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ALBERTUS MAGNUS AND 'AVENZORETH'  
(IBN ZUR'Ā, D. 1008): LEGEND OR REALITY?

«Ricorda Baudolino... Il Presbyter Johannes... La via dell'Oriente...»  
«Basta che sia vero, e noi lo mettiamo», aveva detto Baudolino,  
«l'importante è non raccontare favole»  
(U. Eco, *Baudolino*)

Some of Albertus Magnus' commentaries on Aristotle contain references to an unidentified author. Albertus calls him «Avenzoreth», according to what seems the most likely spelling of his name given by the manuscripts, and credits him with a very pessimistic view on the beastly nature of man and the lack of freedom in human condition. The identity of this author has remained uncertain so far<sup>1</sup>. In Albertus' report, Avenzoreth shows legendary traits: he is presented as a priest, who lived in the East, and pronounced a severe admonition against mankind. Despite this seemingly mythical profile, I wish to show that Avenzoreth corresponds to an Arabic author who really existed: there are good reasons to identify him with a theologian and philosopher active in Baghdad at the turn between the tenth and the eleventh century, Abū 'Alī 'Isā Ibn Zur'ā.

The quotations of Avenzoreth in Albertus Magnus are interesting for three main reasons. 1) This author is otherwise unknown in Latin philosophy: to the best of my knowledge, he is quoted by name only by Albertus Magnus. If, as I think, Avenzoreth is not the fruit of

1. Relevant information can be found in T. Ricklin, «Von den *beatiores philosophi* zum *optimus status hominis*. Zur Entradikalisierung der radikalen Aristoteliker», in *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. J. Aertsens, A. Speer, Berlin, New York 2000 (Miscellanea Medievalia, 27), 217-30 (221-22), and T.W. Köhler, *Grundlagen des philosophisch-anthropologischen Diskurses im dreizehnten Jahrhundert*, Leiden, Köln 2000, 616-19. Ricklin contends that «nicht klar ist, woher Albert das fragliche Zitat hat» (222 n. 23).

Albertus' fantasy, but can be correctly identified with a real Arab thinker, the range of the Arabic sources available to Latin readers in the thirteenth century can be enlarged and extended in a new direction. 2) The doctrine that Albertus ascribes to Avenzoreth in these quotations concerns ethics, but is very original with respect to the Greek ethical tradition, despite a generic dependence on Aristotelian patterns. 3) The sentence of Avenzoreth reported by Albertus spread in Latin philosophy under a different and much more famous name, that of Averroes. This misattribution was originated by a scribal error in the manuscripts of Albertus' works: the vicissitudes of this false ascription provide therefore a map of Albertus' influence on subsequent thinkers, shedding light on the circulation of the codices of his works.

I came across Avenzoreth while compiling an inventory of the Arabic sources of Albertus Magnus' commentary on the *Metaphysics*: in fact, Avenzoreth is one of the Arabic authors quoted by name by Albertus in this commentary<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, the *apparatus fontium* of the edition of Albertus' commentary on the *Metaphysics*, as well of the other commentaries of his in which Avenzoreth is cited, do not provide information on this author. No reliable clue in this direction can be found in secondary literature, where, on the other hand, some misleading suggestions are available, to the effect that the name «Avenzoreth» still lacks a precise counterpart. The present paper aims at establishing the identity of this enigmatic figure and the way in which his sentence was known to Albertus.

After a survey of the content and style of the quotations of Avenzoreth in Albertus Magnus in section I, the identity of Avenzoreth with Ibn Zur'a is argued for in section II. Section III points at the possible channels through which Ibn Zur'a's statement reached Albertus, whereas the final section shows the wide Latin diffusion of Avenzoreth's *dictum* under alien names.

2. See A. Bertolacci, «A New Phase of the Reception of Aristotle in the Latin West: Albertus Magnus and His Use of Arabic Sources in the Commentaries on Aristotle», in *Albertus Magnus und der Ursprung der Universitätsidee. Die Begegnung der Wissenschaftskulturen im 13. Jahrhundert und die Entdeckung des Konzepts der Bildung durch Wissenschaft*, ed. L. Honnefelder, Berlin 2011, 259-76, 491-500.

## TEXTUAL EVIDENCE IN ALBERTUS

Text 1: Alb., *Super Ethica. Commentum et quaestiones. Libri quinque priores*, ed. W. Kübel, Münster 1968-1972, I, I, lect. 7, q. 36, p. 34, 18-20: «Praeterea, Avemoret dicit: 'Vae vobis, homines, qui computati estis in numero bestiarum, mutua servitute laborantes, ut ex vobis nascatur liber'».

[Avemoret: no variant in apparatus]

Text 2: Alb., *Metaphysica, libri quinque priores*, ed. B. Geyer, Münster 1960, I, 2, 8, p. 25, 7-8: «Propter quod quidam sacerdotum Arabiae fertur dixisse: 'Vae vobis homines, qui computati estis in numerum bestiarum et laboratis servitute reciproca, ut ex vobis nascatur liber'. Nullus enim liber in hominibus est, sed omnes laborant ad commodum, ei quod in ipsis divinum est, non intendentes».

Text 3: Alb., *ibid.*, I, 2, 9, p. 26, 71-73: «Propter quod etiam dicit Avenzoreth fere omnes homines, exceptis paucis honorandis viris, esse computatos<sup>3</sup> in numerum bestiarum».

Avenzoreth ed.: Avendreth *H Borgnet: Averrois M* (= Paris, Mazarine 3479)

Text 4: Alb., *Ethica I*, 3, 10, in *Opera omnia ... cura et labore A. Borgnet*, Parisiis 1890-1899, VII, 43a: «Unde optime dixit Averroes philosophus: 'Vae vobis hominibus, qui computati estis in numerum bestiarum et laboratis servitute reciproca, ut ex vobis nascatur liber'».

Text 5: Alb., *Politica II*, 2, *ibid.*, VIII, 108b: «Et Averroes: 'Vae vobis hominibus qui computati estis in numerum bestiarum et laboratis servitute reciproca, ut ex vobis nascatur liber'».

Albertus quotes Avenzoreth, either by name, or by means of a more generic expression, in four distinct philosophical commentaries: his commentary *per quaestiones* on the *Nicomachean Ethics*; his so-called paraphrase of the *Metaphysics*; and his equally paraphrastic commentaries on *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. The absence of citations of Avenzoreth in Albertus' theological works may be significant, but cannot be taken as definitive: many of his works on theology still wait for critical editions; those critically edited are not always complemented by reliable indices<sup>4</sup>. On the basis of the avail-

3. computatos *P* (= MS Vat., Pal. lat. 977, f. 18rb, reported in apparatus as a family  $\alpha$ ): computandos *ed*.

4. Avenzoreth is not among the authors quoted in the *De homine*.

able evidence, we can fix a *terminus post quem* of Albertus' references to Avenzoreth, namely 1248, the date of his move to Cologne and the start of his commentaries on Aristotle.

As to the name of our author in the nominal quotations, we have four slightly different forms: 1) «Avemoret» in Text 1; 2) «Avenzoreth» in Text 3; 3) «Avendreth» as a variant reading in Text 3; 4) «Averroes» in Texts 4-5 according to the old Borgnet edition, and «Averois» as a variant reading in Text 3. I regard «Avenzoreth» as the right spelling. «Avemoret» in Text 1 is possibly a corruption of Avenzoreth, in the same way as the editor of Text 3 regards «Avendreth» as a corruption of «Avenzoreth». Likewise, «Averroes» in Texts 4-5 is very probably a *lectio facilior* with respect to «Avenzoreth», on account of the similarity of the names, the greater fame of the Commentator with respect to the unknown Avenzoreth, and the occurrence of the quotations in Albertus' Aristotelian commentaries. The variant «Averois», discarded by the editor in Text 3, corroborates this impression. Thus, one can reasonably predict that future critical editions of Albertus' commentaries on *Ethics* and *Politics* will emend «Averroes», printed in Borgnet's edition of Texts 4-5, in «Avenzoreth».

The Aristotelian context of the quotations is Aristotle's statement in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, chapter 2, according to which the possess of metaphysics, the highest and most liberal discipline, can be deemed to surpass men's capacities, since human nature is often slave and constricted by many necessities (983a28-30). This passage of the *Metaphysics* is commented by Albertus in Texts 2-3 and cited by him immediately before the quotations of Avenzoreth in Texts 1, 4-5<sup>5</sup>.

As to their content, the quotations display five structural elements, some of which are present in all texts, some others only in some of them. The five elements are: 1) the woe against men («Vae vobis homines» or «hominibus»); 2) the contention that men have been considered like beasts («qui computati estis in numerum bestiarum» or «dicit [...] esse computatos in numerum bestiarum»); 3) the precision that some honorable men are excluded from this consideration («exceptis paucis honorandis viris»), only in Text 3; 4) the further contention that men are mutually slaves and fatigue for

5. See Alb., *Super Ethica* I, I, lect. 7, q. 36, ed. Col., 34, 5-6; Alb., *Ethica* I, 3, 10, ed. Borgnet, VII, 43a; Alb., *Politica* II, 2, ed. Borgnet, VIII, 108b.

reciprocal benefit («et laboratis servitute reciproca» or «mutua servitute laborantes»); 5) the final assessment of the goal of human hardship, namely the prospected birth of a *liber* («ut ex vobis nascatur liber»), whose meaning might be either «free person» or «child»<sup>6</sup>. Texts 1–2, 4–5 have the form of a *verbatim* quotation, whereas Text 3 – the second quotation in Albertus' commentary on the *Metaphysics* – is just an indirect report of Avenzoreth's view, that Albertus has already expounded a few lines before in the same commentary. The parenthetical remark «exceptis paucis honorandis viris» in Text 3, absent in the other texts, can be regarded as a constitutive element of Avenzoreth's statement, rather than an interpolation of Albertus, both because Albertus ascribes it to Avenzoreth, and because it somehow contrasts with Albertus' own gloss «Nullus enim liber in hominibus est» in Text 2: it seems that Albertus had no reason to add this remark by his own initiative, if it was not part of Avenzoreth's doctrine.

Not every detail of Avenzoreth's dictum is clear. It remains obscure, for example, who is the person that has reckoned men as beasts, according to Avenzoreth. Equally uncertain is how far-reaching is the analogy of men with animals, i.e. whether Avenzoreth is thinking of animals in general or of a particular animal species (for example bees). Finally, «liber» at the end of Avenzoreth's sentence might mean either «free person» or «child». The first meaning is suggested by the opposition of *liber* with *servitus* in Avenzoreth's *dictum*, and by Albertus' gloss in Text 2 («Nullus enim *liber* in hominibus est»), which, however, does not exclude the second interpretation. The second meaning, on the other hand, is recommended by the connection of «liber» with the immediately preceding verb *nasci* («ut ex vobis *nascatur liber*»). In this second interpretation, the *mutua servitus* would be the relationship of husband and wife in marriage, and a priest (someone who was very probably a celibate) would then

6. Although rare in classical Latin, the singular *liber* of the plural *liberi*, *-orum* («idem quod filii filiaeque») is attested in *Thesaurus Linguae Latine*, vol. VII.2, 1303.79–1304.4. See also *Novum glossarium mediae latinitatis ab anno DCCC usque ad annum MCC*, ed. F. Blatt, Munksgaard, Kopenhagen 1957, vol. L–N, 118b; *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. R.E. Latham, D.R. Howlett, British Academy, London 1975–, I, 1599c; *Lexicon latinitatis Nederlandicae Medii Aevi*, ed. J.W. Fuchs, O. Weijers, 1977–, V, L132, 2792b. Neither the singular nor the plural of *liber* in the meaning of 'child' is recorded in the *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, ed. C. Du Cange.

launch a woe against those human beings, namely the majority of mankind, that spend their life in family association in order to follow the natural instinct to procreate.

Be all that as it may, the remarks added by Albertus are very interesting: the description of Avenzoreth at the beginning of Text 2 as a priest from Arabia has a two-fold consequence: it ranges Avenzoreth as an Arabic author with religious interests and offices; it makes clear that Albertus does not regard Avenzoreth as identical to Averroes. We may wonder whether the epithet «philosophus» in Text 4 after the name of Averroes is part of Albertus' original text or is rather a later addition (more on this below, section IV).

## THE AUTHOR

### *Pars destruens*

As a preliminary step, it is important to reject definitively an identification of Avenzoreth that surfaces here and there in recent scholarship. In a pioneering study of 1961, A. Pattin, the critical editor of the Latin version of the *Liber de causis*, identifies Avenzoreth with Avendauth, namely the Jewish author Abraham Ibn Daūd, whom Albertus regards as the compiler of the *Liber de causis*<sup>7</sup>. Pattin also indicates in the Prologue of Ibn Daūd's Latin translation of Avicenna's *De Anima* the place of origin of the *dictum* reported by Albertus. Unfortunately, both suggestions are wrong. In the first regard, Pattin believes that the spellings «Avenzoreth» and «Avenzoreth» (in Borgnet's edition of Text 3) are corruptions of «Avendauth»<sup>8</sup>. However, «Avenzoreth» has good credential of being a *lectio difficilior*, due to the higher frequency of Albertus' mentions of «Avendauth» in his works, and the description of Avenzoreth that Albertus provides looks hardly compatible with the way in which he depicts Avendauth («Israelita philosophus», «Iudaeus»). In the second regard, the Prologue of the Latin translation of Avicenna's *De Anima* does not contain anything even remotely resembling Avenzoreth's

7. A. Pattin, «Over de schrijver en de vertaler van het *Liber de causis*», *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, 23 (1961), 503-21 (513-14).

8. See *ibid.*, 514 n. 85.

statement. Pattin's peremptory statement has inevitably influenced subsequent studies<sup>9</sup>, but it has also received a clear-cut dismissal<sup>10</sup>.

Another handy possible identification of Avenzoreth is equally to discard. I think Avenzoreth in Albertus' quotations is *not* the famous Andalusian physician of the twelfth century Abū Marwān 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Zuhr (1091 or 1094-1161/2), who was known in Latin as Avenzoar<sup>11</sup>. Despite the similarity of the Latin names, this identification is implausible for at least three reasons. First, it is not certain that a Latin translation of the medical work of Ibn Zuhr was available to Albertus, at the time when this latter composed the aforementioned commentaries or even later<sup>12</sup>. Second, the content of the quotations of Avenzoreth in Albertus do not fit with the theme of a work of medicine, dealing with the particularities of therapeutics and diet, as is the case with Ibn Zuhr. Third, the qualification of Ara-

9. J.J. Duin, «À la recherche du commentaire de Boèce de Dacie sur la *Métaphysique* d'Aristote», in *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter*, ed. P. Wilpert, Berlin 1963, 446-53 (448 n. 9); L. Bianchi, «Filosofi, uomini e bruti. Note per la storia di un'antropologia 'averroista'», *Rinascimento* (2a s.), 32 (1992), 185-201 (189 n. 14), repr. in *Studi sull'Aristotelismo del Rinascimento*, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2003, 41-61 (46, n. 14); Id., *Il vescovo ed i filosofi. La condanna parigina del 1277 e l'evoluzione dell'aristotelismo scolastico*, Bergamo 1990, 183 n. 47.

10. See Ricklin, «Von den *beatiores philosophi*», 221-22; cf. L. Bianchi, «Felicità intellettuale, 'ascetismo' e 'arabismo': nota sul *De summo bono* di Boezio di Dacia», in *Le felicità nel Medioevo*, ed. M. Bettetini, F. D. Paparella, Brepols, Louvain-la-Neuve 2005, 13-34 (21).

11. On Ibn Zuhr, see M. Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine*, Edinburgh 1978, 46-47, 99. In Latin he was known, besides «Avenzoar» or «Albenzoar» (see G.K. Hasselhoff, «Johannes von Capua und Armengaud Blaise als Übersetzer medizinischer Werke des Maimonides», in *Wissen über Grenzen. arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, ed. A. Speer, Berlin, New York 2006, 340-56 [353-54]), also as «Alguazir Abuele Zor» (having been also vizier) and «Filius Abimelek filii Zor», as in Avicenna Latinus, *Codices*, descr. M.-T. d'Alverny, S. Van Riet, P. Jodogne, Louvain-la-Neuve, Leiden, 1994, 432a (s.v. Algazel [!]). Cf. the name «Ben Zohar» attested in the Hebrew tradition (R. Szpiech, «In Search of Ibn Sīnā's 'Oriental Philosophy' in Medieval Castile», *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 20 [2010], 185-207 [192 n. 17]).

12. Ibn Zuhr wrote a book entitled *Kitab al-taysīr fī l-mudāwa wa-l-tadbīr* (*Book of Simplification Concerning Therapeutics and Diet*), which was translated from Hebrew into Latin by *Maqīster Patavinus* and Jacob ben Eliah in 1281 (see M. Zonta, «The Jewish Mediation in the Transmission of Arabo-Islamic Science and Philosophy to the Latin Middle Ages. Historical Overview and Perspectives of Research», in *Wissen über Grenzen*, 89-105 [100 n. 46]), and by John of Capua (fl. 1262-1269) between 1292 and 1313 (see Hasselhoff, «Johannes von Capua und Armengaud Blaise», 351). I am not aware of any previous Latin translation.

bian priest assigned by Albertus to Avenzoreth does not match with the intellectual and personal profile of Ibn Zuhr, who was a physician and a vizier from Seville.

*Pars construens*

Positively, I would like to propose the identification of Avenzoreth with an Arab author active at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries of the Christian era, namely Abū ‘Alī ‘Isā Ibn Ishāq Ibn Zur‘a Ibn Marqus Ibn Zur‘a Ibn Yuhannā (331/943–398/1008)<sup>13</sup>. Ibn Zur‘a was an interesting and versatile figure: Christian Jacobite apologist and theologian, on the one hand<sup>14</sup>; prolific translator of Aristotle<sup>15</sup>, of pseudo-Aristotelian writings<sup>16</sup> and Neoplatonic works<sup>17</sup>, on the other; philosopher in his own right, actu-

13. For an overview, see the entry on Ibn Zur‘a in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., III (French version), 1004a–b, and C. Martini, «Ibn Zur‘a, ‘Isā ibn Ishāq», in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy. Philosophy Between 500 and 1500*, ed. H. Lagerlund, 2. voll., Berlin 2011, I, 536.

14. See G. Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, II, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1947, 252–56. Three of the four treatises of Ibn Zur‘a edited in P. Spath, *Vingt traités philosophiques et apologétiques d’auteurs arabes chrétiens du IX<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Cairo 1929, are of theological character. On treatises 1 and 2 (ed. Spath, 6–19, 19–52), see S. Pines, «La loi naturelle et la société: la doctrine politico-théologique d’Ibn Zur‘a, philosophe chrétien de Bagdad», *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, 9 (1961), 154–90, repr. in Id., *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization*, ed. S. Stroumsa, Jerusalem 1961 (The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines, III), 156–90.

15. Bio-bibliographical Arabic literature credits him with the translation of the *Sophistici Elenchi* (see R. Walzer, «New Light on the Arabic Translations of Aristotle», *Oriens*, 6 [1953], now in Id., *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford 1962, 60–113 [82]) and of the *Historia animalium* (see D.M. Dunlop, «Introduction», in *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. A.A. Akasoy, A. Fidora, With an Introduction and Annotated Translation by D.M. Dunlop, Leiden, Boston 2005, 74 n. 291; but the text of ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, I, 251, might also be interpreted as referring to a translation of Nicholas of Damascus’ compendium of Aristotle’s zoology). More debated is the issue of whether he translated also the *De anima* (see A.L. Ivry, «The Arabic Text of Aristotle’s *De anima* and Its Translator», *Oriens*, 36 [2001], 59–77 [63], and A. Elamrani-Jamal, «De anima. Tradition arabe», in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, ed. R. Goulet, Supplément, Paris 2003, 346–58 [350]).

16. *Maqāla li-Aristū‘ālīs fī l-tadbīr*, ed. Louis Cheikho (or: Sheikho), *Al-Mashriq* (or: *Al-Machriq*). *Revue catholique orientale* (Beirut), 6 (1903), 316–18.

17. The translation of Proclus’ commentary on the *Phaedo* that is credited to him is not extant (see E.K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its*

ally an «eminent pupil» and the «closest disciple» of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī in Baghdad, in a yet further respect<sup>18</sup>. Actually, he seems to have been much more important at the time than it results from our histories of Arabic thought: he had a leading role in Baghdadian culture, being the head of a circle of intellectuals<sup>19</sup>, and frequently traveling to Byzantine lands for cultural missions; his importance is witnessed by the length of the entries regarding him in bio-bibliographical Arabic literature, and by the spurious works falsely attributed to him<sup>20</sup>. Regrettably, only one introductory monograph on his life, works and thought, published almost thirty years ago, is currently available, and only few of his works have been edited<sup>21</sup>.

Both as a translator and as a philosopher, Ibn Zur'a manifested a strong interest in ethics: according to Arabic bibliographical sources<sup>22</sup>, he translated from Syriac into Arabic the so-called *Summa*

*Fate: Al-'Āmirī's Kitāb al-Amad 'alā l-abad*, New Haven (CT) 1988, 31-32; C. D'Ancona, «Greek into Arabic: Neoplatonism in Translation», in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. P. Adamson, R. Taylor, Cambridge 2005, 22). The authorship of other works that he is said to have translated is still uncertain.

18. The two expressions are, respectively, of R. Walzer, «New Light on the Arabic Translations of Aristotle», 70, and G. Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī. An Analytical Inventory*, Wiesbaden 1977, 8. A French translation of his epitaph for Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (Arabic text in Endress, *The Works*, 125) can be found in E. Platti, «Sagesse et révélation: théologiens arabes chrétiens à Bagdad (IX<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> siècles)», in *Sagesse de l'Orient ancien et chrétien*, ed. R. Lebrun, Paris 1993, 169-92 (181). Of the four treatises edited by P. Sbath in *Vingt traités philosophiques*, one deals with noetics (68-75). His activity and interest in psychology was long lasting, if it is true that at the end of his life, he planned a work on the immortality of the soul (see Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher*, 31).

19. See J.L. Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam. Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and His Circle*, Leiden 1986, 115.

20. See the two spurious works mentioned in the entry on Ibn Zur'a in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* cit., p. 1004a-b; see also the doubts on the authenticity of the logical works ascribed to Ibn Zur'a in A. Hasnawi, «Avicenna on the Quantification of the Predicate (with an Appendix on Ibn Zur'a)», in *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition. Science, Logic and Epistemology and their Interactions*, ed. S. Rahman, T. Street, H. Tahiri, Berlin 2008, 295-328.

21. C. Haddad, *'Isā Ibn Zur'a, philosophe et apologiste chrétien*, Dār al-Kalima, Beirut 1971. Cf. S.K. Samir, «Le philosophe 'Isā Ibn Zur'a. En relisant Cyrille Haddad», *Annales de philosophie [de l'Université Saint-Joseph]*, 9 (1988), 1-38.

22. See *Muntaḥab Šiwan al-ḥikma*, ed. D.M. Dunlop, Mouton, The Hague 1979, 143, § 281; cf. ed. 'A. Badawī, *Bunyad Farhanj*, Tehran 1974, 333.11-334.3; English translation in Dunlop, «Introduction», in *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, 68-69.

*Alexandrinorum*, namely the summary/adaptation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle which, originally written in Greek, is preserved in the Latin translation from Arabic<sup>23</sup>.

*Summa Alexandrinorum*

Greek original text by Nicholas of Damascus (?) (lost)

Syriac translation (lost)

Arabic translation from Syriac by Ibn Zur'a (fragments)

Latin translation from Arabic by Hermannus Alemannus (fully extant; ed. Marchesi; ed. Fowler)<sup>24</sup>

Likewise, one of the pseudo-Aristotelian treatises that Ibn Zur'a translated deals with the conduct of life<sup>25</sup>. Definitions of moral qualities (or lack thereof) are recorded in coeval reports among Ibn Zur'a's contributions<sup>26</sup>.

Apart from this general interest in ethics, I have three main arguments to corroborate the identification of Avenzoreth with Ibn Zur'a.

23. Fragments of the Arabic translation (from Syriac) of the *Summa* can be found in Arīstūṭālīs, *Kitāb al-aḥlāq, tarǧamat Ishāq ibn Hunayn*, ed. 'A. Badawī, Kuwait 1979, 433-45. When A. Akasoy and A. Fidora contend that the Arabic text of the *Summa* has been edited by Badawī («Hermannus Alemannus und die *Alia Translatio* der Nikomachischen Ethik», *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale*, 44 [2002], 79-93 [81 n. 10]), they refer to the edition of these fragments. A survey of the content of the work can be found in R. Saccenti, «La *Summa Alexandrinorum*: Storia e contenuto di un'epitome dell'*Etica Nicomachea*», *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, 87 (2010), 201-34. The *Summa Alexandrinorum* should not be confused with the *Summaria Alexandrinorum*, which regards medicine (on this latter, see D. Gutas, «The 'Alexandria to Baghdad' Complex of Narratives. A contribution to the Study of Philosophical and medical Historiography among the Arabs», *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 10 [1999], 155-93 [169-74]).

24. C. Marchesi, *L'Etica Nicomachea nella tradizione latina medievale*; G.B. Fowler, «Manuscript Admont 608 and Engelbert of Admont (c. 1250-1331)», *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 49 (1983), 195-252. On the Latin diffusion of the *Summa*, see S. Gentili, «L'*Etica* volgarizzata da Taddeo Alderotti (m. 1295). Saggio di commento», *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 17, 2006, 248-81.

25. See, *Maqāla li-Arīstūṭālīs fī l-tadbīr* (above, n. 16).

26. See Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa*, ed. A. Amin, A. al-Zayn, Beirut, III, 131-36 (cf. Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, 163-64, 268-70).

### *The Name*

The name «Avenzoreth» appears to be the conflation in a single term of the two Arabic terms «Ibn» and «Zur'ā», forming jointly a patronimic («son of Zur'ā»), where «Aven-» is the usual rendering of «Ibn» (as in «Avendauth») and «-zoreth» corresponds to «Zur'ā».

Avenzoreth (Aven-zoreth) <-- Ibn Zur'ā

cf. Avendauth (Aven-dauth) <-- Ibn Daūd

cf. Bencherat (Ben-cherat) <-- Ibn Qurra

An ending involving a «t», like «-eth» in «Avenzoreth», is quite common for an Arabic name like Ibn Zur'ā, whose last letter is a «tā' marbūṭa»: the same happens, for example, with the name Ṭābit Ibn Qurra, which becomes, in Latin translation under Albertus' pen, «Thebit Bencherat» (or «Thebitbenchorat») <sup>27</sup>.

### *The Status and the Place of Activity*

The specific religious affiliation of Avenzoreth is not specified by Albertus. However, the term *sacerdos* that he uses to describe Avenzoreth is particularly fit either to the Christian or to the Jewish religion <sup>28</sup>. For sure, apart from terminological considerations, in the light of Albertus' aversion towards Islamic religion and its exponents expressed in various works of his (among which the commentaries on the *Ethics* and the *Politics*) <sup>29</sup>, we can exclude Islam from the pos-

27. See A. Cortabarría Beitia, «Deux sources arabes de S. Albert le Grand: Thābit b. Qurra et al-Farghānī», *MIDEO*, 17 (1986), 37-52 (38 and nn. 9-10).

28. Although the dialectic between slavery and freedom and the recourse to the literary genre of the woe might call to mind Judaism (in particular the rabbinic tradition), these motives are also present in the Christian holy books.

29. The image of Islam current in Medieval Latin culture was affected by negative prejudices, regarding both the theological positions and the moral customs of this foreign religion, which Albertus shares: see, for example, the virulent attack against the *lex Machumeti*, inspired by Eustratius of Nicaea's ('Commentator') considerations, in *Super Ethica*, VI, 2, 405, 69-74, and against Mohammed himself as master of falsity and baseness in *Politica*, VI, 6, 608a. According to G. Fioravanti, «*Politiæ Orientalium et Aegyptiorum*. Alberto Magno

sible range of religions of which Avenzoreth performs cultural functions. If related to Christianity, the description of Avenzoreth as «sacerdos» in Text 2 would be congruent with Ibn Zur'a's activity as a theologian. Also the geographical indication of «Arabia» brings us close to the actual place of activity of Ibn Zur'a, namely Baghdad.

### *The Content of the Dictum*

The main elements of Avenzoreth's *dictum* have strong Biblical connotations: the initial woe calls to mind the frequent invectives against the pharisees in the Gospels; men are compared to beasts in the *Psalms* (49, 13-21) and in the book of *Qoelet* (3, 18-19); the theme of fatigue and labor runs across the entire Bible, from the damnation of Adam and Eve in *Gen.* 3, 17, until the suffering of the entire creation in *Rom.* 8, 22; the dialectic between the slavery of sin and the freedom of grace is fundamental in the anthropology of the New Testament. All these scriptural echoes are not surprising in a theologian like Ibn Zur'a, who was certainly conversant with Christian sacred scriptures.

More specifically, some key-elements of Avenzoreth's view find confirmation in Ibn Zur'a's *oeuvre* and in the works of his cultural environment. The theme of human degradation to bestiality stems from the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle (book VII, chapters 1, 6-7)<sup>30</sup> and is quite widespread in the Arabic tradition, including Ibn Zur'a's contemporaries<sup>31</sup>. Abū Bišr Mattā (d. 940) – the founder of the

e la *Politica aristotelica*», *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere, Storia e Filosofia*, 9 (1979), 195-246 (245 n. 17). Albertus adds to the traditional anti-Islamic polemic original accusations, resumed by later authors.

30. Men slaves by nature are compared to tame animals in Arist., *Politica* I, 6.

31. It appears, for example, in al-Kindī (d. after 870): *Kitāb al-Kindī ilā l-Mu'tašim bi-llāh fī l-falsafa al-ūlā*, in *Œuvres philosophiques et scientifiques d'Al-Kindī. Volume II. Métaphysique et Cosmologie*, ed. R. Rashed, J. Jolivet, Leiden-Boston-Köln 1998, 15, 2; al-Fārābī (d. 950): *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādī' Arā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*. A revised Text with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by R. Walzer, Oxford 1985; repr. 1988, chapt. 16, §7, 272, 1-2; Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (d. 974): see Platti, «Sagesse et révélation», 179-81; Abū Sulaymān al-Siğistānī (d. 985ca.): see Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam*, 268-69; *Muḥtār min kalām al-ḥukamā' al-arba'a al-akābir* (*A Selection from the Sayings of the Four Great Philosophers*, known as 'Philosophic Quartet'), in D. Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation: A Study of*

philosophical school of Christian philosophers in Baghdad to which Ibn Zur'ā belonged – gives to this theme a very peculiar connotation, and portrays brutality as the condition to which mankind would be condemned in the absence of restraining laws:

Text 6: Abū Bišr Mattā, commentary on *Metaph. α*, in ps.-Mağrīṭī's *Ġāyat al-Hakīm*, ed. H. Ritter, 283

This greatest usefulness [of laws] can be discovered [if one considers] how [dreadful] would be, if they were abolished, the dog-fights between the beasts of prey who [form] the majority of the inhabitants of the world, or even all of them, except for [certain] extraordinary and rare [people]<sup>32</sup>.

Ibn Zur'ā very probably knew this impressive statement by his illustrious predecessor, or similar contentions of his cultural *milieu*. It is not impossible therefore to imagine that he has reported this view, asserting that someone before him had compared men to animals. The phrase «except for [certain] extraordinary and rare [people]» towards the end presents a striking similarity with the phrase «exceptis paucis honorandis viris» of Text 3.

Ibn Zur'ā himself expresses a point of view similar to Mattā's. In the Arabic tradition his name is linked with a passage of the *Summa Alexandrinorum* that deals with the theme of human degradation to bestiality:

Text 7: *Muntaḥab Šiwan al-ḥikma (Selection of the Depository of Wisdom)*, ed. Dunlop 1979, p. 143, § 281; ed. Badawi, pp. 333, 11-334, 3 = Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Muqābasāt (Conversations)*, ed. Sandūbī, Cairo 1374/1929, 197: Of what he [= Ibn Zur'ā] translated of the words of Aristotle [= *Summa*

*the Graeco-Arabic Gnomologia*, Publications of the American Oriental Society, New Haven 1975, 170-71 (text and translation), 395-96 (commentary); Avicenna (d. 1037): *Risālat al-ṭayr*, in A.F. Mehren, *Traité mystiques d'Abū Alī al-Hosain b. Abdallāh b. Sīnā ou d'Avicenne*, II, Brill, Leiden 1891, repr. Apa Philo Press, Amsterdam 1979, 43.11-2.

32. Ps.-Mağrīṭī, *Das Ziel des Weisen*, ed. H. Ritter, Teubner, Leipzig-Berlin 1933, 283-84. Engl. transl. of the gloss on *Metaph. α*, 2, 995a3ff. in S. Pines, «A Tenth Century Philosophical Correspondence», *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 24 (1955), 103-36 (repr. in Id., *Essays in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy*, 1977, 357-90), 119 n. 71 (slightly modified). On this work, see Isaac Israeli. *A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century*. His Works translated with comments and an outline of his Philosophy by A. Altmann, S.M. Stern, London 1958; rist. Westport Connecticut 1979, 7-8.

*Alexandrinorum*] is his saying: «Humanity has [is *mss.*] a limit. A man moves naturally to his limit and circles round his centre, unless he is marred in his nature [and] shares the characteristics of brute beasts. He who rejects discipline and abandons restraint, does what he pleases, refrains not from what his nature calls to and is ready to follow wicked desires, has passed beyond his limit and has become worse than the brute beasts through his bad choice»<sup>33</sup>.

Text 7 is part of the entry devoted to Ibn Zur‘a in the *Muntaḥab Šiwan al-ḥikma* (*Selection of the Depository of Wisdom*), a work going back to a lost original (the *Šiwan al-ḥikma, Depository of Wisdom*) written in Ibn Zur‘a’s time. This text is important for our knowledge of the *Summa Alexandrinorum*, since its core (the part between quotation marks) belongs in fact to the *Summa*<sup>34</sup>, thus attesting that Ibn Zur‘a translated this work into Arabic. Although the present text appears to keep human nature in higher consideration, it shares nonetheless with Text 6 the same basic idea, namely that the rejection of discipline and abandonment of restraint (imposed by the laws

33. Engl. transl. in Dunlop, «Introduction», in *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, 68–69 (slightly modified); Dunlop still ascribes the *Muntaḥab Šiwan al-ḥikma* to Abū Sulaymān al-Siġistānī (d. 985 or 957), an authorship that is now rejected. On the authorship of the group of writings connected with the *Šiwan al-ḥikma*, see the studies mentioned by C. D’Ancona, «The Topic of the ‘Harmony Between Plato and Aristotle’: Some Examples in Early Arabic Philosophy», in *Wissen über Grenzen*, 385–86, and Ibn Sīnā, *Lettre au vizir Abū Sa‘d. Editio princeps* d’après le manuscrit de Bursa, traduction de l’arabe, introduction, notes et lexique par Y. Michot, Beirut 2000, 20\*.

34. Latin transl. in *Summa Alexandrinorum*, ed. Marchesi, LXIX, 8–14; ed. Fowler, 229 [I, 22–28]: «Homo habet metas suas ad quas mouetur naturaliter et contra quas reuoluitur circa ipsarum centrum nisi acciderit nature sue occasio ad mores bestiarum ipsam inclinans, que solutis habenis secundum morem proprii appetitus uagantur per pascua, neque continent se ab aliquo eorum ad que ducit eas natura sua. Et hoc modo transgreditur ambitum metarum suarum. Quin [Qui *Marchesi*] immo peior tunc efficitur bestiis propter sue eligentie [arrogantie *Fowler*] prauitatem». The Latin translator (Hermannus Alemannus) seems to have misunderstood some elements of the Arabic text. Without entering into details, the main idea in this latter is that man is by nature a limited being that, like a sphere, ranges between a center and a circumference; this implies that human behavior is regulated by fixed natural boundaries: whoever transgresses these limits, because of a defect of his nature, becomes like a beast or even worse than a beast. The Latin translation conveys a slightly different idea, in so far as it applies to beasts (in the passage «que solutis habenis etc.») the rejection of restraint that the Arabic text attributes to beast-like men. But apart from this unessential difference, both texts transmit the same content.

in Text 6, self-imposed here) conveys the corruption of man's status. It is significant that Text 7 is reproduced *verbatim* in a work of another leading figure of tenth century Baghdad, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), who was very familiar to Ibn Zur'a<sup>35</sup>. The connection of Text 7 with Ibn Zur'a's name in contemporary sources can be hardly coincidental: more likely, the author of the *Ṣiwan al-ḥikma* and al-Tawḥīdī were directly informed, and possibly even personally acquainted, with Ibn Zur'a's endorsement of the doctrine according to which, on certain conditions, humanity downgrades into bestiality<sup>36</sup>.

On the same lines, in the following passage from a theological work of his, Ibn Zur'a proposes a very disingenuous description of human nature:

Text 8: Ibn Zur'a, *Maqāla 'amalahā li-ba'd al-yahūd* (*Treatise composed for some Jews*), ed. P. Sbath, 22, 13-23, 2:

Natural [law] is that which induces us to obtain all the useful and pleasant things we can, and to subjugate (*taḍlīl*) all the persons we are capable to, be they close relatives or far away strangers. This happens because this [condition] is more fit and suitable to, more congruent with, and more able to preserve natural dispositions [than others]. This law precedes all others, since it belongs to man from the beginning of his natural movement, if he is healthy, free from diseases, and endowed with a powerful perception and a strong bodily constitution<sup>37</sup>.

Although in this text Ibn Zur'a does not expressly compares men to animals, the situation he describes as taking place in the law of nature is certainly one of *homo homini lupus*.

35. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Muqābasāt*, ed. Ḥ. Sandūbī, Cairo 1374/1929, 197.

36. Text 7 has no correspondence in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Although it might reflect a doctrine of Nicholas of Damascus (Nicolaus Damascenus), the probable Greek author of the *Summa*, it might also come from Ibn Zur'a himself. Significantly, biographical sources inform us that Ibn Zur'a did not simply transpose into Arabic, but at the same 'corrected' his translations of Nicholas of Damascus (see the passage of the *Fihrist* quoted by Dunlop, «Introduction», in *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, 74 n. 291). The 'correction' in question is likely to imply doctrinal changes and insertions, rather than being bare philological restoration. It is not unreasonable to suppose that also Text 7 is the result of a similar intervention on Ibn Zur'a's part.

37. Cf. French transl. in Pines, «La loi naturelle et la société», 173.

Ibn Zur'a, however, does not subscribe *in toto* to Mattā's pessimism. For him, after the law of nature and before the positive laws imposed by legislators, there is an intermediate law, apparently imprinted into man's essence like the law of nature: this is the law of reason.

Text 9: Ibn Zur'a, *Maqāla 'amalahā li-ba'ddal-yahūd* (*Treatise composed for some Jews*), ed. P. Sbath, 23, 2-7:

The second law, the rational one, is that which prompts us to acquire<sup>38</sup> what is sufficient for us and what we can rely on against possible misfortunes, as well as to be able to employ it for our needs and take care of its management. This happens because reason considers the excess in seeking [material goods] and the transgression of justice as a psychic illness, and obliges man to use, among the things that nature has made necessary for him, only those required by [actual] need and useful in adversities, nothing more.

A certain kind of positive social interaction follows from the constraints imposed by human reason to the lower instincts:

Text 10: Ibn Zur'a, *Maqāla 'amalahā li-ba'd al-yahūd* (*Treatise composed for some Jews*), ed. P. Sbath, 25, 11-12:

[...] the positive law [...] is more perfect than the law of reason, since civil life, harmony and mutual help are more perfect with [the positive law] than with the law of reason.

Thus, even before the positive law transmitted by religions (the law of justice of Moses and the law of grace of Jesus), social cooperation and reciprocal help are possible among men, although at an imperfect level. This possibly explains why the slavery to which men are condemned is called *mutua* in Avenzoresh's *dictum*.

Finally, the idea that abstinence from sexual pleasures and neglect of procreation is a requirement of philosophical life represents a quite common contention in Ibn Zur'a's times, especially within Christian circles. A treatise by one of his immediate predecessors in tenth century Baghdad, the Christian philosopher and theologian Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī (d. 974), provides ample evidence of the diffusion of this idea.

38. The edited reading it «to acquire» (*iqtinā'*): one wonders whether it might be corrected into «to be content with» (*iqtinā'*).

Text 11: Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, *Treatise on continence*, ed. V. Mistrīh, 57:

The most virtuous way of life is to spend one's time gaining knowledge, to devote oneself to it according to one's ability, and not to be concerned with consorting with a wife, nor with having children<sup>39</sup>.

The work from which Text 11 is taken is «a work in progress, still in the process of circulating among conversational partners, both Christian and Muslim»<sup>40</sup>. Ibn Zur'a almost certainly knew it. Therefore, if we understand *liber* at the end of Avenzoreth's sentence as meaning «child», we find in Text 11 a striking parallel. Significantly, in the aforementioned work Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī occasionally refers to the Christian motif of a «distinguished priest», and endorses the idea that over the course of time bad people have by large outnumbered the few virtuous and outstanding individuals that mankind has been able to produce<sup>41</sup>.

Thus, Texts 6-11 document that the identification of Avenzoreth with Ibn Zur'a is quite plausible, both on external grounds, i.e. on account of the coherence of his *dictum* with the culture of Ibn Zur'a's environment (the statement matches quite nicely the views of two important predecessors of his, one of whom equated men with beasts whereas the other defended Christian celibacy by discrediting marriage and procreation), and for internal reasons, namely on account of its doctrinal congruence with the content of Ibn Zur'a's known works (Ibn Zur'a himself propounded an anthropological view in which the irrational faculties reduce man to animal condition, whereas reason assures a certain kind of social life). True, the evidence reported above, especially that of Texts 8-10, is not the mirror image of the statement attributed to Avenzoreth by Albertus. Future research will hopefully detect a *verbatim* sentence of this kind in the *mare magnum* of news on Ibn Zur'a that one can find in Arabic

39. English translation in S.H. Griffith, «Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's Colloquy *On Sexual Abstinence and the Philosophical Life*», in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy. From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, ed. J.E. Montgomery, Leuven, Paris, Dudley (Ma) 2006, 299-333 (330). The Arabic work is composite and does not bear a single title for all its three parts. Griffith calls it, by way of description, *On Sexual Abstinence and the Philosophical Life*; it has been edited and translated into French as *Traité sur la continence*, ed. and transl. V. Mistrīh, Cairo 1981.

40. Griffith, «Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī's Colloquy», 306.

41. *Ibid.*, 322, 330.

bio-bibliographies, reports of cultural gatherings, and wisdom literature. But the task will be possibly more difficult than one can imagine: scholars signals the existence of passages attributed to Ibn Zur'a in Arabic that cannot be found in his extant works<sup>42</sup>. A more precise knowledge of the adaptation of Greek ethics in Arabic will certainly contribute to shed light on this intricate issue.

To summarize: what Albertus tells us about Avenzoreth fits with what we know about Ibn Zur'a: the two names match, the geographical provenience from Arabia brings us near to Ibn Zur'a's actual place of activity (Baghdad), the status of priest is congruent with his activity of Christian theologian, the theme of the quotation reflects in general Ibn Zur'a's interest in moral philosophy and, more specifically, his anthropological views.

#### THE TRANSMISSION INTO LATIN

The channels through which Ibn Zur'a's statement was transmitted into Latin and reached Albertus remain obscure. The work of Ibn Zur'a from which Texts 8–10 are taken was apparently unknown to the Latin world. Texts 6 and 7, on the contrary, were transmitted, but only partially. The Latin translation of the work containing Text 6 (*Picatrix*, dated 1256) gives an abridged and unfaithful version of this text, of which it maintains only the final allusion to the «extraordinary and rare men» («nobiles, alti et preciosi et a bestialibus hominibus [...] natura remoti»), omitting the mention of Abū Bišr Mattā (equally omitted are all the other references to Mattā occurring in the *Ġāyat al-Ḥakīm*)<sup>43</sup>. Likewise, the Latin translation of the *Summa Alexandrinorum*, to which the core of Text 7 refers, does not contain (both in the *versio communis* and in the *versio Admontensis*) the initial reference to Ibn Zur'a, thus preventing Latin readers from being aware of any connection of Ibn Zur'a with the *Summa Alexandrinorum*. Finally, the last sentence of Text 7 («He who rejects disci-

42. See E. Cottrell, «L'Anonyme d'Oxford (Manuscrit Bodleian Marsh 539): Bibliothèque ou commentaire?», in *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, ed. C. D'Ancona, Leiden, Boston 2007, 415–41 (419–20).

43. *Picatrix. The Latin version of the Ghāyat Al-Ḥakīm*, ed. D. Pingree, London 1986, 171. This being the case, a misattribution of Mattā's statement to Avenzoreth in the *Picatrix* can be excluded.

pline [...]») was reproduced in an Arabic work of the XI c. – Abū Wafā' al-Mubaššir ibn Fātik's *Muḥtār al-ḥikam* (ca. 1050)<sup>44</sup> – which was translated into Latin in the last decades of the XIII c. under the title *Liber philosophorum moralium antiquorum*<sup>45</sup>: the Latin translation, however, omits the sentence in question<sup>46</sup>. As a result, among the contemporaries of Albertus the name of Avenzoreth can hardly be found: in particular, I am not aware of quotations of Avenzoreth in the two most promising candidates to the knowledge of an Arabic author dealing with ethical issues, namely Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon.

Since the *dictum* of Avenzoreth is formulated similarly in different works of Albertus, this latter was probably acquainted with a precise and well-established version of the statement. On the other hand, the lack of attributions of this *dictum* to Avenzoreth outside Albertus's *oeuvre* seems incompatible with the existence of a Latin translation, integral or partial, of a work of Ibn Zur'ā that Albertus might have quoted. Although the precise range of Arabic sources at Albertus' disposal, in the field of ethics and elsewhere, remains to be ascertained<sup>47</sup>, the hypothesis that only Albertus, to the exclusion of his contemporaries, had access to works translated into Latin, in the case of Avenzoreth as in that of other authors, looks unlikely<sup>48</sup>. Albertus

44. Mubaššir ibn Fātik, *Muḥtār al-ḥikam*, ed. 'A. Badawī, Madrid 1958, 213.1-3.

45. E. Franceschini, *Il Liber philosophorum moralium antiquorum. Testo critico*, Venezia 1932.

46. Of p. 213 of Badawī's edition, the Latin translation reproduces only ll. 13-16 («Et dixit: senes constanter se invicem diligunt etc.»), ed. Franceschini 505.9-14) and 18-19 («Et eodem modo bonorum amor stabilis est [...]», 505.14-16).

47. The 'Arab commentator' mentioned in the prologue of the commentary *per quaestiones* on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Albertus Magnus, *Super Ethica*, 2, 70), for example, remains unidentified.

48. Although M. Grignaschi's hypothesis that al-Fārābī's long commentaries on logic were known and used by Albertus (see «Les traductions latines des ouvrages de la logique arabe et l'abrégé d'Alfarabi», *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 39 [1972], 41-107) is endorsed by some scholars (see S. Ebbesen, «Albert (the Great?)'s Companion to the Organon», in *Albert der Grosse. Seine Zeit, sein Werk, seine Wirkung*, ed. A. Zimmermann, Berlin, New York 1981, 89-104 [91-92]; M. Chase, «Did Porphyry Write a Commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*? Albertus Magnus, al-Fārābī and Porphyry on *per se* Predication», in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, ed. P. Adamson, London, Turin 2007, 21-38 [29-31]), it is very cautiously considered by others: see J. Janssens, «Albert le Grand et sa connaissance des écrits logiques arabes: une réévaluation du dossier Grignaschi», in *L'Organon dans la translatio*

himself confirms this scenario with the phrase «fertur dixisse» in Text 2: we are apparently in front of a reported opinion. But an opinion reported by whom and where? One can think of three possibilities: 1) a quotation of Ibn Zur'a's *dictum* in an Arabic ethical work translated into Latin, or an entry in one of the numerous Arabic anthologies of sayings available to Latin readers; 2) a gloss in a manuscript; 3) a private communication by a scholar, expert of Arabic philosophy, with whom Albertus was familiar. None of these possibilities can, in principle, be excluded. The research along the first line is, however, very demanding and, in the absence of critical editions and reliable indices of the relevant works, surpasses the limits of the present stage of research. Moreover, also this case presupposes the existence of a public source, a scenario that does not explain why only Albertus apparently knew Ibn Zur'a's *dictum*. As to the second possibility, outside Albertus' works I am aware of only two occurrences of the name «Avenzoret» (in this or similar spellings) in manuscripts. The first is in a codex (Laon, Bibliotheca Municipalis 412, fol. 15v) that contains a collection of notes on natural philosophy, with regard to the doctrine «Omne celum est circulare, et omne circulare est perfectum». It is unclear whether the Avenzoret mentioned here has to be identified with Averroes, as the curators of the Codices of the Avicenna Latinus suggest<sup>49</sup>. In this case, we would be thus in front of the same kind of confusion that we have noticed in the edition of Texts 4-5, although in the opposite direction: this time the original name «Averroes» becomes «Avenzoret». The second case regards the codex Napoli, Bibliotheca Nationalis, VIII.E.45, fol. 2r, where the name «Avensorech» figures in a gloss to the text of the Latin translation of the *Metaphysics* made by William of Moerbeke (fol. 1r-71v)<sup>50</sup>. Since the gloss occurs at the very beginning of the *Metaphysica Guillelmi*, we can surmise that it refers to the same passage of the first book of Aristotle's work commenting on which Albertus quotes Avenzoreth (983a28-30), or

studiorum, ed. J. Brumberg, Turnhout forthcoming. Equally doubtful is Grignaschi's hypothesis of Albertus' acquaintance with some logical works of Avicenna neither preserved nor attested in Latin translation.

49. See Avicenna Latinus. *Codices*, 18, 436b. The presence of the name 'Avenzoreth' in this manuscript remains unnoticed in Aristoteles Latinus. *Codices*, I, Roma 1939, 471 n° 482.

50. See Aristoteles Latinus. *Codices*, II, Cambridge 1955, 1014 n° 1482.

to a passage nearby. The curators of the *Aristoteles Latinus* date the Naples manuscript to the XIV century, and its glosses to the XV. Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem, the editor of William of Moerbeke's translation of the *Metaphysics*, proposes a slightly earlier date, namely the end of the XIII century<sup>51</sup>. In any case, regardless of its exact date, the manuscript looks posterior to Albertus: it possibly testifies, rather than Albertus' source, the diffusion of Albertus' quotation of Avenzoreth in Latin codices of the *Metaphysics*. The existence in Latin manuscripts of other mentions of Avenzoret of these kinds cannot be excluded.

I would like to call attention here to the third possibility, which is corroborated by some historical evidence. We know, for example, that Roger Bacon personally met and interacted with Hermannus Alemannus (Hermann the German) in Paris between 1240-1247, with whom he says to have been *valde familiaris*<sup>52</sup>. The possibility of a similar familiarity and of an oral exchange of information between Hermannus and Albertus in Paris during the Parisian stay of this latter at the same time (1243/4-1248), cannot therefore be excluded: beside sharing Roger Bacon's curiosity for Arabic culture, Albertus had a further reason to get in touch with Hermannus, being a German like him. In those years, Hermannus was in Paris after a long stay in Andalusia (Toledo), where he had translated Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1240) and possibly also the *Summa Alexandrinorum* (1243-4). It seems that Hermannus visited Paris bringing with him from Toledo the newly translated *Summa*<sup>53</sup>. It is not unlikely that he shared with the cultural Parisian environment, beside the text of the translation, also further information on Ibn Zur'ā, the translator of the *Summa* from Syriac into Arabic. This hypothesis has the advantage of explaining why Albertus quoted Avenzoreth only in works composed after 1248, i.e. after his teaching in Paris<sup>54</sup>.

51. Aristoteles Latinus. XXV 3.1. *Metaphysica lib. I-XIV. Recensio et Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeke*, ed. G. Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, Leiden-New York-Köln 1995, 40, 62.

52. See M.-Th. d'Alverny, «Remarques sur la tradition manuscrite de la *Summa Alexandrinorum*», *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 49 (1983), 265-72 (269-70).

53. d'Alverny, «Remarques», 270.

54. A serious investigation of the chronology and extent of Albertus' recourse to the *Summa Alexandrinorum* would substantially contribute to a

## THE DIFFUSION OF ALBERTUS' QUOTATION

The *dictum* of Avenzoreth reported by Albertus circulated among later authors under different names, most prominently under that of Averroes. The misattribution is, from the doctrinal point of view, reasonable, since Averroes quite notoriously professed some 'ascetical' doctrines (see, for instance, the considerations on chastity in *In Phys.* VII, 323G) and held that philosophers and common people are said 'man' equivocally, thus endorsing an anthropological divide not very different from the opposition between the *honorandi viri* and the rest of mankind in Avenzoreth's *dictum*<sup>55</sup>. This misattribution was also momentous, since the ascription of the sentence to the famous Averroes guaranteed its survival, although under a wrong identity; in other cases, unknown authors quoted by Albertus were totally disregarded in the subsequent tradition<sup>56</sup>. The attribution to Averroes, however, conveyed a kind of diaspora in authorship: on the one hand, through the epithet *Commentator* and the ethical context of the sentence, the paternity of the *dictum* migrated to Eustratius of Nicaea (the commentator of Aristotle's *Ethics* known in Latin translation); on the other hand, through a kind of confusion between

better evaluation of this hypothesis. For the time being, only scattered specimens of Albertus' quotations of the *Summa* can be found in scholarly literature (see J. Dunbabin, «The Two Commentaries of Albertus Magnus on the *Nicomachean Ethics*», *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 30 [1963], 232-50 [234 and n. 13]; Albertus Magnus, *Super Ethica. Commentum et quaestiones. Libri VI-X*, ed. W. Kübel, Münster 1987, 820). In «I *Meteorologica* di Avicenna», in *Cosmogonie e cosmologie nel medioevo*. Atti del Convegno della Società Italiana per lo Studio del Pensiero Medievale (S.I.S.P.M.) Catania, 22-24 settembre 2006, ed. C. Martello, C. Militello, A. Vella, Louvain-la-Neuve 2008, 35-46, C. Di Martino advances the hypothesis of Albertus' acquaintance with informal/oral translations of Arabic philosophical texts (p. 46).

55. See I. Zavattero, «La *Quaestio de felicitate* di Giacomo da Pistoia: un tentativo di interpretazione alla luce di una nuova edizione critica del testo», in *Le felicità nel Medioevo* cit., 355-409 (367); Bianchi, «Filosofi, uomini e bruti», 185-201; A. De Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique: Albert le Grand*, Paris 2005, 350.

56. The reference to the unknown *Bugafarus* in Albertus' commentary on the *Meteorologica*, for example, was omitted in the anonymous commentary on the same work preserved in ms. Siena, Biblioteca Comunale L III 21, ff. 196r-234v, written between 1255 and 1270, which depends otherwise on Albertus' commentary (see G. Fioravanti, «I *Meteorologica*, Alberto e oltre», in *Cosmogonie e cosmologie nel medioevo*, 63-78 [70 n. 16]).

commentator and author commented upon, the sentence was ascribed to Aristotle ("Philosophus"). Also ascriptions to Severinus Boetius and Seneca can be found. In front of this scenario, the puzzlement of the historian of philosophy seems justified<sup>57</sup>.

The following table gathers some of the earliest instances of reception of the *dictum* in Latin authors of the thirteenth century, exemplifying the variety of names under which it was transmitted<sup>58</sup>.

The evidence collected here does not aim at being exhaustive. First of all, other occurrences of the *dictum* can be found in coeval and posterior philosophical or theological literature; in some cases, their dependence on Albertus' version can help to clarify the chronology of works of uncertain authorship<sup>59</sup>. Likewise, the table

57. Boethius de Dacia, *Opuscula: De aeternitate mundi, De summo bono, De somniis* ed. N.G. Green-Pedersen, København 1976 (Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi, 6.2), 370: «Locum, qui saepe laudatur et variis auctoribus adscribitur (e.g. Eustrathio, Averroi, Senecae), nusquam inveni».

58. Texts are taken from: Johannis Daci *Opera*, ed. A. Otto, Hauniae 1955, I, 1; Köhler, *Grundlagen*, 618 and n. 134; Anonymi Boethio Daco usi *Quaestiones Metaphysicae*, ed. G. Fioravanti, Librarium Universitatis Austro Danicae, Hauniae 2009; G. Post, «Petraich and Heraclitus Once More», *Speculum*, 12, (1937), 343–50; Boethius de Dacia, *Opuscula*; Duin, «À la recherche du commentaire de Boèce de Dacie sur la *Métaphysique* d'Aristote». In Post's previous article, «A Petition Relating to the Bull *Ad Fructus Uberes* and the Opposition of the French Secular Clergy in 1282», *Speculum*, 11.2 (1936), 231–37, the name of the author is misprinted as «(secundum) Tholomeum Ecracritum» (236 n. 1). Cf. P.O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum. Vol. IV (Alia itinera II), Great Britain to Spain*, London, Leiden 1989, 140a.

59. See, for instance, Pseudo-Beda, *Sententiae, sive axiomata philosophica ex Aristotele et aliis praestantibus collecta. Sectio prima: Sententiae ex Aristotele collectae*, littera H, PL 90, 1000B: «Homo est maxime intellectus (IX Eth.). Intelligentur quod intellectus est nobilior et principalior pars hominis. Vel dicitur quod ille homo magis proprie dicitur homo, qui vivit secundum rationem et intellectum, quam ille homo qui vivit secundum sensum, etc. Unde dicit Commentator de universalibus contra illos qui vivunt secundum sensum, Vae vobis, qui de numero bestiarum computati estis, divinum et optimum ignorantes, quod in vobis est». See also Pseudo-Thomas Aquinas (= Guillelmus Wheatley [Guillelmus Wethleius], fl. first half of XIV c.), *Expositio in Boethii De consolatione Philosophiae*, liber II: «Unde Boetius in tractatu de summo bono allegans Commentatorem dicit: vae vobis hominibus qui de numero bestiarum computati estis, divinum quod in vobis est non cognoscetes, propter quod ad superiora ascenditis, et Deo similes estis» (in *Corpus Thomisticum*, <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/xbc2.html>). I have not been able to identify the *Summa Mercurii* whose incipit is «Vae vobis qui estis natura bestiarum» as in L. Thorndike, P. Kibre, *A Catalogue of Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin*, London 1963, 1679. G. Fioravanti (Anonymi Boethio Daco usi *Quaestiones Metaphysicae* cit., 183) aptly

<p>(1) Albertus Magnus, <i>Metaph.</i> I, 2, 8, ed. Col. p. 257-8 (= Text 2); <i>Metaph.</i> I, 2, 9, ed. Col. p. 2671 (= Text 3)</p>	<p>(2) John of Dacia, <i>Divisio scientiarum</i> (1289), ed. A. Otto, p. 17.18-21</p>	<p>(3) Anonymous, <i>Divisio scientiarum</i> (after 1260?), ms. Roma Vat. lat. 3022, f. 84ra, transcr. T.W. Köhler, p. 619, n. 138</p>	<p>(4) Anonymous Boethio Daco usus, <i>Quaestiones Metaphysicae</i> I, 9, ed. G. Fioravanti, p. 206, 43-47</p>	<p>(5) Anonymous, <i>Quoddam satis morale commentum super decimum Ethicorum</i> (before 1290), ms. London, Brit. Mus., Cot. Dom. A. XI, ff. 152r-153r, transcr. G. Post, p. 346</p>	<p>(6) Boethius of Dacia (d. 1285), <i>De summo bono</i>, ed. N.G. Green-Pedersen, pp. 369.18-370.21; 373.115-117</p>	<p>(7) Anonymous, <i>Quaestiones super II-VII Metaphysicae</i>, ms. Cambridge, Peterhouse 152, f. 290rb-va, transcr. J.J. Duin, p. 449</p>
<p>[a] Propter quod quidam sacerdotum Arabiae fertur dixisse:</p>	<p>Huiusmodi autem homines deplangit Auverrois dicens:</p>	<p>Et ideo contra tales dicit Averrois commentator:</p>	<p>Pauci enim sunt priores, ut dicit Commentator super decimum Ethicorum secundum Tholomeum Eraclitum,</p>	<p>Sicut scribit Commentator super decimum Ethicorum secundum Tholomeum Eraclitum,</p>	<p>Contra quos exclamat Philosophus dicens:</p>	<p>Et ideo dicit Boetius (?; Seneca?):</p>
<p>Vae vobis homines, qui computati estis in numero bestiarum</p>	<p>ve vobis hominibus, qui in numero bestiarum computati estis</p>	<p>Ve vobis brutales, qui in numero bestiarum computati estis</p>	<p>Vae vobis qui in numero bestiarum computati estis;</p>	<p>O infelices homines, qui computati estis in numero bestiarum,</p>	<p>Vae vobis homines qui computati estis in numero bestiarum</p>	<p>Vae vobis homines qui computati estis in numero bestiarum</p>
<p>[b] et laboratis servitute reciproca,</p>	<p>laborantes servitute reciproca</p>	<p>servientes servitute reciproca,</p>	<p>laborantes servitute reciproca</p>			
<p>[c] ut ex vobis nascatur liber.</p>						
<p>[d] Nullus enim liber in hominibus est, sed omnes laborant ad commo- dum,</p>						
<p>[e] ei quod in ipsis divinum est, non intendentes.</p>		<p>illud divinum quod in vobis est non attenditis, quo ad superiora ascenditis, quo similes intelligentis eritis,</p>	<p>quod divinum est in vobis non attendentes, per quod ad superiora ascenditis et intelligentis similes estis,</p>	<p>ei quod in vobis divinum est non intendentes!</p>	<p>ei quod in vobis divinum est non intendentes!</p>	<p>Non percipientes donum quod est in vobis</p>
<p>[f] Propter quod etiam dicit Avenzoresh fere omnes homines,</p>	<p>exceptis paucis uiris honorandis ut scientiarum professoribus</p>	<p>exceptis quibusdam venerandis qui relictis aliis philosophiae studio adhererunt <i>cod.</i></p>	<p>exceptis paucis uiris honorandis</p>	<p>exceptis paucis uiris honorabilibus</p>	<p>Et ita omnes homines hodie impedit inordinata concupiscentia a suo summo bono, exceptis paucissimis honorandis uiris</p>	<p>exceptis quibusdam honorandis uiris</p>

does not document the ascription of the sentence to Eustratius of Nicaea, although we can observe the preliminary stage of this ascription in column 5<sup>60</sup>. Finally, the sequence of columns 2-7 does not indicate a chronological or a genetic order, but simply reflects a progressive distance from Albertus' way of calling the author of the *dictum*. Despite these limitations, some general observations can nonetheless be made. First, the knowledge of the *dictum* in later authors seems to depend exclusively on Albertus: part [c] of the sentence is provided only by Albertus, and four recipients (nn. 4-7) do not seem to have had direct access to the original sentence, since they regard as part of the *dictum* a phrase («ei quod in ipsis divinum est, non intendentes»), section [e]) that Albertus appends to the quotation of Avenzoreth together with the preceding section [d] (using the third, rather than the second, plural person)<sup>61</sup>. Second, among the works of Albertus, all these authors rely in particular on his commentary on the *Metaphysics*: an element of the *dictum* that all of them resume is the phrase «exceptis paucis honorandis viris» in section [f], which occurs only in the second quotation of Avenzoreth in Albertus' commentary on the *Metaphysics*. Third, the ascription of the *dictum* to Averroes or the Commentator (or both) is the most frequent: it occurs in four cases out of six (nn. 2-5). In this regard, we may wonder whether authors like nn. 2-3 (and possibly also 4-5) in the above table were reading Albertus' commentary on the *Metaphysics* in one of the manuscripts, like Paris, Mazarine 3479, in which the original name «Avenzoreth» was corrupted into «Averroes». We may also wonder whether the epithet «philosophus» appended to the name «Averroes» in the Borgnet edition of Text 4 above («Unde

contends: «The praise of intellectual life... and the praise of philosophers... are not exclusive to the Danish master [Boethius of Dacia]: probably the *De summo bono* is just the top of an iceberg, still submerged for the most part».

60. Since Eustratius of Nicaea and Michael of Ephesus quote, respectively, Ptolemy Chennos and Heraclitus in their commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (see Post, «Petraarch and Heraclitus Once More», 346 n. 2, and H.P.F. Mercken, «The Greek Commentators on Aristotle's *Ethics*», in *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, ed. R. Sorabji, London 1990, 407-43 [430]), the Commentator of column 5 might well be either Eustratius or Michael, rather than Averroes.

61. Bianchi, «Felicità intellettuale» cit., 24 and n. 32, documents second-hand quotations of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* through Albertus' commentary on the *Metaphysics* in the *De summo bono* of Boethius of Dacia and in the *Quaestiones super librum de causis* of Siger of Brabant.

optime dixit Averroes philosophus») can be connected in some way with the evidence reported in column 6, representing in a way a conflation of two different authors (Averroes and Aristotle).

## CONCLUSION

Three main conclusions can be drawn. First, the codicological study of Medieval works vindicates its own importance: before 1960, the year of publication of the critical edition of Albertus' commentary on the *Metaphysics*, the name «Avenzoreth» had never appeared among the printed versions of Albertus' *Opera omnia*, where it was replaced by the names «Avendreth» and «Averroes», to the effect that any clue to the quotation of Ibn Zur'a and the circulation of a specimen of the philosophy current in Baghdad in the X century in Latin Medieval culture was not yet available. By contrast, careless spellings of the name «Avenzoreth» in previous editions of Albertus' works («Avendreth», for instance) prompted scholars to endorse wrong identifications (like the one leading to Ibn Daūd). Second, the case of Avenzoreth is a further attestation of the crucial role that Albertus Magnus played in the Latin reception of Arabic philosophy: at the present stage of research, it seems likely that he was the only Latin scholar acquainted with Avenzoreth's adagio, possibly through a private way of knowledge, namely the oral communication with one of the leading figures of the translation movement from Arabic into Latin (Hermannus Alemannus). Since none of the main exponents of the so-called school of «Aristotelians of Baghdad», to which Ibn Zur'a belonged, other than al-Fārābī results to have been translated into Latin<sup>62</sup>, Albertus' acquaintance with Avenzoreth, if the identification proposed here will be confirmed, would shed new light on the process of transmission of philosophy from Arabic into Latin. Third, the diaspora of Avenzoreth's *dictum* in disguised identity among later Latin philosophers witnesses, on the one hand, to the impact of the so-called Latin "Averroism" on the quotations of

62. See C.S.F. Burnett, «Arabic into Latin: the reception of Arabic philosophy into Western Europe», in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, 370-404; Id., «Arabic Philosophical Works Translated into Latin», in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. R. Pasnau, Cambridge 2010, 814-22.

Arabic sources<sup>63</sup> and, on the other, to the deep and lasting influence of Albertus' philosophy on subsequent Latin thinkers.

In conclusion, if asked whether the author quoted by Albertus and named by him Avenzoreth is a legendary figure or a real person, one might adduce sufficient evidence in support of the latter alternative, thus corroborating the reliability of the Doctor Universalis as a source of information and his prestige in the history of philosophy. The real legend to dispell is not the one created by Albertus with his mentions of an Avenzoreth that would be nothing more than the fruit of his fantasy, but, on the contrary, the scholarly stereotype that still depicts the Coloniensis as a compiler of countless sources, only some of which are real, many other being regrettably fictive. In this respect, Albertus' interest in Avenzoreth is markedly different from the search for another priest, the Presbyter Ioannes, that brings the main character of Umberto Eco's *Baudolino* in the lands of a legendary East, in which fantasy creates persons and reality fades into the myth<sup>64</sup>.

#### ABSTRACT

References to an unidentified author ("Avenzoreth") occur in some of the commentaries on Aristotle by Albertus Magnus, who is apparently the only Latin scholar who quoted him. This author is credited with a pessimistic view on the beastly nature of man and the lack of freedom in human condition. In Albertus' report, Avenzoreth shows legendary traits: he is presented as a priest, who lived in the East, and pronounced a spirited and vivid oracle against mankind ("Vae vobis, homines, qui computati estis in numero bestiarum, mutua servitute laborantes, ut ex vobis nascatur liber", a *dictum* repeated with small variations in all citations by Albertus). The article aims at showing that, despite his seemingly mythical profile, Avenzoreth corresponds to a real Arabic author: in all likelihood he can be identified with a theologian and philosopher active in Baghdad at the turn between the tenth and the eleventh century, Abū 'Alī 'Isā Ibn Zur'a (d. 1008).

63. Many quotations of the Commentator in the anonymous questions on *Metaphysics* edited by Fioravanti do not correspond to the actual writings of Averroes (see Anonymi Boethio Daco *usi Quaestiones Metaphysicae* cit., 185-86).

64. On the Medieval legend behind Eco's novel, see C. Taylor, «Prester John, Christian Enclosure, and the Spatial Transmission of Islamic Alterity in the Twelfth-Century West», in *Contextualizing the Muslim Other in Medieval Christian Discourse*, ed. J. C. Frakes, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2011, 39-63.

The identity of Avenzoreth with Ibn Zur'a is argued for on account of: a) the similarity of the two names; b) the applicability to Ibn Zur'a of the geographical and personal details that Albertus offers on Avenzoreth; c) the congruence of Avenzoreth's view as reported by Albertus with Ibn Zur'a's own anthropological doctrine. The channels through which Ibn Zur'a's thought was transmitted into Latin and reached Albertus remain obscure and need to be further investigated. Shortly after having entered into Latin culture, however, the figure of Avenzoreth/Ibn Zur'a abruptly faded away, since his true name was confused – by a scribal error occurring in the manuscripts in Albertus' works – with that, much more famous, of Averroes.

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