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Latin Averroism: What was the influence of Averroes on European philosophy and why has it disappeared from European history of philosophy? A history of ideas and a history of history of ideas

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ABSTRACT

The translations of Arabic texts into Latin in the 13th century triggered an intellectual earthquake. The works and ideas of Aristotle were introduced at European universities but also the ideas of the Andalusian philosopher Averroes (1126-1198). The first question of our research is: "How large was the influence of Averroes' thinking on European philosophy?" To answer that question, we have studied philosophical texts from the 13th to the 18th century, or a history of ideas. We have found that the movement of Latin Averroism, as it is called, was controversial and influential for centuries. When focussing on political Averroism, we have found back traces of Averroes' ideas in the works of Machiavelli, Spinoza and Rousseau. We have also found that ideas spread through mutations and also through attacks.

The second question of our study is why we don't read much about Latin Averroism in our European histories of philosophy. To find the answer we have read histories of philosophy from the 17th to the 21st century and tried to write a history of the history of ideas. We found that up to the middle of the 18th century the history of philosophy was seen as universalistic, where ideas from several continents and cultures influenced each other. We read in *l'Encyclopédie* how Egyptians and Chaldeans influenced the Ancient Greeks. The Greek philosophy was translated into Arabic, commented and interpreted. These interpretations were the basis of European philosophy in the 13th to the 16th century. However, this universalistic view was turned into a Eurocentric view in the course of the 18th century. Philosophy had to be Christian and European. The history of philosophy became an ideological battleground. Arabic philosophy and Latin Averroism became a victim of that battle and largely disappeared from most general histories of philosophy, up to the one published by Jürgen Habermas in 2019.