A NOTE ON THE SOURCES OF THE *VISIÓN DELEYTABLE* OF ALFONSO DE LA TORRE

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As we know, the *Visión deleytable* of Alfonso de la Torre [1] is an extensive philosophical cento in the form of an allegory. It is also something else, a standing paradox; the work is addressed to a Christian readership, and parts of the text have a plainly Christian sense, but the strictly philosophical sections propose doctrines quite at odds with ordinary Christian teaching. The pudding was thickened more than ninety years ago when Wickersham Crawford discovered that the main source for the philosophical matter was nothing less than Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* [2], and it became clear that much of the subversive material, so to speak, came to Torre's work from this famous source. Inevitably questions have arisen about Torre's unbelief and especially about his possible connection to Jews and Judaism. Quite recently, in 2001, the young scholar Luis Girón-Negrón gave us a detailed, very learned and judicious book on Torre and the *Visión*, which sets out to connect the arguments of the work, page by page and globally, to contemporary Hispano-Jewish letters and thought. It is very hard to write about the *Visión* without in some form repeating things Girón has said. But the pages that follow, some of which were written before the appearance of Girón's study, I present as a sort of gloss or addendum to this text. [3]

I will start with the rationalist, non-Christian side of Torre's thought. Let us begin with two lists of authorities cited by Torre, one in the first book, the other in the second. In one passage in the first book (chapter 15) we are told that the allegorical

1. Alfonso de la Torre, *Visión deleytable*, edición crítica y estudio de Jorge García López, two volumes, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1991. References will be by book and chapter. Page and chapter references other than the first will be given throughout this paper in the text.

2. J. P. Wickersham Crawford, "The *Vision delectable* of Alfonso de la Torre and Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*," *PMLA*, XXI (1913), pp. 188-212.

3. Luis M. Girón-Negrón, *Alfonso de la Torre's 'Visión deleytable,'* Leiden, Boston, Köln, Brill, 2001.

figure Entendimiento, presented as a bright, but naïve and inexperienced youth, is introduced into the house of Sabieza, a great hall full of numerous wise men of time past. Some of these Entendimiento recognizes. The oldest are "Acalo [e] Çeçina, vetustísymos yndianos, e el Tremigisto e Alisanias, después llamado Júpiter." I must confess that with one exception these names mean very little to me. "Tremigisto" is of course (mythical) Hermes Trismegistus, to whom is attributed a body of religious-philosophical writings of the early Christian era. After these names come "Platón e otros contenporáneos suyos," and finally, "Alfarabio, Algazel, Aviçena e Muysén de Egipto." In chapter 21 of the second book, Razón is speaking to Entendimiento, and is about to set forth her own view of human perfection based on Reason (her own domain). The authorities Razón cites are, among the Gentiles, "Anaxágoras, Platón, Aristótiles," among the Jews, "rabí Aquiva e rabí Abraham, [sic] Abenaza e maestre Muysén de Egipto," and among the Moors, "Alfarabio, Aviçena e Algazel"; Christians bring up the rear: "Alberto Magno, Gil Hermitaño"; ("Abraham" and "Abenaza" are one and the same person). These lists are revealing in several senses. For example, both groups of Islamic philosophers include Al Ghazali (Algazel); in both, he keeps company with Avicenna and Alfarabi. There is an anomaly here. Alfarabi and Avicenna are both philosophers who wish to comprehend the sacred texts of Islam in the light of the supposed truths of philosophy - in effect, of some variety of Neoplatonism. But Al Ghazali, orthodox and literalist, despises philosophy, and is the author of a great work of polemic aimed, precisely, at all philosophy's pretensions. The irony is that the texts of Al Ghazali that were translated into Latin set forth the positions of philosophy and the philosophers, in other words, the object of his attack in the original Arabic. For the Latin West, then, for the Scholastics and indeed for Torre, "Algazel" is simply one Neoplatonist more.[4] Thus Algazel is now a philosopher, whose writings are available in Latin. Oddly enough, the inclusion of "Gil Hermitaño" in the *Visión's* canon of authors also tells us in a special way that for Torre Latin is the royal road to Islamic and Jewish philosophy ("Gil" is, of course, Aegidius Romanus, Giles of Rome). First of all, I can find no evidence at all that Torre had any interest in the distinctive teachings of Giles, whether in natural philosophy, in ethics or in theology. Giles is, however, the author of a short text, *Errores philosophorum*[5], witness to a stormy period in Christian thought, a

4. These facts are well known; see, for example Frederick Copleston, S. J., *A History of Philosophy, vol. II: Medieval Philosophy*, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland, Doubleday, 1993, p. 195.

5. Josef Koch, *Giles of Rome, Errores philosophorum*, critical text with notes and introduction by Josef Koch; English translation by John O. Riedl, Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1944. The short but very important chapter on "The Effect of the Condemnations of 1277", pp.537-539, in Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny and Jan Pinborg, *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988 helps us to define the moment that produced Giles' treatise. The movement that in great part provoked the reaction, ill-named "Latin Averroism," receives a classic description in Fernand van Steenberghen, *The Philosophical Movement in the*

series of arguments against the supposed errors of Aristotle, Avicenna, Averroes and others; strange as it may seem, the list of erring thinkers includes Algazel, who figures in the *Visión* as the authority - on logic[6] and as we shall see, on the problem of evil - and Maimonides, who, as we know, carries most of the philosophical burden in the work. How does this strange combative text fit into Torre's scheme of things? What seems to be the case is that our *bachiller* actually values Giles' work not for its attacks on Aristotle, Averroes and the rest, but as a summary of the doctrines he favors and which his author despises. If my view is correct, this Latin Scholastic Giles becomes for Torre one of the major purveyors of Muslim and Jewish thought, along with Maimonides and Algazel.

We may generalize. As we shall see, many of Torre's philosophical views have more in common with those of Islamic and Jewish philosophy than with those of Christian Scholasticism. But it is nearly certain that he read Arab philosophy in Latin. In fact, Avicenna, Alfarabi and the rest were available in Latin just as was Al Ghazali (Copleston, vol II, pp. 205-211); all were in the repertory of any university trained scholar, be he liberal artist or theologian. Scholastic literature quotes these writers extensively. Torre, as we know, was a "bachiller" (*Visión*, part 1, chapter 1).

It is, in fact, far from impossible that Torre read Maimonides' text itself in Latin. The Latin version of the *Guide* circulated widely, and was often quoted by the Christian Scholastics.[7] Crawford, indeed, points out that Torre refers to this author as they did, as "Moses of Egypt" (Crawford "The *Vision delectable*," p.210, n.1). One could go further. We are, of course, strongly tempted to see the *Visión's* preference for Maimonides, and for certain views of his which are at odds with those of Christian divinity, as somehow related to the possible Jewishness of the author. But even when Jewish lore is at issue, Latin seems to prevail. Abraham ibn Ezra surfaces in Torre's text in the fine Latinized form "rabí Abraham Abenaza." Some of that thinker's writings available in Latin call him similar things. In fact, the *Visión's* allusions to precisely that Judaica which lies outside ordinary Christians' Latin culture are very few. I can recall two. One is the reference to Kabbalah in the chapter on arithmetic (book 1, chapter 6); the other is the allusion to Rabbi Akiba, in the passage I have cited. One hardly has to be a major rabbinical scholar to make these simple references.

Torre knows basic Christian doctrine and a certain amount of Christian divinity; there can be no question about this. Thus, in chapter 20, in part II, Verdad sets forth

Thirteenth Century, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, Cape Town, Nelson, 1955, in the chapter on "Siger of Brabant or Radical Aristotelianism", pp.75-93.

6. J. P. Wickersham Crawford, "The Seven Liberal Arts in the *Vision delectable* of Alfonso de la Torre," *Romanic Review* IV (1913), pp. 66-72.

7. Wolfgang Kluxen, "Literargeschichtliches zum lateinischen Moses Maimonides," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, XXI, 1954, pp. 23-50.

the principal dogmas of the Catholic faith; we will return to these lines presently. Then too, well within the range of his natural theology, in which Revelation, strictly speaking, is left out of account, he makes plain allusions to philosophical propositions more typical of Christian thinkers than of Jewish or Muslim. The differences are often clearly drawn. We must note that Christian and Islamic-Jewish philosophical thought do not generally run parallel. The translation into Latin made in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of the great texts of philosophy by Muslim and Jewish authors produced a mixed reaction in learned Christendom. Some of these writings, indeed, induced certain scholastics in Arts faculties (that is, non-theologians) to take positions which seemed to be far too naturalist, so to speak, allowing God too small a role in the governance of the universe. By the latter half of the thirteenth century, the battle line between supposed Truth and Error had been sharply drawn, and from that moment on Christian speculation set out to differentiate itself clearly from that of other traditions (see note 5). Torre's views, as I have suggested, are mostly on the dangerous side of the boundary, but he does know something about the territory in the safer areas. As we would expect, much of his naturalism comes from Maimonides[8], though, as I have suggested, he is not the only relevant source. And it should be added that some of Torre's borrowings from the *Guide* are quite harmless, in no way threatening to the Catholic faith. Thus, the *Visión's* chapter on the human individual as a microcosm, I:31, derives from chapter 42 of the first book of Maimonides' text (I:72), matter bland enough. More important, the *Guide*'s list of proofs for the existence of God (II: introduction), well known to the Scholastics and in some cases used by them, is reproduced in Torre, I:19. But more typically, the great Jewish sage leads our *bachiller* deep into the waters of rationalism. Here are some examples. Most important of all, for Torre Providence is not all-pervasive; this is a capitally important theme in the *Visión*, where it takes several forms. But the argument in I:25 is Maimonidean; it is clearly related to *Guide*, II:48, and likewise, the end of *Visión* I:31 is certainly traceable to the end of *Guide*, I:72. Prophecy for Torre is a purely natural human attainment (albeit a very noble one). It has nothing to do with revealed religion nor with Sacred History in the Christian sense; the prophet is a perfect human being, akin to a philosopher. Prophecy is the matter for a long chapter in the *Visión*, II:22. This text echoes a long development on the subject in the *Guide*, II:32-48. Chapters 2-6 in the second book of Maimonides' text are given over to angels. For him they are perfect beings, in effect sinless; there are nine, and they govern the nine heavenly spheres, which in turn determine things and events on Earth. Maimonides respects Scripture, but when angels are represented there in a way that is too material or too human, he gives the sacred text a figurative sense that is compatible with his basic view. Christian sacred history, of course, says that of all the angels, many more than nine, some sinned, rebelling against God. Christian

8. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, translated by S. Pines, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963. References will be to book and chapter of the *Guide*.

scruple obliges Torre to accept this belief, but he still considers the philosophical view more rational, and he makes no effort to reconcile the two accounts. One is taught that each individual is attended by one good angel and one bad. Typically, the *Visión* interprets this doctrine in a naturalistic way: the good angel is in reality the Agent Intellect, the bad is matter itself. Torre's treatment of angels is in I:28. Finally, in chapter 21 of book II of Torre's work he proposes a purely natural, non-Christian view of human perfection. This consists in a total dedication to philosophy and truth, and complete detachment from unruly affections and all moral vice. This is, of course, Aristotle's ideal, expressed at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but it is also Maimonidean, set forth also at the end of the *Guide*, in the last four chapters of the third book.

Torre sometimes takes positions on the subject of the divine power that were undreamed of in Muslim-Jewish philosophy. The issue is central. Is there anything God cannot do? All hands agree that the impossible is denied Him, but Christian Scholastics and the other thinkers define the impossible in quite different ways. Philosophical Arabs and Jews take it for granted that God cannot do anything against nature. This means, of course, nature within the limits conceived by Aristotle; God cannot make more than one world, He cannot permit a vacuum to exist, or make fire tend downward or water upward. Christians disagree. In particular, certain Scholastics who worked after the thirteenth century crisis seem to undercut seriously the very concept of nature by proposing a narrower limitation of God's power, the very law of contradiction itself. He could not make two plus three equal six or make a creature which was in the literal sense both a horse and not a horse, but any strictly logical possibility was still open to Him. In this view the whole order of nature, in all its details, is entirely at His pleasure; it could be otherwise, if He wished. Let us not misunderstand. Any orthodox Christian theologian must at least partly reject the total naturalism of the Muslim and Jewish thinkers, since their views generally make no provision for miracles. But the Scholastics I refer to take a more radical stand. They link up the notion that the law of contradiction is the only limit to God's power with an enhanced and very distinctive conception of God's naked will; they conceive the latter as establishing the whole order of things arbitrarily and freely. In 1277, the bishop of Paris, Stephen Tempier, published a set of condemned propositions which appears to have determined the shape and profile of Scholastic speculation from that moment on. One of these raises the issue of the divine power in the plainest terms: "What is simply impossible cannot be done by God," and Tempier specifies, "Error, si de impossibili secundum naturam intelligatur." "This is an error if one is thinking of the impossible according to nature" (quoted in Kretzmann *et al.*, p. 538). Significantly, Torre preserves and amplifies several passages in Maimonides and other authors in which this very condemned proposition is expressed or implied. As we shall see, the *Visión* treats questions about Providence or the existence of

evil in ways that suggest that nature once created does constrain God's acts. But our *bachiller* is no fanatic for consistency. Early in the narrative Naturaleza complains that the simple youth Entendimiento is ill-disposed to her, thinking that her words imply limits on the divine power. Yes indeed, she says, echoing the young man's sentiments, God certainly could turn stones into human beings, but His will is not capricious like ours; stones-to-humans is excluded because He wills freely that the order of nature not be violated, that her regularities not be set aside. In other words, the permanence of species is not a law of fate, but is willed directly by God (I:10). Virtually the same argument is presented some two dozen pages later in a dialogue between Entendimiento and Sabieza. As she insists, God could allow the heavenly spheres to be corrupted or donkeys to fly, but He is not subject to whims like ours, and it is His direct will that keeps things as they are (I:21).

Torre in these passages is plainly dismissing necessity "secundum naturam" unceremoniously. One further utterance of his aligns itself solidly on the side of post-1277 Christian theology. Also in part I chapter 21, Entendimiento objects to Sabieza that God's will does not always prevail. He willed, for example, that all of the Israelites who left Egypt reach the Promised Land, but only a handful actually completed the journey: "eran seysçientas mill almas e no entraron syno tres." Likewise, God wishes that all humankind be saved, but only a few souls in fact attain Heaven. Sabieza's answer is solid fourteenth- and fifteenth-century theology: "El poder de Dios es en dos maneras, así como la su voluntad es en otras dos maneras, ca ay una voluntad de Dios la qual es absoluta, e ay otra la qual es conparada e cabsada e consyguiente aquélla." The lines that follow in Sabieza's speech are not the clearest, but their sense is not unlike that of our other examples. God could freely bring to the Promised Land or to Salvation anyone He wished, but He in fact set down conditions for both goals, that the Israelites not worship idols, and that humans at large adhere to the Catholic faith and obey the commandments. He is surely not constrained by the acts of His creatures, but He does place constraints upon Himself. The absolute power of God, "potentia Dei absoluta," is His complete freedom before His creatures, His ability to bring whomsoever He wishes to the Land of Promise or to Heaven, but His consequent will, "potentia Dei ordinata," is to satisfy only those who fulfill the conditions He Himself lays down. Torre's terms and concepts here are commonplace; both the Scotist school and Ockhamist treat the very important theme of Predestination in just these terms. But in Torre the motive is a fish out of water; his allusion to *potentia Dei absoluta/ordinata* is so fleeting within the *Visión* that it is impossible to associate his argument solidly with either school.[9]

9. Duns Scotus, *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, selected and translated by Allan B. Wolter, O. F. M., Washington, Catholic University of America, 1986, pp. 254-261. Girón alludes to *potentia Dei absoluta/ordinata* in Torre twice, on pp. 29-30 and on p. 116.

Torre, as we can see, is certainly acquainted with post-1277 Scholastic thought; his familiarity with the Scotist or Nominalist teaching about Predestination is particularly striking. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that the more basic positions he takes in natural philosophy are of a very different character from those we have considered, and are often in plain contradiction to them. The decisive themes here are those which bear on the problems of evil and the divine providence. "Secundum naturam" comes back with a vengeance. Giles of Rome, once again, poses the problem. Christians perennially assert that God permits evil so that greater good may come of it. Algazel thinks otherwise (we recall that the Al Ghazali text known to Giles is actually his paraphrase of the very philosophy he despises). Giles says in the *Errores*:

> "Again, he [Algazel] erred on the subject of divine providence, not holding that evil is permitted by divine providence insofar as good is derived from it, but rather that it proceeds from the inner determinism of matter. He held that Saturn, Mars, fire and water could not have proceeded from God without some evil arising from them." (Koch, p. 41)

Torre and his *Visión* are in fact solidly on the side of "Algazel." The Spanish text says not a word about good coming out of evil, but the determinism of matter is everywhere in it. What is more, Saturn, fire and water –though not Mars– are out in force there, carrying the same burden of argument they do in Giles' version of Algazel. Sabieza responds to a difficulty of Entendimiento about what he regards as the perversity of nature: "me paresçe que sea mayor la maliçia de las cosas que la bondad de aquéllas." (I:23) Sabieza begins by berating humans in their vanity who believe that the universe, the angels, the heavenly spheres, everything, was created for them. The Earth, after all, is but a pinpoint in the cosmos; if ants thought that they were at the center of things, they would not be as foolish as we. The *Visión* then gives us Saturn, fire and water. Saturn has a bad press. People hate the planet because in some conjunctions he produces pestilences. This is unfair. Saturn is mainly benign: he causes wisdom, justice and peace among humans, and he also showers lesser blessings, especially certain ones accessible to legitimate magicians. Fire, for its part, once destroyed the house of a woman of very holy life. This fact makes us forget that fire provides light in darkness and warmth during the winter months. Water, rain, dissolved the tiles that were the livelihood of the poor craftsman. This is but a detail, when we think of all the benefits rain brings. Created beings cannot be more perfect than they are; God did the best He could, constrained by matter. To require that fire, water and the rest be invariably beneficent is to ask for the impossible; these things would have to become something totally different and cease to be what they are. More particularly, they would have to turn into ensouled entities which could judge what was right under different circumstances. As they are, imperfection is part of their very nature, a condition of their very existence. And on balance, things are surely for the best; the mischief in things does not outweigh the good.

This passage matches the condemned proposition in Giles in that the residue of evil never gets redeemed; it may be counterbalanced, but the harm itself is irreducible and no good ever comes from it. Lest we think that this chapter (I:23), with its doctrine of the basic goodness of nature, is too cheerful to be the naturalistic and godless text our "hermitaño" might wish to oppose, we must point out that it is taken lock, stock and barrel out of the hated Algazel; it is nothing less than a modified and expanded version of the very pages out of that author's *Metaphysics* which Giles is paraphrasing.[10] The proposition in the *Errores* that for Algazel evil is due to the "inner determinism of matter", "ex necessitate materiae," is perhaps put more plainly by Algazel himself than by Torre, but it is present in both, and obviously fundamental to the argument of both.

One should add that there is another passage in the *Visión* that speaks of the "necessitas materiae" which is dependent not on Algazel but on Maimonides; it comes at the end of I:31 and, as I have noted, it is traceable to the *Guide*, I:72.

There is no need to discuss in detail every instance in which Torre's philosophical preferences are more on the side of Avicenna, Algazel and Maimonides than on that of Bonaventure or Duns Scotus. With Giles' *Errores* as a guide, we make quick work of a few more of these controversial views. One should explain. The disputed authors on Giles' list are Aristotle, Averroes, Avicenna, Algazel, Al Kindi and Maimonides. From the viewpoint of a modern historian, the philosophies of all the Muslims and the one Jew on the list are rather alike, important differences notwithstanding, and indeed, in many cases Giles finds the same errors in more than one of his philosophers. It is for a fact quite possible that, writing in his own contentious times, he thought of all of his thinkers together as a single target. They do indeed agree even more than his list would suggest. For example, he accuses only two philosophers, Avicenna and Algazel, of asserting that beatitude is for us a purely natural attainment and does not depend on any special divine gift. But this is certainly Maimonides' view expressed throughout the *Guide*, and it is probably that of every one of Giles' philosophers. It is also Torre's, expressed over all but a few pages of the *Visión* from the dedication to nearly the end. His concept of human perfection is that of Maimonides. As we have seen, the best life is one not only of moral perfection but of contemplation, based on a systematic philosophical knowledge of nature and nature's God. The real inspiration for the whole doctrine is undoubtedly Aristotle's *Ethics* and its description of Wisdom; this concept almost certainly underlies the accounts of the supreme good in most of the philosophers on Giles' list, and may also have influenced Torre directly. It is almost unnecessary to point out that this is a purely natural –as we might say nowadays, secular– view of perfection. It is certainly not Christian; it says not a

10. Algazel, *Algazel's Metaphysics, a Medieval Translation*, edited by Rev. J. T. Muckle, C. S. B., Toronto, St. Michael's College, 1933, pp. 125-29.

word about Grace, infused virtues, Heaven, or the initiatives of God in choosing those who are to spend eternity there. It is hard to believe that Torre hit on this doctrine by accident, or that he chose it with anything but full deliberation.

Thus far my examination of Torre's naturalist, non-Christian side. As we have seen, the *Visión's* eclectic Maimonideanism depends not only on the *Guide* itself, but also on bits of Christian divinity, on Algazel, certainly, and as I would insist, on Giles' notorious *Errores*, which in its strange way may have been Torre's handy anthology of naturalist opinion. What is perhaps most striking about this mix is that the author of the *Visión* builds his Islamic-Jewish arguments out of materials in Latin and which are generally known to Christian Scholastics. This almost exclusive dependence on Latin sources might seem to confirm Girón's view that our author had little or no Hebrew (Girón, p. 48). Paradoxically, Girón also insists on the Jewish origin and character of most of Torre's ideas. So questions multiply. First of all, there is the question of motive: if Latin was Torre's only learned language and if his learning was exclusively scholastic, why did he give his argument a line so at odds with Christian teaching and theology? Girón, as I suppose, might answer that our *bachiller* underwent some kind of diffuse influence from the learned Jewish community, perhaps through personal contacts or from some sort of memories of a Jewish past. But Girón's own evidence seems to belie the no-Hebrew hypothesis. The bulk of his fine book is given over to pointing out parallels between the arguments in the *Visión* and elements in the learned Judaism of his day; it is hard to believe that mere talk or memory –and no reading in Hebrew– could produce such a wide repertory of Jewish themes. I cite two of Girón's examples. First, he tells us that in some quarters among learned Jews philosophy and Kaballah, perennial enemies, were reconciled (pp. 47-48). The same peace, as we recall, reigns in Torre's *Visión*; Maimonides notwithstanding, allusions to Kaballah appear in the chapter on Arithmetic. This does not seem to me to be a trivial theme. The alliance philosophy-Kaballah has, for example, been on the table for years; in modern scholarship, witness a long article on the subject by the legendary Georges Vajda.[11] It seems to me to be a stretch to suppose that Torre could have known of this strange development within the Jewish community, if he had no Hebrew. Our second example is perhaps more striking. Torre uses Algazel at least twice in the *Visión*, once in the chapter on logic, the other in the lines on the problem of evil, or on the provisional goodness of nature. As I have noted, medieval Christians, Torre included, knew nothing of Algazel the polemicist; they read him exclusively as an expositor of Islamic philosophy. It turns out that Algazel plays exactly the same role in the learned Jewish community of Torre's day (Girón, pp. 64-65). Indeed, in Hispano-Jewish schools, Algazel's writings served as curricular texts in elementary natural philosophy; this fact is especially pertinent if we recall

11. Georges Vajda, "La conciliation de la philosophie et de la loi réligieuse," *Sefarad*, IX (1949), pp. 311-350, X (1950), pp. 25-71, and 281-323.

that the *Visión* is itself a primer, meant for readers with no background in philosophy. This parallel suggests that Torre knew something about contemporary Jewish schooling; that something is hard to imagine without Hebrew.

No hypothesis about Torre's Hebrew or the lack of it is wholly satisfactory. But one guess might be that Torre was originally a Jew, that he had good Jewish schooling, that he turned Christian, that he studied arts as a way to preferment (as so many did), and that in the *Visión* he reconstructed certain parts of his school-based philosophy out of Latin materials he learned in Arts.

Our *bachiller* is almost certainly a Bachelor of Arts and not of Sacred Theology. This may well have been one of the things that was meant by the words "gran philósofo" applied to Torre in the epigraph to one of his poems[12]. Philosophia, throughout the Middle Ages often signified simply "the lore of the liberal artist," and indeed philosophy (in our sense), mainly natural philosophy, makes up a large part of the arts curriculum.[13] If Torre had been a theologian, it seems the less likely to me that he would have been called a philosopher. If my guess about Torre is true, if he was a simple A. B. and not an S. T. B., he could not have been the young theologian from Burgos who took residence in the Colegio de San Bartolomé in Salamanca, as so many think (Salinas, pp. 18-19). The identification is implausible in any case, given his Scholastic repertory; the fact that the two undoubted borrowings from Scholastic teaching we have touched on belong distinctively to post-1277 thought suggests strongly that Torre's scholastic formation was not at Salamanca nor at the hands of Dominicans nor was it Thomistic. One could say that he does not think like a theologian. His page on *potentia Dei absoluta/ordinata* is, as I would judge, the only strictly theological element in the whole book. Torre, as we know, invokes the distinction to resolve the problem of evil generally, but in Scotist and Nominalist discussion it is at the heart simply of the teaching on Predestination, a theme that is undoubtedly theological. In Torre's text this significant pair of terms is an oasis in the desert. This very poverty of theological reflection in the *Visión* suggests to me that its author was an "artist" and not a theologian. One must, of course, add that Torre's arts lore is in perfectly good order; the pages on natural philosophy, strictly speaking (as in chapters 30, 31 of book I) are completely professional. A good term of comparison is the extensive material on natural philosophy in the anonymous glosses on the *Visión* published by García López. (Torre, vol. II, pp. 23-70) The arts material in the two texts is perfectly comparable. The whole matter, his status as "artist" and not theologian, may have a large bearing on the pages of the *Visión* which

12. Concepción Salinas Espinosa, *Poesía y prosa didáctica en el siglo XV: la obra del bachiller Alfonso de la Torre*, Zaragoza, Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 1997, p. 241.
13. See, for example, John Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150-1350)*, London, New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. 66-67.

do undoubtedly convey Christian teaching. As we know, a long passage in the Second Part, put in the mouth of Verdad, sets forth the fundamental dogmas of Christianity (II:20). These pages are completely innocent of "speculative theology"; they are strictly fideist, and are explicitly disconnected, front and back, from philosophy and philosophical reasoning. Later, in chapter 23, Verdad speaks of the possible harmony between Faith and Reason, but nothing whatever in the whole book's argument comes of this promise. Where, then, does Torre stand? For argument's sake, let us assimilate him to the classic Averroists, so called, of an earlier day; I appreciate the risks in my comparison. We might imagine one of these Schoolmen saying: "I am a liberal artist, and my responsibility is to philosophy and philosophy alone. No one ever obliged me to read theology. If my philosophy leads me to say things that are at odds with Christian teaching, so much the worse. But philosophy notwithstanding, revealed Christianity is for me the only truth." This almost certainly was the stand many historic Averroists actually took or claimed to take (Steenberghen, p. 89). This might also be Torre's position, except that unlike the old Averroists', his philosophy may well have come from outside Christendom, literally.

There is a parallel case from shortly before Torre's time. One Garci Álvarez de Alarcón is author of a poem that appears in the *Cancionero de Baena*[14], a composition on Predestination. The theme of the piece is Christian, obviously, but its argument has nothing whatever to do with Christian divinity and does have a distinct Jewish-Maimonidean coloring; Alarcón reconciles Providence and free will by denying that God's foresight regards particulars. Now the poem's epigraph in the *Cancionero* says little about Alarcón, only that he is "vezino de Madrid, escribano del rrey." But it happens that there is a person of that name who achieved a certain fame independently. This Garci Álvarez de Alarcón played a major role at the notorious Disputation of Tortosa, a confrontation between Christian and Jewish scholars designed to bring the latter to baptism and, indeed, to destroy local Judaism. Alarcón figures here as a fine Hebraist, a converted Christian well prepared to argue effectively with unconverted Jews.[15] The historian Zurita says of this person also that he was generally an effective apologist, and that he brought many of his former coreligionists into the new faith.[16] If the two Alarcóns are one and the same person, we have the case of someone assuredly Christian who nevertheless thinks like a philosophical Jew. If the two are separate, we still have the living example of one who is at least a nominal Christian who brings to bear Jewish learned argument on a Christian theme;

14. *Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena*, edited by José María Azáceta, 3 volumes, Madrid, C. S. I. C., 1966, number 523 (vol. III). See also Charles F. Fraker, *Studies on the 'Cancionero de Baena,'* Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1966, pp. 52-59.
15. Antonio Pacios López, *La disputa de Tortosa*, 2 volumes, Madrid, C. S. I. C., 1957, vol. I, p. 50.
16. Cited in José Amador de los Ríos, *Estudios históricos, políticos y literarios sobre los judíos de España*, Madrid, D. M. Díaz y Compañía, 1848, p.106.

it is perfectly possible that he does this in complete innocence. One should note that the *Baena* Alarcón is not a theologian; the *Cancionero's* epigraphs never fail to mention academic titles, including those in theology; witness the one for Fray Alfonso de Medina, "bachiller en teologia" (heading *Baena* 520). What is more, Alarcón's piece dates probably from before 1406; it is one of a set of *respuestas* to a *pregunta* by Sánchez de Talavera, addressed originally only to Pero López de Ayala, who died that year. If, then, Alarcón had really been a Jew and had received baptism sometime after the fateful year 1391, he could not have been a Christian for very long, hardly long enough for a layman, occupied with the king's business, to absorb much theological lore. Torre's double citizenship, so to speak, is thus by no means unique. His Christianity is fervent, or tepid or a sham; there is no way of knowing which. But the case of the convert Alarcón in the fifteenth century, and perhaps also that of formally Christian Schoolmen of the thirteenth, make the expressed ideas of our *bachiller* less puzzling.