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OLIVI AND BONAVENTURE
PARADOXES OF FAITHFULNESS

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Peter John Olivi's relationship to Bonaventure is an intriguing one.¹ Outwardly they appear as the leading figures of two different trends of Franciscan politics, Olivi usually being qualified as a "radical" inspiring the dissidence of the Spirituals, while Bonaventure represents a central and balanced attitude regarding Franciscan poverty. Likewise, as far as their apocalyptical expectations are concerned, Olivi is certainly an overt and avowed Joachite, whereas Bonaventure supposedly makes a more distanced use of Joachim of Fiore's works. Recent studies of Olivi's philosophical approaches rather present him as anticipating themes soon to be developed by Duns Scotus than associate him with the Bonaventurian school.² As for his pragmatic approach of economics, nothing of the sort can be found in the writings of the Seraphic doctor. In many respects, the two Franciscan theologians do seem to belong to different intellectual and spiritual worlds.

Yet, when turning to the documents, we find a far much more complex situation. Olivi has been a student in Paris during the final years of Bonaventure's generalate (1267-1273). Although the latter was never his teacher in a formal sense, many of Olivi's writings reflect a deep admiration and respect towards the one that he describes as "the most powerful of my masters"³. Such a qualification instantly outshines all theology professors in active duty at the Franciscan *studium* in Paris during the late 1260's whom Olivi may have been taught by. Some degree of institutional pride shows when he calls Bonaventure "one of the most solemn [2] masters of this order" or "the greatest doctor of our order and our times".⁴ In Olivi's eyes,

¹ This presentation summarizes and builds on results already presented in "Le métier de théologien selon Olivi. Philosophie, théologie, exégèse et pauvreté", in C. König-Pralong/O. Ribordy/T. Suarez-Nani (eds.), *Pierre de Jean Olivi. Philosophe et théologien* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 17-85 and elsewhere. I thank my cousin Sophie for her linguistic corrections.

² S. Dumont, "The Origin of Scotus's Theory of Synchronic Contingency", *The Modern Schoolman* 72 (1995): 149-167.

³ Petrus Johannis Olivi, *Quaestiones in secundum librum Sententiarum*, B. Jansen (ed.), (Quaracchi: Coll. S. Bonaventurae, 1922-1926), (henceforth *Summa*), t. 1, q. 31, 516 : "Licet autem huic viae in nullo praeiudicare intendam, cum non solum sit magnorum sed etiam potissimorum magistrorum meorum".

⁴ Petrus Ioannis Olivi, *Quaestio de usu paupere* (henceforth QPE 9), in D. Burr (ed.) *De usu paupere. The Quaestio and the Tractatus* (Firenze : Olschki, 1992), 32-33 : "unus de sollemnioribus magistris ordinis huius". *Ibid.*, 34 : "Frater etiam Bonaventura, summus nostri temporis et ordinis doctor" Petrus Johannis

his preeminence over all contemporary theologians remains beyond any doubt. This shows, for instance, when Bonaventure is described, in an ironic contrast to Thomas Aquinas, as “no less catholic a doctor”.⁵ Moreover, this admiration is exclusive. Besides him, almost no other Franciscan doctor is ever mentioned, and certainly not with such reverence. The authority of Alexander of Hales, founder of the Franciscan presence at Paris university, is entirely eclipsed. Among contemporary Franciscans only John Pecham stands as a remarkable figure. His authority is the first one put forward in the *Tractatus de usu paupere* in defense of a notion that friars should use things to which they have access in a limited way.⁶ Olivi did indeed derive his famous notion of “poor use” from the English friar who had by then been appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet, only Pecham’s *Tractatus pauperis* is quoted at length while his lectures on the *Sentences* are simply referred to by memory, a sign that Olivi did not bother to keep a record of it among his personal notes.⁷ Only at a late stage and in difficult circumstances, in 1283, does he refer as an authoritative text to William de la Mare’s *Correctorium fratris Thomae* after the Strasbourg General Chapter of 1282 had made its use compulsory for the friars reading Aquinas. Earlier on, as we shall see, Olivi knew and treated less respectfully this doctrinal catalogue. At any rate, Bonaventure’s aura overshadows every other Franciscan doctor.

Despite all these marks of admiration, Olivi clearly stands in retrospect as the Franciscan theologian who embarked in the most devastating critique of the main tenets of Bonaventure’s metaphysics. As Camille Bérubé eloquently wrote, Olivi’s rejection of all doctrines involving a divine illumination certifying the human conceptual understanding marks “an epochal change”.⁸ Indeed, by the end of the century, most Franciscan [3] teachers would have taken the same stance. If only for the very reason that Olivi’s positions were discussed at length in Paris at the time of his 1283 censure, they had a profound impact during the following decades.⁹ A number of questions raised during Richard of Mediavilla’s *Quodlibeta* held in

Olivi, *Quaestio de altissima paupertate* (henceforth QPE 8) in J. Schlageter, *Das Heil der Armen und das Verbreiten der Reichen*, (Werl : D. Coelde, 1989), 185 : “summus nostri temporis doctor”.

⁵ *Summa*, t. 1, q. 9, p. 165 : “Alii vero non minus catholici”. See as well, *Ibid.*, q. 33, p. 597 : “sequendo tamen doctores in hac parte saniores et magis catholicos...”.

⁶ D. Burr (ed.), *De usu paupere*, 90-93.

⁷ Petrus Johannes Olivi, *Impugnatio XXXV articulorum*, in *Quodlibeta* (Venice: [Soardi, 1505]), fol. 49va : “Idem etiam vult, si bene recolo, frater Ioannes de Pecham in primo suo”. At that stage, in Olivi’s papers had not yet been confiscated.

⁸ Camille Bérubé, “Olivi, critique de Bonaventure et d’Henri de Gand”, in R. S. Almagno/C. L. Harkins (ed.), *Studies honoring Ignatius Charles Brady, Friar Minor* (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1976), 57-121, reprinted in ID., *De l’homme à Dieu selon Duns Scot, Henri de Gand et Olivi* (Rome : Istituto storico dei Cappucini, 1983) 19-79. The French expression is : “un tournant d’histoire”.

⁹ On Olivi’s censure, D. Burr, *The Persecution of Peter Olivi*, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976, is still crucial for an analysis of the various issues debated. On the succession of events, see S. Piron,

Paris in the following years were asking for clarifications on various items censured, which indicates in all likelihood that at least some students were not convinced that the commission had issued a sound judgment.¹⁰ It has not been sufficiently emphasized that Olivi's return to teaching in Florence in 1287 also meant lifting the ban on the circulation his works. Many signs reveal that they were read and copied up to the General chapter held in Lyons in 1299 that explicitly prohibited their diffusion one year after his death. The number of surviving copies of his *Lectura super Mattheum* produced in the meantime is impressive.¹¹ As for giving up the illumination theory, Petrus de Trabibus (Piero delle Travi), his successor at Santa Croce in the mid 1290's provides the most telling example, for he changed his mind between the two versions of his *Sentences* commentary and eventually accepted as compelling a typically olivian argument.¹²

Olivi's critique of divine illumination theories in the late 1270's was fuelled by Henry of Ghent's recent attempt to offer an *a priori* demonstration of God's existence by way of "universal intelligible propositions" in the first part of his *Summa*, published in Paris in 1276¹³. According to Avicenna, these propositions, regarding the one, the being, the good, are the first things impressed in the human mind. If they are to be identified with the "eternal reasons" that certify all knowledge, which are not different from the eternal truth, they would provide an understanding of God [4] prior to any knowledge of his creatures. Indeed, "according to Augustine, by understanding the being of every being, and the good in absolute of every good, God is understood; therefore, it is possible to understand that God exists from such concepts of universal propositions".¹⁴ For Olivi, this argument is an unbearable sophism that entails many dangers and absurdities.¹⁵ In the first place, it would imply that in some way, God is seen without any mediation in this life on the occasion of any intellectual activity. Secondly, such propositions are in no way "eternal". Their necessity is only

"Censures et condamnation de Pierre de Jean Olivi: enquête dans les marges du Vatican", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, 118 (2006): 313-373.

¹⁰ Richard of Mediavilla, *Quodlibeta*, (Brixia: Sabbius, 1591; repr. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1963). The three questions are: Quod. II, art. 2, q. 2: "Utrum quantitas dicat rem aliquam ultra substantiam, cuius est quantitas, loquendo de re absoluta"; Quod. III, q. 1: "Utrum futura sint realiter praesentia aeternitati"; Quod. III, q. 15: "Utrum character dicat aliquid absolutum in anima".

¹¹ Petrus Johannis Olivi, "Lectura super Mattheum, prologus", S. Piron (ed.), *Oliviana*, 4, 2012, <http://oliviana.revues.org/498>, § 5.

¹² S. Piron, "Le poète et le théologien: une rencontre dans le *studium* de Santa Croce", in J. Biard/F. Mariani Ziani (eds.), *Ut philosophia poesis. Questions philosophiques dans l'écriture de Dante, Pétrarque, Boccaccio* (Paris: Vrin, 2008), 73-112.

¹³ P. Porro, *Enrico di Gand. La via delle proposizioni universali*, Bari, Levante, 1990.

¹⁴ Henry of Ghent, *Summa quaestionum ordinarium* (Paris: Josse Bade, 1520, reprint St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1953), fol. 134v. The translation is that of William O. Duba, *Seeing God. Theology, Beatitude and Cognition in the the Thirteenth Century*, PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2006, p. 301.

¹⁵ Olivi, *Summa*, vol. 3, 477-478.

conditional since they always presuppose the object they refer to and would simply not exist in the absence of an intellect that conceives them.¹⁶ Besides, they do not grasp any thing real since, according to Olivi, all universal concepts are derived from an initial knowledge of singular objects.¹⁷ Whiteness is just a quality perceived in various white objects and constructed as a universal concept by depriving these objects of all their singularities. Without exploring any further the complex debates brushed upon above, I would like to focus on one specific issue that is crucial to Henry's proof but also central to Bonaventure.

Among the remnants of the first book of Olivi's *Summa quaestionum*, a long and still unpublished question devoted to the divine foreknowledge and will contains as an appendix a discussion of the exact meaning of divine ideas.¹⁸ Such is the disposition of the texts in two manuscripts now preserved at the Vatican library that were confiscated or produced on the occasion of the 1283 censure.¹⁹ A third manuscript from Gdansk reflects the disposition later adopted in the *Summa* (edited by Olivi himself around 1295) by presenting the appendix as a full standing question. Unfortunately, those questions appear in a sharply abridged form, being tamped into the final pages of a codex containing an important collection of Ramon Lull's works²⁰. The question raised is straightforward: [5] what is the meaning of the "divine exemplar and ideas" (*Quid per divinum exemplar et ydeas significantur in Deo*)? As is well known, this concept is a legacy of Augustine who took the decision to locate the Platonic ideas in the Word of God as eternally expressing all of his creatures. Henceforth, the notion became traditional in latin theology under the condition that it did not posit any internal diversity within the divine intellect. Olivi proceeds with presenting five opinions without providing any name. According to the first one – which is clearly Aquinas' – the exemplar signifies "the divine essence inasmuch as it can be participated and imitated in different ways by the various creatures" (*divinam essentiam prout est diversimode participabilis et imitabilis a diversis creaturis*). The second opinion summarizes Bonaventure's expressionism as presented in his third question *De Scientia Christi*: "the light of the divine intellect" is eternally expressing the similitude of every single thing created or to be created. A third

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 481-495.

¹⁷ C. Bérubé, *La connaissance de l'individuel au Moyen Âge* (Paris: PUF, 1964).

¹⁸ I have presented this text in "La liberté divine et la destruction des idées chez Olivi", in A. Boureau/S. Piron (eds.), *Pierre de Jean Olivi (1248-1298). Pensée scolastique, dissidence spirituelle et société* (Paris: Vrin, 1999), 71-89, and provided a partial French translation in "Pierre de Jean Olivi: les idées comme vérification de la liberté divine", in O. Boulnois/J.C. Bardout (eds.), *Sur la science divine* (Paris: PUF, 2002), 204-225.

¹⁹ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Borgh. 322, fol. 169rb-179vb; Borgh. 358, fol. 154ra-165ra.

²⁰ Gdansk, Biblioteka Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Mar. F. 309, fol. 200r, 203v-204r. A fourth partial witness, of great historical interest, but less accurate, is Montefano (Fabriano), Convento Padri Silvestrini, cod. 19. I hope to present one day a full edition of this material.

opinion allowing for a real plurality of ideas in God can be traced back to Richard Rufus.²¹ It may have been adduced only in order to introduce the symmetric error of those who, trying stupidly to avoid such a difficulty (*hanc caripdim volens stulte effugere*), fall into the even worse error of negating the reality of any ideas in God. Such was the stance taken by Arnaud Gaillard who has been Olivi's real life opponent in Languedoc for a long time – probably, in a question disputed in Montpellier before 1279, at a time when Olivi was teaching in Narbonne.²² The fifth and final opinion is the one the author finds more consonant with both faith and reason and it can be assumed that it represents Olivi's personal view. It states that the divine exemplar is simply the actual intelligence that God has of all that can be possibly created while the ideas are his actual intelligence of all single existing beings. In other words, if the concept is maintained, it is devoid of most of its usual contents.

What Olivi wanted to avoid is expressed in the central discussion that is mainly focused on refuting Aquinas. Divine ideas should be not conceived of as a necessary intermediary between God and the world he [6] is creating. It is superfluous to postulate that God should first investigate himself and discover that he can be participated by forming the ideas of his creatures. Instead, for Olivi, the divine intellect has an immediate knowledge of singular creatures he may or may not will to create, as well as an effective knowledge of those that he is willing to create. The notion of "participation" does not belong to his vocabulary while "immediately" is a favorite adverb. This question thus represents one of the many cases where Olivi is arguing in favor of a radical metaphysical simplification. In the name of both God's transcendence and human freedom, he attempts to get rid of all unnecessary intermediate entities or operations in what I suggested to label a "deplatonizing" program.²³ Such an endeavor should run as much against Bonaventure whose position was very much akin to that of Aquinas. Yet, Olivi adopts here a diplomatic attitude. The formulations chosen can be correctly understood if "the divine light" is taken to mean the actuality and clarity of the divine intelligence, and "his expressions" stands for the actual divine intelligence, as

²¹ Rega Wood, "Distinct Ideas and Perfect Solitude: Alexander of Hales, Richard Rufus and Odo Rigaldus", *Franciscan Studies* 53 (1993) : 7-46.

²² Olivi is denouncing this error, on the report of some present on the occasion of Gaillard's disputation, among the list of accusation he draws against him in 1282. See *Impugnatio*, art. 24, fol. 49rb: "Dixit etiam, prout per eosdem intellexi, quod rationes attributorum divinatorum aut idearum non sunt in Deo aliquo modo realiter". Quite logically, Gaillard accused Olivi of stating that ideas are essentially or really different in God, to which he answered: "Contrarium huius expresse asservi et scripsi, dictum hoc ostendens esse hereticum et prophanum", Peter John Olivi, *Epistola ad fratrem R.*, S. Piron, C. Kilmer, E. Marmursztejn (ed.), *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 1998, p. art. 17.

²³ S. Piron, "Deplatonising the Celestial Hierarchy. Peter John Olivi's interpretation of the Pseudo-Dionysius", in I. Iribarren, M. Lenz (eds.), *Angels in Medieval Philosophy Inquiry. Their Function and Significance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 29-44.

expressing distinctly every object.²⁴ The metaphysics of light on which Bonaventure was relying does not undergo any serious criticism. Instead, it is simply treated as a metaphorical discourse, the vocabulary of which can be safeguarded. This does not mean that the whole argumentation presented in the questions *De Scientia Christi* has somehow been preserved. Olivi has simply managed to pick up one passage providing a solution to the problem of the plurality of ideas that could be acceptable for him. By the same token, he parts ways with Bonaventure who was holding, as was Aquinas, that God has no immediate knowledge of things in their essence. Instead, for both masters, God has to inspect himself and discover he can be imitated through similitudes or eternal reasons that will in turn provide the form of things created.

Therefore, if Olivi spares Bonaventure from a minute criticism, it should be noted that such leniency is not granted to William de la Mare. Among many difficulties, theologians had to account for the divine eternal foreknowledge of contingent [7] futures that may or may not be actualized in historical time. On this topic, Olivi stands together with Aquinas, arguing in favor of an immediate divine knowledge of contingent futures, eternally reaching the time in which they will be in act. It should be emphasized that this is an issue where Aquinas does not refer to the divine ideas that are not really central to his conception of God's knowledge.²⁵ Soon after March 1277 when the English Franciscan theologian drew a catalogue of Aquinas's errors, his third article was devoted to this topic. For de la Mare, the eternal co-presence of God to every instant of time is shocking since it implies that God would have an actual knowledge of contingents which do not actually exist yet. Insisting on his knowledge through ideal reasons, he adds: "it would be otiose to posit them if, of all eternity, all things would be present in their proper nature and so subjected in eternity to the divine vision".²⁶ Such a consequence is exactly the way in which Olivi conceives the process: divine ideas are indeed otiose. He then devotes many pages to stress the misunderstanding regarding the connection between time and eternity which, according to him, underlies such a position. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that one codex annotated by Olivi's censors in 1283 bears the remark in front of such developments: "here he speaks stupidly against friar William de la Mare" and that this topic would stand high in the list of propositions

²⁴ Petrus Johannis Olivi, *Quaestio de ideis*, Borgh. 358, f. 158vb: "Secundus autem modus potest sane intelligi si lux divina sumatur pro actualitate et claritate divini intelligere, et si nomine expressionum suarum non aliud intelligatur quam ipsum Dei intelligere, ut est actualis expressio uniuscuiusque obiecti secundum suam propriam rationem, et hoc modo non differt ab ultimo modo."

²⁵ Thomas de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia pars, q. 14, art. 11 and 13.

²⁶ Guillelmus de Mara, *Correctorium fratris Thomae*, in P. GLORIEUX, *Les premières polémiques thomistes. Le Correctorium Corruptorii Quare* (Le Saulchoir : Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, 1927), 18-20.

condemned in the *Littera septem magistrorum*.²⁷

The divine illumination theory represents the other face of this Christian Platonism that posits ideas in the process of creation. Olivi relinquishes it in the same fashion, as a “solemn and sane position” that could become “very dangerous” if some precautions are not taken.²⁸ One should not say that the “eternal reasons” really inform the human intellect or assist it by presenting some visible species. They do not represent to the intellect the intelligibles as first known in such a way that the intellect should see them, at the risk of making God visible to the human mind. They cannot represent in a distinct way, otherwise the whole effort of knowing would be useless. But if they only offer a confuse and general representation of the genus of things, their necessity becomes dubious for the certification of a knowledge that begins by the sensory experience of material singular things. They should not be said to cooperate in the act of knowing as a natural principle, since they immediately cooperate with God whose actions are all voluntary. Nor can they [8] cooperate as a total principle that would render the human intellection a passive operation. Since those eternal reasons can only cooperate in the intellectual process by producing some species within the human mind, if nothing created can certify knowledge in an infallible way it is unclear how such created species would be able to do so. In short, Olivi is exposing all possible doctrines of such an illumination to a ruthless crossfire, between the impossibility of an immediate perception of God through an intellectual act and the uselessness of the assistance of created species²⁹. The most telling precaution states that such eternal reasons should assist the intellect in such a way that it would remain “formally as impotent as if they were not assisting it”³⁰. In other words, the divine illumination is acceptable only if it is thoroughly useless. The critique remains reverential, yet uncompromising.

A statistical evidence of this intellectual estrangement between Olivi and his master can even be provided.³¹ Hugh of Saint-Victor stood for Bonaventure as the epitome and model of what theology should be, encompassing doctrinal and spiritual teaching in one go. A famous page from the *De reductione artium ad theologiam* draws a genealogy of three branches of

²⁷ Vatican, BAV, Borgh 322, f. 159rb: “hic loquitur stulte contra fratrum Guillelmum de Mara”. See S. Piron, “Censures”, 333.

²⁸ Olivi, *Summa*, vol. 3, 512-513. “licet praedicta positio in se sit sollemnis et sana, istis tamen non diligenter observatis posset esse valde periculosa”.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 505-512.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 506: “Et ideo oportet quod, quantumcunque ideae aeternae assistant intellectui nostro, quod propter huiusmodi assistentiam non sit formaliter perfectior neque potentior respectu alicuius habitus vel actus intelligendi, sed ita formaliter impotens sicut si non assisterent ei”.

³¹ I am here summarizing the results of my article, “Franciscains et Victorins. Tableau d’une reception”, in D. Poirel (ed.), *L’école de Saint-Victor de Paris. Influence et rayonnement du Moyen Age à l’époque moderne* (Turnhout : Brepols, 2010) 521-545.

theology, the dogmatic, the moral and the contemplative, respectively connected to Augustine and Anselm, Gregory and Bernard, Denys and Richard of Saint-Victor. Yet, only Hugo encompasses them all (*Hugo vero omnia haec*).³² Counting up explicit references to Hugo can therefore serve as a fine criteria allowing for a global measure of faithfulness to Bonaventure's theological project. The figures are still quite high in William de la Mare's *Scriptum in libros Sententiarum* (ca. 1265-1267) or in John Pecham's *Disputed Questions* (ca. 1269-1271). [9] Such is still the case in later decades with Matthew of Aquasparta and Roger Marston.³³ In contrast, Olivi is the first Franciscan theologian for whom, quite unequivocally, Hugh is not anymore a useful intellectual reference. Furthermore, the scarce eight explicit references found in his theological questions and apologetical works are, for the most, critical ones.

A more qualitative assessment can be offered by considering what is left of Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deo* against such criticism. In a first stage of this journey, the mind discovers God in the mirror of creatures whose manifold perfections prove that they are divine productions (§ I, 14). For Olivi, the mirror of creatures functions in a strictly reverse fashion; creatures do provide an indication of God's existence, not by their perfections but precisely because of their many imperfections indicating that they depend on some higher cause³⁴. In a second stage, God is perceived through the remnants (*vestigia*) he left in the rational creatures. Bonaventure's depiction of a sensorial world entering the human soul through the doors of the senses (§ II, 1-6) is reversed in Olivi's theory of an active knowledge that reaches out and grab its external objects. The symbolism of spiritual species produced in the soul at the end of the process has no place in Olivi's view which rejects all such species³⁵. As we have seen, the necessity of the eternal propositions is only conditional (§ II, 9) and the same argument applies to numbers (§ II, 10). In a third stage, the *Itinerarium* conceives the powers of the souls as God's image. According to Olivi, memory is not a receptacle of innate

³² Bonaventura, *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, in *Opera omnia* (Quaracchi : Coll. S. Bonaventurae, 1891), vol. 5, 321: "Unde tota sacra Scriptura haec tria docet, scilicet Christi aeternam generationem et incarnationem, vivendi ordinem et Dei et animae unionem. Primum respicit fidem, secundum mores, tertium finem utriusque. Circa primum insudare debet studium doctorum, circa secundum studium praedicatorum, circa tertium studium contemplativorum. Primum maxime docet Augustinus, secundum maxime docet Gregorium, tertium vero docet Dionysius; Anselmus sequitur Augustinum, Bernardus sequitur Gregorium, Richardus sequitur Dionysium, quia Anselmus in ratiocinatione, Bernardus in praedicatione, Richardus in contemplatione. Hugo vero omnia haec."

³³ E. Menestò, "La biblioteca di Matteo d'Acquasparta", in *Matteo d'Acquasparta francescano, filosofo, politico*, (Spoleto : CISAM, 1993) 257-289, shows that Matthew possessed a copy of Hugh's *De sacramentis* (now cod. Assisi, Bibl. Com., 98) and two copies of the *De statu interioris hominis*.

³⁴ Olivi, *Summa*, vol. 3 : 538-544.

³⁵ Katherine H. Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham: Optics, Epistemology, and the Foundations of Semantics, 1250-1345* (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

ideas (§ III, 2) but a reservoir of images produced in the process of intellectual acts. The intellect does not find the certainty it requires in eternal truths (§ III, 3). The will is not in the image of God because, through its operations, it would uncover the divine law (§ III, 4). Moreover, there is no room in Olivi's thought for the crucial and widespread theme of a psychological trinity within the human soul functioning as an image of the holy Trinity (§ III, 5-6). In his views, all powers of the souls are reduced to the couple of the will and the intellect, memory being relegated to a secondary position. In the same fashion, as we have seen, the metaphysics of light (§ III, 7) stands for him as a mere metaphor. To sum up, in the three first stages of the *Itinerarium* where Bonaventure could find manifold [10] evidence of the divine in visible earthly realities, Olivi only sees a radical difference between the two realms. The divide is radical enough to call it an "epochal change". No other medieval thinker ever conceived before him such a sharp discontinuity between God and the created world, nor advocated such a strong conception of the human subject defined as the source of his own intellectual and voluntary activity.³⁶

In light of such a contrast, the proclamations of faithfulness to Bonaventure we have quoted earlier on can only make sense if perceived as the sign of a personal relationship. One single example may suffice to prove the fact. The treatise *De usu paupere* is responding to Arnaud Gaillard. Now back from Paris as a formed bachelor in 1280-1281, Gaillard attempted to dismantle in a disputed question held in Montpellier what Olivi had written on this topic. Among his arguments was a vile and petty reference to Bonaventure's less than edifying record in his personal practice of the poverty vow. Olivi reacts strongly to this shameful *ad hominem* attack by drawing a moral portrait of the master: if he was indeed frail regarding his bodily needs and simply human in that respect, as Olivi often heard him humbly confess (*ego ipse ab eo sepius audivi*), his feelings were nevertheless pure and he always preached the outmost perfection.³⁷ This apologetic paragraph witnesses a personal acquaintance and frequent contacts between the two during Olivi's studies in a period in which the General Master of the Order spent a great amount of his time in Paris. Other occurrences of Olivi mentioning Bonaventure lecturing "in full chapter, in my presence" probably refer to sermons delivered in front of the assembly of friars in the Paris convent³⁸. His attendance at the more

³⁶ S. Piron, "L'expérience subjective chez Pierre de Jean Olivi", in O. Boulnois (ed.), *Généalogies du sujet. De saint Anselme à Malebranche* (Paris: Vrin, 2007), 43-54.

³⁷ Olivi, *De usu paupere*, 138: "Fuit enim interius optimi et piissimi affectus, et in doctrine verbo semper predicans ea que sunt perfecte puritatis [...] Fragilis tamen fuit secundum corpus et forte in hoc aliquid humanum sapiens quod et ipse humiliter, sicut ego ipse ab eo sepius audivi, confitebatur".

³⁸ Olivi, *De usu paupere*, 138 ; Id., *Lectura super Apocalipsim*, W. Lewis (ed.) (St Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2015) : 308.

public *Collationes de dono Spiritus sancti* provides the earliest certain date for his presence in Paris (1st April 1268).³⁹ Yet this may not be the first time he was confronted to Bonaventure. We should be reminded that Olivi entered the order at the age of 12 at the convent of Béziers in 1260 in which year a General Chapter was held in Narbonne and presided over by Bonaventure. Such an event meant that by [11] Mid-Spring, in that year, the lower Languedoc was flooded with friars from all across Europe, some certainly arriving by sea from Italy who may have landed at Sérignan, the harbor village where Olivi had grown up and was still residing at. The coincidence of time and place is too obvious to be neglected. The young boy's decision to devote his life to the Order of Friar Minors has very likely been triggered by the impressive example given by so many religious men and their commitment to a collective project then appearing as the main driving force towards historical change and eschatological expectations. Bonaventure was the very incarnation of this sense of history, and certainly a very attractive public figure for the young boy. It is striking that all references to personal speeches by Bonaventure to be found in Olivi's works refer to his proclamation of Saint Francis and his Order as heralds of a dawning New Age.

Olivi did not consider Bonaventure as a mere theology teacher. As we already saw, he deployed only moderate efforts to defend the master's earlier theological speculations. He rather perceived his General Minister as a charismatic and prophetic figure, showing the Order and indeed the whole Church the path towards the future. Trained in Béziers and Montpellier during the early 1260's, Olivi was exposed to an intellectual milieu whose most brilliant figure, Hugh of Digne, had been among the most devout introducers of Joachim of Fiore's works in the Franciscan world. Olivi was spared the crisis the earlier generation of Joachite had gone through, witnessing Gerardino of Borgo San Doninno's naïve reading of Joachim and his condemnation in 1255, then the failure of 1260 as an apocalyptic date. He was thus in a position to treat Joachim' authentic readings in a more serene fashion than many others, and it is indeed remarkable that he remained faithful to this attitude throughout the course of his entire intellectual career. As a theology student in Paris, Olivi felt attracted to the one major fight that Bonaventure was pointing to. The philosopher's errors that were spreading at the Arts faculty had an apocalyptic meaning. They constituted the most subtle sign that the arrival of the Antichrist was nearing. Such is exactly the quotes that Olivi picked from the 1268 conference. David Burr has remarkably shown in the first articles he devoted to

³⁹ D. Burr/D. Flood, "Peter Olivi: On property and revenue", *Franciscan Studies* 40 (1980), 47 : "sicut enim de ultima frater Bonaventura me audiente optime exposuit", referring to the 8th lecture which was delivered on that date, according to J.-G. Bougerol, *Introduction à saint Bonaventure* (Paris : Vrin, 1988), 232.

Olivi that such was the true cornerstone of his intellectual endeavors.⁴⁰ The *Collationes in Hexaemeron* held in 1273 repeated and emphasized even more the task of resisting the philosophical errors, now pervasive in Paris, with tones of a great eschatological emergency. Although Olivi never says he attended them, many echoes found in various places attest that these lectures made a strong [12] impression on him.⁴¹ The surest sign is probably the fact that when he had in turn his first opportunity occasion to lecture in a major theology school in Montpellier in the Fall of 1279, he exposed a whole theological program made up of three complex sermons (*principia*) which central items begins with a paraphrase and reformulation of the first of the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. Reproducing his master's exposition, with some interesting changes, Olivi presents seven ways in which Christ can be said to be the medium of all sciences⁴². The implicit reference to Bonaventure was already obvious in the first *Principium*, where Olivi offers a new table of philosophical categories that could replace Aristotle's mistaken one, directly inspired by the fourth *Collatio*⁴³. By that time, five years after Bonaventure's death, Olivi was re-enacting, on the smaller scene that was afforded to him, most of his late master's project, combining exegetical prowess and philosophical bravery in a typically Bonaventurian way. Judging by these extraordinary lectures, one could fairly say that Olivi has been the only true follower of Bonaventure among the Franciscan theologians of his generation. Unquestionably, he was the only one able to produce simultaneously brilliant biblical commentaries and innovative philosophical reflections while keeping alive a strong sense of historical emergency. On the doctrinal level, the price to pay was quite high. In order to defend what he was considering as the most crucial part of Bonaventure's legacy, Olivi felt compelled to get rid of many theoretical constructions that retained, in his views, too strong of a platonician flavor.

Based on reconstruction of Olivi's chronology, his earliest preserved texts appears to be extracts from a commentary on the *Physics*.⁴⁴ It is very likely that these lessons were produced according to the standard of the Arts' faculty for they do not take any theological authority into account. Yet, they already display some tendency to convey a philosophical critique of Aristotle's views, instead of simply commenting and explaining them. This

⁴⁰ D. Burr, "The Apocalyptic Element in Olivi's Critique of Aristotle," *Church History* 40 (1971), 15-29 ; Id., "Petrus Ioannis Olivi and the Philosophers," *Franciscan Studies* 31 (1971), 41-71.

⁴¹ S. Piron, "Le métier de théologien", 28-29, 39-40.

⁴² Olivi, *Principium* "de doctrina", in *Peter John Olivi on the Bible*, 78-84, reformulates Bonaventura, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, in *Opera omnia*, (Quaracchi: Coll. S. Bonaventurae, 1891), vol. 5, 331-335.

⁴³ Olivi, *Principium* "de causis", in *Peter John Olivi on the Bible*, 50-61, reformulates Bonaventura, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, 349-352.

⁴⁴ S. Piron, "Les oeuvres perdues d'Olivi: essai de reconstitution", *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 91 (1998), 357-394.

unusual approach is more widespread and overt in many disputed questions that Olivi produced during the early years of his activity, a number of which may derive more or less directly from this initial lecture on the *Physics*. Until these questions are properly edited and compared with contemporary products of the Arts faculty, their precise dating will [13] remain uncertain. So far, a rough estimate only allows us to situate them back in the first half of the 1270's. I have already proposed elsewhere some suggestions about their meaning. I would like to conclude this presentation by restating this hypothesis, since this may constitute the key to understand Olivi's complex relationship to Bonaventure.

Promotion to studies in the Franciscan order was very much left to the appreciation of superiors. Spending a fair share of his time at the Paris convent and arguing against the Philosopher's errors between 1267 and 1273, Bonaventure would have been, as General Minister of the Order, in a position to appoint some younger friar to study more closely the most dangerous texts, out of a sensible "know thy enemy" principle. My guess is that he felt the necessity to engage with the most crucial Aristotelian text, the *Physics* (that overtly presented a pagan view of an eternal world) deeper than he could do himself, and entrusted the task to the most promising young student he had spotted in the Paris Franciscan *studium*. This may have happened once Olivi had completed his standard four years of presence at the Paris convent, around 1271, and this could be the reason why he then stayed a little longer than usual. A close reading of Aristotle is evident in his later philosophical works, and the unique way in which he is approaching him among medieval authors may account for a good part of his philosophical freedom and inventiveness. The endeavor entrusted to him had an unexpected effect. Being immersed in the philosophical debates going on at Paris university, Olivi realized that the worst danger did not come from Aristotle himself, but from a wider neo-platonic trend in which the pseudo-Aristotelian and truly Proclusian *Liber de Causis* was a major reference for the group he himself describes as "Averroists"⁴⁵. Olivi's own philosophical fight then took on a different perspective from what Bonaventure could have expected. It led him into a wider campaign against any hint of Platonism that could be spotted in theological speculations, even within Bonaventure's theology. More tragically perhaps, it also caused him to adopt a radically opposed stance on the relationship between philosophy and theology. Instead of a *Reductio artium ad theologiam*, Olivi advocated the necessity to study philosophy in its own right, in order to defend the Christian faith against

⁴⁵ S. Piron, "Olivi et les averroïstes", *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 53 (2006), 251-309. One should remember that the text which inspired the highest number of articles of the 1277 condemnation pronounced by Bishop Tempier was Siger of Brabant's commentary on the *Liber de Causis*.

the philosopher's error, but with the weapons of reason alone, on a philosophical battleground. Such is the complex background that allowed the formation of one of the most original [14] intellectual project of the Thirteen Century scholasticism. Among other things, it forms the intellectual foundation to the moral philosophy of economic contracts that Olivi expressed in the last years of his career.

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