. 91-114.

<sup>8</sup> IOANNES BACHONUS, *Super quatuor Sententiarum libros*, Venetiis, 1526, I, q. 1, a. 1, fol. 2vb, on the intellect as an informing form; cf. NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante*, cit., pp. 110-111.



name is mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Nardi also formulated reasonable arguments for Achillini's acquaintance with the views that Nifo attributed to Siger,<sup>2</sup> but also this contemporary of Nifo did not mention the name of the Brabantian master. Thus, it cannot be excluded that he derived his information from another source. In the early sixteenth century, Siger is mentioned in the dedicatory epistle on the title-page of Tiberio Bacilieri's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*,<sup>3</sup> but – although Nardi 'traces' once again all views of Siger's lost works – in his expositions the name of the Brabantian master is absent.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Francesco Silvestri's reference to Siger in his commentary of Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* may be derived from Nifo and thus, it does not constitute, on its own, a proof for the availability of Siger's works in Italy. This also holds for the reference to Siger in Caietanus' commentary on *De anima*.<sup>5</sup>

Every time Nardi happened upon views similar to those attributed by Nifo to Siger in his *De intellectu*, he did not hesitate to trace the influence of Siger. But it cannot be excluded that these 'central views' of Siger's 'lost works' circulated in a 'general form', that is, anonymously, and that only Nifo attributed them to Siger. In effect, it should be kept in mind that medieval and early modern Peripatetic philosophers had the custom to attribute as much as possible the views they discussed to specific predecessors, also in the case the attribution was anything but certain.

Considering the available information, the issue of Siger's 'lost works' cannot (yet) be established. First, it seems reasonable to presume that the views attributed to Siger by Nifo were known to a large group of earlier and later authors but that they did not consider them to be Siger's. Second, we have seen that Nifo frequently presents quotes from other authors (Albert the Great and Marsilio Ficino are cases in point), without explicitly saying so. This leads to mysterious references, for example, those to probably inexistent authors, known only from Albert's texts. To be sure, this is not Siger's case, but it cannot be excluded that Nifo for his Siger quotes borrowed from a work that discussed the views of the Brabantian master.

### 3. OVERALL STRUCTURE

The first edition of *De intellectu* (Venice 1503) was divided in two books, the first being split up into five treatises concerning the following issues: 1. the origin and immortality of soul; 2. the nature of the soul's separability from the body; 3. the unity of soul; 4. the agent and possible intellects; 5. the speculative and practical

<sup>1</sup> NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante*, cit., pp. 115-132, and 159-170.

<sup>2</sup> NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante*, cit., pp. 39-90.

<sup>3</sup> TIBERIO BACILIERI, *Lectura in octo libros de auditu naturali Aristotelis et sui fidissimi commentatoris Averrois*, Papie, 1507.

<sup>4</sup> NARDI, *Sigieri di Brabante*, cit., pp. 132-152.

<sup>5</sup> CAIETANUS (Tommaso da Vio), *Commentaria in libros Aristotelis de Anima*, Florentiae, 1509, fol. 59va: «Contra Alexandrum Achillinum, Quolibeto 3<sup>o</sup>, et Subgerium in tractatu ad S. Thomam, qui volunt intellectus uniatum secundum esse, apud Averroem».

intellects. The much shorter book two was divided into three treatises, each of them considering an aspect of the same topic, namely the state (*status*) of soul, that is the (intellectual) beatitude. In later editions (1527, 1553, 1554) the work was divided in six books, the final book dealing with beatitude.<sup>1</sup>

All six books of *De intellectu* are characterized by an evident disproportion between large amounts of discussion, analysis, and confutation of opinions and views, on the one hand, and a digest presentation of the 'true' position which is usually expounded and defended in just a few pages or sometimes even in a couple of lines only. Let us now take a brief glance at the content of each of the six books.

After a detailed discussion of the Platonic and Peripatetic definitions of human soul in the first eighteen chapters of book I, Nifo presents in chapter 19 the true definition of soul. The latter is eternal, not «parte ante», but only «parte post», while the goodness of the first mover and the work of nature cooperate in the creation and infusion of rational soul in body. Then, in chapter 28, he points out that rational soul originates from within as well as from without: the essence of soul is generated by the first cause, its specific application and determination to the body depends upon secondary causes (celestial bodies) operating on the body.

Book II presents a lengthy discussion of the views of Plotinus, Averroes, other Arabs, and the Latin Averroists (including Jandun, and possibly Siger) on the relation between body and rational soul, and on that between intellect and *cogitativa*. After a confutation of the followers of the Commentator with arguments taken from his own work, Nifo argues that human soul stands halfway («in orizzonte») between the forms that are fully immersed in matter and the forms of the celestial bodies that are operationally independent. Human soul is an individual form, but universal inasmuch as it is a «potestas quaedam lucis spiritualis». Accordingly, human soul is mixed up in matter but separate as to its specific capabilities.

Quite enigmatically, at the outset of book III Nifo presents the opinions of the followers of Amalric of Bena, and of the unknown Alexander of Rhodes and Theophilus<sup>2</sup> concerning the coincidence of God and world-soul. After an analysis of the views of Themistius, Simplicius, and other Platonists, as well as of Siger's interpretation of Averroes, Nifo presents the position of the Commentator. After doubts, solution of doubts, and ensuing destruction of the latter, Nifo states in chapter 31 that there are as many rational souls as there are men (against Averroes

<sup>1</sup> In later editions the first five books correspond to the treatises of book I of the 1503 edition. In this latter edition book II was divided in three treatises: the ten chapters of tr. 1 correspond to the first ten chapters of book VI of the later editions, the fifty-two chapters of tr. 2 to the chs. 11 to 62, and the nine chapters of tr. 3 to chs. 63 to 71.

<sup>2</sup> In his *De anima* commentary, Nifo mentions the same authors and he attributed them two works; cf. NIFO, *Expositio subtilissima collectanea commentariaque in III libros Aristotelis De anima*, cit., fol. 147ra: «[...] Theophilus in libro 9. De Manicheis, et Alexander graecus patria Rodius in libro antiquo suo de hoc, dixerunt intellectum esse materiam, et maxime Deum [...]».



and Themistius), that rational souls are not specifically different, that they do not leave and enter the bodies, that rational soul is the vital and intrinsic form of the body, and that it is connected to the whole body.

The relatively short book iv analyzes the views of Plato, and of the ancient and medieval (mainly Arabic) Peripatetics. After Averroes' true position, Nifo establishes that this doctrine contradicts truth and natural philosophy. The (multiplied) rational soul derives from divine seed, is different from God and the separate intellects, and possesses a double faculty: one to become and one to make all things. Furthermore, human intellect provides things with spiritual being, while the potential intellect is both separate and a faculty of soul.

Book v starts with a confutation of the doctrine of intelligible species, as defended by Jandun and other Latins. After a brief discussion of Themistius' doctrine of the speculative intellect, Nifo set out an extensive analysis of doubts on Averroes' view of the speculative intellect (chs. 14 to 33). Once assessed the issues of self-knowledge and the practical intellect, Nifo solves the arguments for species derived from Averroes. Then, suddenly in chapter 41, contained in a scant pair of columns, the reader is surprised to find stated as 'veritas' the need for intelligible species. The vast number of arguments against the species in previous chapters is in stark contrast with Nifo's bald justification of his adopting the doctrine of intelligible species: he simply declared that Averroes' interpretation of Aristotelian psychology cannot be upheld. In other words, this means that he accepted the species only for reasons of philosophical conformism. And this explains why, in the final chapters, Nifo argues for an identification of species and cognitive act.

At the outset of book vi the 'state' or the felicity of the human soul is qualified by Nifo as a honorable, appetible, and difficult topic. After a summary discussion of the opinions of those who entertain the mortality of soul, the position of Siger, who identified felicity with God, is discussed. Then, thirteen doubts on Averroes are formulated, the analysis of which takes almost forty chapters (24 to 62). When the speculative intellect is sufficiently developed, we know the agent intellect through the essence of the speculative intellect as the efficient cause of the speculative intellect and also through the essence of the agent intellect itself as the formal and final cause of the speculative intellect. This grounds the successive ascent of human soul through the hierarchy of the intelligences, leading up to a total and non-supernatural 'adeptio', namely intuitive knowledge of the separate substances and God. Thus, man becomes the 'nexus' of spiritual substances and material beings (ch. 52). In ch. 63, Nifo presents the Aristotelian view, which is based on the following doctrines: the rational soul is multiplied, is created with the body, and contains known things in potency. Embracing vegetative, sensitive and intellectual capabilities, human soul has several appetites, the lower participating in reason. In the final chapters Nifo argues that human soul knows 'accidental' intelligibles (quiddities of sensible things) as well as beings that are intelligible *per se* (God, the intelligences). Rational soul develops through knowledge of intelligibles in time (natural science) and continuum (imagination) up to metaphysical intelligibles, when the speculative intellect is formed, and

then through the separate substances till the first intellect. Finally, Nifo states that those who do not acquire beatitude in this life, do not even reach it in the afterlife either.

#### 4. ARGUMENTATIONAL STRATEGIES

Nifo's psychological investigations, as those of the majority of his fellow Aristotelians, consist mainly of commenting upon (authoritative) texts. In effect, Nifo's *De intellectu* is a classical example of a Peripatetic treatise of the late medieval, early modern era. His views are developed in a continuous dialogue with Ancient and medieval authors, and thus the dynamics of his argumentations is characterized not only by discussion and analysis of positions, but also by confutation, solution, and (when appropriate or possible) demonstration of views, arguments, counter-arguments, and doubts.<sup>1</sup> These typically scholastic techniques presuppose the existence of more or less authoritative or dominant views, but not at all a blind acceptance of one or more specific authorities. It cannot be denied, however, that in the economy of *De intellectu* religious creed plays a crucial role.

Nifo's central systematic view in *De intellectu*, namely the creation and multiplication of rational soul and its relation to the body, apparently comes out of the blue, as it is dictated by Catholic faith only and not really argued for. The essential is to be found in the central chapters of Book I, where in ch. 17 Nifo states that the relationship between the rational soul and the body is instituted by God.<sup>2</sup> In the following chapter, he says that he does not 'want' soul to be created simultaneously with the body, but created and then infused.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it does not come as a surprise that in ch. 20 he openly admits his reluctance to develop proofs ('demonstrationes') for his view on the relationship of rational soul and body, as it concerns a mystery which cannot be proved.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, at the end of this chapter

<sup>1</sup> For dazzling examples of this procedure, see book II, chs. 16-17 (formulation of solutions and their proof, then the solutions destroyed by the Averroists), book III, chs. 18-19 (Siger's position explained and challenged with twenty-seven arguments), book III, chs. 26-27 (solution of doubts against Averroes' position and the ready destruction of the latter), book V, ch. 16-33 (the solution of *all* doubts on Averroes' position).

<sup>2</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 9v: «Rationalis anima corpus vivificat necessitate naturae, non simpliciter sed ex suppositione, quemadmodum et Deus secundum nos necessitate ordinis naturae etiam animam rationalem praebet corpori in Deo, ut sequatur complementum naturae cur hoc tempore, et cur huic corpori patet».

<sup>3</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 9v: «Nec volo quod rationalis anima simul natura cum corpore facta sit, sed prius natura creata, et in secundo signo infusa».

<sup>4</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 10r: «Quod rationalis anima simul cum corpore ac in corpore oriatur, ut dixi, non expectes a me demonstrationes, nec decebat hoc esse demonstrabile, quod enim meritum ac nostrae fidei praemium adepti fuissimus. Propter quod tanquam arcanum sibi Deus retinuit nec hoc revelare iussit nisi credentibus, verum licet indemonstrabile hoc sit, persuaderi id potest forte melioribus syllogismis quam his, quibus philosophi utuntur ad oppositum huius. Persuademus ergo primo hoc modo quaecunque ad aliquid sunt omnino simul sunt ac simul incipiunt eo enim ictu quo sol oritur nobis et dies».

Nifo concludes that about its truth one can only be persuaded.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, also the view of the origin of rational soul in the semen can be confuted with probable arguments only.<sup>2</sup> And elsewhere, Nifo even suggests that the immortality of the rational soul cannot be proved.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted, however, that Nifo's use of probable arguments is not always dictated by faith, but constitutes in a certain sense a central stance of his methodology: «Intentio enim mea non est semper demonstrare, sed apparentiorem intellectum accipere in dictis Peripateticorum, ac magis a contradictione remotum».<sup>4</sup>

Nifo's view of a created and infused rational soul has far-reaching consequences, as it invests nearly all psychological issues. As said before, Nifo develops this view in opposition and in alternative to his early Averroism, which in *De intellectu* is rejected because in contradiction to truth and natural philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Now, his rejection of Averroism not only entails that he explicitly rejects what Averroes endorsed, but in some specific cases also that he implicitly entertains what is to be rejected on Averroistic grounds. His most peculiar acceptance of the doctrine of intelligible species in book v is a clamorous case in point.<sup>6</sup>

Nifo's more specifically technical methodology for psychological research in *De intellectu* is essentially inspired to principles of Aristotle's *Organon*, the treatises of which for the rest have been intensively commented by him.<sup>7</sup> Indeed,

<sup>1</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 10v: «Verum fideli sat est id credere, in quantum ex divinis sapientibus reperitur approbatum, nec me reputes id credere ex persuasionibus nunc inductis. Sed id credo, quoniam verum a theologis nostris approbatum repertum est».

<sup>2</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., fol. 12v: «Sed rationalem particulariter esse ex semine effluxam, rationes ergo omnes concludunt verum, sed non contra eos, ut recte intelligentes cognoscere possunt. Ego autem considerans, et magno tempore investigans, credo contra eos demonstrationes nondum esse. Verum esse argumenta quaedam probabiliora illis quae inducunt pro se, ut legentibus rationes meas statim apparebit».

<sup>3</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. vi, ch. 45, fol. 62r: «Foelicitas enim non tollit omnem privationem nisi possibilem homini in eo quod homo, modo immortalitas apud philosophos repugnat homini secundum esse individuum, hoc enim est fide perspicuum, tantum non ratione naturali demonstratum». See however, book i, chs. 8 and 10 for rational arguments.

<sup>4</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. iv, ch. 20, f. 40ra.

<sup>5</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. iv, ch. 23, fol. 41va: «Hucusque quid potuit Averrois sentire diximus et secundum principia eiusdem positionem explanavimus, sed quia positionem Averrois totam esse contra veritatem et naturalem philosophiam monstravimus. Ideo supposito quod rationalis anima sit multiplicata, et simul cum corpore incipiens et quod sit forma corporis humani, dans esse in qua terminatur sensitivum et vegetativum, tanquam in termino ultimo et fine totius naturae progressus, oportet nunc veritatem exponere».

<sup>6</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. v, ch. 41, fol. 52v: «Et quia nos concedimus totum oppositum illorum principiorum, ideo ut expositores dicunt concedimus totum oppositum conclusionum. Conclusiones enim sequuntur ex principiis, et ideo dicimus aliud esse intellectum, aliud quo intellectum intelligitur». See also bk. vi, ch. 62, fol. 66r: «Tractatus enim De foelicitate sequitur tractatum De intellectu. Ideo concessis principiis suis, quae diximus in libro De intellectu, sequuntur omnia haec, et quia destruximus omnia principia eius ibidem, ideo per totum hoc non plus volumus habere, quam quod haec sit mens Averrois quae sequitur ex principiis eius, cum quo tamen stat esse errorem purum, sicut in sequentibus ostendemus».

<sup>7</sup> E. DE BELLIS, *Bibliografia di Agostino Nifo*, Firenze, 2005, pp. 63-67, 141-146, 169-172, 203-205, 213-217.

most of his argumentations develops through syllogistic reasoning, and are thus based upon two definitions or statements (the premises) which are assumed to be true (or the truth of which is demonstrated preliminarily) and which thus lead to a conclusion. However, two other, frequently recurring, dialectical techniques merit particular attention. First, Nifo eliminates (or 'destroys', as he prefers to define it) many views and theories through a «reductio ad absurdum». As a rule, the latter is based upon an argumentation which runs more or less as follows: if P exists or is true, it is either Q or R, and as both possibilities are impossible or false, P cannot be accepted because utterly absurd.<sup>1</sup> Second, frequently Nifo's bases the plausibility of a view on analogy. For example, like corporeal operations, such as walking, cannot exist without the body, so uncorporeal (i.e.: intellectual) operations cannot have to do anything with the body.<sup>2</sup>

Besides logical techniques, something needs to be said about the role of empirical evidence. As said earlier, Nifo's psychology, as that of his fellow Aristotelians, was essentially bookish. Yet, reference to empirical grounds is not totally absent in *De intellectu*, although quite rarely so. A fine example is the argument in book I, ch. 22, for the mortality of intellectual soul: a physical agent which can deprive a form of its operation (note that the body compromises the mind's rational activity in drunkenness and malady), should be viewed as capable to generate this form. Shortly afterwards, this argument is confuted: the body may cause a decay of mental operation, but not of the aptitude for the latter.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, Nifo develops some remarkable thought-experiments. In particular the one expounded in ch. 8 of book v, functional in the demolition of the doctrine of the intelligible species, merits some attention. Apparently unsatisfied with his earlier arguments, Nifo proceeds to demonstrate, in a sort of thought-experiment, that the doctrine of intelligible species leads to intractable contradictions whenever one tries to determine how the same object can be effectively known by different persons.<sup>4</sup> Analyzing this far from hypothetical situation, Nifo argues that no acceptable numerical ratio can be established between the mediating species and the intellection (or intellections), because the intellection of one and the same thing by three different persons inevitably leads to contradiction, whichever combination of one or three intellections and one or three species is chosen.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the destruction of the doctrine of intelligible species attributed to Jandun in book v, ch. 8. <sup>2</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. I, ch. 10. See also ch. 7 in the same book.

<sup>3</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. I, ch. 29.

<sup>4</sup> The doctrinal background of this problem is JANDUN, *Super libros De anima subtilissimae quaestiones*, cit., III, q. 10, cols. 279-285, and TADDHEUS DE PARMA, *Quaestiones de anima*, ed. S. Vanni Rovighi, Milano, 1951, q. VI, p. 64. <sup>5</sup> *De intellectu*, cit., bk. v, ch. 8, fol. 43v.

COMPOSTO, IN CARATTERE DANTE MONOTYPE,  
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