

Annuario di storia della metafisica
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Yearbook of the History of Metaphysics

Quaestio

Doctor Fundatissimus

Giles of Rome: His Thought and Influence

Egidio Romano: il suo pensiero
e la sua influenza

edited by / a cura di
Marienza Benedetto
Francesco Marrone
Pasquale Porro

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Valérie Cordonier

**Aristotle Theologized: the Importance
of Giles of Rome's *Sententia de bona fortuna*
to Late Medieval and Renaissance Peripatetism***

The importance of Giles' commentary work on Aristotle to subsequent intellectual history has long been acknowledged¹. However, much remains to be done to specify Giles' contribution. In the present paper, I would like to highlight the role played in the longer course of Aristotelian tradition by Giles' *Sententia de bona fortuna* (below: *Sententia*), a work that constitutes a telling example of the transformations imposed by Latin thinkers on the Aristotelian system. The impact of this commentary was decisive for the subsequent discussions on fortune, contingency and 'divine government'; that is, the issue of how God, as the First Principle of all beings, leads them all to their ends – or their ultimate 'good'. To specify the role of Giles' *Sententia* in the history of the modern theologization of Aristotle's thought, I will first sketch the background as well as the manuscript tradition of the work under consideration (1.), and then highlight the aspects of Giles' reading that turned out to be the most innovative and influential in the Late Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, namely: Giles' version of Aristotle's Ethics and Anthropology (2.), the distinction he drew between the concepts of 'nature' (3.) and 'fortune' (4.) in different Aristotelian texts, and finally, his detailed understanding of the mechanism of fortune (5.) as well as of the influence of the philosopher's God on human life (6.). To conclude, I give a general assessment of the position held by the *Sententia* in the longer Aristotelian tradition (7.).

* The research work presented here was part of a project conducted in collaboration with Matthias Roick (Volkswagen-Stiftung / Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel / Universität Göttingen): "Le *Liber de bona fortuna* et la réception de l'éthique aristotélicienne de Gilles de Rome à Giovanni Pontano (c. 1275-1502)" and benefited, in this framework, from the support of the *Institut des Sciences Humaines et Sociales* (CNRS, France) in the course of the years 2015 and 2016.

¹ See MOODY 1949, pp. 420, 427-430; MAIER 1952, pp. 90 sqq.; DONATI 1999, p. 104; TRIFOGLI 1990; and MARMO 2007, pp. 36-37.

1. The ambitious work of a young theologian: Giles' *Sententia de bona fortuna* in the context of the rediscovery of Aristotle

The *Liber de bona fortuna* (below: *Liber*) was part of the Latin Aristotelian corpus from the 1260s and consisted of two chapters on good fortune translated from the *Magna Moralia* (1206b30-1207b19) and the *Eudemian Ethics* (1246b37-1248b11) by William of Moerbeke². In the history of the reception of this opusculum, Giles' commentary is the first known exegetical work on the text – and probably its very first commentary. The *Sententia* certainly belongs to the first period of Giles' career, before 1278. During this period, as a student in Paris, he was reading among others the Dionysian corpus, Thomas Aquinas' *Commentary on the Sentences*, Avicenna's paraphrases of Aristotle's texts, Averroes' commentaries on them, as well as some of the most important items of the Aristotelian corpus, in particular the *Nicomachean Ethics*³. When it comes to situating Giles' *Sententia* inside this period, a reasonable dating is around the years 1275-1278⁴. So the work belongs to the mature period of Giles' earlier creative stage.

This situates the work during a period that was undoubtedly marked by the second condemnation of doctrinal errors by the Parisian bishop Etienne Tempier on 7 March 1277. However, in the studies that I have published on this work by Giles, I have chosen to read it in relation not to Tempier's condemnations, but to Henry of Ghent's *Quodlibet VI,10* (written either at Christmas 1281 or in Spring 1282)⁵. This choice was motivated by several reasons. First, the relationship and chronological position of Giles' commentary to Tempier's condemnations is very difficult to assess, as no direct correspondence can be found between the theses contained in this work and the ones condemned by the bishop; in contrast, the discussion of Aristotle's doctrine in Henry's *Quodlibet VI,10* turns out to be dependent on and directed against Giles' exegesis. Second, the documents of Tempier's condemnation offer no real arguments for his positions, while Henry's text is a masterpiece of philosophical argumentation. Finally, a consideration of the *Liber de bona fortuna*'s later reception history indicates that Henry's discussion of Giles' positions was itself a reference point for a great number of authors from the end of the 13th century.

Let us now sketch some results of a study that I have been conducting on the

² Moerbeke's paternity towards the translations has been established in CORDONIER / STEEL 2012, whereas the genesis of the opusculum is described in CORDONIER 2011. For an overall account on the reception of the opusculum, see CORDONIER 2010.

³ On the manuscript evidence concerning this period, see WIELOCKX 1994 and PINI 2005. In the case of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the copy of the Aristotelian manuscript annotated by Giles has been conserved in ms. Paris, Arsenal, 812.

⁴ DONATI 1990, pp. 53-55 and DONATI 1991, pp. 10, 23, 26 and 71.

⁵ CORDONIER 2014 and CORDONIER 2018.

textual tradition of Giles' *Sententia*. This text had a large and rather complex university transmission, and a much more limited independent transmission, mostly in Germany and in Italy, which is however not less difficult to assess⁶. Among the copies that are independent from the Parisian tradition, ms. Oxford, Bodl. Libr., Digby 150, fol. 114r-132v deserves particular attention. In this codex dating back to the 13th century, Giles' text and the Aristotelian lemmas present some features that might point to an earlier redactional stage⁷. As for the Renaissance, the data already gathered on the editorial history of Giles' *Sententia* indicate features that explain some peculiarities of its early modern reception. Indeed, among the earliest editions, the one published by Hieronymus de Durantis in Venice in 1493 simply ascribes Giles' commentary to Thomas Aquinas: this might well explain why the treatise *De Fortuna* (written by the Italian humanist Giovanni Pontano between 1499 and 1501) made extensive use of Giles' work in the chapter supposedly devoted to the views of Thomas Aquinas⁸. Some other printed volumes rightly ascribe the text to Giles, but only in making the *Sententia* figure after commentaries on the *Parva naturalia* by Aquinas and Peter of Auvergne⁹.

This positioning of the commentary in some of the Renaissance prints is in line with a part of the treatise's manuscript tradition, in which the *Liber* was often copied alongside a group of texts then called *Parva naturalia et alia parva*. In the late 13th century, this label included not only the works dealing with 'psychological' and 'physiological' issues that were later canonized under the title *Parva naturalia* – the works *On sense and sensible objects*, *On memory and recollection*, *On sleep and waking*, *On dreams*, *On prophecy in sleep* (these three books have been considered as parts of one and the same book *De somno et vigilia*), *On length and shortness of life*, *On youth and old age*, *On respiration*, *On life and death*¹⁰ –, but it also included a set of short treatises ascribed at the time to Aristotle and associated with the group of works just mentioned on the basis of their shortness and their 'interdisciplinary' content, such as, among others, the treatises *On the movement of animals* and *On the progression of animals*,

⁶ See CORDONIER / DE LEEMANS / STEEL 2017.

⁷ On this, see CORDONIER 2014, p. 158 and pp. 164-169.

⁸ See ARIST., *Opuscula philosophorum principis Aristotelis per diuini Thome Aquinatis commentaria compendiose exposita*, ed. Pataviis 1493, and ROICK 2017, pp. 152-154 and 276, n. 216. See here below note 38.

⁹ This is, for example, the case of the edition prepared by Bonetus Locatellus and published at the Venetian Press of Octavianus Scotus in 1507: see *Opuscula Aristotelis cum expositionibus Sancti Thomae; ac Petri de Alvernia*, ed. Venetiis 1507, ff. 61v-69v.

¹⁰ Since the publication of FREUDENTHAL 1869, one generally mentions Giles as the first user of this generic title. At any rate, the phrase *parvi libri naturales* proves rather frequent in the end of the 13th century. On the Medieval *Parva naturalia*, see DE LEEMANS / BEULLENS 2008, pp. 87-135; DE LEEMANS 2011, pp. LXII-LXVII and DE LEEMANS 2011, pp. 917-923.

as well as *On Indivisible Lines*, *On colours*, *On the flooding of the Nile*, and the *Physiognomonics* and the *Liber de bona fortuna*¹¹. As such, this heterogeneous collection was considered to be complementary to the book *On the Soul*, whereas the *Liber*, which often figured at the very end of the list, was also read in close connection to the Ethical corpus – as remains to be seen.

2. “To constitute a complete account of Ethics”: a broad interpretation of Aristotle’s views on human nature and destiny

As was frequent in medieval commentaries on the Sacred Scripture or on philosophical texts, the Prologue of Giles’ *Sententia* offers a very general presentation of the text that it considers and gives a justification of its position within the corpus to which it is supposed to belong. The first point to be noted in this respect is the fact that Giles explicitly ranks the *Liber* among the Ethical treatises by Aristotle. This decision was hardly a matter of course at a time when – as was seen in the preceding section – the opusculum was often copied at the end of an extended series of the *Parva naturalia* related not only to ‘psychological’ but also – to use modern categories – to ‘physiological’ and ‘physical’ issues. Instead of following this categorization, Giles adopts a view reflected in various other medieval manuscripts that situate the *Liber* among other Ethical treatises. For the Prologue of the *Sententia* is built entirely on a judicious selection of extracts from the Ethical corpus having to do with the role of fortune in human happiness. Indeed, Giles starts with a supposed assimilation of happiness to fortune in order to discuss the importance and position of the opusculum in the Ethical corpus:

“Someone has considered good fortune to be ‘the same as happiness’, as the Philosopher holds in the first book of the *Ethics*¹², and he has not spoken¹³ in a completely irrational way. For, as is said in the first book of the *Rhetorics* in the treatise on deliberative process, ‘happiness is *eupragia*’ (that is a good operation) ‘alongside virtue, or it is self-sufficiency-to-life’¹⁴. So these two (that is, good operation according to virtue

¹¹ On the integration of the *Liber* into this extended version of the corpus of Aristotle’s *Parva naturalia*, see CORDONIER / STEEL 2012, pp. 403–405.

¹² On this reference (ARIST., *Ethica Nicomachea*, I, 9, 1099b05–10), see below note 17.

¹³ Grammatically, the subject ‘he’ might refer either to the one who “considered good fortune to be the same as happiness”, or to Aristotle himself, who referred to him.

¹⁴ ARIST. LAT., *Rhetorica*, I, 5, 1360b15–19, ed. SCHNEIDER 1978, p. 175, l. 1–2: “Sit itaque felicitas eupraxia cum uirtute, uel per se sufficientia uite”. The Latin *eupragia* is a mere transliteration of the Greek term εὐπραγία, literally meaning “well doing”, “successful action”, or “prosperity”. I have left it untranslated, as it also figures in this state – with a slight orthographic difference – in Moerbeke’s translation of the beginning of the *Magna moralia*. Indeed, this option was often taken by him instead of a proper translation when he was faced with a series of Greek words that were difficult to understand or to render into Latin. The Greek term occurs among others in *Ethica Nicomachea*, I, 1098b22 (that is slightly

and self-sufficiency-to-life) seem to be included in the notion of perfect happiness. For, speaking of the political happiness – as will be made clear in what follows –, such happiness cannot be possessed with all its perfection unless the self-sufficiency-to-life also occurs there. Therefore, since good fortune is the mistress of the external goods, as the Philosopher holds in this book on good fortune, if someone being without the external goods is not completely self-sufficient in his life and if without self-sufficiency-to-life there cannot be a completely perfect political happiness, it follows that good fortune must be in some way considered as being the same as happiness itself, as far as it contributes to some kind of its perfection. [...] These things having been now clarified in advance, it can easily be made clear to which part of the philosophy this book is related and to which book it must be annexed. Because if good fortune is something annexed to happiness, the book must be annexed to the book of *Ethics* or to the *Great Morals*, where happiness is treated. [...] Then it becomes clear what necessity led to the composition of this book, the subject of which is good fortune. For, if in the moral science one deals with happiness, and if good fortune can contribute¹⁵ in some way to the perfection of happiness, it was required, to constitute a complete account of *Ethics*, to produce a book on good fortune¹⁶.

Although Giles does not quote his primary Aristotelian source literally, this seems to correspond to the text of Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the Philosopher discusses the views of those who insist on the crucial importance of the external goods and who accordingly assimilate happiness to fortune insofar as it is responsible for their distribution among human beings. After having stressed how crucial such goods are to accomplishing “good acts” (1199a31-b05), Aristotle claims that one is not completely happy without beauty, nobility, friends, a great number of children, as well as other such kinds of prosperity (1199b05-07); hence, he says, the fact that some rank good fortune in the same category as happiness¹⁷. According to Giles, the opinion of these philosophers was quoted in this passage only dialectically, while in the *Liber* it is assumed to be true by the Philosopher, considering that the external goods are definitely necessary to happiness. In other words, the opusculum is supposed

before the passage quoted by Giles in the beginning of his Prologue), but in this passage it was translated, precisely by the phrase “good operation” (ed. GAUTHIER 1973, p. 385, l. 23-24: “Consonat autem rationi et bene vivere et bene operari felicem. Fere enim bona vita quedam dicta est et bona operatio”). The phrase “self-sufficiency-to-life” renders the readymade phrase *per se sufficientia uite* frequently used by Giles in this passage. In Moerbeke’s version (which consists in a revision of the translation made by Robert Grosseteste), the phrase *per se sufficientia* as such renders the term ἀνάρκεια, which means a kind of independence that is essential to individual or political happiness: see *Ethica Nicomachea*, I, 5, 1097b07; X, 6, 1176b05, and *Politica*, I, 2, 1252b27-35 and 1253a18-28; VII, 4, 1326b08-25. In *Ethica Nicomachea*, X, 7, 1177a28, however, Grosseteste did only transliterate the term, and Moerbeke has left it untranslated.

¹⁵ What I have translated with “to contribute to” is the Latin phrase “*facere ad*”.

¹⁶ AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna*, Prologue, partially quoted in CORDONIER 2010, p. 727, n. 51. The Latin text is that of my edition of this prologue, which is in preparation.

¹⁷ ARIST. LAT., *Ethica Nicomachea*, I, 9, 1099b05-10, ed. GAUTHIER 1973, p. 387, ll. 7-12. An opposite view is defended in *Politica*, VII, 1, 1323b20-30.

by Giles to definitively consecrate the Philosopher's (and the philosophers') assumption that good fortune is a necessary condition for happiness or equal to happiness. So, fortune belongs to the topics that must be taken into account in a complete Ethical doctrine, and the Philosopher 'had to' write this treatise to elaborate a complete account of Ethics.

Giles' decision to consider the *Liber* as a necessary and almost natural complement to the other ethical Aristotelian works had some influence in the Late Middle Ages as well as in the Renaissance. Although the circulation of the *Sententia* in this period deserves to be further studied, suffice it to point out a particularly telling example of Giles' influence in the Italian Renaissance. This is the case of the *Compendium of the Liber de bona fortuna* composed by Chrysostomus Javelli (1470/72-1538/40), a powerful Inquisitor and Dominican scholar who authored a large set of scholarly commentaries on almost the entirety of the Aristotelian corpus¹⁸. Javelli's *Compendium* was transmitted by two redactions. Making here an abstraction from the complex editorial history that has marked the editions of this work, I am just recalling that the definitive redaction of Javelli's text is the one that was first printed in the 1531 *editio princeps* of his works under as *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, whereas the text published in volume 3 of the *Opera Omnia* edition printed in 1577 and 1580 reflects an earlier stage of the work. Among the differences that are to be found in the two versions, there is the fact that the definitive text entails a Prologue in which the author tacitly incorporates almost all the content of Giles' Prologue in an original way¹⁹. Indeed, in adding an explicit connection with the *Parva naturalia* and the biological corpus that was absent in Giles, Javelli claims that the *Liber* was meant to complete the "knowledge of the animate beings" that started with Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul* and finished with his books *On Animals* and *On Plants*, and more precisely to complement or to achieve the theory of happiness that was partially developed in Books I and X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as well as in the *Great Morals*²⁰. In other words, Giles' ideas concerning the position of the opuscle in the Ethical corpus were integrated by Javelli into an even broader view of Aristotle's anthropology, where the more general study of living beings was supposed to be preparatory to the particular content of the opuscle.

¹⁸ See TAVUZZI 1990, pp. 462 and 477-479. Now Michael Tavuzzi, who is currently preparing a monograph on Javelli, considers that most of his Aristotelian epitoma were completed during his years in Piacenza 1522-1538, though some were probably started earlier, perhaps in his early years in Ferrara and Bologna. I thank Michael Tavuzzi for having generously shared with me the latest results of his research on this author.

¹⁹ This editorial history, as well as the complex relation between Javelli's *Compendium* and Giles' *Sententia* is analysed in a separated essay: see CORDONIER / DE ROBERTIS 2021 (in press).

²⁰ See CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, Prologue, ed. Venetiis 1531, p. 39vB, ll. 17-33. This edition corresponds to n° 17 in TAVUZZI 1991, p. 110. On this passage, see CORDONIER / DE ROBERTIS 2021 (in press), section 3.1.

3. Between Ethics, Politics and (Meta-)physics: two different meanings of the term of “nature” in Aristotle

An aspect of Giles' *Sententia* that has profoundly marked the Latin reception of the Philosopher at a conceptual level is the semantic distinction he made concerning the term ‘nature’. This term is crucial to the doctrine of the *Liber*, as far as it is one of two favored candidates for terms that may be equated with fortune (the other being divine influence). Indeed, in the first chapter, Aristotle starts his inquiry by saying that the tendency of some people to succeed with regularity might be due to the nature of individuals (1206b38-1207a02), their intelligence (1207a02-05), or some divine intervention (1207a06-11). When these options have been evaluated (1207a11-35), the first very soon emerges as the preferred one, but it is reformulated to include the notion of divine inspiration: good fortune is said to be a ‘nature without reason’ (*sine ratione natura*) that carries an individual towards ‘good things’ (*habens impetum ad bona*). But it is impossible to identify the motives behind this, as if the individual were inspired by some divinity: the fortunated man “has an impetus to good things and obtains these without reasoning”, being unable to explain why he does so (1207a35-37).

This explanation – as yet provisional and imprecise – on which the first chapter (from the *Magna moralia*) is left hanging, is developed in the second chapter (from the *Eudemian Ethics*), which unambiguously privileges the theological hypothesis: this culminates in the thesis of God as the only and ultimate mover behind the impulsions that compel an individual to succeed (1248a22-39). But before emphasizing the role of divine inspiration in this way, the second chapter of the *Liber* also gives greater weight to the hypothesis of natural fortune. For after having recalled three possible causes of fortune – the individual’s natural constitution (1247a09-13), intellectual faculties (1247a13-23) or divine care (1247a23-29) –, it seems that the former takes precedence, supposing that the list is exhaustive (1247a29-31). Then, this naturalist hypothesis is subjected to a tortuous reflection (1247a30-1248a22), with several references to the figure of the “naturally well constituted” man (*bene naturatus* or *bene natus*). According to this reflection, the hypothesis that fortune is natural proves problematic for two reasons: first, because nature results in regularities, whereas fortune is rather a sort of contingency (1247a31-35; cf. 1206b38-1207a01); second, because a natural explanation of fortune risks divesting the word ‘fortune’ of its meaning, since, instead of describing that individual as well-fortunated, one has to say he is naturally well constituted (1247a36-b01).

Despite these objections raised against the natural explanation of good fortune, Giles accorded great importance to it, and more specifically to the expression by which Aristotle had equated this phenomenon with a “nature without

reason” (*natura sine ratione*). This phrase, which at the beginning of the text embodies a provisional explanation of fortune as having natural causes (1207a35-37), punctuates Giles’ commentary from beginning to end, and it encapsulates what is, in his eyes, the Philosopher’s true and definitive position; thus, according to Giles, the reticence expressed by the latter with regard to the naturalist hypothesis (1247a31-35 and 1206b38-a02) is not definitive, considering that it appears in a passage that is marked by doubt and is not yet striving to “determine the truth”²¹. The “truth”, says Giles, is only revealed after 1207a12-18, in the exposition culminating in the equation established between fortune and “nature without reason” (1207a35-37). According to Giles, this is a key expression and even the Philosopher’s last word on his doctrine on good fortune²². It is to elucidate the content and the status of this formula that Giles distinguishes between two different meanings of nature in the Aristotelian corpus.

According to Giles’ conceptual distinction, the first meaning of ‘nature’ corresponds to the famous notion that was developed most particularly in *Physics II* – in contrast to the artificial and chance – but also more broadly in the works devoted to natural philosophy and in the *Metaphysics*²³. There, ‘nature’ means a principle that is sufficient to produce its effects either always (*semper*) or at least in most of the cases (*ut in pluribus*) and, at any rate, in an ordinate way (*ordinate*): this concept of nature is at stake when one says that fire is a ‘natural’ principle of heat, but this concept cannot be equated with good fortune, as the latter causes its effects neither always, nor in most of the cases, nor in an ordinate way, but ‘as it occurs’, ‘by chance’ or in a contingent way (*ut contingit*)²⁴. The second notion of nature, in contrast, allows for such a kind of contingency, and this notion was developed in the Ethical corpus and, more precisely, in the second chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as in the famous passage of the *Politics* where Aristotle said that “the nature of the man is to be a political animal”²⁵. This distinction between two meanings of nature in the Aristotelian corpus is recalled by Chrysostomus Javelli in his *Compendium of the Liber de bona fortuna*²⁶. Such a distinction was absent from the Peripatetic tradition until Giles, and the way in which Javelli expresses it unambiguously indicates the influence of the latter’s *Sententia*.

²¹ AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1207b36-1207a02, pp. 144, l. 25 - 145, l. 44.

²² AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1207a12-18, p. 145, ll. 46-55. See also CORDONIER 2014, pp. 97-102.

²³ See among others ARIST., *Phys.*, II, 5-6, 197a05-32; 197b01-02; *Metaph.*, IV (Δ), 4, 1014b11-1015a17 and, above all, 1070a04-20.

²⁴ AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1207a12-18, p. 146, ll. 81-87.

²⁵ AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1207a30-36, pp. 146, l. 87 - 147, l. 106.

²⁶ CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, Chapter 1, ed. Lugduni 1568, pp. 353A, l. 72 - 353B, l. 26 (ed. Venetiis 1531, pp. 40vA, l. 41 - 40vB, l. 41). On this passage, see CORDONIER / DE ROBERTIS 2021 (in press), section 3.2.

4. ‘Continuous’ and ‘discontinuous’ fortune in Aristotle, and the specific content of the *Liber de bona fortuna*

Among the distinctions posited by Giles in the *Sententia*, the most important is probably the one that concerns the concept of fortune. To understand it, let us recall that the concept of fortune under consideration in this opusculum does not exactly fit the one that is present in other works by Aristotle. In the Ethical corpus – the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Rhetorics* and the *Politics* –, fortune is mentioned as being responsible for the allocation of the external goods that are supposedly necessary to happiness – such as material wealth, health, nobility, etc.; in the *Physics*, by contrast, fortune is identified as a contingency factor that is distinct from nature, most typically in cases where an action committed by a rational agent has an unforeseen effect; in both cases, however, good or bad fortune will depend on whether the effect is beneficial or not²⁷. In the chapters forming the *Liber*, the notion of fortune is re-worked in a way that finally extends beyond the two other senses of fortune in Aristotle: “good fortune” is no longer seen as an uncontrollable cause of the incidental success of some and, although it is admitted to be ultimately responsible for the distribution of external goods, it is eventually presented as the tendency possessed by some to succeed often, and even regularly. And this regularity, or frequency, is labelled by Aristotle in terms of ‘continuity’: continuous fortune is “according to the directive impetus”, while discontinuous fortune is “beyond the impetus”²⁸.

Despite this mark of a conceptual distinction between the two senses of fortune in the passage quoted above, there was – to my knowledge – no proper discussion of this distinction in the Peripatetic tradition before Giles’ *Sententia*. Certainly, the idea that the good fortune under consideration in this text implies some reoccurrence of beneficial effects had been highlighted by Aquinas when first quoting from the two chapters in his “Book on the Truth of the Catholic Faith”. At the end of the chapter on good fortune (III, 92), after having separately quoted the two chapters that form the *Liber* (at this time or slightly after?), Thomas rephrased the issue that they consider by asking how a man is fortunated ‘universally’ (*universaliter*) and ‘in all things’ (*ad omnia*)²⁹. But Thomas did not

²⁷ See, on the one side, ARIST., *Ethica Nichomachea*, I, 8, 1098b12-14; I, 9, 1099a30-b10; VII, 14, 1153b18-21; *Politica*, VII, 1, 1323b20-30 and *Rhetorica*, I, 5, 1360b26-1361b39; and on the other side, *Phys.*, II, 5-6, 197a05-32, 197b01-02. On the distinction between the two concepts of fortune in Aristotle, see DUDLEY 2012 and STRUCK 2016, pp. 131-156.

²⁸ ARIST. LAT., *De bona fortuna*, II, 1248b04-07. The idea that the fortune that is “divine” and “according to the impetus” is also “continuous” seems to be another way to express the fact that the man who benefits from this kind of fortune sees his actions followed by good and unexpected effects “repeatedly” and “often” (see *De bona fortuna*, II, 1247b15-18: “*deinceps*” ... “*multociens*”).

²⁹ THOMAS DE AQUINO, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, 92, pp. 281b53-282b10.

make any explicit distinction between the concept of good fortune in the opusculum and in the rest of the corpus: he rather provided a harmonizing explanation of the concept on the basis of relevant passages in the *Philosopher*, without pointing to the specificity of continuous fortune. A generation after Thomas, a clear-cut distinction was made on the basis of 1248b05-10 by Giles, who extensively explained the characteristics of both kinds of fortune:

“For as will be said near the end of this little book, good fortune is twofold, one being continuous, the other one being not continuous and, as will become clear below (1248a22-39), here the continuous good fortune is more principally at issue than the not continuous one. Then the good fortune that is under consideration here is not infrequently, but for the most part [...]. Therefore, although one good fortune can be said somehow continuous in respect to the other, yet none of them is continuous nor is for the most part in respect to nature. Because of this, it has been rightly said³⁰ that fortune differs from nature because of the very fact that nature acts in a similar way and for the most part”³¹.

The distinction between continuous and discontinuous fortune is crucial to Giles: not only does he recall it shortly after in his commentary on the treatise³², but he also refers to it in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Rhetorics*, an important work that was composed shortly before the *Sententia*. Here, Giles summarizes the content of the opusculum as follows: “the *Philosopher*, in the chapter on good fortune, distinguishes between two kinds of good fortune, the one being continuous and the other being rare and dense”³³. This distinction had become common in the beginning of the 14th century, where one finds it in very diverse texts, such as the notes of the Melk glossator (1308)³⁴ and in the *Speculum Virtutum* by the Benedictine monk Engelbert of Admont (c. 1310)³⁵. Two centuries later, the distinction is recalled many times by Chrysostomus Javelli in his *Compendium of the Liber de bona fortuna*³⁶. It also occurs in Giovanni Pontano's treatise *On Fortune*, most explicitly in a chapter establishing that there are “two kinds of fortunate men”, the ones who act under the auspices of *fortuna eventitia* which is “unfrequent and rare”, and the others who act constantly and “under divine guidance”; he latter may be found in the case of Eutychus Sabinus, who one fine morning tells his wife: “I don't know why, but I have a presentiment that some-

³⁰ See ARIST. LAT., *De bona fortuna*, II, 1248b04-07 (quoted above in note 28).

³¹ AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1206b36-1207a02, pp. 144, l. 26 - 145, l. 44.

³² AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1207a30-36, pp. 145, l. 60 - 146, l. 65.

³³ AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *In Rhetoricam* 1362a 13-16, ed. Venetiis 1515, f. 23ra, ll. 26-30.

³⁴ ANONYMOS GLOSSATOR OF MELK (1308), ed. CORDONIER 2010, p. 741, n. 85.

³⁵ ENGELBERTUS ADMONTENSIS, *Speculum virtutum* II, 8, ed. UBL 2004, pp. 127 sqq.

³⁶ See, e.g., CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, Chapter 1, ed. Lugduni 1568, p. 353B, ll. 52-80 (ed. Venetiis 1531, pp. 41rA, l. 36 - 41rB, l. 14). On this passage, see CORDONIER / DE ROBERTIS 2021 (in press), section 3.3.

thing good will happen”³⁷. There is no doubt that Giles’ *Sententia* was a reference to Pontano’s creative rephrasing of Aristotle’s doctrine of fortune³⁸.

5. The workings of continuous fortune, or the analogy
between the “natural impetuses” and the movement of the dice

It is one thing to characterize the conceptual content of a given notion – in this case “good fortune” – and it is still another thing to explain how it concretely ‘works’ in reality. In Giles, this question is not addressed on an experimental basis nor from a phenomenological point of view; rather, the workings of good fortune in the *Liber* are explained by means of a thorough analysis of an example that is also to be found in the Aristotelian text, but which Giles has expanded in order to develop a consistent and telling analogy: that of the throwing of dice. The example of the dice as such comes from the opusculum, specifically in the passage of Chapter 2 where the dice-thrower is used to illustrate the case of the one who is well-fortuned because of his “well-fortuned nature” or by the fact that he is “loved, as they say, by God and that there is something coming from outside that makes him succeed” (1247a21-28). So, Giles goes much further than Aristotle, as he does not so much compare the well-fortuned man to the winner of such a game as compare the workings of good fortune to the falling of a die as a mechanical process. For, after having summarized the passage of the *Liber* quoted above, he asks “how the kind of fortune that is at stake here is comparable to the roll of dice,” and answers in the following way:

“It must be said that the fact that a die rolls a particular number to a greater extent than another can occur, as far as the present inquiry is concerned, following a threefold cause. First, following the disposition [that is its physical configuration] of the die, second following the position it has in the hand, and third following the impulse according to which it is thrown by the hand. [...] Therefore, because the convergence of these factors (that is the fact that the die is positioned in that way in the hand, the fact that it has such a configuration and the fact that it is thrown exactly with the force required for the desired number) is by accident and at random (*per accidens et a casu*), gaming with dice, unless there is some fraud and cheating, is contingent and fortuitous (*casualis et fortuitus*). For this reason, things are similar in the case of the roll of dice and in that of fortune because, as it is by fortune that all the factors converge to obtain the desired number, in a similar way it is by fortune that all these converge, so that one has the impetuses, that one perceives them and that one acts according to them, so that one achieves good outcomes”³⁹.

³⁷ GIOVANNI PONTANO, *De fortuna* II, 31, ed. TATEO 2012, p. 262.

³⁸ See ROICK 2017, pp. 141-167 and, in particular, pp. 151-155 and 274.

³⁹ AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1247a22-23, ed. CORDONIER, in CORDONIER 2014, pp. 149, l. 191 - 150, l. 214.

This passage exhibits Giles' most typical explanations of contingency, and it contains a hallmark of his philosophical style, which one might describe as being 'analytical'. In the passage where Aristotle illustrates the talent some have for engaging in chance procedures by the example of the dice thrower (1247a22-23), Giles finds a pretext to specify the conditions that are necessary for good fortune to come about. To do so, he establishes an analogy between the occurrence of a fortunate event and the mechanism at work in the throw of a die: by drawing a rigid parallel between the trajectory of a die towards a good number and that of an individual towards a fortunate effect, he thus identifies the factors influencing each trajectory: the die's final position is defined by (i) its physical configuration (given that no cube is perfectly equilateral but always has one side that is larger and/or heavier than the others), (ii) its position in the hand of the one performing the throw (this determines an orientation towards one side rather than another), and (iii) the force with which or the direction in which the die is cast by the hand of the thrower. Similarly, the fact that an individual benefits from a fortunate effect can be attributed to (i) his impulsion towards the good, (ii) his perception of this impulsion, and (iii) his execution of this impulsion. The conclusion of this analogy is expressed in the last sentence: in the case of both fortune and the throw of a die, it makes no difference if each of these factors has a *determined* effect on the result, as this result remains undetermined in the same way that the convergence of the factors at play is *undetermined* ("it is by fortune that...").

So it is clear that the three factors isolated by means of the dice analogy correspond to three necessary conditions for being well-fortuned. However, Giles did not say that these conditions are sufficient: only the secular theologian Henry of Ghent imputed such a view to Giles in his *Quod. VI*, q. 10 (composed in the beginning of the 1280s). As was shown on the basis of a detailed study of this text, Henry's critique takes up Giles' exegetical decisions to eventually demonstrate that Aristotle's view does not allow for contingency and that Giles' view is therefore self-contradictory⁴⁰. Nevertheless, despite of Henry's criticisms, Giles' rigorous and analytical discussion of the dice analogy had considerable success in the late middle ages. One finds it in a crucial passage of the series of *Problemata* composed by Nicole Oresme at the end of his career: when it comes to finding explanations for bad fortune, the author meticulously discusses the example of a man throwing a stone in the direction of a given target and finally missing it; in doing so, he gives a free reworking of Giles' typology of the factors influencing the falling of a die⁴¹. A century later, the model of the dice game was

⁴⁰ On this, see CORDONIER 2014, pp. 110-126 and CORDONIER 2018.

⁴¹ I am referring to question 31 of Nicole Oresme's *Problemata* (or the so-called *Quodlibeta*), the Latin text of which is currently being prepared by Beatrice de Laurentis and Alain Boureau. I thank these

partially endorsed by Javelli against determinism: like Giles, he admits that the first factor is only a necessary condition for being well-fortuned, not a sufficient one and, in so doing, Javelli allows for a true contingency in the result of such a process⁴².

6. The doctrine of God's uniform action, and the method of 'natural' theology

The dice analogy explained in section 5 is actually just one side of Giles' explanation of continuous fortune, namely its human side. But there is also its theological side, insofar as the human choice of the acts leading to fortune are ultimately caused by some divine influence – or, otherwise, insofar as the impetuses at the origin of the fortunate effect come from somewhere and, more precisely, from someone. For as was said, the *Liber* regularly refers to a natural and to a theological explanation of fortune, separately or together, so as to suggest that fortune ultimately results from a combination of divine influence and individual human nature⁴³. Thus, the main point of the exegesis of the opusculum consisted in finding a way to combine the natural and the divine aspects of good fortune. And Giles was the first to address this very issue in formulating it explicitly. He did so in analyzing the lemma preceding the definition of fortune as a “nature without reason” and where fortunate men are described as inspired men or – in Greek – “enthusiasts” (1205b03-05): according to Giles' reading, this text is concerned with the discussion of the reduction of fortune to God's benevolence⁴⁴. In commenting on this text, he puts to the fore his “doctrine of God's uniform action”, claiming that God acts in all things in a uniform way, but this action leads to different effects according to the specificity of the beings receiving it⁴⁵. Compared to Giles' previous works, where this doctrine was already present, the *Sententia* further specifies it by combining it with a focus on the “purely natural” goods – in contrast to supernatural goods – and on the actual condition of the world – in contrast to an order that God could achieve using his power without restriction.

colleagues for having communicated this piece of information in the course of a workshop that I had organized at the Laboratoire SPHERE in Paris on 2 February 2017 on “*Le Liber de bona fortuna* dans la culture textuelle latine (13e-18e siècles)”.

⁴² CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, Chapter 4, ed. Lugduni 1568, p. 356A, ll. 1-15 (ed. Venetiis 1531, p. 43vB, ll. 2-21). On this passage, see CORDONIER / DE ROBERTIS 2021 (in press), section 3.7.

⁴³ See Section III above.

⁴⁴ AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1207b2-4, pp. 147, l. 124 - 149, l. 183. For a close reading of this crucial passage of Giles' *Sententia*, see CORDONIER 2018.

⁴⁵ See, among others, VOLLMER 1928 and PINI 2001, pp. 394-396.

This conceptual framework was attacked by Henry of Ghent, who critically discussed Giles' exegesis in the *Quodl.* VI,10, composed in reaction to Giles' exegesis: according to Henry, it is nonsense to analyze fortune in purely philosophical terms as Giles tries to do in his *Sententia*. Following Henry's rephrasing of Giles' reading, the action of the Philosopher's God is *limited* and *necessitated* by the natural conditions of the beings to which it is applied; a true account of contingency is only possible if one takes into account the idea of a God who acts in a *voluntary* way and whose action is not limited by the world's conditions. However, despite Henry's criticisms, Giles' explanation of God's uniform action developed in the *Sententia* deeply influenced Aristotelianism in the long run. One can find very clear traces of it in Duns Scotus and some of his heirs in the 14th century, such as the author of the *Questiones de bona fortuna* falsely attributed to John of Jandun by the printed edition⁴⁶. The same doctrine also had a decisive role in the treatise *De fato, fortuna et casu* by Coluccio Salutati (1396)⁴⁷. In the subsequent centuries, Giles' reading of fortune in terms of God's uniform action can be found again in Javelli's *Compendium of the Liber de bona fortuna* as well as in crucial passages of Pontano's *On Fortune*. To have a glimpse of the rich influence of Giles' *Sententia* on the Renaissance tradition, let us briefly consider the two latter cases in more detail.

In Javelli's *Compendium*, Giles' doctrine appears in Chapter 4, where fortune is discussed in relation to the psychological apparatus of the man, more particularly to the human 'impetuses'. Three points are addressed: first, Javelli addresses the question of the number of the impetuses produced in the human soul; second, he asks to which kind of impetuses fortune is related; third, he asks whether these impetuses force us to act according to them⁴⁸. Giles' influence is patent in Javelli's answer to all three questions⁴⁹. The doctrine of God's uniform action is to be found in the answer to the second one, where Javelli says that fortune happens in relation to the natural impetus and that one is fortunate only

⁴⁶ See [FRANCISCUS CARACCIOLIO DE NEAPOLI], *Quaestiones Super Parvis naturalibus*, ed. Venetiis 1570, fol. 132r-150r. As I suggested in CORDONIER 2010, pp. 749-750, the attribution of the *Questiones de bona fortuna* to John of Jandun is contradicted by the Incipit in ms. Sevilla, Bibl. Colomb., 7-7-19, f. 145v: "Incipiunt questiones de bona fortuna domini Francisci de Neapoli". And the author might probably be identified with Francesco Caracciolo of Naples, who came to Paris around 1300, acquired his licence in theology in 1308 and was Chancellor of the University of Paris from 1309-1316. On this theologian, see GLORIEUX 1931, GLORIEUX 1966, p. 122 and COURTENAY 2013.

⁴⁷ COLUCCIO SALUTATI, *De Fato et fortuna*, ed. BIANCA, pp. 131, l. 61 - 134, l. 165. An entire study to this important passage that shares clear marks of Giles' influence is conducted in CORDONIER 2020.

⁴⁸ CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, Chapter 4, ed. Lugduni 1568, p. 355A, ll. 11-16 (ed. Venetiis 1531, p. 42vA, ll. 14-22). For this reference as well as the four others that follow (notes 49-52), see CORDONIER / DE ROBERTIS 2021 (in press), section 3.6.

⁴⁹ CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, Chapter 4, ed. Lugduni 1568, pp. 355A, l. 17 - 356A, l. 15 (ed. Venetiis 1531, pp. 42vA, l. 22 - 42vB, l. 2); cf. AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *Sententia de bona fortuna* 1247b19-21, pp. 151, l. 265 - 155, l. 382.

when one follows such impetuses⁵⁰. It is even more clearly present in the passage where Javelli attributes the diversity of the destinies of different men to the fact that not all are equally receptive to divine influence, depending on the psychological dispositions and physical temperaments of each, but above all on their capacity to resist rational deliberation or the desire to “measure everything” (*quia suo ingenio metiri volunt omnia*)⁵¹. Javelli never refers to Giles’ distinction between a “purely philosophical” account and an approach marked by the Christian revelation; nor does he recall Henry’s critique. Instead, he uses distinctions made by Giles to clarify how fortune works, combining them with the idea of the negative effects of “external concerns”⁵²; and he reinvests Giles’ doctrine with a medical content by using the words “*complexio*” and “*natiuitas*” that were avoided in the *Sententia* and only later imported into the debate by Henry and Duns Scotus⁵³.

As for Pontano’s *De Fortuna*, its indebtedness towards Giles’ *Sententia* is patent. The passage where it is the most obvious is Chapter II.11, where it is asked “whether good fortune must be referred to God”. The answer to this question claims that fortune ultimately comes from a divine influence that is diversely instantiated in individuals depending on their ability to follow the relevant impetus in their souls: Giles’ influence is clear in this idea in itself, but also in the terms used and, in particular, the lexicon of ‘uniformity’⁵⁴. Clearly, Pontano did not only rewrite the *Liber*, but also parts of its commentary by Giles. The latter’s doctrine of God’s uniform action reoccurs many times in the former’s *De Fortuna*: this is the case in the passage quoted above on Eutychus Sabinus’ journey to Rome in II.31, and in II.29⁵⁵. It also appears in a series of chapters (I.37-39) that were analyzed by Matthias Roick as a creative rephrasing of the Aristotelian texts, of Aquinas’ quotations of them in his *Summa contra Gentiles* and of Giles’ *Sententia*, culminating in the assimilation of this ‘impetuous’ and divine fortune to prophetic and even poetic inspiration⁵⁶. This passage is a telling example

⁵⁰ CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, ed. Lugduni 1568, p. 355A, ll. 17-51 (Chapter 4, ed. Venetiis 1531, p. 42vB, ll. 26-45).

⁵¹ CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, Chapter 4, ed. Lugduni 1568, pp. 355A, l. 52 - 355B, l. 12 (ed. Venetiis 1531, p. 43rA, ll. 15-40). In this particular passage, the translation “to measure” reflects a reading that is present only in the 1568 edition, whereas the 1531 edition reads “to lie” (*mentiri*). For the editorial history of this work by Javelli, see here above note 19.

⁵² CHRYSOSTOMUS JAVELLI, *Epitome in Libellum Aristotelis de Bona Fortuna*, Chapter 3, ed. Venetiis 1531, p. 41vB, ll. 17-38. See AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *In Rhetoricam*, 1362a13-16, ed. Venetiis 1515, f. 23ra, ll. 45-60.

⁵³ See CORDONIER 2016.

⁵⁴ GIOVANNI PONTANO, *De fortuna* II.11, ed. TATEO, p. 214; for the term “uniform” in Giles’ *Sententia*, see CORDONIER 2014, p. 148, ll. 164-165.

⁵⁵ GIOVANNI PONTANO, *De fortuna* II.29 (“Thomae Aquinatis dicta”), ed. TATEO, pp. 254-256. For II.31, see here above, notes 37-38.

⁵⁶ GIOVANNI PONTANO, *De fortuna* I.35-39, ed. TATEO, pp. 172-188 and in particular pp. 182-188 for the comparison with poetic inspiration.

of the kind of career that scholastic views on God and man might have had in Renaissance times: far from abandoning the views of their predecessors, the protagonists of early modern Peripatetism were concerned with many doctrines that are now regarded as being ‘typically scholastic’, and they even often focused on those doctrines with the most theological depth; however, they recycled them in order to give them a much stronger anthropological import.

7. Concluding remarks: the importance of the *Sententia* to Giles’ work and its later influence on Peripatetism

The importance of the *Sententia de bona fortuna* in the history of Aristotelianism cannot be overestimated. First, Giles favored the integration into the scholarly corpus of an original treatise which could otherwise have seemed strange to the eyes of the commentators. His ability to clearly explain subtle passages and complex notions of a work that was already highly difficult in Greek, his talent for conceptual analysis and semantic distinctions, in short, his pedagogical skills, made the opusculum both accessible and disputable to the Latin readers. Second, and more particularly, many of Giles’ insights were endorsed as such by subsequent readers. This is unquestionably clear, for instance, in the case of the distinctions that he introduced between different notions of ‘nature’ and ‘good fortune’ in the Aristotelian corpus. Such semantic distinctions, which are typical for Giles’ analytical reading and pedagogical presentation of Aristotle’s thought, were crucial to the understanding of the newly-discovered *Liber de bona fortuna*, but also to that of other important works to which Giles referred, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Physics* and the *Politics*. At the same time, Giles’ contribution to the traditional Aristotelian picture was mostly theological in nature. For Giles followed Aquinas in putting a strong emphasis on the theology present in the opusculum, but at the same time he made divine government an object of a ‘philosophical’ discussion, focusing on the purely natural aspects of God’s *ad extra* action, with no reference to faith whatsoever.

In sum, it is probably not unresonable to claim that Giles’ reading of the newly discovered Aristotelian treatise on good fortune marked in a way the birth of a ‘natural theology’ in the Latin West. The scope of Giles’ exegesis of the *Liber* goes far beyond the mere Ethical domain to which this work was supposed to belong, according to Giles’ own prologue to the text. For Giles, in discussing the issue of the causes and origin of good fortune according to Aristotle, also discussed the issue of the modalities of God’s *ad extra* action and, more particularly, of His action towards human beings. Giles’ influence on that issue in late Medieval and Renaissance Aristotelianism has not been studied entirely,

but the decisive importance of this influence has already been made very clear, from both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. The way in which Giles has theologized Aristotle proves at any rate very complex and innovative. What eventually results from Giles' reading of the Philosopher's doctrine of good fortune might of course sound rather surprising to modern scholars specializing in Aristotle. But this might well be precisely one of the interests of studying the scholastic Aristotelian tradition in the Late Middle Ages or in Early Modernity: namely, in studying this period closely and with due attention, one realizes that Aristotle is sometimes *something else*, or *something more* than what he means to modern readers.

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Abstract: This paper highlights the decisive role played in the longer course of Aristotelian tradition by Giles' *Sententia de bona fortuna*, a work that constitutes a telling example of the radical transformations imposed by Latin thinkers on the Aristotelian philosophical system. The impact of this commentary was decisive for the subsequent discussions on fortune, contingency and "divine government" – that is, the issue of how God, as the First Principle of all beings, leads them all to their ends or their ultimate "good". In so doing, the article shows that Giles' reading of the Aristotelian treatise called *Liber de bona fortuna* marked the birth of a coherent 'natural theology' in the Latin West.

Keywords: Anthropology; Aristotelian tradition; Divine government; Ethics; Good fortune; "Humanism"; "Natural theology"; "Nature" (different meanings of –).

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