

# Irrtum – Error – Erreur

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Giles of Rome on the Reduction of Fortune  
to Divine Benevolence:  
The Creative Error of a Parisian Theologian in the 1270s

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Among the significant figures in Late Medieval intellectual history, Giles of Rome († 1316) holds a rather specific position, as a large part of his contribution has to do with errors – be they the “errors of the philosophers” forming the subject of the work sometimes ascribed to him (although the authorship of this treatise ‘*Errores philosophorum*’ is not definitely secured<sup>1</sup>), or the errors he was thought to have made, which led to his disagreement with his older colleague Henry of Ghent († 1293) and to his involvement in the Condemnation issued by Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, in March 1277<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the errors which have traditionally been considered in scholarship on Giles and which characterized his difference of opinion with Henry of Ghent, I have recently drawn attention to an ‘error’ which led to intense criticism from Henry and had a profound influence on his thinking, namely Giles’ views on the so-called ‘*Liber de bona fortuna*’, a treatise that was part of the Latin Aristotelian corpus from the 1260s. However, this so perceived ‘error’ had, until then, escaped the attention of researchers – maybe precisely because it does not figure either in Tempier’s Condemnation or in Giles’ defense. The work consists of two chapters on the subject of fortune taken from the ‘*Magna Moralia*’ (1206b 30–1207b 19) and the ‘*Eudemian Ethics*’ (1246b 37–1248b 11) and forms an essential milestone in the discussions on contingency as well as on divine government<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For some doubts on the authenticity of the ‘*Errores philosophorum*’, essentially based on doctrinal considerations (mainly concerning Giles’ ideas about the unicity of substantial form) cf. C. Luna, *La Reportatio della lettura di Egidio Romano sul Libro III delle Sentenze* (Cm. 8005) e il problema dell’autenticità dell’*Ordinatio*, Parte II, in: *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 1 (1990), 113–225, 164sq.

<sup>2</sup> On this affair cf. the classical studies by R. Wielockx, *Aegidii Romani Opera omnia*, vol. 3/1: *Apologia* (*Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi. Testi e studi* 4), Firenze 1985, 3–41 and id., *Henrici de Gandavo Opera omnia*, vol. 6: *Quodlibet II*, Leuven 1983.

<sup>3</sup> In the course of this essay, I will use the phrase “divine government” to mean – in the broadest and most general sense – how God or the First Cause, being the First Principle of all beings – according to Scholastic thinkers – leads them all to their ends, their “good”. Divine government, which is one of the most debated topics since Late Antiquity, still has not received its due place in the history of philosophy.

For it was possible to establish that Giles' 'Sententia de bona fortuna' (1275–1278), a commentary on the then newly-discovered 'Liber de bona fortuna', was the primary target of Henry's 'Quodlibet' VI,10 (1281/82), in which a groundbreaking model of divine providence was proposed<sup>4</sup>.

In this essay, I would like to examine Giles' supposed "error" on good fortune more closely, from the viewpoint of its construction and its doctrinal fruitfulness. This will entail showing precisely how the way in which Giles commented on the 'Liber de bona fortuna' led Henry to consider the commentary unacceptable and to look for an alternative interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine of good fortune and divine government. To do so, I will focus on a passage from Giles' 'Sententia de bona fortuna' that proves to be crucial in this respect, namely a lemma corresponding to the description of "enthusiasts" in 'Magna moralia' 1207b 3–5. The present paper is structured in three parts. The first, which is preliminary in nature, presents Giles' approach to the treatise as a whole and indicates the crucial importance of his commentary on 'Magna moralia' 1207b 3–5. The second part, which forms the core of the analysis, is devoted to a close reading of this passage: by comparing it to some previous scholastic texts that form its background – although they are not explicitly mentioned –, I will highlight the way in which the young theologian, while relying on some selected claims held by Thomas Aquinas († 1274) on divine government and God's *ad extra* action, brings forth some new methodological options and doctrinal results. Finally, on the basis of this analysis, it will be possible to show, in the third part, why Giles' reading of Aristotle's doctrine of good fortune might have been considered erroneous or, at least, incoherent by Henry, and how this led the latter to envisage radically new ideas on divine providence.

### I. The importance of the section on enthusiasm in Giles' general outline of the 'Liber de bona fortuna'

Before entering into Giles' commentary on the discussion of the "enthusiasts" in the 'Liber de bona fortuna', let us briefly sketch the trajectory of this text and indicate some discoveries recently made concerning its early reception. The second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century constitutes a decisive step in the history of the Peripatetic tradition, as far as it marks the first appearance of a complete and systematic corpus of Aristotle's works in the West<sup>5</sup>. In this corpus, the

<sup>4</sup> Cf. V. Cordonier, Une lecture critique de la théologie d'Aristote: le Quodlibet VI, 10 d'Henri de Gand comme réponse à Gilles de Rome, in: ead./T. Suarez-Nani (eds.), *L'aristotélisme exposé: aspects du débat philosophique entre Henri de Gand et Gilles de Rome* (Dokimion 38), Fribourg 2014, 81–180. Further references on this aspect of the debate between Giles of Rome and Henry of Ghent are given below, nt. 51.

<sup>5</sup> V. Cordonier/P. de Leemans/C. Steel, Die Zusammenstellung des 'corpus aristotelicum' und die Kommentartadition, in: A. Brungs e. a. (eds.), *Die Philosophie des Mittelalters*, vol. 4: 13. Jahrhundert (Erster Halbband) (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie), Basel 2017, 149–161.

'Liber de bona fortuna' stands out because of its structure as a combination of two chapters on the subject of good fortune taken from different works that were originally independent in the Greek tradition: the 'Magna Moralia' (1206b 30–1207b 19) and the 'Eudemean Ethics' (1246b 37–1248b 11). A series of elements to be found in the textual tradition and in the early reception of these chapters indicate that they were combined after the translator – who has been identified as the learned Dominican William of Moerbeke – had translated a longer extract from the 'Eudemean Ethics' including, after the chapter on good fortune, the very last chapter, namely the one on the typically Greek virtue of *kalokagathia* (1248b 11–1249b 25)<sup>6</sup>. On a purely textual level, I have suggested that this second step in the constitution of the 'Liber' was most likely made under Thomas Aquinas' influence and in a Parisian context; on a more doctrinal level, I have shown that this work served as the cornerstone for the constitution of a supposed Aristotelian doctrine of divine government that was thought to be compatible with Christian faith in a God who takes care not only of the world and of the conservation of all *species*, but also of each individual human being – to save them<sup>7</sup>. To avoid misunderstandings, let me stress that such a reconstitution of the pre-history of the treatise does not imply that Moerbeke translated these texts on the explicit request of Aquinas or anyone else. It merely means that his translation work, like any other work by a serious translator, served some demand of the intellectual milieu to which the work was addressed. In this case, it was some scholars' interest in Aristotle's texts.

The two chapters devoted to good fortune in the 'Magna moralia' and the 'Eudemean Ethics' made their first appearance in the third part of Aquinas' 'Book on the Truth of the Catholic Faith' ('Summa contra Gentiles'), written during his sojourn at the Papal Curia in Italy at the beginning of the 1260s. Indeed, the final part of the chapter of Aristotle's 'Eudemean Ethics' on good fortune was first quoted by Aquinas in chapter 89 of Book III to serve as a philosophical authority that confirms that God is the cause not only of the human will, but also of its movements ("*Quod motus voluntatis causatur a Deo, et non solum potentia voluntatis*")<sup>8</sup>. This chapter appeared again in chapter 92, this

<sup>6</sup> Cf. V. Cordonier/C. Steel, Guillaume de Moerbeke traducteur du 'Liber de bona fortuna' et de l'Éthique à Eudème', in: A. M. I. van Oppenraay (ed.), *The Letter before the Spirit: The Importance of Text Editions for the Study of the Reception of Aristotle (Aristoteles Semitico-Latinus 23)*, Leiden–Boston 2012, 401–446.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. V. Cordonier, *Sauver le Dieu du Philosophe: Albert le Grand, Thomas d'Aquin, Guillaume de Moerbeke et l'invention du 'Liber de bona fortuna' comme alternative autorisée à l'interprétation averroïste de la doctrine aristotélicienne de la providence divine*, in: L. Bianchi (ed.), *Christian Readings of Aristotle from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance (Studia Artistarum 29)*, Turnhout 2011, 65–114 and ead., *La doctrine aristotélicienne de la providence divine selon Thomas d'Aquin*, in: P. D'Hoine/G. van Riel (eds.), *Fate, Providence and Moral Responsibility in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought. Studies in Honour of Carlos Steel (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, Series 1)*, Leuven 2014, 495–515.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles III*, 89, ed. Commissio Leonina (*Opera omnia*, vol. 14), Roma 1926, 273,7–19 (n° 2651); transl. V. J. Bourke, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles, Book III: Providence, Part II, Notre Dame 1975 (1956<sup>1</sup>)*, 37, n° 8: "Besides, an argument that is pertinent is offered by Aristotle, in Book VIII of the 'Eudemean Ethics'

time in combination with the chapter on the same topic taken from the ‘Magna moralia’, to fuel the discussion of an issue that was new in Aquinas’ production and that proves to be clearly connected to the two then newly discovered texts, namely: “How one is said to be well-fortuned and how man is assisted by superior causes” (“*Quomodo dicitur aliquis bene fortunatus, et quomodo adiuvatur homo ex superioribus causis*”)<sup>9</sup>. But in his later works, Aquinas mentioned the chapter of the ‘Eudemian Ethics’ exclusively, quoting it as a “*capitulum de bona fortuna*” or, more rarely, under the label “*liber de bona fortuna*”<sup>10</sup>. This label, referring to some Aristotelian treatise of its own, became the official title of the treatise in the late Middle Ages, which it remained until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a period during which the text awoke lively discussions on fate, fortune and related topics<sup>11</sup>. In the history of the reception of the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’, Giles’ commentary is the first known exegetical work on this treatise, and the options chosen in it provide a basic framework for subsequent approaches to the text (alongside its citations by Aquinas).

Before reading the passage on the enthusiasts, it is useful to characterize the way in which Giles organizes the subject matter of the treatise. After the initial section of Aristotle’s ‘Magna moralia’ (1206b 30–36), which Giles considered to be a prologue to the whole treatise, he distinguishes three main parts: in the first part (A), which covers the rest of the ‘Magna moralia’ after the part considered the prologue (1206b 36–1207b 19), Aristotle asks what good fortune is; in the second part (B), corresponding to the first half of the ‘Eudemian Ethics’

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(1248a 25-b 5), as follows: There must be a cause for the fact that a person understands, deliberates, chooses, and wills, for every new event must have some cause. But, if its cause is another act of deliberation, and another act of will preceding it, then, since one cannot go on to infinity in these acts, one must reach something that is first. Now, a first of this type must be something that is better than reason. But nothing is better than intellect and reason except God. Therefore, God is the first principle of our acts of counsel and of will.”

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. III, 92, 279 (n° 2667); transl. Bourke, *Summa contra Gentiles* (nt. 8), 42, n° 4: “Next, we can show how a person might be said to be favored by fortune.” Although the ‘Magna moralia’ is quoted only once in this chapter, there are many other implicit references to this text in the course of the discussion, as well as a general (but implicit) reference to the ‘Eudemian Ethics’.

<sup>10</sup> A list of explicit citations of the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’ in the work of Thomas was provided, on the basis of the *Index Thomisticus* established by Roberto Busa, by R.-A. Gauthier, *Thomas d’Aquin, Somme contre les Gentils, Introduction*, Paris–Bruges 1993, 82. The only quotation referring to the extract from the ‘Eudemian Ethics’ as a “treatise” is to be found in Aquinas’ ‘De sortibus’, c. 4, ed. Commissio Leonina (*Opera omnia*, vol. 43), Roma 1976, 235,259–260. It is hence inaccurate to claim, as Gauthier did, that the author of the ‘Book on the Truth of the Catholic Faith’ was referring to a “treatise on good fortune”: to be exact, Aquinas, while quoting the ‘Magna moralia’ explicitly, was actually offering a combined reading of this chapter and of the parallel chapter to be found in the ‘Eudemian Ethics’, at a time when nothing indicated the existence of a proper treatise on this topic. On all of this cf. Cordonier, *Sauver le Dieu du philosophe* (nt. 7).

<sup>11</sup> Some lines of discussion are indicated in V. Cordonier, *Réussir sans raison(s). Autour du texte et des gloses du ‘Liber De bona fortuna Aristotilis’ dans le manuscrit de Melk 796 (1308)*, in: A. Speer/D. Wirmer (eds.), 1308 – Eine Topographie historischer Gleichzeitigkeit (*Miscellanea Medievalia* 35), Berlin–New York 2010, 704–770.

(1246b 37–1247b 15), he asks who the well-fortuned men are; in the third part (C), the second half of the ‘Eudemian Ethics’ (1247b 15–1248b 11), he clarifies the realm and the action of good fortune<sup>12</sup>. Following the remarkably complex layout of scholastic commentaries, each of the three main parts is then divided into subparts that are themselves subdivided again, and so on. As the discussion on the enthusiasts is to be found in part A, a sketch of the internal divisions of this part may be of interest. A is subdivided into two subsections, which, following Giles, correspond to two argumentative attitudes by Aristotle: in the first subsection (I = 1206b 36–1207a 12), the nature of good fortune (“What is good fortune?”) is discussed by the Philosopher “in doubting” (*dubitando*), while in the second (II = 1207a 12–1246b 37), the same topic is addressed “in determining the truth” (*veritatem determinando*)<sup>13</sup>. This second subsection is itself subdivided into two subparts. The first subpart (1 = 1207a 12–30) provides an enumeration of the parts of the definition of good fortune, whereas the second (2 = 1207a 30–b 19) offers a more synthetic account of this definition. This second subpart of the second subsection of A, in turn, proves to be divided into three subsections, which are organized as follows: in the first (a = 1207a 30–b 2), the Philosopher “concludes the definition as having been enumerated”; in the second (b = 1207b 2–5), he shows how this kind of fortune is reduced to divine benevolence; in the third (c = 1207b 5–19), he finally distinguishes the good fortune “that is somehow divine and continuous” from the one that is “discontinuous and as chance has it”<sup>14</sup>. Such a distinction, which is crucial to Giles and forms the core of A.II.2.c, had already appeared in A.II.2.a. And this latter passage is worth considering in detail here, because it will allow us to specify the relevance of A.II.2.b, where Giles discusses Aristotle’s description of the enthusiasts. The text runs as follows:

“Good fortune, then, consists in some good accruing beyond his own calculation, etc.” (1207a 30–36). After the Philosopher has enumerated the parts of the definition

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Giles of Rome, *Sententia de bona fortuna*, 1206 b 36–07a 2, ed. Cordonier, *Une lecture* (nt. 4), 144,1–8: “First, then, one may raise difficulties about this etc.’ (1206b 36–1207a 2). Once the prologue has been finished, in this part the executive part or tract is posited, in which the Philosopher does three things according to what he has in the prologue promised that he was to deal with. For he first deals with good fortune itself, second he shows who the well-fortuned men are, third he declares concerning what and in what <sort of things> good fortune exists. The second <part> starts with: ‘But since not only wisdom’ (1246b 37), the third <part> with: ‘What, then, prevents such things happening’ (1247b 15).” In what follows, I will be referring to Giles’ *Sententia de bona fortuna* as “SBF”.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1206b 36–07a 2, 144,8–10: “Concerning the first, he does two things because first he addresses good fortune in doubting, second in determining the truth here: ‘And yet outside of these’ (1207a 12).”

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1207a 30–07a 2, 146,65–70: “For first he concludes the definition of good fortune as having been enumerated, second he shows how this kind of fortune is reduced to divine benevolence, and third he distinguishes this good fortune that is somehow divine and continuous from the one that is discontinuous and completely accidental and as chance has it. The second part is: ‘being in the same condition as those’ (1207b 3), and the third: ‘We cannot call good fortune’ (1207b 5).”

of good fortune, in this part he concludes its definition as having been enumerated. To understand this in a clear way one must know that the good fortune that is at issue here is the one that is somehow continuous and divine and not the one that is completely accidental and as chance has it. And, because this kind of fortune, with which the discussion here deals principally, is in some way divine, as will be made clear near the end of this short book (*cf.* 1248a 25–b 5), it has in some way to be reduced to divine benevolence.”<sup>15</sup>

This explanation is decisive in several respects. Structurally, it contains in a seminal way the two aspects developed more specifically in the two following sections, enumerated above: the idea of a “reduction” of fortune to divine benevolence is addressed in depth in section A.II.2.b, whereas the idea of a specificity of the concept of fortune at issue in the treatise is the main object of section A.II.2.c. Moreover, and more importantly, this passage marks the first occurrence, in Giles’ ‘Sententia de bona fortuna’, of an explicit distinction between two different concepts of good fortune. The second of these concepts is considered “divine” on the basis of the end of the treatise, more precisely the passage already quoted by Aquinas in the chapter of his ‘Book on the Truth of the Catholic Faith’ concerning God as the cause of the movements of our will (‘Eudemian Ethics’, 1248a 25–b 5)<sup>16</sup>. But despite this similarity, it must be noted that, while Aquinas had worked with these two different concepts of fortune, he did not make an explicit distinction between them – be it because he was not aware of their distinction, or because his aim was precisely to combine them. So the distinction between continuous and discontinuous fortune here made by Giles to highlight the peculiarity of the kind of contingency addressed in the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’ was new, not only compared with Aquinas, but also and more decisively in the long-term Peripatetic tradition.

Indeed, since Antiquity, it had been recognized among Aristotelian scholars that the universe allows for three kinds of modality: while the superlunary beings – the celestial bodies or their incorporeal “movers” – act or react in a necessary way, actions and reactions of sublunary beings happen in a contingent way, which means frequently (as natural processes happening on earth do) or infrequently (as chance events do)<sup>17</sup>. This typology, principally developed by

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 1207a 30–36, p. 145,57–146,65: “*Est igitur bona fortuna in eo quod bonum aliquod existit preter rationem, etc.*’ (1207a 30–36). *Postquam philosophus uenatus est partes diffinitionis bone fortune, in parte ista concludit diffinitionem eius tamquam uenatam. Ad cuius euidenciam, sciendum quod bona fortuna de qua hic principaliter intenditur est illa que est quasi continua et diuina, non illa que est omnino per accidens et ex euentu rerum. Et quia huiusmodi bona fortuna de qua hic principaliter est sermo est quodammodo diuina, ut patebit circa finem huius libelli, ideo quodammodo reduci habet in diuinam beniuolentiam.*”

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 89, quoted above (nt. 8).

<sup>17</sup> The classical study for this remains A. Maier, *Notwendigkeit, Kontingenz und Zufall*, in: ead. (ed.), *Die Vorläufer Galileis im 14. Jahrhundert. Studien zur Naturphilosophie der Spätscholastik*, Roma 1949, 219–250. In the preceding explanation, I made an abstraction of the question of the nature and origins of the so-called *contingens ad utrumlibet*, a kind of contingency that could be anachronistically described as a “fifty-fifty” probability. As already noted by Maier, Aristotle’s ‘Physics’, II, 5, 196b 10–18, provided the textual basis for rich discussions, in which the Aristotelian commentators – from Late Greek Antiquity – tried to specify the very origin of this particular kind of contingency. As was also judiciously highlighted by Maier, Giles played a



the commentators on the basis of Aristotle's 'Metaphysics', Book VI, and 'On Interpretation', chapters 9–13, was compatible with 'Physics', Book II, chapters 4–6, where natural causality is contrasted with a causality that produces infrequent events and was called alternatively 'chance' or 'fortune'<sup>18</sup>). In contrast, the 'Eudemian Ethics' and the 'Magna moralia' introduced a kind of contingency that was irreducible to "chance" and to "fortune": though the categorizations of 'Physics', Book II, were not completely absent from these two works, the discussion in them evolved in the direction of a different idea of "fortune", implying a reoccurrence of fortunate events for the same man. So in the 'Liber de bona fortuna', good fortune is the cause not only of the fact that a man going to the market in order to buy carrots meets some of his debtors, but of the fact that such lucky encounters happen several times for the same man in the course of his existence. The peculiarity of this notion of fortune in the tract, which makes an individual see his options frequently followed by fortunate effects, is precisely captured, for the first time, as far as I know, by Giles' above-mentioned distinction between continuous and discontinuous fortune.

So, the specificity of the notion of fortune at issue in the 'Liber de bona fortuna', highlighted by Giles with the qualifications "divine" and "continuous" on the basis of the end of the treatise dealing with God's influence on our choices, allows him to conclude, at the end of the passage from A.II.2.a quoted above, that this kind of fortune "has – in some way – to be reduced to divine benevolence". It must be noted that the term "reduction", which itself cannot be found in the treatise, appears in a passage of the Aristotelian corpus that has been of crucial importance for discussions on contingency and determinism since Antiquity, namely 'Metaphysics', Book VI, Chapters 1–3, precisely in a short phrase where Aristotle mentions the possibility of the "reduction" (*ἀναγωγή*) of all accidental effects to their *per se* causes (1027b 14–16)<sup>19</sup>. It is on the basis of this very elusive text that Aquinas developed, in his 'Commentary

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crucial role in the history of these discussions, in reworking the solution given to this problem by Averroes in reaction to Avicenna, in a way that was subsequently taken as a starting point by William of Ockham to develop a radically new solution. While there is no study on Giles' approach to Aristotle's doctrine of contingency, I am currently preparing an essay on this question, focusing on the particular issue of the contingency *ad utrumlibet*.

<sup>18</sup> While the conceptual distinction between these two labels was neither posited in a perfectly clear way nor maintained consistently in 'Physics', Book II, scholastic thinkers – on the basis of a clarification already made by some ancient commentators – have systematized the meaning of each term in positing that "fortune" is a specific kind within the genus "chance", a kind distinguished by the fact that its results concern sublunary beings that act in a voluntary or intentional way. Cf. e.g. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle's 'Physics', transl. R. J. Blackwell e. a. (Aristotle Commentary Series), Notre Dame (Ind.) 1999 [1963<sup>1</sup>], n° 208–216 and Giles of Rome, Commentaria in octo libros phisicorum Aristotelis II, 5, 196b 10–16, ed. A. de Torresanis de Asula, Venetiis 1502, fol. 38r27–32 [Reprint: Frankfurt a. M. 1968].

<sup>19</sup> Aristoteles, Metaphysica (Recensio et Translatio Guillelmi de Moerbeka) VI, 3, 1027b 14–16, ed. G. Vuillemin-Diem, (Aristoteles Latinus XXV/3.2), Leiden e. a. 1995, 130,158–160: "*Sed ad principium quale et causam qualem reductio talis, utrum ut ad materiam aut ut ad id quod cuius gratia aut ut ad mouens, maxime perscrutandum.*"

on the *Metaphysics*, an extensive and independent discussion of different kinds of determinism, to finally establish that the assumption of universal providence exerted by God does not take away the possibility of contingency; and at this occasion, he claimed that every single “contingent” effect can be ultimately reduced to its first cause, in relation to which it is not contingent anymore<sup>20</sup>. This idea, which constitutes the main tenet of what Pasquale Porro recently called Aquinas’ “providential determinism”<sup>21</sup>, became an object of inquiry of its own in Giles’ discussion of Aristotle’s newly discovered treatise. Hence the relevance of section A.II.2.b of the ‘*Sententia de bona fortuna*’, which is devoted to the discussion of the reduction of fortune to God’s benevolence.

This crucial passage of Giles’ ‘*Sententia de bona fortuna*’ corresponds to a section of the ‘*Magna moralia*’ where Aristotle (or the anonymous author of the work), after having assessed three *a priori* candidates for the position of the cause of good fortune – which are human intelligence, divine influence and, finally, good nature (*φύσις*) – comes back to the third one by defining good fortune as “nature without reason” (“*sine ratione natura*”). This would characterize the well-fortuned men, explaining their ability to see their acts followed by fortunate effects<sup>22</sup>. The author clarifies this definition by identifying nature as the cause of why “the well-fortuned man has an impulse to good things and obtains these without reasoning”, being unable to explain why he does so<sup>23</sup>. At this point, the second candidate for the position of the cause of good fortune, namely divine inspiration, is recalled as well, by means of a comparison made between the well-fortuned men and the “enthusiasts”, who also have an impulse apart from reason<sup>24</sup>. To render the present participle referring to these kinds of men (*οἱ ἐνθουσιάζοντες* in 1207b 3 and 4), the Latin translator uses the word “God” twice (“*qui a deo aguntur; a deo uecti*”)<sup>25</sup>: when faced with these phrases,

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, In *Metaphysicam Aristotelis commentaria* VI, 3, Lect. 3, ed. M.-R. Cathala, Torino 1935, n° 1202–1222, 306–308.

<sup>21</sup> P. Porro, *Contingenza e impeditività delle cause: presupposti e implicazioni di un dibattito scolastico*, in: *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 68/1 (2013), 113–147 and id., “*Lex necessitatis vel contingentiae*”. *Necessità, contingenza e provvidenza nell’universo di Tommaso d’Aquino*, in: *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 96/3 (2012), 401–450, here 437–441.

<sup>22</sup> [Pseudo-]Aristoteles, *Liber de bona fortuna*, 1 (from the ‘*Magna moralia*’), 1206a 35–36: “*Est igitur bona fortuna sine ratione natura*.” In what follows, I will be referring to the ‘*Liber de bona fortuna*’ as ‘BF’.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 1, 1207a 36–b 3: “*Bene fortunatus est enim sine ratione habens impetum ad bona, et bec adipiscens, hoc autem est nature. In anima enim inest natura tale quo impetu ferimur sine ratione ad que utique bene habebimus. Et si quis interroget sic habentem, ‘propter quid hoc placet tibi operari’, ‘Nescio’, inquit, ‘sed placet michi’ [...]*”.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 1, 1207b 3–5: “[...] *simile paciens hiis qui a deo aguntur. Et enim a deo uecti sine ratione impetum habent ad operari aliquid*.”

<sup>25</sup> This option is in line with the fact that many other passages in this chapter as well as in the second chapter of the treatise speak of “the/a God” (*θεός*) to discuss the view that fortune comes from divine influence. Indeed, Moerbeke used the word “God” (*deus*) to render all the occurrences of the Greek term *θεός* (used only in singular forms) in the course of the tract, namely in ‘*Magna moralia*’ 1207a 6.10–11.15 and in the ‘*Eudemian Ethics*’, 1247a 24.28.38,

Giles considers that ‘Magna moralia’ 1207b 2–5 clarifies the way in which fortune is reduced to God’s benevolence. Moreover, the close proximity of this passage to the formula “nature without reason” (1206a 35–36) strongly suggests that the main issue in the treatise consists in finding a way to combine the natural and the divine aspects of fortune. And this is all the more crucial in that the second chapter of the treatise also indicates that fortune ultimately results from a combination of some kind of divine influence and human nature – this notion later being referred to in terms of a “good temperament”<sup>26</sup>.

To sum up: following Giles’ reading, ‘Magna moralia’ 1207b 3–5, which forms the first chapter of the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’, gives an explanation of the way in which the good fortune that is specific to this text, namely continuous and divine good fortune, is reduced to God’s benevolence. This interpretation by Giles makes use of an idea of “reduction” that was present in a crucial Aristotelian text (namely ‘Metaphysics’ VI, 1–3) which was taken up by Aquinas to develop and advocate what is usually labeled as a compatibilist view on contingency. Besides, following Giles, the Aristotelian passage on enthusiasm also explains how the divine influence supposed to account for fortune is combined with what was called, some lines earlier, “nature without reason”. In so doing, the text provides, following Giles, the ultimate and most complete explanation of the fact that some individuals of the human species benefit, in the course of their lives, from a clear reoccurrence of lucky or fortunate events as a result of their own acts but in an unpredictable manner. This also means that, according to Giles, this very passage captures a key doctrine of the treatise. Now, it remains to be seen how Giles understood it.

## II. “According to the order that we see”:

### Giles’ commentary on the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’

#### I, 1207b 3–5 as a kind of philosophical manifesto

This section is devoted to Giles’ exegesis of the passage on the enthusiasts, where the Philosopher is supposed to show how the good fortune at issue in the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’ is reduced to God’s benevolence. Before starting the textual analysis as such, let us see how this passage from Giles’ commentary

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1248a 26.28.38 and 1248b 4. The only case where Aristotle qualifies this term more is 1247a 28, where he writes “God or the demon” (*deus aut daimon*).

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, in chapter 2, a similar combination between a natural factor and a divine factor is to be found as in chapter 1. The main difference is the following: while the author of the ‘Magna moralia’ had expressed the nature hypothesis by using the term “nature” (*φύσις*, rendered by Moerbeke with the term *natura*) – in the ‘Eudemian Ethics’ Aristotle used, in addition to this term (present in 1247a 2.9–10.23.31.37, 1247b 8.20–21.23.28 and 1248a 13–14), the more precise lexicon of the “good natural constitution” (*εὐφροῦνῖα*, transliterated to give the Latin term *euφra*), which is a distinctive trait of the “naturally well-constituted man” (*εὐφροῦνής*, translated by *bene natus* or *bene naturatus*).

is structured. As is the author's usual practice in these kinds of texts, he starts with an explanation of the literal meaning of the passage (formed by a *diuisio textus* and an *expositio littere*), then comes to a more systematic doctrinal elucidation (formed by a series of notes and, finally, the discussion of some questions or doubts). In the literal explanation, he actually summarizes the passage on the enthusiasts together with the preceding lines of the treatise, in which fortune was equated with "nature without reason" (1207a 36–b 3)<sup>27</sup>. As for the doctrinal explanation, in this particular case it consists of three notes (introduced by "One must note that ..."), followed by a section devoted to a particular doubt (introduced by "One could perhaps doubt ..."), in which Giles discusses a problematic issue. The section devoted to the doubt in question proves to be particularly long and well developed: such a feature of a purely structural nature already indicates, from the outset, that there is something rather important happening in this passage. Now that these preliminary remarks have been made, we can start a close reading of Giles' commentary: to do so, we will follow, step by step, first the three notes and then the doubt, sketching all the claims expressed, in order to situate them as precisely as possible against their doctrinal background on the basis of other texts by Giles himself or by Aquinas.

The three notes with which Giles starts his doctrinal explanation give different kinds of justification to the text by Aristotle summarized above; however, these justifications do not concern exactly the same point and do not have the same depth in all three notes. In the first note, Giles justifies the equation, made in the commented passage, between the well-fortuned men and those who follow their natural and irrational impetus<sup>28</sup>. Although the commentary formulates the argument in a rather synthetic way, one can isolate four main claims in this passage, which are the following: (i) God moves our souls similarly to the way in which moves the whole of nature (148,129–130); (ii) because he is himself fundamentally good, he moves all this towards the good (148,130); (iii) in the case of human beings, he does so in creating an impetus in our souls (148,131 –

<sup>27</sup> Giles of Rome, SBF, 1207b 3–5, ed. Cordonier, Une lecture (nt. 4), 147,124–148,128: "Then, when he says: 'being in the same condition' (1207b 3 sq.), he shows how good fortune is reduced to divine benevolence by saying that the well-fortuned man and [in the sense of: "that is"] the one who follows <his> natural impetus is in the same condition as those who are acted (that is moved) by God, and that those who are such and are transported (that is conducted and moved) by God have an impetus without reason towards acting (that is in such a way that they operate something good)." The passage equating fortune with nature without reason, taken from 'Magna moralia' 1207a 36-b 5, is quoted above (nt. 22 and 23).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 148,129–136: "But, one must note that God moves the whole of nature and that he moves our souls, and that because he is himself essentially good, he moves <us> always towards the good. Those, then, who follow up such a divine motion and impetus made by God in our souls achieve and attain some goods; even if they are not able to give a reason why one must act in this way (cf. 1207a 36–1207b 3). Indeed, God, as it will be said below (cf. 1248a 38–39), forecasts the future good that those must attain, and He moves them towards this good, which is a good that those who are moved in this way cannot forecast themselves – and hence they can not give a reason."

133); (iv) God is able to forecast the future goods that human beings will obtain (148,133–136). All these four principles taken together explain, following Giles' commentary, that God can bring good fortune to human beings. But not all the principles have the same conceptual root and history: while claim (iv) rephrases an assumption that was rather classic in mediaeval philosophy at least since Boethius, the preceding claims are much more typical for the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, it was only from this period – in which theological thinking was marked with the influence of a Peripatetic doctrine of motion – on that it was possible to assume, as Giles does here, a basic correspondence between God's moving “the whole of nature” and moving our souls, and to hold that this divine influence is the ultimate cause of human beings' striving for the supreme good.

Actually, Giles' assumption of a correspondence between God's motion of the whole of nature and of human beings can be situated even more precisely in the framework of 13<sup>th</sup>-century philosophy. Indeed, it can be read in the light of Aquinas' commentary on the chapter of ‘Nicomachean Ethics’, Book I, where Aristotle establishes that a supreme good exists on the basis of the impossibility of proceeding to infinity with regard to the ends to which human desire tends, because human desire cannot be vain (I, 2, 1094a 11–22). For when rephrasing this argument, Aquinas elaborated a justification of the fact that our desire cannot be vain: this is because, he said, “a natural desire is nothing else but an inclination belonging to things by the disposition of the First Mover”, which cannot be frustrated”<sup>29</sup>. A similar addition was made in his commentary on the text of ‘Metaphysics’, Book Lambda, in which Aristotle posits (1075a 13–15) a twofold order in the things forming the universe, namely their mutual (horizontal) order, and their order to their principle (vertical): in Aquinas' reading, the connection of the two orders was assumed to have been providentially established by the nature of each being, which is “a kind of inclination implanted in it by the First Mover, who directs it to its proper end”, and this allows for the possibility that all “natural beings act for the sake of an end even though they do not know that end”<sup>30</sup>. This idea of some kind of “inclination” given to each being to direct it towards an end was intimately linked to a Christian reading of Aristotle, according to which the First Mover is also the creator of all things

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* I, 2, 1094a 19–22, transl. C. I. Liztinger, Chicago 1964, n° 21, 13: “Hence it follows that a natural desire would be useless and vain, but this is impossible. The reason is that a natural desire is nothing else but an inclination belonging to things by the disposition of the First Mover, and this cannot be frustrated.” This seems to me to be an example that invites us to slightly qualify the view that the changes introduced in Aristotle's ‘Ethics’ by Aquinas are minor and correspond to some views that were already present in him “in spirit – though not literally”. On this quite common view on Aquinas' supposed “Aristotelianism” cf. recently M. Perkams, *Thomas von Aquin, Kommentar zu Aristoteles' Nikomachischer Ethik. Sententia Libri Ethicorum I und X. Lateinisch–Deutsch*, Freiburg e. a. 2014, 11–56.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* XII, 10, 1075a 13–15, lect. 12, transl. J. P. Rowan, 2 vols., Notre Dame 1995 (Chicago 1964<sup>1</sup>), vol. 2, n° 2629–2636, 833–839, in part. n° 2634.

and exercises providence towards them – thus being able to cause particular dispositions and potencies in them.

To sum up: in Giles' commentary on the passage of the 'Liber de bona fortuna' containing Aristotle's discussion of the enthusiasts, the notion of "divine motion" or "impetus made in our souls" (148,131–132) corresponds quite faithfully to the notion of inclination introduced by Aquinas in his commentaries on classic passages from the Aristotelian corpus dealing with the human desire for the ultimate good<sup>31</sup>. However, after having rephrased the description of the enthusiasts with the help of such basic assumptions taken from what one could call Aquinas' metaphysics and anthropology of divine providence, Giles would even go much further in the following notes, so as to develop some views that are more original and audacious. These notes give a deeper justification to the Aristotelian passage at issue by explaining more precisely why and how such a construal of men favored by fortune is able to account for the very diversity of destinies that is to be found among different individual beings. Despite the repetitions to be found in this laborious text forming note 2 – a feature that could have something to do with the originality and tentative aspect of the views expressed there –, let us quote it in its entirety:

"One must also note that he says that the well-fortuned man is similar to those who are acted upon by God, because God, according to the order that we see, as far as his part is concerned, moves in the same way; yet because of the diversity of the recipients, not all perceive this movement in a similar way. So, as far as God's part is concerned, the well-fortuned are in a condition similar to all the others who are acted upon and moved by God. This is because, as it was said, according to this order that we see, God acts, or stimulates and moves all <beings> in the same way, be they well-fortuned or not. Yet, it is not the case that all are acted upon and moved in the same way, but those who have such a nature that is disposed in such a way that they are acted upon by means of God's impetus are well-fortuned according to the Philosopher. As to whether or not God could make <something> contrary to this order and move in a different way as far as his part is concerned, this is not the object of the present speculation."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> One could, of course, be sceptical about introducing Aquinas among the texts that possibly form the background of Giles' approach, since the existence of a teacher-student relationship between them is not unanimously accepted; cf. e.g. E. Hocedez, Gilles de Rome et Saint Thomas, in: *Mélanges Mandonnet. Études d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale du moyen âge*, Paris 1939, 385–410, 391 sq. However, whatever their relationship may have been on a personal and institutional level, it is hardly imaginable that a scholar of this time, commenting on a new item of Aristotle's ethical corpus, was unaware of the existing work done by Aquinas on the main text of this corpus, as well as the key text of the 'Metaphysics'.

<sup>32</sup> Giles of Rome, SBF, 1207b 3–5, ed. Cordonier, *Une lecture* (nt. 4), 148, l. 137–148: "*Notandum etiam quod ait quod bene fortunatus est simile patiens hiis qui a deo aguntur, quia deus secundum istum ordinem quem uidemus, quantum est de se, similiter mouet, tamen propter diuersitatem recipientium non omnes similiter percipiunt huius motum. Quantum est ergo ex parte dei, bene fortunati sunt simile patientes omnibus aliis qui aguntur et qui mouentur a deo quia, ut dictum est, secundum istum ordinem quem uidemus, deus omnes, tam bene fortunatos quam alios, similiter agit sine agitatur et mouet. Tamen non omnes similiter aguntur et mouentur, sed qui habent naturam talem et sic dispositam quod impetu dei aguntur, hii secundum sententiam*

This passage must be situated against the background of the lasting debate concerning the respective parts played by God and the creatures themselves in the production of natural effects, an issue that was addressed by Giles on many occasions<sup>33</sup>. This was most notably the case in his ‘Commentary on the Sentences’ (the “*reportatio*”, or written report, of which is accepted to have been written around 1270<sup>34</sup>). Concerning the first distinction of Book II of the Lombard’s work, the young scholar asks in q. 8 “if all beings act in virtue of the first agent” (“*Utrum alia a primo agant*”). In giving an answer, he first critically discusses the solution given by Aquinas in his own ‘Commentary on the Sentences’, which says that all beings act by giving the form to an activity whose matter is given by God: Giles does not agree with this option, considering that God must be *immediately* present in every action, which can only be the case if he also gives the form to every action<sup>35</sup>. So he claims that every effect comes from God in its entirety immediately and totally, but that this effect, as far as it is caused by God through secondary causes, comes from him in its entirety immediately, but not totally, that is, not in every way (“*totus immediate, sed non totaliter*”). To make this subtle distinction clearer, he adds that God acts in things universally “as far as his part is concerned” (“*quantum est ex parte sui*”), so that the diversity in the effects is only due to the diversity of the beings receiving this action, as they receive it “according to their natures” (“*recipiunt secundum naturas suas*”); hence, Giles claims the diversity of the effects, despite the “uniformity” of God’s action: every action is produced by God, but not totally, since there is no distinction “as far as his part is concerned”<sup>36</sup>.

Let us now briefly focus on this specific doctrine. As was judiciously summarized by Giorgio Pini in an essay published in 2001 in ‘Miscellanea Medievalia’,

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*philosophi bene fortunati sunt. Utrum autem deus posset facere preter istum ordinem et posset quantum est de se dissimiliter mouere, non est presentis speculationis.*”

<sup>33</sup> On this debate, initiated in the Arabic world with the discussion of the Muslim theologians’ views by Ghazali, Averroes and Maimonides, and continued in the Western world from Aquinas to the XVIIth century, cf. among many others P. Vollmer, Die göttliche Mitwirkung bei Aegidius Romanus, in: Divus Thomas 6 (1928), 452–470 and M. Plathow, Das Problem des Concursus Divinus. Das Zusammenwirken von göttlichen Schöpfungswirken und geschöpflichen Eigenwirken in K. Barths “Kirchlicher Dogmatik” (Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie 32), Göttingen 1976, 17–97. The texts by Giles traditionally taken into account in this respect are the distinctions from his ‘Commentary on the Sentences’ devoted to the question, the part of the ‘Commentary on the Book on Causes’, Book I, prop. 4, and, finally, question 4 of the ‘Theoremata de esse et essentia’.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. C. Luna, Aegidii Romani Opera Omnia, vol. 3/2: Reportatio Lecturae Super libros I–IV Sententiarum. Reportatio Monacensis, Excerpta Godefridi de Fontibus (Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi. Testi e Studi 17), Roma 2003, 90, gives 1270–72 as a date for the course on Book II, whereas a slightly earlier date (1269–1270) was given for the first two books by C. Luna, La Reportatio della lettura di Egidio Romano sul libro III delle Sentenze e il problema dell’autenticità dell’Ordinatio, in: Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale 1 (1990), 113–225, here 127 sq.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Giles of Rome, Rep. II Sent., q. 8 [dist. 1], ed. Luna (nt. 34), 208,15–18.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 208,19–34.

this doctrine can be seen as the original result of the young Giles' rigorous interpretation of Aquinas' claim of the identity of conservation and creation as held in 'De Potentia' V, 1, a claim that, in turn, seems to be a consequence of his understanding of creation as a pure relation between God and creatures<sup>37</sup>. Following this particular view, which is proper to Giles' understanding of God's external activity and which Pini called his "doctrine of God's uniform action", the First Mover is supposed to act on all beings uniformly, but this very action leads to different effects according to the specificity of the beings receiving his action. Pini studied this explanation of God's *ad extra* action with a focus on its link to Giles' most famous claim of the real difference between being and essence formulated, among others, in his treatise 'De ente et essentia', and on the subsequent debate with Henry of Ghent, who criticized both Giles and Aquinas concerning this issue. So, Giles' 'Sententia de bona fortuna' was completely absent from Pini's analysis, as it had, at this time, no real place in the existing studies on the debate concerning the respective roles played by God and the creatures in natural causality: this absence was all the more "natural" as the 'Liber de bona fortuna' was itself almost ignored in the historiography of scholastic thought and received no consideration from scholars specializing in philosophy. However, this specific work by Giles is of great importance for our subject, as far as it attests an interesting evolution in Giles' conception and formulation of his doctrine of God's external action.

Indeed, in comparison with the just mentioned passage from the "*reportatio*" of Giles' 'Commentary on the Sentences', some specificities of Giles' 'Sententia de bona fortuna' immediately become obvious. The most striking one is that the phrase "as far as his part is concerned", present in both passages, happens to be combined with the phrase "according to the order that we see" in the 'Sententia de bona fortuna' (138,142–143: "*secundum ordinem quem uidemus*"). This phrase, which is absent from the "*reportatio*", is to be found in two later texts, in which the theologian discusses the issue as to whether it is possible to assume a distinction between individuals of the same angelic kind, namely his 'Theoremata de esse et essentia', n° 3 and his 'Quodlibetal Question', Book II, q. 7: in both texts, the "order that we see" clearly refers to the actual condition of the created world, in contrast to a different order that God could achieve using his power without any restriction<sup>38</sup>. In the light of these passages, it becomes clear that the reference to the "order that we see", made by Giles in his second note to the description of the enthusiasts in the 'Liber de bona fortuna', indicates that he restricts the focus of his analysis of good fortune. Obviously,

<sup>37</sup> Cf. G. Pini, Being and Creation in Giles of Rome, in: J. A. Aertsen e. a. (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277. Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts. Studien und Texte (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 28)*, Berlin–New York 2001, 390–409, here 394–396.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Giles of Rome, *Theoremata de esse et essentia*, ed. E. Hocedez, Louvain 1930, n° 3, 13,12–15 and id., *Quodl. II*, q. 7, ed. H. Nempaeus, Leuven 1646, 65a,45–65b,19.



this restriction was made deliberately, as is indicated at the end of the passage quoted above, where the author excludes the issue “as to whether or not God could make <something> contrary to this order” as being “not the object of the present speculation”. The same holds true for the third note, which is even more radical, saying that the “good” at issue in the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’ must be understood in terms of the goods “that we can attain by means of our pure nature”, for only those were taken into consideration by the Philosopher<sup>39</sup>.

In fact, such a decision to address a subject without taking Christian faith into account is not unique in Giles’ writings. But the explicit and decided way in which he advocates such an option in the ‘Sententia de bona fortuna’ is, to my knowledge, a rare case. And when one considers the other occasion where the author proceeds in such a way, it seems that the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’ played a decisive role in this affair. Indeed, a very similar position statement is to be found in Giles’ ‘Commentary on the Rhetorics’, concerning chapter 5 of Book I, where Aristotle deals with happiness in a way that is not entirely in line with all the other texts in the corpus, but that partially corresponds with the two extracts forming the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’. Indeed, in the ‘Rhetorics’ human happiness is defined by enumerating its “constitutive parts” (1360b 6.19). In a passage that is very close to this one, the Philosopher posits a distinction between “external” and “internal” goods (1360b 26–30) but without giving a complete list of the items belonging to each category. So, because good fortune figures among these “constitutive parts” of happiness enumerated thusly (1361b 39–1362a 12), the question of its categorization arises. To answer this, Giles first ensures that fortune belongs to the internal goods, as does friendship (mentioned later, in 1361b 35–1362a 12); he then justifies this claim by the fact that fortune can be reached *naturaliter*, as can be made clear on the basis of what the Philosopher says “in the chapter on good fortune” (“*ut potest patere ex philosopho in capitulo de bona fortuna*”) <sup>40</sup>; and a couple of lines later, after having recalled the specificity of the concept of good fortune at issue in the treatise, he stresses that only God’s inspiration can make an individual well-fortuned in the sense of the opusculum:

“And perhaps it [good fortune] can be said to come from nature, speaking of our direction in as far as we are directed by the separated substances to an end that is proportionate to our nature, <an end> which we can attain by means of our pure nature (*ex puris naturalibus*). As to whether or not there is some supernatural end

<sup>39</sup> Giles of Rome, SBF, 1207b 3–5, ed. Cordonier, Une lecture (nt. 4), p. 148, 149–152: “One must also note that when we say that those who have such a nature so as to be conducted by God’s impetus and attain some goods are well-fortuned, this is to be understood in terms of the natural goods that we can attain by means of our pure nature, because we did not find the Philosopher having dealt with other kinds of goods.”

<sup>40</sup> Giles of Rome, Commentaria in Rhetoricam Aristotelis I, 5 (1361b 3–6), ed. Venetiis 1515, fol. 21va [Reprint: Frankfurt a. M. 1968].

(*aliquis finis supernaturalis*), and how we are directed by God to attain this end, this is not the object of the present speculation.”<sup>41</sup>

Against the background of Giles’ works, this text shares some features with his commentary on the passage of the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’ on the enthusiasts, which are, to my knowledge, not present in other texts by Giles. In both passages, the notion of “nature” proves to be crucial and is understood to be partially in line with Aquinas’ understanding of Aristotle’s ‘Nicomachean Ethics’, Book I, and ‘Metaphysics’, Book Lambda, concerning the human disposition towards the good<sup>42</sup>. But at the same time, Giles gives to this theological notion of nature a much more radical meaning, in advocating an inquiry conducted solely “by means of our pure nature”. Most strikingly, in the ‘Commentary on the Rhetorics’, he uses this phrase to mean a state of affairs opposed to the “supernatural”. Although this later word does not appear in the ‘Sententia de bona fortuna’, the clear-cut opposition between what is purely natural and what is supernatural, explicitly claimed in the ‘Commentary on the Rhetorics’, is taken for granted in Giles’ commentary on Aristotle’s doctrine of fortune: the “present inquiry” means an approach that intentionally does not take into account the possibility of some “supernatural end” for human beings. Sure, the phrase “pure nature” was already used by Latin theologians before Giles, with the function of identifying, in a given process, what comes from man himself without grace or before the fall. However, Giles uses it to mean a specific method, distinct from revealed theology, which he systematically applied to comment on the new Aristotle, in a spirit that is in line with the approach adopted by Albert the Great in his own exegetical writings. This shift towards a concept of “naturalness” that is thought of in opposition to the supernatural and used as a typically philosophical tool, marks a clear break with Aquinas’ approach<sup>43</sup>.

So, Giles’ understanding of Aristotle’s doctrine of good fortune in terms of an approach “by means of our pure nature” (“*ex puris naturalibus*”), made explicit in his third note to the description of the enthusiasts in 1207b 3–5, is mainly a reading method, or an interpretative strategy, that does not necessarily pretend to be the only approach to the subject at issue. In other words, such a restriction

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. I, 5 (1362a 13), fol. 23ra: “*Et forte multo magis a natura dici potest loquendo de directione nostra prout a substantiis separatis dirigimur in finem proportionatum nature nostre, quem ex puris naturalibus consequi possumus. Vtrum autem sit aliquis finis supernaturalis, et quomodo attingendum illum a deo dirigimur, non est presentis speculationis.*”

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the extracts of Aquinas’s commentaries on Aristotle’s ‘Nicomachean Ethics’ I, 2, 1094a 19–22 and ‘Metaphysics’, XII, 10, 1075a 13–15 quoted here above (nt. 29 and 30).

<sup>43</sup> On the use and significance of the concept of “nature” in Thomas Aquinas cf. above all the very influential approach by Henri De Lubac, Surnaturel. Etudes historiques, nouvelle édition avec la traduction intégrale des citations latines et grecques, Paris 1991 (1946<sup>1</sup>), 213–291 and 355–373 and J.-P. Torrell, Nature et grâce chez Thomas d’Aquin, in: Revue Thomiste 101 (2001), 167–202. For a stimulating outline of discussions on that issue in late scholastic tradition cf. J. Schmutz, La doctrine médiévale des causes et la théologie de la nature pure, in: Revue Thomiste 101 (2001), 217–264.

of the scope of the philosopher who comments on Aristotle could have been regarded by Giles as a way of leaving space for a specifically Christian approach to divine government – supposed to be developed in other works, belonging to different literary genres<sup>44</sup>. Nevertheless, Giles' methodology in commenting on Aristotle has direct and significant consequences for his treatment of good fortune. A first consequence is clearly explained by himself in the “doubt” that directly follows the three notes just analyzed. This doubt gives rise to a rather long justification in which the author advocates the method adopted by the Philosopher when causally explaining good fortune in terms of “nature without reason”. In so doing, Giles also justifies his own doctrine of fortune in commenting on the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’. Since the very formulation of this question will be of interest for our purpose, let us quote it here in full:

“One could perhaps doubt that while the good fortune that is principally at issue here comes from God as a mover, and from a natural aptitude according to which we can perceive this motion and act according to it, why the Philosopher attributes good fortune to a greater extent to nature itself or to the natural disposition itself, than to divine benevolence, whereas it seems that it is to be attributed to a greater extent to divine benevolence because the effect is to be attributed more to the principal agent than to the instrumental one.”<sup>45</sup>

Although Giles gives no reference, the basic assumption that lies behind the doubt corresponds to a principle indicated in prop. 1 of Pseudo-Aristotle's ‘Liber de causis’: “Every primary cause exerts more influence on what is caused than does the secondary cause” (“*causa primaria plus influit super causatum quam causa secundaria*”). So, the doubt can be summarized as follows: why is it that the author of the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’ defines good fortune starting with the notion of nature rather than with that of divine benevolence, while it is known, on the basis of another crucial work from the Aristotelian corpus, that an effect must be attributed to the principal agent more than to the instrument? Or: why

<sup>44</sup> The fact that Giles' naturalist approach to Aristotle's ‘Ethics’ does not exclude a Christian view but rather leaves space for it and even indicates its necessity is clearly expressed by Giles among others in his treatise ‘On the Government of the Princes’; cf. Giles of Rome, *De Regimine Principum*, I, ii, 33, ed. Antonius Bladum, Romae 1556, fol. 90r,14–16 (end of the chapter): “*In hoc ergo eliditur philosophorum elatio, uolentium quod ex puris naturalibus possemus omnia mala uitare et perfectam bonitatem acquirere.*” A good example of a typically Christian approach to the subject of divine government is Giles' later treatise ‘De predestinatione et prescientia, paradiso et inferno’. Cf. B. E. Holstein, A commentary on ‘De predestinatione et prescientia, paradiso et inferno’ by Giles of Rome on the basis of MS Cambrai BM 487 (455), Ph.D. Diss, Berlin 2007. I intend to devote a further study to this treatise by Giles and its relation to the ‘Sententia de bona fortuna’.

<sup>45</sup> Giles of Rome, SBF, 1207b 3–5, ed. Cordonier, Une lecture (nt. 4), p. 148, l. 153–159: “*Dubitarer forte aliquis, cum bona fortuna de qua hic principaliter intenditur sit a deo mouente et ab aptitudine naturali secundum quam percipere possumus motionem illam et agere secundum eam, quare philosophus magis attribuit bonam fortunam ipsi nature uel ipsi dispositioni naturali quam beniuolentie diuine. Videtur autem eam magis attribuendam esse beniuolentie diuine, quia effectus magis attribuendus est principali agenti quam instrumentali.*”

is it that the Philosopher, after having acknowledged that fortune is ultimately reduced to divine benevolence, allows himself to treat it on the basis of its purely natural causes? The starting point of Giles' answer is his doctrine of God's uniform action: the activity of the prime mover, who acts "as far as his part is concerned" uniformly on all beings, "is not diversified but because of the diversity of the recipients, or because of the secondary agents"; so an effect coming from the first cause is diversified either according to the diversity of the recipients of this effect, or according to the diversity of the secondary agents of the activity considered<sup>46</sup>. Hence Aristotle's choice, Giles claims, to focus on the secondary causes, which are the actual explanatory factors of the diversity of destinies among human beings: in this case, the secondary causes are the different natural impetuses moving the different individual men<sup>47</sup>.

Giles finally returns to the principle that had given rise to the doubt, namely the idea that "an effect is to be attributed more to the principal agent than to the instrumental one". This principle is still valid, he states, but it corresponds to a certain point of view chosen by the Philosopher (or the philosophers) to find the "proper and particular" cause for some kind of effect: in the case of fortune, this means to make it come from the natural impetus present in the human beings concerned – notwithstanding the universal causality of God, "which moves the whole of nature"<sup>48</sup>. Giles' explanation echoes Aquinas' doctrine of God's *ad extra* action, in several respects. First and generally, his view that "in whatever natural operation, God acts more and more intimately than nature itself" (149,178–179) is in line with a claim that is frequently made

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1207b 3–5, 148,159–149,165: "It must be said that, according to the Philosopher's doctrine, God, as far as his part is concerned, acts uniformly and his action is not diversified but because of the diversity of the recipients, or because of the secondary agents. So according to the Philosopher, what is uniformly unvariate in the effects must be attributed to the first cause that acts and moves uniformly, whereas what is diversified in the beings must be attributed either to the diversity of the recipients or of the secondary agents."

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 149,165–170: "Therefore, while not all are well-fortuned but, rather, there is in this the most extreme diversity because some are well-fortuned and some unfortunate, and the one and the same man at one time acts fortunately who at another time operates unfortunately. Hence the Philosopher attributes good fortune – even if he reports it to God's benevolence and to God as the mover of the whole of nature as in its universal cause – to the natural impetus as its particular and proper cause."

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 149,171–183: "However, what is added (that the effect is to be attributed to the principal agent, not to the instrumental) is true under the condition that one respects the proportion between the effect and the cause, in the sense that a universal effect is to be attributed to a greater extent to the universal agent than to the instrument, and the particular effect is to be attributed to the principal and particular agent to a greater extent than to the instrument. Yet if the effect is proper and particular, it is attributed to the secondary and particular agent, such as warming, even if it comes from fire and from the intelligence that moves the sphere and from God, is attributed to fire as to its proper and particular agent. Indeed, in whatever natural operation, God acts more and more intimately than nature itself. Yet, as the proper and particular effects are reduced to proper and particular causes, we attribute the natural effects to natural agents and say that good fortune comes from natural impetus despite the fact that all these kinds of effects come from God as from their principal cause, that moves the whole of nature."

in the passages from Aquinas' mature works where he discusses the above mentioned issue of the factors at issue in natural causality in dialogue with some Muslim theologians, most particularly in Book III of the 'Book on the Truth of the Catholic Faith'<sup>49</sup>. Second and more specifically, Giles' way of explaining the Philosopher's method in terms of a focus on secondary causes can be read in the light of some claim made by Aquinas in commenting on Aristotle's note to the "reduction" of the accidental effects to their *per se* causes in 'Metaphysics', Book VI, 1027b 14–16, namely the claim that, according to Catholic worldview, nothing happens by chance or fortuitously, whereas, in this place, "Aristotle is speaking of those contingent events which occur here as a result of particular causes"<sup>50</sup>. This idea, mentioned by Aquinas in passing, has been taken by Giles as a true key principle to understanding the Philosopher's doctrine in the 'Liber': such a focus on secondary causes represents, to him, an important feature of what has now appeared as his manifesto, the manifesto for a typically philosophical method that aims at accounting for contingency on the basis of the secondary causes and in making abstraction of the Christian faith.

### III. Fortune as resulting from the necessity of nature: the main tenets of Giles' "error" from Henry of Ghent's point of view

Shortly after its publication, Giles' 'Sententia de bona fortuna' gave rise to sharp critical reactions by the Parisian theologian Henry of Ghent, whose 'Quodlibet' VI, 10 – written either at Christmas 1281 or in Spring 1282 –, was entirely devoted to the issue of the causes and nature of good fortune, and

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<sup>49</sup> This is the leitmotiv of this book, which constitutes, in its entirety, a general background for Giles' doctrine of divine government. The book includes the issue of the felicity constituting the final end of human acts (Ch. 1–63) and that of God's activity towards different kinds of beings (Ch. 64–163). But the limited background of Giles' claim is formed by the series of Chapters 64–83 devoted to God's action in the world through secondary agents and, in particular, in the chapters where Aquinas, after having stated that God governs all things and preserves them in being (Ch. 64–65) establishes that the only way to give being is to act by divine power (Ch. 66), that "God is the cause of operation for all things that operate" (Ch. 67), and that the Arab theologians who "take away proper actions from natural things" (Ch. 69) are wrong, because the same activity can be attributed at the same time both to the First Principle and to the secondary agents that are to be found in the created world (Ch. 70). Even more specifically, Summa Contra Gentiles III, 66, § 6 states (i) that the secondary agents act by the power of the primary agent and (ii) that the particularities of the secondary agents are determinants and particularizers of the primary agent's activity. In this crucial series of chapters, which has no real parallel in the remaining part of Aquinas' works, the issue of the reduction of particular effects to their particular and general causes is a leading theme that is treated intensively in a way that seems to have served as a starting point for Giles' analysis.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle VI, 1, n° 1216, transl. Rowan (nt. 30), vol. 1, 417.

proves to be fundamentally dependent on, and directed against Giles' exegesis<sup>51</sup>. It was indeed Giles' understanding of the treatise, which favored Aristotle's definition of good fortune as "nature without reason" (1207a 35–37), that gave rise to the question asked in 'Quodlibet' VI, 10, "whether good fortune is natural to man" ("*Utrum bona fortuna sit homini naturalis*"). Henry's answer to this question is clearly contrary to that given by Giles: for him, good fortune is not and cannot be, in any way, natural to man; if this so-called good fortune is natural to man, it is not fortune anymore, and, conversely, to be truly well-fortuned, the human condition of being well-fortuned must be other than natural. So, according to Henry, Giles was incoherent. He denounces Giles' inconsistency in the following way: Giles failed to measure the consequences of his doctrine of God's uniform action because, if he had done so, he would have been able to see that it means that God's external action, when considered in this way, proves to be actually dependent on the natural receptivity of individual beings. In other words, according to Henry, when one takes Giles' exegesis of the 'Liber de bona fortuna' seriously, the actions of Aristotle's God are simultaneously limited and necessitated by the natural prerequisites of the beings on which they apply.

From this, Henry calls the whole system of contingency elaborated by his younger colleague as an Aristotelian commentator into question. From Henry's perspective, it is nonsense to try to account for fortune in natural terms, as Giles did: a satisfactory notion of contingency is only possible when taking into account the idea of a God who acts in a voluntary way and whose activity is not limited by the natural conditions of the created world. This God can act contrary to the natural conditions of the world and the natural dispositions of men, and this is only the case for the Christian God. Accordingly, Henry pro-

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<sup>51</sup> The text has been edited by G. A. Wilson, in: *Henrici de Gandavo Opera omnia*, vol. 10: *Quodlibet VI*, Leuven 1987, 87,3–127,65. The year 1281 is indicated on p. xxii, on the basis of J. Gómez Caffarena, *Cronologia de la 'Suma' de Henrique de Gante per relación a sus 'Quodlibetos'*, in: *Gregorianum* 38 (1957), 116–133. The year 1282 is given as an alternative in G. A. Wilson, *Henry of Ghent's written legacy*, in: id. (ed.), *A companion to Henry of Ghent* (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 23), Leiden–Boston 2011, 3–23, here 6. Besides the edition from 1987, whose contents reveal the text's many redactional layers and the often substantial modifications made by Henry to the second section (where he criticizes Aristotle), Wilson had also devoted two further studies to 'Quodlibet' VI, 10, in which he elucidated, in one case, some motives behind Henry's critique of the 'Liber de bona fortuna' and, in the other, the impact of this critique on the last 'Quodlibet' by Duns Scotus; cf. G. A. Wilson, *Henry of Ghent's Critique of Aristotle's Conception of Good Fortune*, in: *Franziskanische Studien* 65 (1983), 241–251 and id., *Good Fortune and the Eternity of the World: Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus*, in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* 65 (1998), 40–51. The dependency of Henry's 'Quodlibet' VI, 10 on Giles' 'Sentencia de bona fortuna' has been highlighted in Cordonier, *Réussir sans raison(s)* (nt. 11), 738 and was studied in detail in ead., *Une lecture* (nt. 4). Gordon A. Wilson has then taken this dependency into account to study Henry's "naturalist" approach to Aristotle's doctrine of good fortune; cf. G. A. Gordon, *Henry of Ghent on Fatalism and Naturalism*, in: D'Hoine/van Riel (ed.), *Fate, Providence and Moral* (nt. 7), 591–603.

poses a twofold view of God's *ad extra* action<sup>52</sup>. Very roughly speaking, he distinguishes between two different aspects of God's action towards the world, or two kinds of divine providence. First, there is what he calls God's general providence, a benevolent concern for all kinds of being: following this general providence, God governs the different beings according to their specific natures and to the natural necessity attached to these natures; at this level, Aristotle's concept of fortune as interpreted by Giles was perfectly relevant. Second, there is what Henry calls God's particular providence, which is devoted exclusively to human beings. On the basis of this kind of providence, God directs human individuals according to an order that is not natural, but gratuitous. This order very often contradicts the natural order, so that God's particular providence is superior to, and much more powerful than, general providence. This twofold model of providence was in line with a broader distinction that was identified by Luca Bianchi as an obsession for Henry, namely his distinction between the God of the philosophers (who acts in accordance with nature) and the God of Christian faith (who acts in a supernatural way)<sup>53</sup>. The importance of this opposition between two absolutely irreducible figures of God for the subsequent developments in Latin theology is well known. But, more specifically, the importance of the topic of divine providence in Henry's thinking has only recently begun to be recognized as such<sup>54</sup>.

While the critique addressed to Giles by Henry in *Quodlibet VI,10* follows intricate paths and relies on a complex reading of the *Sententia de bona fortuna*

<sup>52</sup> This model is most present in the 'Quodlibet' VI, but also in other works, in particular the 'Summae quaestionum ordinarium', art. III, q. 5, ed. J. Badius, Paris 1520, vol. I, fol. 30rT. On this distinction and its importance in Henry's thought cf. Cordonier, Une lecture (nt. 4), 124–126, in part. nt. 99. Henry's twofold view of God's *ad extra* action ultimately results from a particular reading of the distinction made by Augustine in his work 'De genesi ad litteram', XVIII, 37, between two kinds of God's providence ("opus bipartitum divinae providentiae"). Henry uses this model to distinguish between two kinds of texts in the Dionysian corpus: while the treatise 'On the Divine Names' is supposed to deal with the natural order of God's providence, the treatise 'On the Celestial Hierarchy' is supposed to deal with the gratuitous order of God's providence. On this cf. Henry of Ghent, Quodl. VI, q. 4, ed. Wilson (nt. 51), 52,29–31, 54,86–88 and 55,17–18 with the comments made in Cordonier, Une lecture (nt. 4), 133, nt. 119. This particular reading of Dionysius, however, deserves further study.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. L. Bianchi, Onnipotenza divina e ordine del mondo fra XIII e XIV secolo, in: Medioevo 10 (1983), 106–153, in particular 109 sq., and id., Il vescovo e i filosofi. La condanna parigina del 1277 e l'evoluzione dell'aristotelismo scolastico, Bergamo 1990, 65.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. in particular the following essay, in which the author points to an intriguing comment that Henry made in his 'Summae quaestionum ordinarium', art. LI, q. 2, to a certain "tract on divine providence and on the government of the creatures", which has left no trace in Henry's extant works. Among the possible explanations for this empty reference, Wilson favors the hypothesis that it is a reference to an independent tract that Henry intended to write, but did not write – possibly because he died before he could compose it: G. A. Wilson, The Parts of Henry of Ghent's "Quaestiones Ordinariae (Summa)", in: R. Hofmeister Pich e. a. (eds.), Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought. Festschrift in honor of Kent Emery, Jr. on the Occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters), Leiden e. a. (forthcoming). I thank Gordon A. Wilson for having sent a copy of this unpublished essay.

that cannot be explained here in detail, the aspects that interest us in this paper are the features that are present in Giles' text and could have instigated his adversary's attack. In this respect, one of the most striking features is to be found in the formulation of the doubt that followed the three notes to Aristotle's description of the enthusiasts in *Magna moralia* 1207b 3–5, in a passage already quoted above<sup>55</sup>. Let us now consider this passage once again, but this time focus on the words and phrases used by Giles to mean the natural factor at issue in the 'Liber de bona fortuna' and in Aristotle's supposedly preferred definition of good fortune as "nature without reason". When considered from this particular viewpoint, this extract proves to contain three different words to mean this natural factor of fortune. Indeed, we find not only the term "nature itself" followed by the phrase "natural disposition" (148,156: "*ipsi nature [...] dispositioni naturali*"), but also, and preceding these two, the phrase "natural aptitude", which is said to make one "able to perceive the motion by which God moves us to our goods and to act according to it" (148,154–155). So, in other words, nature, natural disposition or natural aptitude altogether seem to mean here an individual's capacity not only to be favorably moved by God – in line with Aquinas' view of Gods' uniform attraction of all beings towards their ends by means of their so-called "natural inclination" –, but also some human capacity to "react" to God's providence in perceiving its appeal and in acting in accordance to it, in a way that will bring good fortune.

It is striking that Giles, in such a crucial passage of his 'Sententia de bona fortuna', which is precisely supposed to solve a crucial doubt concerning a decisive methodological issue, does not distinguish clearly between the meanings of "nature" and the various instantiations of what a natural factor of fortune could be, speaking indeed of a "natural aptitude", a natural disposition and a "nature", which are far from being unambiguously defined and could well be either general or individual, either corporeal or spiritual, either innate or acquired by practice or some training. Actually, the only secure conclusion that the reader is allowed to deduce from Giles' explanations is that the natural factor at issue is probably a capacity that is present in various degrees in diverse individuals belonging to the same human species – a conclusion suggested by the context of the passage and the very formulation of the doubt at issue. But the same reader remains unable to determine with certainty the origin, the workings and the eventual adjuvant factors of such an aptitude. This ambiguity can hardly be considered to result from Giles' incapacity to make conceptual distinctions, given the authors' marked predilection for such conceptual distinctions, a typical tendency that is even confirmed in the 'Sententia de bona fortuna', precisely concerning two different meanings of "nature" in 'Magna moralia' 1207a 30–36 and 1206b 38–1207a 1<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. above nt. 45–48.

<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in SBF, 146,81–147,106, Giles indicates that the two passages each offer a different reading of "nature": the first is a reading of nature as the cause of effects in the beings that it actuates, whereas the second relates to a principle which, far from being sufficient to provoke an effect, only corresponds to a tendency to produce one. This second reading of "nature",



On these conditions, it does not seem justified to infer the author's inability to distinguish between different instances of "nature" in Aristotle's description of the enthusiasts. Instead, it seems probable that the ambiguity of the use of this concept in Giles' formulation of the doubt concerning the description of the enthusiasts was deliberate – perhaps because the author's argumentative point was to draw a basic (and, hence, conceptually broad) opposition between an approach of good fortune conducted on the basis of its "natural causes" (in the most general sense) and an approach taking the surnatural end of human life into account. However, it seems to me that the task of the historian of philosophy is not to determine what happened, at a psychological level, in the mind of the authors under consideration, but rather to understand the effects that their texts could have had on an interpretative level – a task that is at the same time historical and philosophical. In this respect, what seems to be clear now is that it is precisely this ambiguity concerning the notion of nature in the passage of Giles' 'Sententia de bona fortuna' analyzed above that made this text susceptible to Henry's criticism: this openness of the concept of nature used here gave room to Henry's much more complex interpretation of Aristotle's system of good fortune, an interpretation in which the so-called fortunate effect ultimately results from a series of naturally determined factors, the combination of which can only be determined, since all of them are so<sup>57</sup>. Thus, the ambiguity of the natural factors at issue in Giles' reading of Aristotle's discussion of the enthusiasts constitutes an essential element of what was, to Henry, Giles' error in this crucial passage.

Let us, finally, take a step back, and now consider Giles' error and its critique by Henry against the broader framework established in the preceding analyses. First, it must be recalled that the issue as to how God governs the world and leads all beings to their ultimate ends was much debated in late scholasticism, and all the more intensively after Thomas Aquinas had credited the Philosopher's First Principle with a true concern for every single individual being: from then on, Western experts on Peripatetism began to discuss the workings of such

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according to Giles, is at work in the definition of fortune as "nature without reason" in 'Magna moralia' 1207a 30–36, while the other, which can also be applied to inanimate beings, is at work in Aristotle's refusal to see fortune as a natural cause in 'Magna moralia' 1206b 38–1207a 1. On this cf. Cordonier, Une lecture (nt. 4), 103.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Cordonier, Une lecture (nt. 4), 123 sq. Following Wilson, Henry of Ghent on Fatalism (nt. 51), 598 sq., "Henry did not regard the position expressed in the *De bona fortuna* as a determinism", he rather "regarded the position of Aristotle as presented in the tract 'De bona fortuna' as a minimal naturalism, which restricted how God could operate in the created world." This indication is true for Henry's endeavor against the Philosopher's views on good fortune himself, in the second part of 'Quodlibet' VI, 10 (ed. Wilson [nt. 51], 103,86–122,61). But when Henry deals with Giles's interpretation of it more specifically, as he does in the first part of 'Quodlibet' VI, 10 (87,3–103, 85), I think that the label "determinism" remains valid to characterize Henry's reading of Giles; indeed, as I have tried to show, Henry seems to consider that Giles' error is to believe that Aristotle's view of fortune allows for true contingency, which is actually not the case.

divine government. Second, it is now rather clear that, in this history, Giles' reading of Aristotle's 'Sententia de bona fortuna' marks a crucial milestone. The contribution of this text, the influence of which lasted until the Renaissance, was in the present essay examined from the viewpoint in which Giles' exegesis was considered to be erroneous by his colleague Henry of Ghent. In this respect, what seems to have constituted Giles' error is the kind of radical interpretation that he gave to Aquinas' doctrine of God's *ad extra* activity. The very idea of using the 'Liber de bona fortuna' as a key text for God's government was, as such, deeply rooted in some passages from the Thomasian corpus, most evidently Book III of the 'Book on the Truth of the Catholic Faith', where the two chapters that were later shown to make up the opusculum, taken from the 'Eudemian Ethics' and the 'Magna moralia', were quoted for the first time. On the basis of this exegetic strategy, which forms the remote framework of the 'Sententia de bona fortuna', Giles' reading can be summarized as implying a twofold interpretative gesture towards Aristotle and Aquinas, which brought up some problematic points that were latently present in his predecessor's doctrine. This twofold gesture will be described in what follows.

First of all, Giles systematically accentuated the significance of a "detail" added by Aquinas in commenting on Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics', Book I and 'Metaphysics', Book Lambda, namely the idea that the direction of all beings towards their final end or their good comes from some kind of natural inclination given to them by the First Principle (or first intelligences). Such an idea, that was absent from Aristotle, was used in the 'Sententia de bona fortuna' to give a more determinate content to the suggestion, made in both chapters of the short Aristotelian treatise, that fortune results from a subtle combination of a natural factor and some kind of divine inspiration. Secondly, on the basis of such an idea of fortune, Giles opted for a viewpoint that was methodologically in line with the attitude ascribed to the Philosopher by Aquinas in his analysis of the accidental in 'Metaphysics', Book VI, namely a focus on the secondary causes, leaving out the *per se* causes to which accidental effects are ultimately reducible. Such a focus on the secondary causes of good fortune – which are, in this case, its natural factors – was adopted by Giles as a philosophical program, which was systematically applied in the course of the 'Sententia de bona fortuna', but also made explicit in a particularly clear way in the passage dealing with the description of the enthusiasts, in which the Philosopher was supposed to explain how fortune is reduced to divine benevolence. This passage contained an extensive outline of Giles' doctrine of uniform action, to develop it in the direction of a naturalistic account of good fortune, formulated to the exclusion of any consideration of human beings' supernatural end and of any intervention of the Christian God.

This choice to develop an analysis restricted to the "order that we see" seems to have been closely connected to Giles' commentary work on Aristotle and more particularly on the 'Liber de bona fortuna' – as suggested by a passage in the 'Commentary on the Rhetorics' in which this treatise is dealt with in a

very similar way as in the ‘Sententia de bona fortuna’. Giles’ methodological choice for such a limited kind of analysis seemed problematic to Henry, being perceived as a reductionist view of fortune, in which the character of naturalness advocated by Giles marked not only its secondary causes, but also the mode of God’s *ad extra* action itself. This interpretation was favored by the fact that, in Giles’ discussion of Aristotle’s description of the enthusiasts, the notion of “natural factors” of fortune has remained extremely abstract and schematic and, hence, rather unclear in a way. According to Henry’s critical notes against Giles’ reading of the ‘Liber de bona fortuna’, such an exegesis of Aristotle was unsatisfactory and fundamentally incoherent. On the one hand, it was unsatisfactory because his view of God’s uniform action made him dependent on the receptivity of human beings: following Giles’ account, God could only bestow good fortune on those who are naturally well-fitted to perceive his influence and act accordingly, which was seen by Henry as an unacceptable limitation of God’s power. On the other hand, Giles’ exegesis was judged incoherent because a doctrine that claims to deal with fortune and ends up in such a naturalistic account of divine government is, finally, self-contradictory. So, in short, according to Henry, Giles’ error was not complete: while almost all exegetical assumptions of his reading of Aristotle’s doctrine of good fortune were true, he failed to see and to duly measure the consequences of such a doctrine.

#### IV. Conclusion

In order to see Giles’ reading of Aristotle’s description of the enthusiasts as an error, we have, for the most part, adopted Henry’s particular point of view. On the basis of this analysis, another aspect of the young theologian’s error could now appear, which has perhaps less to do with philosophy than with intellectual strategy. Indeed, it could be considered that fundamental to Giles’ error was his endeavor to make a basic principle of Aquinas’ doctrine of contingency the very object of a discussion, namely the idea of a reduction of contingent effects to their ultimate cause, which is God’s action: this discussion opened the possibility to see Aquinas’ view on contingency (and good fortune) as unsatisfactory, by bringing up the fact that the so-called contingent is contingent only in relation to secondary causes, but that it remains necessary in relation to God. Hence the crucial position of this lemma in the ‘Sententia de bona fortuna’ as well as in the debate between Henry and Giles concerning this opusculum. Now, the historian of medieval philosophy can ask whether it was justified to devote an entire essay to such an intricate passage as Giles’ commentary on Aristotle’s description of the enthusiasts. I would answer in the affirmative. For one can do history of philosophy in several ways. One way is to seek to reconstruct the process by which some doctrines and claims were elaborated, rather than focusing exclusively on the resulting theses. When opting for this way, one can see that, in some cases, the very fact that the views of some people seemed to be

incomplete and unsatisfactory to others played a certain role in the development of the history of ideas. And to make aspects like this appear, one must often go into the texts themselves and into their intricacies, rather than only summarizing their arguments. Thus, one realizes the possibly creative potential of error in some human elaborations.