Fiorella Retucci

Intersecting Wisdom: Thomas of York and His Sources

Abstract: Thomas of York was a careful and pioneering reader of some philosophical texts that had little or no circulation in the Middle Ages. His major work, the *Sapientiale*, was the first medieval instance of a purely metaphysical investigation that falls outside the conventional frameworks of theological *summae* and commentaries to Aristotle. Despite this fact, the *Sapientiale* has long been read as a clear example of a form of ‘authentic Augustinianism’. This reading of the text treated Thomas of York as the founder, along with Bonaventure and Alexander of Hales, of a uniform Franciscan tradition that was later inherited by William de la Mare, John Peckam, Peter John Olivi, Peter of Trabibus, and Richard of Middleton. In this essay, Fiorella Retucci attempts to question the historiographic category of ‘authentic Augustinianism’, too often applied to Thomas of York’s thought, by carefully analyzing the *Sapientiale* and its sources. The study focuses in particular on three sources that play an important role in Thomas of York’s philosophical system: the *Liber de causis*, the *Asclepius* and Averroes.¹

The *Sapientiale* of Thomas of York (c.1250 – 60) was brought to the attention of philosophical medievalists by Martin Grabmann, now more than a century ago (1913). Grabmann’s enthusiasm in presenting Thomas of York’s work was considerable: the *Sapientiale* was, according to Grabmann, ‘the only major exposition of the system of metaphysics from the era of high scholasticism.’²

A few years later (1919), Parthenius Minges announced the imminent publication of the critical edition of the *Sapientiale* by the Commission of St Bonaventure in Quaracchi, which was also engaged at that time in preparing the edition of the *Summa Halensis* or *Summa fratris Alexandri*.³ The announcement, however, was

1 I would like to thank Lydia Schumacher for the patient kindness with which she supervised the preparation of this study and revised it linguistically. In this essay, I have returned to some of the studies I had previously carried out, indicating the relative bibliographical references in the footnotes. The systematic research on the presence of Averroes in the *Sapientiale* was carried out within a research project financed by MIUR (PRIN 2017: 2017H8MWHR_002).

2 Martin Grabmann, ‘Die Metaphysik des Thomas von York,’ in *Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie: Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag Clemens Baeumker*, ed. J. Geyser (Münster i.W.: Aschendorff, 1913), p. 191 in pp. 181–93.

3 Parthenius Minges, ‘Robert Grosseteste Übersetzer der *Ethica Nicomachea*,’ *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 32 (1919), p. 239 in pp. 230–43.

never followed by any publication: the edition, ready for printing, was burned along with Minges' entire legacy during the First World War.⁴

Nevertheless, the *Sapientiale* continued to attract the attention of specialists, and from 1924 onwards it fully entered the textbooks on the history of medieval philosophy. In the fifth edition of his *Histoire de la philosophie médiévale* (1924), Maurice De Wulf mentioned Thomas' work, describing it as 'the first attempt at metaphysical systematisation that the 13th century produced.'⁵ In the second edition of his *Philosophie au Moyen Age* (1947), Etienne Gilson devoted three dense pages to the *Sapientiale*, which was in his opinion an important work, unfortunately still unpublished, and the result of an 'open and curious, but shapeless spirit,' which tried to assimilate 'the mass of metaphysical information of Greek-Arabic origin that penetrated the schools at the time.'⁶

Despite this debut on the scene of medieval philosophical studies, and the numerous efforts made at the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto for almost half a century, first by Reginald O'Donnell, and then by Virginia Brown,⁷ the text of the *Sapientiale* is only beginning in recent months – more than a century after the first announcement – to see the light in a modern edition: the third book has just been published;⁸ the first is in print. Perhaps it is too early to attempt a definitive evaluation of a work as complex and long as the *Sapientiale*. However, this is not my purpose. Rather, my intention is to offer a mere footnote on the *apparatus fontium* of the work, while at the same time trying to draw some conclusions from the textual evidence.

The *Sapientiale* has long been read as a clear example of a form of authentic Augustinianism. This dominant reading of the text, which was inaugurated by Martin Grabmann,⁹ and further advanced by Ephraim Longpré,¹⁰ Christopher Krzanic,¹¹ Giulio Bonafede¹² and Edgar Scully,¹³ treated Thomas of York as the founder, along with

4 Sigfried Grän, 'Parthenius Minges OFM: Ein Förderer des modernen Scotismus,' in *De Doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti: Acta Congressus Scotistici Internationalis Oxonii et Edimburgi 11–17 sept. 1966 celebrati* (Rome: Societas Internationalis Scotistica, 1968), pp. 707–15.

5 Maurice de Wulf, *Histoire de la philosophie médiévale* (Louvain: Institut supérieure de philosophie, 1924), p. 340.

6 Etienne Gilson, *La philosophie au Moyen Age* (Paris: Payot, 1947), pp. 474–76.

7 For a general overview of the editorial work on the *Sapientiale* conducted in Toronto, see Joseph Goering, 'Editions of Thomas of York's *Sapientiale* by students at the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies and the University of Toronto, 1950–1992,' *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 52 (2010), pp. 156–59.

8 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale, liber III, cap. 1–20*, ed. Antonio Punzi (Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2020).

9 Grabmann, 'Die Metaphysik des Thomas von York,' pp. 191–92.

10 Ephrem Longpré, 'Fr. Thomas d'York, O.F.M. La première somme métaphysique du XIII^e siècle,' *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 19 (1926), p. 893 in pp. 875–930.

11 Cristoforo Krzanic, 'Grandi lottatori contro l'Averroismo,' *Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica* 22 (1930), pp. 161–207.

12 Giulio Bonafede, *Il pensiero francescano nel secolo XIII* (Palermo: Mori e Figli, 1952), pp. 187–89.

Bonaventure and Alexander of Hales, of a uniform Franciscan tradition that was later inherited by William de la Mare, John Peckam, Peter John Olivi, Peter of Trabibus, and Richard of Middleton.¹⁴ For Thomas of York, as for many other 13th- and 14th-century Franciscans, the Augustinian tradition would be ‘the very embodiment of Christian wisdom to such a degree that Aristotle, or any other philosopher, could not essentially alter the time-honored doctrines of Augustine, Boethius and Anselm.’¹⁵ The anti-philosophical and anti-averroistic attitude of the *Sapientiale* was so evident that Krzanic did not hesitate to open his list of ‘*great fighters against Averroism*’ with the name of Thomas of York.¹⁶

To the reader who glances even briefly at the table of contents that the author attaches to the *Sapientiale*,¹⁷ the historiographic category of ‘authentic Augustinianism’ and the anti-philosophical and anti-averroistic attitude attributed to Thomas of York may seem, however, somewhat forced: the work is in fact a complete treatise on metaphysics, divided into three parts of different lengths. The first part of the work, which corresponds to the first book, after describing in detail the purpose and method of the work (c. 1–4), deals with God and his properties (c. 5–34), divine providence and justice (c. 35–43), and human beatitude (c. 44–45).¹⁸ The second part of the work comprises books II–VI and deals with being, its divisions and causes.¹⁹ Finally, Thomas intended to divide the third and last part of the *Sapientiale* into two books: the first dedicated to the world, the second to the intellect.²⁰ Only the first of the two books has been preserved. It is divided into 23 chapters, of which the first

13 Edgar Scully, ‘Thomas of York and his Use of Aristotle: An Early Moment in the History of British Philosophy,’ *Culture* 20 (1959), pp. 420–36.

14 Krzanic, ‘Grandi lottatori contro l’Averroismo,’ p. 164.

15 Scully, ‘Thomas of York and his Use of Aristotle,’ pp. 422–23.

16 Krzanic, ‘Grandi lottatori contro l’Averroismo.’

17 The *tabula contentorum* is placed before the text in two manuscripts (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. A.VI.437 [henceforth F], ff. IIra-Vva; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 6771 [henceforth R], ff. 1ra–8va), while it can be found at the end of the *Sapientiale* in the manuscript Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 4301 [henceforth V], ff. 195va–199ra. For a description of the manuscripts, see Antonio Punzi and Fiorella Retucci, ‘Introduzione,’ in *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, ed. Punzi, pp. xv–xvi in pp. xv–xxxv. The transcription of the *tabula* handed down from the Florence manuscript was published by Longpré, ‘Fr. Thomas d’York,’ pp. 906–30.

18 Longpré, ‘Fr. Thomas d’York,’ p. 906: ‘Sapientialis huius prima pars est de Creatore benedicto, quae una cum quibusdam ad totius operis elucidationem in uno comprehenditur libro continente capitula 45.’

19 Longpré, ‘Fr. Thomas d’York,’ p. 911: ‘Sapientialis huius secunda pars est de ente, secundo quod ens, et divisionibus eius necnec de principiis entium, quae et qualia et quomodo exeant a principio primo, et comprehenditur in libris quinque.’ The three surviving manuscripts testify to a different order of the books from III to VI: see Punzi, Retucci, ‘Introduzione,’ in *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, ed. Punzi, pp. xviii–xxv.

20 Longpré, ‘Fr. Thomas d’York,’ p. 927: ‘Sapientialis huius pars tertia est de partibus entis in speciali habens libros duos, quorum primus est de ente creato perfectissimo, videlicet mundo, necnon de parte rationalis creaturae, quae est intelligentia, et continet capitula 23.’

seven deal with the world (c. 1–7), the middle chapters with the soul (c. 8–18), and the final chapters with the intellect (c. 19–23).

The curious reader who flips through the *Sapientiale* cannot ignore the enormous density of sources that characterize every single page of the work. The library to which Thomas had access must have been very well stocked and, above all, constantly updated. Thomas of York was among the first authors to use the Greek-Latin translations completed by Robert Grosseteste in the years immediately before the composition of the *Sapientiale*. He was, for instance, an accurate reader of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and of the complex of commentaries and *scolii* on the Aristotelian text, probably assembled in Constantinople in the first half of the 12th century at the initiative of Anna Comnena and translated by Grosseteste between 1246/47:²¹ over 170 explicit quotations, some of which are quite extensive, attest to the interest that this corpus had for the English Franciscan.²² Thomas was among the first to read Moses Maimonides' *Dux neutrorum*, from which he quotes long passages in his own work. As is clear from a letter by Adam Marsh,²³ Thomas of York came into contact with Maimonides' work in 1251 at the latest, i.e. only a few years after the first attested traces of the text's circulation.²⁴ Thomas was familiar with classical authors, as

21 The dating of the translations is still controversial. Almost all scholars agree, however, that Grosseteste completed his translation work by 1246–47. See Daniel A. Callus, 'The Date of Grosseteste's Translations and Commentaries on Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Nicomachean Ethics*,' *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 14 (1947), pp. 186–210; Michele Trizio, 'From Anna Comnena to Dante: The Byzantine Roots of Western Debates on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*,' in *Dante and the Greeks*, ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2014), pp. 105–140.

22 On the reception of Byzantine commentaries in the *Sapientiale*, see Fiorella Retucci, 'Nuovi percorsi del platonismo medievale: i commentari bizantini all'*Etica Nicomachea* nel *Sapientiale* di Tommaso di York,' *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 24 (2013), pp. 85–120.

23 See *The Letters of Adam Marsh*, ed. Clifford H. Lawrence, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006–10), vol. 2, n. 225, pp. 540–42. In this letter, Adam Marsh informs Thomas of York that Brother Laurence 'mittit vobis frater Laurentius quaternos matris prophetice' ['is sending you the quires for the prophetic mother']. *Prophetice* is a hypercorrection that the editor Lawrence uncritically borrows from Brewer ('*Adae de Marisco Epistulae*,' in *Monumenta Franciscana*, ed. John S. Brewer [London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858], pp. 394–96, esp. p. 395, n. 2), whereas the manuscript tradition transmits the reading *philosophie*. Lawrence assumes, again together with Brewer, that *matris prophetice* is the reference to the prophetic writings of Hildegard of Bingen. However, as Longpré has rightly remarked ('Fr. Thomas d'York, O.F.M.,' p. 878), the original reading *quaternos matris philosophiae* does not pose any textual problem, since it is a reference to the work titled *Mater philosophiae*: this was actually the title under which Thomas of York knew and quoted Maimonides' work. Moreover, the *Dux neutrorum* was known under the title *Mater philosophiae* in England, as attested by the English manuscript tradition: see Diana Di Segni, 'Introduction,' in Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum vel dubiorum*, ed. Diana Di Segni (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), p. 101*.

24 As Diana Di Segni clearly demonstrated, in her 'Maimonides's Guide of the Perplexed in the Latin Middle Ages,' in *Interpreting Maimonides: Critical Essays*, ed. Charles H. Manekin and Daniel Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 207 in pp. 190–207, 'the earliest clearly identifiable

documented in an unpublished study by Virginia Brown, which analyses in detail the quotations from Latin classical authors in the *Sapientiale*:²⁵ Cicero is mentioned by name 356 times. Most of the quotations come from the *De natura deorum* (200 quotations) and the *Tusculanae disputationes* (100 quotations), although other minor works of Cicero find space in the *Sapientiale* (28 quotations from *De divinatione*, 17 from the *Paradoxa*, four from *De amicitia* and *De Senectute* respectively). Seneca's name appears 315 times, 275 times with reference to the *Epistulae*, 36 to the *De beneficiis* and four to the *De clementia*. Alongside Cicero and Seneca, Thomas must have been familiar with Valerius Maximus (8 quotations) and Pliny (12 quotations). He quotes from more than 50 authorities and more than 100 different works,²⁶ for a total of about 20,000 explicit quotations, according to Virginia Brown's estimate.²⁷

The works cited in the *Sapientiale* can be divided into three categories: ancient philosophers and Latin classics (called *sapientes mundi*); Fathers and medieval Latin authors (called *sapientes Dei*); Arabic and Jewish sources (called *sapientes mundi*).²⁸

A quick glance at the sources of the volumes already published is sufficient for understanding the different weight that the various authorities have in the *Sapientiale*: in the first twenty chapters of the third book, which deal with being in general (c. 1–8) and the causes (c. 9–20),²⁹ Thomas invokes more than 400 times the authority of the *sapientes mundi* (in particular Algazel, Aristoteles, Averroes, Avicenna, and Maimonides), and about 70 times the *sapientes Dei* (first and foremost Augustine). The situation does not change much if we consider the first book,³⁰ which deals with the existence, nature, and properties of God: here too the *sapientes mundi*, among whom Thomas includes Aristotle, Plato, Averroes, Avicenna, Hermes, Avicbron, Maimonides, and Algazel, are mentioned by name 1,267 times. The *sapientes Dei*, represented above all by Augustine, Boethius, Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory the Great, Anselm, John Damascene, and Bernard of Clairvaux, are mentioned explicitly only 397 times.

The sheer quantitative evidence makes it clear, even at first glance, that the philosophical sources of the *Sapientiale* have in no way a merely decorative function. This fact becomes even more evident if we look in more detail at three case studies

quotations from the *Dux neutrorum* date back to the years 1241–44 for Moneta of Cremona and between 1241–46 for Albert the Great.'

25 Virginia Brown, 'Latin Classical Authors in the *Sapientiale* of Thomas of York,' unpublished study, found among Brown's archival papers at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.

26 For an exhaustive overview of the sources used in the *Sapientiale*, see Dorothea E. Sharp, *Franciscan Philosophy at Oxford in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), pp. 53–55.

27 Brown, 'Latin Classical Authors.'

28 As is well known, a few years after the composition of the *Sapientiale*, the definition of the philosophers as *sapientes mundi* would be condemned by Bishop Etienne Tempier: see *La condamnation Parisienne de 1277*, ed. David Piché (Paris: Vrin, 1999), art. 154, p. 126.

29 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale, liber III, cap. 1–20*, ed. Punzi.

30 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale, liber I*, ed. Fiorella Retucci (Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galiluzzo, forthcoming).

that deserve special attention: the *Liber De causis*, the hermetic tradition, and Averroes.

The *Liber de causis*

The presence of the *Liber de causis* in the *Sapientiale* has recently been investigated in detail, leading to rather unexpected results.³¹ Thomas exhibits a completely different attitude towards *De causis* than his confreres. As recent studies on the medieval tradition of *De causis* have shown,³² the *Liber* was sometimes dismissed with disinterest, and sometimes read with suspicion by the Franciscans. Bonaventure, one of the first Franciscans to use *De causis*, not only made very limited use of the text, quoting only 13 propositions from the *Liber* in just over 20 explicit quotations, but openly condemned some of its doctrines as heretical, such as that of the production of souls through intelligence.³³ In his work, Thomas of York shows deep confidence in his use of *De causis* and quotes it several times. Within his *Sapientiale*, he refers literally or explicitly to the *Liber de causis* 107 times, quoting from 22 different propositions. Thomas' use of *De causis* is widespread and always in support of his own doctrines. At no time does Thomas of York take a stand against the doctrines conveyed by the *Liber*.

This fact becomes particularly important if we consider that, contrary to common belief,³⁴ Thomas of York was fully aware that the *Liber de causis* cannot be ascribed to a Christian author, but to a philosopher, of whose identity he is rather uncertain.³⁵ Yet, Thomas does not hesitate to use *De causis*, and together with it other *sapientes mundi*, to correct and rectify the interpretation that some *sapientes Dei* have given of particular doctrinal problems.

This is what happens in a passage found in the third book of the *Sapientiale*, which is particularly significant in my opinion. In chapter eleven of this book, Thomas of York analyses in detail the characteristics of the agent or efficient cause, concluding that God is not only the efficient cause of the causes, but also the efficient

31 Fiorella Retucci, 'The *De causis* in Thomas of York,' in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes: Volume 1*, ed. Dragos Calma (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 70–119.

32 Dragos Calma, 'Du néoplatonisme au réalisme et retour. Parcours latins du *Liber de causis* aux XIIIe–XVIe siècles,' *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 54 (2012), pp. 217–76, esp. pp. 234–36; Retucci, 'The *De causis* in Thomas of York,' pp. 70–72.

33 Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quattuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, bk. 2, d. 18, a. 2, q. 3, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, 10 vols (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1902), vol. 2, pp. 452b–453a.

34 Longpré, 'Fr. Thomas d'York, O.F.M.,' p. 897; Daniel A. Callus, 'Introduction of Aristotelian Learning to Oxford,' *Proceedings of British Academy* 29 (1943), p. 261 in pp. 229–81; Henri Dominique Saffrey, 'Introduction,' in *Thomas de Aquino, Super librum de causis expositio*, ed. Henri Dominique Saffrey (Paris: Vrin, 2002), p. xix in pp. xv–lxxiii.

35 See Retucci, 'The *De causis* in Thomas of York,' pp. 74–78.

cause of all that is caused, and consequently of everything, in accordance with what is stated in the first proposition of *De causis*.³⁶ Immediately afterwards, a long digression begins that has all the characteristics of a *questio* (arguments *pro* and *contra*, conclusion, response to the arguments). The topic of this *questio* is clear and well-defined: whether in every action, not so much of creation, but also of induction into being, God is the first and immediate agent, or whether in some action he acts through an intermediary.³⁷

According to the reconstruction provided by Thomas of York, some (*aliqui*) have answered this question by considering God as the sole immediate agent, thereby denying the action of any creature even in natural processes: in their view, creatures are merely occasions for the causal activities of the first cause.³⁸

The supporters of this doctrine rely on the authority of some Christians, who believe that the induction of natural forms into matter is attributed solely to the action of the creator, in accordance with what Augustine says in the 12th and 22nd books of *De civitate Dei*, in the seventh book of *De Genesi ad litteram* and in the third book of *De Trinitate*.³⁹ Adherents of this form of occasionalism further defend (*mununt rationibus*) this doctrine by arguing that the creator is more intimate to each creature than each creature is to itself; that only God can penetrate the essence of the creature; that only God is the sufficient cause of all action, and therefore requires no intermediary.

Thomas of York does not give any clue as to the identity of the (probably Christian) supporters of this doctrine, but he clearly shows that this view cannot be supported philosophically.⁴⁰

The criticism developed by Thomas of York against occasionalism is articulated in three different stages: firstly, Thomas of York quotes Averroes' criticism of Islamic

36 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, p. 143, 74–76: 'Ipse est efficiens omnium et causarum et causatorum, utopote causa prima plus influens in causata omnia quam cause secundarie.' For Thomas' use of the first proposition in the critique of occasionalism, see Retucci, 'The *De causis* in Thomas of York,' pp. 81–85.

37 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, p. 143, 78–80: 'Hoc igitur premissis ponam questionem, an in omni actione, non tantum creationis, sed etiam eductionis, sit ipse primus immediate agens, an in aliqua actione agat per medium.'

38 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, pp. 143, 80–144, 83: 'Et iam fuerunt aliqui, qui posuerunt ipsum immediate agere omnino et non posuerunt creaturam agentem in aliqua actione naturali, sed tantum occasionem, qua per actionem primi forma naturalis inducitur in materia.'

39 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, p. 144, 83–87: 'Isti autem suam opinionem confirmare voluerunt per sermones sapientum Christianorum, per quos videtur quod inductione formarum naturalium in materia attribuitur solummodo actioni creatoris, secundum quod dicit sapiens Augustinus.'

40 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, p. 145, 117–19: 'Scias igitur lector in principio hanc opinionem a philosophia reprobata, secundum quod habetur ab Averroee *Super IX Metaphysice* capitulo 4.'

occasionalism in the ninth book of his Commentary on *Metaphysics*;⁴¹ secondly, he gives a whole series of arguments that deprive occasionalism of any foundation. These arguments, with which Thomas defuses occasionalism, are first and foremost philosophical, and come from Aristotle (book II of the *Physics*, books VII and XI of *Metaphysics*), and the related commentaries by Averroes, from Maimonides' *Dux neutorum* (book II, chapter 5) and from *De causis* (prop. 23[24]).⁴² Finally, Thomas calls into question the arguments of the *sapientes Dei*, first and foremost, Augustine.⁴³ On the basis of these arguments, first philosophical and then theological, Thomas concludes that God cannot be regarded as the sole agent in natural processes, and that creatures are not merely occasions for God's all-encompassing activities.⁴⁴

He finally replies point by point to the arguments put forward by the supporters of occasionalism, or more precisely, to the occasionalist interpretation of Augustine. The occasionalists seem – in Thomas' view – to betray the true intention of Augustine, who in his works did not in any way want to negate any kind of natural causality, but rather wanted to attribute to God a form of pre-eminence in the causal chain, in accordance with what is stated in the first proposition of *De causis*.⁴⁵

Some observations can be made on the basis of what has been said so far.

1. Thomas calls *De causis* into question within the debate on causality without intermediaries in order to demonstrate the philosophical invalidity of occasionalism, thus offering a very early – and to some extent pioneering – interpretation of the first proposition of the *Liber*. As Dragos Calma has recently observed, it is possible to recognize a paradigm shift in the exegetical tradition of *De causis*, and in particular the first theorem: while in the commentaries prior to Siger of Brabant the Latin medievals concentrated mainly on the description of flow, after Siger's commentary the first proposition began to be used in order to explain the relations between primary and secondary causes and to neutralize the erroneous position of the occasionalists.⁴⁶

2. In his reply to occasionalism, Thomas refers almost exclusively to philosophical sources, citing Averroes' critique of the Islamic occasionalists in his commentary on the ninth book of the *Metaphysics* and Maimonides' critique in the second book of

⁴¹ *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, p. 145, 117–22.

⁴² *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, pp. 145, 123–149, 203.

⁴³ *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, pp. 149, 204–151, 255.

⁴⁴ *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, p. 151, 256–59: 'Hiis igitur et consimilibus sermonibus liquet, quod nature non absolvuntur ab actionibus suis in eductionibus formarum de materiis, sed quod sunt agentes medii extractores seu eductores, et non tantum occasionum largitores.'

⁴⁵ *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 11, ed. Punzi, p. 151, 260–65: 'Scito igitur, quod intentio Augustini in sermonibus suis, cum dicit Deum formatorem et formam induci per ipsum in inferioribus, est non excludere ipsum ab operibus secundario agentium, immo potius attribuere principalitatem, cum causa primaria plus influat, secundum quod dictum est superius.'

⁴⁶ Dragos Calma, 'Sine secundaria: Thomas d'Aquin, Siger de Brabant et les débats sur l'occasionalisme,' in *Reading Proclus and the Book of Causes. Volume 1*, ed. Calma, pp. 268–300.

Dux neutrorum, and thus demonstrating an uncommon awareness and knowledge of the sources.

3. Thomas of York appears, however, to be concerned not so much with Islamic occasionalism, but with a form of Christian occasionalism that finds confirmation specifically in certain passages of Augustine's work. In order to exclude any possible occasionalist reading of Augustine, Thomas relies on the doctrines conveyed by the *Liber de causis*. In other words, in order to avoid falling into the error of defending a doctrine, such as occasionalism, which has been widely rejected by philosophers, Augustine must – in his view – be read through the filter of the first proposition of the *Liber*.

4. Thomas of York, instead of being the promoter of a form of authentic Augustinianism (as Longpré, Krzanic, Bonafede and Scully unanimously believed) that would reject the demands of philosophy (as Krzanic assumed), not only solves the apparent contradictions between Augustine and the philosophers in complete favor of the latter, but also claims the need to read Augustine through the filter of an exclusively philosophical text, namely the *Liber De causis*.

The Hermetic Tradition

The influence of the Hermetic tradition on Thomas of York has been the subject of a fundamental and well-documented study by David Porreca,⁴⁷ and not without reason. Thomas of York is one of the authors in the Middle Ages who referred most heavily to the authority of Hermetic philosophical texts. Moreover, in the Middle Ages, Thomas of York was the author who used a particular hermetic text, i.e. the *Asclepius*, most extensively. The number of *Asclepius*' citations in the *Sapientiale* (197) is particularly significant, especially when compared to the number of quotations from this Hermetic text in Albertus Magnus' *opera omnia* (87).⁴⁸ With very few exceptions, Hermes is mentioned by Thomas of York in a positive way, that is, in support of Thomas' own doctrine, as David Porreca clearly demonstrates in his study.⁴⁹ For this

⁴⁷ David Porreca, 'Hermes Trismegistus in Thomas of York: A 13th-Century Witness to the Prominence of an Ancient Sage,' *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 72 (2005), pp. 147–275. On this point see also Paolo Lucentini, 'Ermetismo e pensiero cristiano,' in *Universalità della ragione: Pluralità delle filosofie nel Medioevo. XII Congresso internazionale di filosofia medievale. Palermo 17–22 settembre 2007. Sessioni plenarie*, ed. Alessandro Musco (Palermo: Officina di studi medievali, 2012), pp. 195–214.

⁴⁸ Porreca, 'Hermes Trismegistus in Thomas of York,' p. 149. For the reception of hermetic texts in Albert the Great, see Loris Sturlese, 'Saint et magiciens: Albert le grand en face d'Hermès Trismégiste,' *Archives de Philosophie* 43:4 (1980), pp. 615–34; Loris Sturlese, 'Proclo ed Ermete in Germania da Alberto Magno a Bertoldo di Moosburg: Per una prospettiva di ricerca sulla cultura filosofica tedesca nel secolo delle sue origini (1250–1350),' in *Von Meister Dietrich zu Meister Eckhart*, ed. Kurt Flasch (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1984), pp. 22–33.

⁴⁹ Porreca, 'Hermes Trismegistus in Thomas of York,' p. 158.

reason, Porreca does not hesitate to define Thomas of York's *Sapientiale* as 'the high-point of the influence of Hermes Trismegistus during the Middle Ages.'⁵⁰

On one point the influence of *Asclepius* is, in my view, of special relevance. And this for at least two reasons: first, Thomas of York quotes a passage from *Asclepius* that had no particular fortune in the Middle Ages – I am referring to *Asclepius* 22; second, Thomas uses *Asclepius* 22 to describe the nature of the human being in a way that was very unusual for the medievals.⁵¹

Whereas other Latin medieval authors seem to have completely overlooked chapter 22 of *Asclepius*,⁵² Thomas of York quotes this text in three different contexts.

1. In chapter 40 of the first book, Thomas tries to reply to the arguments of those who deny providence because it is incompatible with the daily perceivable presence of evil.⁵³ Two interconnected elements characterise Thomas' solution: the first is the absence of Augustine; the second is the exclusive presence of philosophical sources. Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, Cicero, Seneca, Boethius and Trismegistus are the only authorities Thomas invokes in his defence of divine providence.

In chapters 16 and 22 of *Asclepius*, Thomas finds a very clear and valid answer to the age-old question *Unde malum?* Evil – maintains Thomas, following *Asclepius* to the letter – exists because God has granted human beings the possibility to sin. Sin is not, therefore, the result of a divine punishment inflicted on the *massa damnationis* that is humanity, but is the natural consequence of a (generous) free gift of God: free-

⁵⁰ Porreca, 'Hermes Trismegistus in Thomas of York,' p. 182.

⁵¹ I had the opportunity to examine Thomas' use of this text in Fiorella Retucci, 'The Human Being and its Dignity: Three Medieval Models,' in *Homo, Natura, Mundus: Human Beings and Their Relationships. Proceedings of the XIV International Congress of the Société Internationale pour l'étude de la Philosophie Médiévale, July 24–28, 2017, Porto Alegre, Brazil*, ed. Roberto Hofmeister Pich, Alfredo C. Storck, and Alfredo S. Culleton (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021-forthcoming).

⁵² No other cases of intensive use of *Asclepius* 22 in the Middle Ages are known to me. Antonella Sannino, 'La tradizione ermetica a Oxford nei secoli XIII e XIV: Ruggero Bacone e Tommaso Bradwardine,' *Studi filosofici* 18 (1995), pp. 23–56, esp. pp. 51–52 finds a probable quote from *Asclepius* 22 in *De causa Dei* by Thomas Brawardine. For a synthetic overview of the spread of *Asclepius* in the Middle Ages, see Claudio Moreschini, *Dall'Asclepio al Crater Hermetis: Studi sull'ermetismo latino tardo-antico e rinascimentale* (Pisa: Giardini, 1986); Claudio Moreschini, *Storia dell'ermetismo cristiano* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2000); Carlos Gilly, 'Die Überlieferung des Asclepius im Mittelalter,' in *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme: Gnosis, Hermetism and the Christian Tradition*, ed. Roelof van den Broek, Cis van Heertum (Amsterdam: In de Pelikaan, 2000), pp. 335–64; *Hermetism from Late Antiquity to Humanism: La tradizione ermetica dal mondo tardo antico all'umanesimo. Atti del Convegno nazionale di studi, Napoli, 20–24 novembre 2001*, ed. Paolo Lucentini, Ilaria Parri, Vittoria Perone Compagni (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 37–58.

⁵³ *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 40 (F, f. 45ra in marg. inf.; V, f. 35v in marg. inf.): 'In solvendo, quod videntur impugnare esse providentie, scilicet quod scelerati videntur prevalere contra innocentes, et unde probatur, quod omnis iniurans miser et miserior patiente, similiter in respondendo rationi, que videtur destruere providentiam per hoc, quod mala sunt in mundo, et quod homo potest peccare, et malum facere, et ideo datur causa permissionis mali, et tandem quomodo sit providentia de bonis et malis.'

dom. The human being, free to sin, is a better being than other creatures which have no such special privilege. The human being is also better than the angelic creatures that are immortal and are, therefore, not free to sin. Only the human being is, in fact, granted the freedom to choose to follow his mortal nature, by sinning, or his divine one, by aspiring to immortality. Since the human being is composed of a twofold nature, a mortal and a divine one, this is the only creature that is allowed the freedom to choose and construct its own destiny.⁵⁴ Those who believe – Thomas continues – that evil is to be attributed to privation or matter do not grasp the real nature of the problem. Matter in itself is neither evil nor sinful, but rather the possibility of doing evil (*possibilitas ad malum*) and the possibility to sin (*ad peccandum potestas*).⁵⁵ But it is precisely this possibility, which is the root of human freedom, that confirms the superiority of the human being over all other creatures, including immortal ones.

2. In the second book, from chapter 11 onwards, Thomas describes in detail the characteristics of matter and form. In chapter 16, after describing the characteristics of matter and concluding that matter is ontologically good because it derives from God, Thomas introduces two interconnected questions: how do sins depend on matter, since according to some wise ones they depend on the soul or on free will? And if matter is the cause of evil and corruption, why did God provide the human being with a body, and therefore with matter?⁵⁶ For Thomas of York, the answer to these

54 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 40 (F, f. 45ra–b; R, f. 56rb; V, f. 36ra): ‘Tertio autem movet homines ad negandum providentiam, quia videlicet non omnes efficit bonos Deus. Malos enim multos constat esse, quod non videtur consonum providentie sapientissimi et summi benivoli provisoris. (...) Rationem autem illam solvit idem Trismegistus in eodem. Manifestavit, quare creavit Deus homines potentes fieri malos et unde oritur malitia in mundo. (...) Fecit igitur Deus hominem peccare potentem, quia sic homo conditus melior effectus est, secundum quod dicit idem in eodem: “Fecit” – inquit – “hominem ex parte corruptiore mundi et ex divina,” hoc est immortalis, natura quantum ad animam. “Eterna” – inquit – “lege constituit, ut ex animalibus cunctis de sola ratione disciplinaque cognoscens, per que vitia corporum homines avertere atque abalienare potuissent, ipsos ad intentionem spemque immortalitatis protendens. Bonum igitur hominem et qui possit immortalis esse ex utraque natura composuit, divina atque mortali, et sic compositum hominem per voluntatem Dei constitutum esse meliorem diis, qui sunt ex sola immortalis natura formati, etc.” Vult enim hominem esse meliorem, quod ex tali natura constitutus est, qui mori potest et peccare, quam dii, qui hoc non possunt.’

55 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 40 (F, f. 45rb; R, f. 56rb–va; V, f. 36ra): ‘Possibilitas autem mali in homine ponitur secundum philosophantes in divinis, quod est de nichilo; secundum philosophantes vero in mundanis ponitur in materia, sicut dicit Avicenna IX *Metaphysice* cap. 6, quod “malum sequitur materiam.” (...) Oportet autem hoc sane intelligere, non quod materia sit causa necessario malum inducens, sed possibilitas ad malum est ex esse possibili, quod sequitur materiam. Nam in eo, in quo non est materia, non est possibilitas, ut nomen materie extendamus ad omne id, quod non est forma purissima et simplicissima, qualis in solo creatore invenitur. In quo autem non est possibilitas, non est ad peccandum potestas.’

56 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber II, c. 16 (F, ff. 73vb–74ra; R, f. 83va–b; V, f. 51ra): ‘Quomodo peccata sequuntur materiam cum, secundum aliquos sapientes, sequantur animum sive liberum arbitrium? (...) Amplius si materia qualitercumque sit causa mali seu corruptionis et maxime hec turbida et tenebrosa, sicut dictum est, non immerito queri potest quare talem dedit Deus homini.’

questions is crystal clear. From the body, the human being does not derive the necessity to do evil, but only the possibility, and therefore the freedom to sin (by succumbing to the vices of the body) or not to sin (by alienating oneself from the impulses of the flesh and leaning towards immortality). Matter does not necessarily force the human being to sin: on the contrary, it provides an opportunity for the constant exercise of the soul (*ad anime exercitium*) and the possibility of increasing the merits of the human being (*propter augmentum meriti*).⁵⁷

Relying on the *Asclepius*, Thomas discovers a new and positive dimension of corporeity, which insofar as it affords the occasion and possibility to (not) sin, equips the human being to freely choose his divine part and to pursue the goal of the human being insofar as it is human: to comprehend the intelligibles and to choose honorable things.

3. *Asclepius* 22 is mentioned again in chapter 16 of the third book within the discussion of the final cause. Thomas has no doubt that God is not only the efficient, but also the final cause of all things. More difficult for him, however, is the question whether there is some other end to all things apart from God (*an aliquis alius sit finis ceterorum omnium preter ipsum*). Once again, Hermes' words seem to be decisive for the English Franciscan. Being equipped with a double nature, corporeal and mortal on the one hand, divine on the other, the human being contains all things in itself, like a world in miniature (*minor mundus*) or a microcosm (*microcosmus*). The body does not in any way undermine the ontological superiority of the human being over all other creatures. On the contrary, it is its essential condition. Indeed, the co-existence of a divine immortal nature and a corporeal mortal one suits the human being for its unique and exalted role in comparison with the rest of creation, namely to be the end of all other creatures.⁵⁸

57 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber II, c. 16 (F, f. 74ra; R, f. 83vb; V, f. 51va – b): 'Ex hoc autem planum est, quod non erit homini necessitas mali operandi ex corpore. Verum si queras quare sic copulavit Deus formam nobilem cum materia tali, respondet Trismegistus *Ad Asclepium*, quod homo sic melior constitutus est ex mortali et immortalis natura, quare per hoc quod compositus est ex corruptibili et mortali natura potuit vitia corporum avertere atque abalienare et ad intentionem spemque immortalitatis protendere. Secundum Rabbi Moysem in eodem quo supra, dedit Deus talem materiam homini ad anime exercitium et ad frangendum vires istius materie et diminuere ipsas in concupiscibilis earum et non admittere nisi quantum necessitas exigit. Et sic intelligat intelligibilia et eligat ex eis honorabilia et magis eligenda. Et hec est scientia creatoris et angelorum et aliorum operum eius secundum posse suum. Hic est enim finis hominis inquantum homo, sicut ipse dicit. Summa igitur sermonis est, quod talis materia data est propter augmentum meriti.'

58 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber III, c. 16, ed. Punzi, pp. 224, 190 – 225, 211: 'Verum an aliquis alius sit finis ceterorum omnium preter ipsum questio est non pretermittenda. (...) Amplius numquid non secundum sapientiam Christianorum est homo universitas, et ideo dicitur omnis creatura et minor mundus seu microcosmus? Quomodo igitur non erit finis omnium, cum contineat omnia secundum rationem finis, que supra dicta est? Preterea numquid non ipse ultimo creatus est secundum sapientiam Christianorum tamquam omnium perfectio et consummatio? Quod si sic est, quomodo non erit finis omnium? Ex rationibus Trismegisti *Ad Asclepium* videtur id ipsum, cum vult, quod homo sit animal optimum nomine animalium comprehendens omnes species rationales more Plato-

To sum up: thanks to his in-depth reading of *Asclepius* 22, Thomas of York discovers a new dimension of corporeity. Matter and body acquire a new value and a new dignity in the *Sapientiale*. Far from an impediment on the path to virtue, the body becomes a tool for exercising the soul, an opportunity to increase merit and an essential condition for the ontological superiority of the human being over all other creatures, including angels.⁵⁹ Matter and body allow the human being not only to be, together with God, the final cause of creation, but also to escape the regime of necessity that rules all other creatures, including immortal ones. Thanks to the body, the human being lives and operates in the realm of possibility, that is, of freedom. The realization of the human being and the attainment of immortality thus become human – and only human – achievements, completely independent of any pre-established divine plan. *Asclepius* 22, in Thomas' view, legitimizes the claims of the human being to self-constitute himself as a divine human being (*homo divinus*),⁶⁰ freely choosing to follow his own immortal nature and abandoning the instincts of his mortal one. Far from passively inspired by the traditionalism of Saint Augustine, Anselm and Saint Bernard, Thomas of York seems to me to be very close to what Eugenio Garin has identified as the leitmotif of Pico's *Oratio de hominis dignitate*: what the human being is must depend, above all, on what the human being does and chooses.

Averroes

Thomas of York constantly refers to Averroes' authority in his work. The name of Averroes appears more than 1,000 times in the *Sapientiale*. There are also many literal but implicit quotations from Averroes' works. With very few exceptions, Averroes is called upon only to support Thomas' own doctrines. Thomas actually criticizes Averroes only with reference to the doctrine of the eternity of the world. To Averroes' eternalistic model, however, Thomas does not reply by following Augustine, but by referring to the solution that Moses Maimonides had given to the problem.

Thomas does not read or cite Averroes' doctrines with any prejudice. Rather, it is in Averroes that Thomas of York finds confirmation that the philosophers were able

nicorum. Et ne credas obstare sue optimitati, quod habet in sui compositione naturam corpoream et mortalem, dicit quod ex hoc homo constitutus est melior, quod videlicet ex divina corporea mortali-que natura constitutus est. Quare videtur ex hiis, quod homo sit melior ceteris creaturis et ob hoc finis earum.'

⁵⁹ See here, the text in n. 54 above: 'Bonum igitur hominem et qui possit immortalis esse ex utraque natura composuit, divina atque mortali, et sic compositum hominem per voluntatem Dei constitutum esse meliorem diis, qui sunt ex sola immortalis natura formati, etc. Vult enim hominem esse meliorem, quod ex tali natura constitutus est, qui mori potest et peccare, quam dii, qui hoc non possunt.' My conjecture is that here, where *Asclepius* speaks of gods of immortal nature, Thomas is referring to angels.

⁶⁰ See text in n. 74 below.

to penetrate the Trinitarian mysteries. According to Thomas, the Commentator on Aristotle, together with Porphyry, Hermes, Seneca, Cicero, and Aethicus Ister, clearly spoke of the Holy Spirit.⁶¹

Thomas somehow defends Averroes even when the latter would seem to deny God a knowledge of singular things. Averroes – as Thomas of York explains – only reported (*recitat*) the opinion, without defending it, of some others (*aliqui*), whose identity is not disclosed.⁶² Moreover, Averroes' position on the divine knowledge of individual things is – according to Thomas – fallacious only from a linguistic, formal, and not real point of view (*non tantum in re sed sermone*).⁶³

Thomas relies on Averroes' authority, even quoting from a text that remained almost completely neglected by the medievals: the prologue to the VIII book of the *Physics*.

As many scholars have already noted,⁶⁴ few Latin medievals followed Averroes on this point. The same manuscript and printed tradition of Averroes' prologue also mirrors the perplexity that this text must have provoked in its medieval reader.

The medieval copyists who had to reproduce this text were probably in trouble. The manuscript tradition of the Prologue is indeed very large (a total of 34 witnesses⁶⁵), though far from uniform. The Prologue is transmitted in 33 of the 50 complete

61 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 14 (F, f. 14va; V, ff. 11vb-12ra; R, ff. 27vb-28ra): 'De tertia persona locuti sunt, licet non adeo manifeste. (...) Istam autem personam tertiam, quam nominavit mediam Porphyrius, nominat nomine proprio Trismegistus, videlicet nomine "spiritus", cum dicit *Ad Asclepium*: "Fuit nequit deus et hyle, quem Grece mundum credimus et mundo concomitabatur spiritus vel inerat mundo spiritus" (...). Ex quibus omnibus liquet, quod predicta non possunt intelligi de spiritu creato, quia nullus gubernat, implet et vivificat omnia, nisi divinus Spiritus, secundum quod premitit Cicero *De natura deorum* II capitulo 15 de operationibus huius spiritus (...). Ethicus philosophus Cosmographus in sua *Cosmografia*, quam transtulit beatus Ieronimus, luculenter exprimit personas tres. (...) Unde et Trinitatem per hanc viam insinuans Porphyrius (...). Habes igitur ex hoc sermone Patrem et Filium et voluntatem, quam superius dixit amborum medium, sicut manifestum est ex Augustino *De civitate Dei* X. Huic autem appropriationi, per quam ostenditur Trinitas personarum in summo Spiritu, attestatur Averroes *Super XI Philosophie prime capitulo* 15.'

62 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 24 (F, f. 30va; V, f. 24rb; R, f. 42vb): 'Errorem autem alium, quo dixerunt aliqui scire Deum omnia scientia universali et non particulari, recitat Averroes *Super XI Prime philosophie* cap. 24, et hic error destruitur per tres propositiones.'

63 *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 25 (F, f. 30vb; V, f. 24va; R, f. 43ra): 'Vide ex his sermonibus quomodo non tantum in re, sed sermone expressus est sermo Averrois, quomodo sciat singularia.'

64 Mario Grignaschi, 'Indagine sui passi del "Commento" suscettibili di aver promosso la formazione di un averroismo politico,' in *L'averroismo in Italia* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1979), pp. 237–88, esp. pp. 258–62; Horst Schmiejia, 'Drei Prologen im grossen Physikkommentar des Averroes,' in *Aristotelisches Erbe im arabisch-lateinischen Mittelalter*, ed. Albert Zimmermann (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1986), pp. 175–89; Luca Bianchi, 'Filosofi, uomini e bruti: Note per la storia di un'antropologia "averroista",' in *Studi sull'Aristotelismo del Rinascimento* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2003), pp. 41–61, esp. pp. 50–52.

65 Schmiejia counts only 33 manuscripts that transmit the text of the prologue. See Schmiejia, 'Drei Prologen im grossen Physikkommentar des Averroes,' p. 185.

manuscripts that transmit Averroes' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. A further witness (Vatican City, Barb. Lat. 165), datable to the 13th century, which transmits, among other texts, Latin translations of many Aristotelian works, presents on the last folio (f. 415r) Averroes' Prologue to the third and eighth book of the *Physics*.⁶⁶ Of the 33 manuscripts that transmit this text, 14 place it at the end of the seventh book without any particular indication, while two manuscripts indicate the prologue as the last commentary (number 40) of book VII; 11 MSS present the prologue as the beginning of the eighth book and clarify through marginal notes that it is the *Prologus super octavum Physicorum Averrois*; one manuscript presents the text at the end of book VIII, although through a note in the upper margin by a later hand the text is inserted at the beginning of book VIII; five further manuscripts contain the prologue not in the body of the main text, but in the margins.

No less confusing is the situation in the printed editions of Averroes' commentary.⁶⁷ The text is found in the first printed edition by Laurentius Canotius of Padua (1472) and in the edition printed at Venice by Nicolettus Vernias (1483). In both editions the text is placed as the very beginning of book VIII. The edition printed at Venice by Bernardinus Stagninus (1489) inserted the text at the end of book VII, immediately after the commentary 39. Following Paolus Israelita's indication, the editors of the edition published at Venice in 1550–52 decided, by contrast, to omit the text of the prologue, specifying in an editorial note the reasons for their choice.⁶⁸ For the editors, Averroes' so-called prologue to the eighth book of the *Physics* was nothing more than an illegitimate, superfluous, and erroneous repetition of the prologue to the first book. For this reason, the editors decided to correct the text, completely eliminating the prologue to the eighth book, but then reusing part of it in the prologue to the first book. The final part of the prologue to the eighth book (from *Et*

⁶⁶ See *Aristotele Latinus: Codices. Pars Posterior*, ed. Lorenzo Minio-Paluello (Cambridge: Typis Aca-
demiae, 1955), n. 1717, pp. 1162–64.

⁶⁷ For humanist and Renaissance editions of Averroes' Commentaries, see. F. Edward Cranz, 'E-
ditions of the Latin Aristotle accompanied by the Commentaries of Averroes,' in *Philosophy and Human-
ism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. Edward P. Mahoney (New York: Colum-
bia University Press, 1976), pp. 116–28; Jill Kraje, 'The Printing History of Aristotle in the Fifteenth
Century: A Bibliographical Approach to Renaissance Philosophy,' *Renaissance Studies* 9:2 (1995),
pp. 189–211.

⁶⁸ See *Aristotelis Stagiritae De physico auditu libri octo cum Averrois Cordubensis variis in eosdem
commentariis*, Venetiis Apud Iuntas, 1500, f. 153vb: 'In huius Septimi Libri fine, in impressis hactenus
codicibus omnibus legebatur ad verbum ea pars proemii ipsius Averrois, Primi, Physicorum, incipi-
ens, Utilitas autem, usque ad illud, Ordo vero, quam, veluti illegitime, superflue, ac vitiose hoc in loco
posita, abscidimus, praecipue autem ad id Pauli Israelitae, Hebraei, viri doctissimi sententia coadiu-
vante, nonnullisque Antiquis codicibus, eam non legentibus.' The same annotation is in the Giunta's
edition of 1562 (reprinted anastatically by Minerva at Frankfurt in 1962), f. 337vb.

cum aliquis to intentione) became, indeed, in Junta's edition, the central part of the prologue to the first book.⁶⁹

Probably because of the chaotic history of the textual tradition, the traces of circulation of this text in the Latin Middle Ages are very scarce. The well-known medieval florilegium *Auctoritates Aristotelis* briefly mentions the prologue, with reference to the theme of the equivocal nature of the word 'human being': 'In prologo hujus libri VIII, hoc nomen homo dicitur aequivoce de eo qui est perfectus per scientias speculativas et de aliis hominibus, hoc est de sciente et ignorante.'⁷⁰

A longer and more articulate quotation from this text occurs in the *Philosophia* written by Alberich of Reims: 'Nam, ut ait Auerrois in prologo octauis Phisicorum, esse hominis ex sui ultima perfectione uel completionem est ipsum esse perfectum per scientias speculativas; estimatur enim, ut ibidem dicit, quod hoc nomen homo aequivoce dicitur de homine perfecto per scientias speculativas et de aliis, sicut animal dicitur aequivoce de animali homine et de picto.'⁷¹

Finally, a quick but literal quote from the prologue is also found in Henry Bate's *Speculum divinum*.⁷²

On closer inspection, in all the cases mentioned above, the prologue to the eighth book of the *Physics* is always and exclusively used to support the idea that the word *homo* is attributed equivocally to philosophers and non-philosophers alike. Relying on Averroes' authority, the anonymous compiler of the *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, Alberich of Reims, Oliver Brito, and Henry Bate thus argued for the existence of internal differences within humankind, a doctrine that – as Luca Bianchi has demonstrated – the medievals generally preferred to avoid.⁷³

⁶⁹ I do not address here the question whether the prologue to book I and the prologue to book VIII are two different translations, made by two different translators (Theodore of Antioch and Michael Scotus), of the same text, as argued by Grignaschi, 'Indagine sui passi del "Comento",' pp. 258–59, or whether they are completely different texts, as Schmiejka, 'Drei Prologen im grossen Physikkommentar des Averroes,' p. 185, seems to argue.

⁷⁰ *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse (Louvain: Publications universitaires; Paris: Bêatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1974), n. 3, 229, p. 159, 72–74.

⁷¹ Alberich of Reims, *Philosophia*, in René A. Gauthier, 'Notes sur Siger de Brabant II: Siger en 1272–1275, Aubry de Reims et la scission des Normands,' *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 68:1 (1984), p. 29, 12–17 in pp. 3–49. On Alberich and his *fiducia philosophandi*, see: Irene Zavattero, 'L'entusiasmo per la filosofia di Aubry di Reims,' in *Metamorfosi della filosofia antica: Studi in onore di P. Gualtieri*, ed. Ferdinando Abbri (Arezzo: Dipartimento di Studi Storico-sociali e filosofici [Università di Siena], 2006), pp. 9–18. Gauthier points out that the same quote is also in Oliver Brito, MS Oxford, Corpus Christi College 283, f. 151vb (see Gauthier, 'Notes sur Siger de Brabant,' p. 29).

⁷² Henry Bate, *Speculum divinum et quorundam naturalium: Parts VI–VII: On the Unity of Intellect: On the Platonic Doctrine of the Ideas*, ed. Carlos Steel, Emiel Van der Vyver (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), VI, c. 8, p. 27, 93–96: 'Unde Commentator in Prologo 8 Phisicorum, de quibusdam, inquit, hominibus aequivoce dicitur hoc nomen "homo" sicut dicitur de homine vivo et mortuo, immo sicut dicitur de animali rationali et picto.'

⁷³ Bianchi, 'Filosofi, uomini e bruti,' p. 115.

In his *Sapientiale*, Thomas of York inherits from Averroes' prologue the reading on the equivocation of the word 'human being'. This same conclusion emerges again when Thomas quotes a passage from the commentary on the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Together with Michael of Ephesus, Thomas establishes a clear distinction between two kinds of humanity: a true humanity, dedicated to speculation and to that divine part which is the intellect, and a derived, secondary humanity, represented by the human being who is composed of body and soul.⁷⁴

But that is not all: Thomas of York is, actually, the only author known to me who in the Latin Middle Ages used almost entirely and explicitly the prologue to the eighth book of the *Physics*, as the synopsis below tries to show.

Averroes, *Phys.*, VIII, Prologus⁷⁵

Thomas of York, *Sapientiale*

liber I, c. 1 (F, f. 1vb; R, f. 13vb; V, f. 2va)

Utilitas autem istius scientiae est pars utilitatis scientiae speculativae et declaratum est in scientia morali, scilicet quae considerat de actionibus voluntariis quod esse hominis in sua ultima perfectione est ipsum esse perfectum per scientias speculativas, et quod ista dispositio est ultima fortunitas, et secundum fatuos vita aeterna, et apparet in illa scientia quod hoc nomen homo dicitur aequivoce de eo, qui perfectus est per scientias speculativas et de aliis hominibus, et hoc secundum insipientes philosophos sicut dicitur de homine vivo et mortuo, immo sicut dicitur de animali rationali et picto.

Hec est enim ultima fortunitas, videlicet esse perfectum ultima perfectione per scientias speculativas secundum Averroem super principium VIII *Physicorum*. Et ideo dicit, quod homo dicitur quasi aequivoce de tali homine et de aliis hominibus, et hanc fortunatatem dicit esse vitam eternam secundum fatuos.

Cum tamen secundum vere sapientes completa visio veritas sit vita eterna, sicut docuit piissimus magister Christianorum, unde, cum sapientia sit beatificativa, quo plus anima a curis et cupiditatibus absolutior sapientiam acquisiverit, eo magis compos est beatitudinis.

liber I, c. 1 (F, f. 1va; R, f. 13va; V, f. 2rb-va)

Preterea ipsa est virtutum insertiva, secundum quod dixit Alexander, prout recitat Averroes super principium VIII *Physicorum*, quod cognitionem scientiarum speculativarum sequuntur boni mores, quia, cum artifices istarum scientiarum

Cum hoc quod sequitur cognitionem scientiarum speculativarum de moribus bonis, necesse est, cum artifices istarum scientiarum fuerint secun-

⁷⁴ *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, cap. 44 (F, f. 48rb; V, f. 38va; R, f. 59rb): 'Tres apparent operationes hominis secundum expositionem Commentatoris: propria, et hec est secundum virtutem actio, magis propria, et hec est operatio, que est politica felicitas, propriatissima, et hec est speculatio eius, quod in nobis est optimum, et hoc est intellectus, qui est primus et verus intellectualis et divinus homo, quem Plato nominat vitam rationalem, respectu cuius secundario homo est ille, qui est ex anima et corpore.'

⁷⁵ Here I use the text published by Schmiejka, 'Drei Prologen im grossen Physikkommentar des Averroes,' pp. 185–88.

*Continued*Averroes, *Phys.*, VIII, Prologus⁷⁵

dum cursum naturalem, necesse est, ut sint virtuosī omnibus modis virtutum moralium ut iustitia et castitate et audacia et magnanimitate et liberalitate et veracitate et aliis virtutibus.

Et Alexander in prohemio istius libri declaravit quomodo sequuntur istae virtutes ex cognitione istarum scientiarum. Nam cum aliquis sciverit parvitatem suae vitae in respectu istius esse aeterni et motus continui et quod proportio suae vitae in respectu temporis aeterni est sicut proportio minimi finiti ad infinitum, non cupiet vitam, quare erit audax. Et similiter cum sciverit quod mors est de necessitate materiae et maxime cum acquisiverit humanam perfectionem, tunc enim percipiet in aliqua hora quod melius est ei mors quam vita, sicut fecit Socrates Athenis, licet aestimetur quod Socrates non distinxerit inter vias proprias et communes in scientiis, quia nitabatur procedere via propria cum vulgo.

Et est manifestum quod debent esse iusti et casti, quoniam cum sciverint naturam iustitiae existentis in substantia entium, diligunt se assimilari illi naturae.

Et similiter, cum sciverint vilitatem appetitivum et quod non sunt de numero dispositionum necessarium in permanentia hominis nedum ut sint perfectiones, sed sunt accidentia de necessitate materiae, expellent eas a se omnino et odient eas maximo odio, et sic erunt casti, retinentes leges divinas et oboedientes legibus naturalibus.

Et est manifestum etiam quod erunt liberales, quoniam reputant pecuniam vilem, et erunt magnanimi, diligentes veritatem in sermone et actione.

Thomas of York, *Sapientiale*

fuerint secundum cursum naturalem, necesse est, ut sint virtuosī omnibus modis virtutum moralium ut iustitia, castitate, audacia, magnanimitate, liberalitate et veracitate et aliis virtutibus.

Nam sicut dicit, ex scientia proportionis huius vite ad eternam vitam, istam non cupiet homo et ideo erit audax.

liber I, c. 1 (F, f. 1va; R, f. 13va; V, f. 2r)

Preterea est contemptus huius vite generativa, sicut dixit Alexander, prout recitat Averroes super principium VIII *Physicorum* in prologo, quod ex cognitione scientiarum scitur parvitas huius vite respectu esse eterni et quod eius proportio ad ipsam est sicut proportio minimi finiti ad infinitum, unde non cupiet homo vitam. Maxime cum acquisiverit humanam perfectionem, tunc enim percipiet in aliqua hora, quod melior est ei mors quam vita, sicut fecit Socrates Athenis, et vilem habebit pecuniam.⁷⁶

Et cum sciverint homines naturam iustitiae existentis in substantia entium, diligunt se assimilari illi nature.

Et cum sciverint vilitates appetitivum, expellent eas a se omnino et odio habebunt odio maximo, et sic erunt casti, retinentes leges divinas et oboedientes legibus naturalibus.

Et erunt liberales, quoniam reputabunt pecuniam vilem, et erunt magnanimi, diligentes veritatem in sermone et actione.

⁷⁶ See also *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber II, c. 16 (F, f. 73va): ‘Et propterea – ut infert – omnis corruptio vel amissio vel imperfectio non est nisi propter materiam, adeo quod mors est secundum ipsos de necessitate materie et hominum et animalium, secundum quod dicit Averroes super principium VIII *Physicorum* in prologo. Et propter hoc – ut aiunt – cum aliquis adquisierit perfectionem humanam, percipiet in illa hora, quod melior est ei mors quam vita.’

Continued

Averroes, <i>Phys.</i> , VIII, Prologus ⁷⁵	Thomas of York, <i>Sapientiale</i>
<p><u>Sed si aliquis dixerit quod nos videmus plures artifices istarum scientiarum in contraria dispositione, dicendum est quod hoc accidit eis ex dispositione innaturali</u>, et hoc potes scire ex hoc quod Alexander et alii ratiocinantur super hoc, scilicet quod omnes philosophi sunt studiosi sicut erant in suo tempore. Et cum aliquis perscrutatus fuerit de hac dispositione, inveniet quod illa perfectio, quam expectant in assuetudine hominum, in qua nutriebantur, valde est remota ab hac perfectione. Et non solummodo accidit hoc eis, sed credunt ex modo hominum et consuetudine, in qua nutriebantur, quod hec perfectio est valde vilis, et hoc non accidit eis ex lege, sed corrumpentibus eam.</p> <p>Accidit igitur istis hominibus, cum incipiunt speculari contempnere illum modum perfectionis, quem expectabant, sed cum desperaverint pervenire ad hanc perfectionem et viderint omnes homines contempnere eam et credere quod expectantes eam non debent esse pars civitatis aut credunt quod omnia dicta de hac perfectione forte sunt similia dictis de illa prima perfectione, quam expulerunt, scilicet illam, in qua nutriebantur.</p> <p>Et tales sunt plures istius temporis, scilicet illi, qui sunt dialectici. Tunc omnino <u>declinabuntur ad appetitus et accidet eis dispositio innaturalis adeo quod non debent esse omnino pars civitatis, quoniam cum eis non potest fieri contractus civilis neque amicitia humana neque utilitas alterius, sed omnes actiones eorum sunt ad seipsum et ideo philosophia in hoc tempore abhorretur</u>, et iam exivimus a nostra intentione.</p>	<p><u>Quod, si quis dicat plures artifices scientiarum in contraria esse dispositione, dicendum est, quod hoc eis accidit ex dispositione innaturali.</u></p> <p><i>liber I, c. 2 (F, f. 2vb; R, f. 14vb; V, f. 3rb)</i></p> <p>Nam sicut vult Averroes <i>Super VIII Physicorum</i> in principio, quod, <u>cum declinant homines ad appetitus, accidit eis dispositio innaturalis, et ideo contempnunt philosophiam.</u> Unde non debent esse pars civitatis nec cum eis fieri contractus civilis nec amicitia humana neque utilitas alterius, quia omnes actiones eorum sunt ad ipsos et ideo – ut ait – abhorretur philosophia in hoc tempore.</p>

In quoting this text, Thomas is convinced that Averroes is right on many points.

1. First of all, Thomas shares with Averroes the idea that the final perfection of the human being can be achieved through the speculative sciences.

2. Averroes believes that this final perfection (*ultima fortunitas*) is what some fools call eternal life. Although Thomas quotes this (in my opinion explosive) passage, he does not follow Averroes on this point, but corrects him slightly: eternal life consists, as the wise say, in the complete vision of the truth. However, the more the soul distances itself from bodily impulses and gains wisdom, the more it prepares itself for achieving beatitude (*quo plus anima a curis et cupiditatibus abso-*

lutior sapientiam acquisiverit, eo magis compos est beatitudinis). Thomas is therefore certainly more cautious than Averroes, but he is nonetheless the spokesman for an impudent – and in some ways dangerous – enthusiasm for philosophy. Wisdom, or rather perfection in the study of the speculative sciences, not only guarantees moral rectitude, but in a certain way prepares one for beatitude, or eternal life.⁷⁷ A few years after the composition of the *Sapientiale*, Bishop Etienne Tempier did not hesitate to condemn this doctrine.⁷⁸ Thomas, on the contrary, has no doubt that the utility of the sciences consists precisely in the acquisition of human perfection, which prepares and predisposes *in effectu* for the achievement of future happiness: ‘Utilitas omnium scientiarum est acquisitio perfectionis humane preparantis eam in effectu ad futuram felicitatem.’⁷⁹ Thomas of York, moreover, sees no danger in identifying speculative happiness with the knowledge of separate substances – described by Averroes in his commentary on the ninth book of *Metaphysics* – and with eternal life – mentioned in John’s Gospel.⁸⁰

3. Finally, from the prologue to the eighth book of the *Physics*, Thomas derives the idea that the human being remains, by virtue of the intellectual faculty alone, responsible for the perfection of his nature: thanks to the knowledge of the speculative sciences, the human being can realize its humanity and achieve perfection in all the moral virtues, none excluded. In the exercise of rationality consists, therefore, the metaphysical and moral fulfilment of the human being, since the human being in the proper sense is only the intellectual one. Deviating from philosophy, on the other hand, is a totally unnatural tendency of the human being, who thereby loses its rightful place within proper humanity.

⁷⁷ The idea that speculation makes the human being fit for happiness returns again in the *Sapientiale*, this time on the basis of Gundissalinus and Avicenna: See *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 45 (F, f. 49va; R, f. 60rb–va; V, f. 33va): ‘Istud idem dicit Gundissalinus in libro suo *De anima*, quod anima, dum est in corpore, non potest recipere intelligentiam agentem subito, cum autem liberatur a corpore, tunc poterit coniungi eidem et inveniet in ea pulchritudinem intelligibilem et delectationem. Per habitudinem verumptamen, quia speculatio facit aptitudinem ad felicitatem, unde speculator quanto plus addiderit speculationis, tanto plus addetur aptitudo ad felicitatem, sicut dicit Avicenna tract. IX.’

⁷⁸ See *La condamnation Parisienne de 1277*, ed. Piché, art. 156, p. 126: ‘Quod homo ordinatus quantum ad intellectum et affectum, sicut potest sufficienter esse per virtutes intellectuales et alias morales de quibus loquitur philosophus in ethicis, est sufficienter dispositus ad felicitatem eternam.’

⁷⁹ *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 1 (F, f. 1va; R, f. 13va; V, f. 2va). Thomas here quotes Avicenna, *Liber de Philosophia prima sive Scientia divina*, 3 vols, ed. S. van Riet (Louvain: Peeters; Leiden: Brill, 1977–83), pp. 18, 41–19, 43.

⁸⁰ *Thomae Eboracensis Sapientiale*, liber I, c. 44 (F, f. 48rb; R, f. 59rb; V, f. 38va): ‘Cum igitur perfecta felicitas sit in speculatione, et hec non in quorumcumque, sed optimorum, et divina sunt optima, quare in divinorum speculatione erit felicitas, sicut manifestum est ex Aristotele X cap. 10. Deum igitur inspicere est summa felicitas et beatitudo, secundum quod dicit Averroes *Super IX Philosophie prime* cap. 10, quod fortunitas maxima est inspicere intellectum separatum primum. Et hec speculatio est intellectus per potentiam, quam habet apud suam ultimam perfectionem. Hec non est aliud, quam quod dicit Theologus Iohannes in *Ioh.* 17: Hec est vita eterna, cognoscere te etc.’

Conclusion

Cristoforo Krzanic was convinced that ‘Thomas of York was the first – and all the Franciscan masters followed him – who chose to absorb traditional philosophy in order not to touch the sanctity of dogmas with the acceptance of Aristotelianism. Thomas was a Franciscan and could not choose otherwise, he could not prefer Aristotle to Augustine. It is always theology that appears in every statement of Franciscan thought.’⁸¹

It is too early – and it would go far beyond the limits of this study – to evaluate the role played by Thomas of York in establishing a Franciscan philosophical tradition along the lines of Augustine’s legacy. On some points, however, the historiographic category of ‘authentic Augustinianism’, too often applied to Thomas of York’s thought, should in my opinion be reviewed. Thomas of York is a careful and pioneering reader of texts that had little or no circulation in the Middle Ages. He uses these texts, along with many others, for a single purpose: to legitimize, on the one hand, the claims of philosophy to be an all-encompassing science of reality and a valid science of the divine, and on the other, the aspirations of human beings to freely construct their own destiny, preparing themselves, with the help of philosophy, for future happiness.

81 Krzanic, ‘Grandi lottatori contro l’Averroismo,’ pp. 167–68.