

# **CONTEXTUALIZING PREMODERN PHILOSOPHY**

**EXPLORATIONS OF THE GREEK, HEBREW,  
ARABIC, AND LATIN TRADITIONS**

Edited by  
Katja Krause, Luis Xavier López-Farjeat,  
and Nicholas A. Oschman



This is an excellent collection with contributions from an impressive number of top international scholars in Medieval and Ancient philosophy. The collection outlines and exemplifies important nuances of Professor Richard C. Taylor's hermeneutic, "source-based contextualism." It will prove helpful to anyone concerned with philosophy as understood through its own history.

**Matthew Robinson**, *St. Thomas University, Canada*



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# Contextualizing Premodern Philosophy

This volume brings together contributions from distinguished scholars in the history of philosophy, focusing on points of interaction between discrete historical contexts, religions, and cultures found within the premodern period. The contributions connect thinkers from antiquity through the Middle Ages and include philosophers from the three major monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

By emphasizing premodern philosophy's shared textual roots in antiquity, particularly the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the volume highlights points of cross-pollination between different schools, cultures, and moments in premodern thought. Approaching the complex history of the premodern world in an accessible way, the editors organize the volume so as to underscore the difficulties the premodern period poses for scholars, while accentuating the fascinating interplay between the Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin philosophical traditions. The contributors cover topics ranging from Aristotle's cosmology, the adoption of Aristotle's *Organon* by al-Fārābī, and the origins of the *Plotiniana Arabica* to the role of Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae* in the Latin West, the ways in which Islamic philosophy shaped thirteenth-century Latin conceptions of light, Roger Bacon's adaptation of Avicenna for use in his moral philosophy, and beyond. The volume's focus on "source-based contextualism" demonstrates an appreciation for the rich diversity of thought found in the premodern period, while revealing methodological challenges raised by the historical study of premodern philosophy.

*Contextualizing Premodern Philosophy: Explorations of the Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin Traditions* is a stimulating resource for scholars and advanced students working in the history of premodern philosophy.

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**This volume is dedicated to Richard C. Taylor**





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During the final phases of preparing the manuscript, we received the distressing news that one of the contributors, Janis Esots, had unexpectedly passed away. Janis was a researcher at the Ismaili Institute in London

and from 2009 onward the editor of the Islamic philosophy yearbook *Ishraq*. He published about fifty articles and encyclopedia entries on Islamic philosophy and intellectual history, with a focus on the Ismaili philosophical tradition, and translated into Russian works by Mullā Ṣadrā, Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, Mīr Dāmād, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. Our dear friend left us before the publication of his last book, *Patterns of Wisdom in Safavid Iran: The Philosophical School of Isfahan and the Gnostic of Shiraz* (I. B. Tauris, 2021), and also before the final production of his contribution to our volume. May he dwell forever in a garden under which rivers flow (Qurʾān 3:198).

# Narrating Premodern Philosophy in Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin

Origins, Developments, Innovations

*Katja Krause, Luis Xavier López-Farjeat, and  
Nicholas A. Oschman*

## On Tradition

BY KATJA KRAUSE

Every tradition of thought, and likewise every tradition of practice—as long as it has not been lost in the black hole of history—seems to remain alive. For this reason, it has been rightly said that history and historiography keep traditions alive. Nonetheless, certain differences seem to arise among the historiographies of traditions. Some historiographies look forward, dynamically adapting, reworking, and molding what they find in their heritage to their own needs. Others look backward, seeking truth in stable origins. Wherever truths are located in such stable origins, traditions seem to be the subject measured against these origins. Do the traditions thus capture the meaning of the original? Or do they defectively deviate from it? Wherever traditions face forward, they seem free to find new expressions, to encounter divergent viewpoints, to multiply in space and time. The aliveness of traditions in this sense does not fall under a single measure; there seems to be no preference for origins over adaptations.<sup>1</sup> Whether traditions come to life in diversity or whether they flourish only in light of their origins, therefore, makes a difference.<sup>2</sup>

This book proposes to take a fresh look at the Aristotelian traditions in space and time, finding meaning in those traditions' diverse expressions, viewpoints, and multiplications of perspective without neglecting its thematic and methodological origin. Let us start by explaining more precisely what this fresh look entails and what different aspects it embraces, in order that it might be apprehended how history keeps tradition alive in both senses.

History gives an account of individual thinkers, and also groups of thinkers, who constructed or selected discourses from a stable origin—the *corpus Aristotelicum* as it was known to these thinkers at any one point in time—so as to commend or condemn ideas contained in those discourses. These acts of commending or condemning, seen from the perspective of their historical change, reveal the values and beliefs of the traditions'

appropriators and adaptors—yet they need to be interpreted in light of the origin. Values and beliefs arise from the motifs and emphases with which tradition endows its Aristotelian origin, thus from the present needs and purposes of the appropriators and adaptors, not from the Aristotelian origin itself.<sup>3</sup> To be sure, the origin provides the canvas, the *sine qua non* condition without which historical change in its variety could not be grasped, let alone explained. But the origin does not itself construct or prescribe a linear causality in history that would be marked more by similarity in the adaptations than by their dissimilarity. For historical change itself is not a line of causation, not an accumulation of right repetitions and false repetitions of the origin; it is driven, rather, by the “human factor.” That is certainly the case for intentions, motifs, and emphases,<sup>4</sup> since, for the most part, discourses on parchment are shaped by the living debates of a given time.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it is through intimate familiarity with the objects of an inquiry that we obtain knowledge, that is to say *historical* knowledge, of them. For objects embody their conditions and means of creation. They contain their particularities in expression and in constructed ontologies. And they encompass the specific functions that they have acquired in space and time. We do not say that we know any historical fact until we are acquainted with its primary conditions of construction and the ontology that results from them, and until we have carried our analysis to the specific functions fulfilled by the object in the general context of its construction in space and time. Plainly, therefore, in the history of philosophy just as in other branches of historical study, our first task is to establish what the conditions are for the construction of such an object.

The wise approach is to begin with the traditions, normativities, impediments, crises, institutions, sociologies, and so on that have brought these acts of evaluation of traditions into being in their historically specific settings. Then one may proceed toward those that define the objects in their philosophical ontologies and functionalities. For these features are not knowable to us unless they are cognized under the conditions of construction.<sup>6</sup> In the present inquiry, we follow this order in generation, advancing from what is specifically and circumstantially preconditioned in each case of philosophical construction to what is constructed out of those preconditions of history.

Let this description, however brief, suffice as a method that approaches history and keeps tradition alive in both the senses described. Sketchy as it is, it should enable the reader to recognize the shape of the tradition in the contributions that follow.<sup>7</sup>

## Response to “On Tradition”

BY NICHOLAS A. OSCHMAN

Of course, such a “sketchy” prescription requires more methodological precision to be truly sufficient, and more ought to be said, building upon

and explicating the previously established foundation. For while the nature of this kind of project may seem familiar in both its commendations and condemnations, it is the familiar nature of the *corpus Aristotelicum* itself that renders it so peculiar in its manifestation. The reader of this collection will readily see that “As Aristotle says . . .” is as contentious a phrase as can be written. Which Aristotle? The Stagirite, *Ἀριστοτέλης*, himself? *Aristū?* *Aristoteles?* Alexander of Aphrodisias under the guise of Aristotle? Themistius under a similar guise? The misattributed *Plotiniana Arabica?* The Second Teacher? The Sheikh? The Commentator? Thomas? Aristotelianism, as received, is not singular, but myriad.

Yet the *corpus Aristotelicum* is nonetheless a body of work, defined and definite, as is the tradition that follows in its wake. It is the source of the tradition that follows, the text to which all later authors must return. To ascribe difference is not to deny boundaries. To acknowledge the occurrence of growth out of the *corpus Aristotelicum* is not to deny that there is some something shared in its interpretation—a textual ground, an authorial historicity, and a way of thought—which gives the succeeding tradition a recognizable nature. In other words, recognizing that the Aristotelian tradition contains difference does not necessitate that it entails *différance*,<sup>8</sup> as if all meaningful discussion of Aristotelianism and Aristotle’s texts, as such, must be deferred in perpetuity or denied in the first place.

To recognize that any understanding of “Aristotle” cannot be found purely in reference to historicism need not deny the importance of history.<sup>9</sup> Context and history matter, as both the markers of continuity and the mechanisms of division. Misreadings become novel readings. Novel readings become standard readings. Standard readings become condemned readings. Condemned readings become rediscovered readings. Yet this constant remains: the reading of Aristotle.

In recognition of that, what follows in this collection is less of a study than simply one more contribution to a conversation that spans continents and millennia, as were the contributions of the authors about whom many of the following papers were written. “Aristotle,” it would seem, is ever growing, yet always anchored in a text.

In this sense, while the text itself does not necessitate “a line of causation” or “an accumulation of right repetitions and false repetitions of the origin,” it does demarcate itself from other traditions.<sup>10</sup> The Aristotelian tradition is not monolithic, yet the text serves as a monolith marking the foundation of a school of thought, providing first principles that must be known if one is to be acquainted with the tradition as a whole, as Aristotle teaches about the sciences in *Physics* 1.1. Interpretations vary, yet the text itself maintains a certain hegemony over any foreign influence. The text is the source of the tradition. A return to the “true” Aristotle holds potent and powerful rhetorical appeal.

Even while recognizing the chimerical character of understanding authorial intent,<sup>11</sup> the tradition as such does have an author, bound

by texts written in a particular place and context. The commentators and adopters of these texts were themselves living individuals, with aims and intentions both hidden and apparent within their own writings. Though it is true that the Aristotelian tradition can be said to be “driven [. . .] by the ‘human factor,’”<sup>12</sup> the directionality and particularity of its motion need not be considered inscrutable, as if each individual author interprets the text without a rudder, according to the whims of chance. Context, like text, can be discerned, as can purpose, even if imperfectly. While Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1 teaches us about disparate activities pursuant of disparate ends, it also reminds us that ends can be lexically prioritized, subordinated, in reference to that for the sake of which the activity is pursued. Just as the individual activities of the shipwright or bridle-maker can be judged according to the usefulness of building a ship or riding a horse, so too can individual commentators be judged according to their usefulness for understanding the *corpus Aristotelicum*.

Thus, what is needed is a method that itself discerns different methodological approaches to the *corpus Aristotelicum*, something that delineates between the text, responses to the text, and the influence of texts upon one another. (After all, it was Aristotle himself, in *Topics* 1.1, who taught us that the manner by which we obtain conclusions is as crucial to our understanding of said conclusions as the conclusions themselves.) Taken together, these hermeneutics, which attend to the text and context while maintaining a proper reference and orientation toward the texts that succeed and precede the text at hand, could be described as *source-based contextualism*, a methodological approach demiurgically created by Richard C. Taylor. This is a hermeneutic that assesses each text in reference to prior texts yet preserves a clear vision toward historical context. The family tree of the Aristotelian tradition can be charted from root to branch, based upon what has come before and after each text. It is a complicated family tree, to be sure, but one can limn it.

What follows in the body of our book are several novel attempts to map out the various branches of this tradition. Each attempt lends detail to a specific historical topic but also introduces brand-new outgrowths to the tradition ready for exploration. Each author, then, examines the tradition even while becoming part of it. In doing so, the authors add their voices to an ongoing conversation, providing greater precision even while opening new avenues for discussion. Each contributes to our knowledge about the content of Aristotelianism even while performatively displaying the author’s understanding of the proper methodology for approaching texts in the Aristotelian tradition. Put simply, Aristotelianism grows from its textual roots.

Let this description suffice for an introduction to the research that follows.

## Response to the Response to “On Tradition”

BY LUIS XAVIER LÓPEZ-FARJEAT

Of course, more needs to be said if we are to find a sufficient prescription for defining what is usually called the “Aristotelian tradition.” The conversation always continues. In debates and writings, historical and contemporary thinkers reexamine the texts to which they respond, while their writings, in turn, become texts that require equally careful examination and response. The same has happened with the *corpus Aristotelicum*. The text has been subject to adaptations, transformations, and appropriations, thus generating new thoughts, debates, and texts—in short, new sources that become embedded in discussion, interpretation, and innovation in different cultural contexts. These processes have been crucial for the development of the philosophical vocabulary and philosophical problems that have shaped what we generally recognize as the “Aristotelian tradition.”<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the history of philosophy, for two and a half millennia, Aristotle has been there. However, as has been stated, the question “Which Aristotle?” is imperative.<sup>14</sup> Aristotle’s philosophy has been transformed in different ways at different times, in books, in minds, in debates. There have been Aristotelians and Aristotelianisms of many different kinds. Neither did Aristotle emerge out of nothing. Aristotle’s ideas were deeply rooted in Plato’s philosophy. Despite their differences in method and content, Middle Platonists, Neoplatonists, and Late Antique commentators thus adapted, transformed, and appropriated their Plato and their Aristotle as two complementary, or at least compatible, philosophies.<sup>15</sup> The attempt to harmonize—in some cases to combine—these two philosophies extended into the Middle Ages, when philosophers and theologians of the three Abrahamic traditions walked similar paths.

In some significant ways, therefore, philosophy and theology in the three Abrahamic traditions are rooted in Aristotle and in other sources that affirmed or rejected Aristotle or that tried to reconcile Aristotle with Plato.<sup>16</sup> The result is the emergence of a multifaceted Aristotelianism, an Aristotelianism in constant transformation. From an Aristotle that had already been transformed in many ways, the medievals took ideas, structures, arguments, and methods to discuss problems relating to their own contexts and concerns. The first principles that were “most knowable and obvious” to each generation were, in part, artifacts of their milieu.<sup>17</sup> For better or for worse, medieval thinkers kept their traditions alive through adaptations, transformations, and appropriations of the past.<sup>18</sup> Without the medieval reworking of Aristotle, there would have been no Renaissance and no modernity in philosophy. Through the Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin translations of Aristotle and their formalized commentary cultures, Aristotle’s ideas, structures, arguments,



and methods were assimilated into the history of philosophy, theology, science, and even medicine.<sup>19</sup>

Abundant scholarly literature is devoted to exploring the different ways in which medieval scholars inherited and transformed Greek philosophy—especially Plato, Aristotle, and Neoplatonism.<sup>20</sup> This literature mostly approaches these inheritances and transformations through the lens of a linear historical trajectory, in which the original provides the standard against which the historically later contributions are to be measured. But history, even if a record of natural things, is not a natural object that aims at some teleologically endowed good.<sup>21</sup> The reception and adaptation of the Aristotelian tradition lacked any predetermined purpose. Every time it was put to some purpose, something new was formed. The volume complements these inheritances and transformations by emphasizing how medieval philosophical appropriations were always bound to forge new meanings, produce new ways of understanding philosophical vocabulary, concepts, and arguments, and implement new ways of doing philosophy. These acts of appropriation are particularly challenging given that, as each contribution to this volume shows, they require careful examination of the sources. Working with the sources, focusing on their specificities, is essential to recognizing not only the appropriations but also the recontextualizations and reformulations of philosophical ideas.

The kind of work just described has its complexity. Historians working with philosophical ideas engage with their sources in context, as part of a specific space and a specific time. The historian of philosophy knows and weighs the particular cultures and social spaces, the linguistic and religious conventions, the motivations, intentions, and sets of questions; in short, all the relevant conditions of a particular historical construction. Historians of medieval philosophy consider carefully under which circumstances, how, and why the medievals departed from Aristotle and subsequently transformed him.

Different languages often complicate this work further. Aristotle was translated from Greek into Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and many vernaculars. Translations are themselves interpretations and innovations, as is the generation of new ideas from translations.<sup>22</sup> Adding even more complexity is the historian's access to the actual historical events in which ideas and concepts took shape—conversations over beer, wine, or *shāy*, discussions in university classrooms, madrassas, and synagogues, and debates in private and public space are all lost; we can only read texts that have come down to us. The same was true for medieval philosophers with regard to their ancestors. Al-Fārābī could only read a version of Aristotle, his Aristotle (whoever that was), certainly not talk to him in person.

Medieval philosophers and theologians thus examined and mined philosophical texts to create meaningful philosophies and theologies within their own lifeworlds. We as historians of philosophy, in contrast, examine not only medieval philosophical and theological texts, but also the texts

that medieval philosophers and theologians examined and other texts of historical relevance, such as statutes of universities, letters, texts of other literary genres, images, manuscripts in their material culture, etc. Discussion continues as to what is the most appropriate way to examine the philosophical and theological texts produced by the medievals.

Members of the “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’ International Working Group” (AAIWG) have, for many years now, discussed, adopted, and developed what Richard C. Taylor, the founder of the group, has called “source-based contextualism.” As has been said,<sup>23</sup> this approach assesses each medieval philosophical or theological text in light of other relevant philosophical and theological texts, leading to a root with different derivations that allows us to recognize the complexity of each text and the different ways in which a philosophical problem can be framed. This methodology encourages a meticulous work of analysis and textual interpretation based on sources. The interpretation of a text in light of other texts contributes, in some cases, to the clarification of philosophical discussions and, in other cases, to a more appropriate approach to the problems. Certainly, working with this method also allows discovery of the variety of adaptations and interpretations carried out by medieval scholars of the three Abrahamic traditions.<sup>24</sup> The contributions in this volume provide, precisely, new insights to understand the Aristotelianisms permeating the philosophical and theological discussions of the Middle Ages.

Let this description suffice as the method scholars should adopt when approaching texts in the history of philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

## **Liminal Spaces, Familial Narratives**

BY **KATJA KRAUSE, LUIS XAVIER LÓPEZ-FARJEAT, AND  
NICHOLAS OSCHMAN**

Of course, more needs to be said for a sufficient prescriptive approach to tradition.

Understanding traditions requires wrestling with mereological problems. Traditions are not, after all, just the sum of their parts. Rather, they are fashioned by a complicated nexus of influence, rejection, ignorance, adaptation, and adoption. One cannot understand a tradition, especially a tradition as long, storied, and complex as an Aristotelian tradition, by simply delimiting its boundaries and deducing its shared characteristics. Traditions are both narrative, in the sense of history unfolding, and familial, in the sense of sharing a common foundation. But they are also more than that, for while authors are embedded in context, text, and the holistic gravity of history, a certain dimension of them—the personal—escapes these confines.

Traditions contain myriad liminal spaces, found wherever living human beings are. Take, for instance, Averroes as a reader of Aristotle. Averroes

(Ibn Rushd) is credited with carrying out a “return to Aristotle,”<sup>26</sup> as if the precise meaning of that phrase were clear. In fact, the complexity of what this really means can scarcely be detailed, even though the claim is accurate on the whole. Within the phrase lies a whole history: Averroes’ personal context; the texts and translations available to him; the contexts and texts of his predecessors, whose positions he either rejects, adopts, or adapts; and his understanding of those authors. The intricacy of Averroes’ relationship to even a few of his predecessors alone is too complicated to explicate in full: al-Fārābī, commentator on and Neoplatonic adapter of Aristotle; Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), reader and adapter of both Aristotle and al-Fārābī; Ibn Bājja, advocate of Plato, often forgoing Aristotle and al-Fārābī; and Averroes’ erstwhile mentor Ibn Ṭufayl, who rejects Aristotle, al-Fārābī, and Avicenna’s *Shifā’* in favor of Avicenna’s Eastern philosophy—an entirely fabricated position constructed by Ibn Ṭufayl himself.<sup>27</sup> Each of these authors has their own “Aristotle,” and Averroes rejects each “Aristotle” in favor of his own conception. But where is the overlap? Where are the gaps? Where is the influence? Careful scholarship can ameliorate these difficulties, but our approach to understanding even this small sliver of Aristotelian tradition is asymptotic.

Concluding that traditions are complicated, murky things, muddled by the messiness of human activity, is different from understanding them. For this reason, we, the editors, have endeavored to prime the reader toward a deeper engagement with these issues. In this introduction so far, we have each in turn taken stances, some performatively insincere, about methodology, described in our private discussions as “contextualism” (Krause), “textualism” (Oschman), and “holism” (López-Farjeat). None of these stances, despite our claims above, is sufficient to describe the proper way to interpret Aristotelianisms. Each is a prescription, responding in part to the inadequacies of other prescriptions. But no prescription closes the conversation; the tradition, including its interpretation, remains open-ended. By taking up clear points of view, our aim was to challenge (and even frustrate) you, the reader, inviting cognizance about the lens through which each of our contributors approaches their topic. By interpreting one another in different ways, we hoped to remind you that the tradition invites and, in fact, is made up of different types of interpretations.

Each “Aristotle” contained in this book is a scholar presenting a historical author, influenced by other authors, each of whom views “Aristotle” through a different interpretive lens. There are layers upon layers of types of interpretations, each driven by methodological and numerous other choices, each creating new seams to explore. We hope you appreciate not merely the texts, the contexts, and the historical whole of the tradition, but the methodologies adopted by both contemporary and historical authors. And in considering these methodologies, we hope you consider the liminal spaces, the human elements, the lacunae between authors, which shape the tradition every bit as much as intention.

This book thus addresses the various attempts that single historical actors made to shape and reshape Aristotelianism over its *longue durée*: how some of them understood, adopted, and appropriated Aristotle's corpus; how others interpreted, transformed, and adapted Aristotle's philosophy; and how yet others used Aristotle's ideas for their own sake. It is well beyond the scope of this book to give an exhaustive chronological account of such developments in the Aristotelian tradition. But despite the particular and even idiosyncratic approaches of individual contributors to the Aristotelian tradition, all of the historical actors studied in this book are examined through three interrelated questions. First, given the availability of numerous possible ways to approach "Aristotle" and the tradition which follows in his wake at various moments within the Aristotelian tradition, using what approach did historical actors engage with "Aristotelian" works? Second, how did they view previous historical actors' engagement with "Aristotelian" works? And third, what, if any, thematic and methodological choices did the actors make according to their own particular scientific ideals?

Approaching the historical in this way, the tension between thought options and choices in each case serves as an intellectual litmus test as to how we should describe the internal scientific factors that established and stabilized any Aristotelian tradition over the course of time. Indeed, by examining the spectrum of these factors and subsuming them under three broad analytic categories—origins, developments, and innovations—we hope to initiate a lively discussion about how our own thought options and methodological choices influence the ways that we describe the intentional space of our historical actors vis-à-vis their sources. This book is not, then, intended as a study of the historical, social, and cultural conditions *under* which an Aristotelian tradition was forged at any given time, even though these matters arise in different functions in a number of the contributions. Nor does it intend to study the material means *with* which Aristotelianism could physically be carried forward in history, even though manuscripts, translations, prints, and editions play a crucial, even if implicit, role in all contributions. Rather, in each chapter, this book studies the intellectual practices that historical actors apply to their texts and templates in order to create knowledge and meaning through *epistēmē*, 'ilm, *scientia*. As a whole, it engages with the intellectual practices and lenses that we as scholars apply when investigating our historical actors in the Aristotelian traditions.

These practices and lenses form our own liminal space. The lacuna between the contemporary scholar and historical author is, in each case, navigated by specific methodological decisions and concerns. But discussions about methodology rarely capture the full entanglement of these issues, because the most important methodological decisions are often the ones that are not made, or are not made explicitly. Decisions about topic, style or personal preference, personal exposure to specific scholarship and texts,

and values all contribute to the methodologies of contemporary scholarship and to scholarship itself, often superseding methodological decisions. Again, the human comes to the fore, new spaces arise, new seams between authors (this time contemporary and historical) as they negotiate a clear definition of the tradition. We are ourselves part of the mereological problem. Our own encounter with the texts of the Aristotelian tradition creates a new liminal space.

In order to remind you of these issues, we have organized this book idiosyncratically. It is not a chronological account of the Aristotelian tradition, as if each developmental stage of understanding Aristotle builds upon the last in a necessitated and determined way. Nor is the book thematically coordinated, as if authors interested in certain topics share some core motivations. It is not even organized according to the characteristic methodologies of the historical authors themselves. Instead, we have grouped the sections of this book according to the methodologies of the contemporary scholars who have contributed. Rather than making Aristotle or history the stars of the show, we give the scholars center stage. The lens through which they look at history is the ordering principle of the study. But this raises the question: Are we, as editors, already applying our own lens of interpretation to our scholars, which colors the book throughout?

Given the disparate approaches of the contributions, we have catalogued the papers under three very general headings: those adopting methodologies that return to the origins of the tradition, those adopting methodologies that emphasize the continuity of the tradition, and those adopting methodologies that emphasize a *de novo* reading of the tradition. Though the methodological decisions made in each contribution are much more complicated than backward-looking, developmentalist, or forward-looking, our hope is that the methodological categorization and order of the contributions will invite you, the reader, to keep methodology—the historical author's, the scholar's, our own as editors, and yours—top of mind.

Two final things should be said before introducing the contributions. First, organizing them according to the methodology of the contemporary scholar alone leads to some interesting results. Whereas some of our chapters fit neatly according to expectations (e.g., David Twetten's examination of the influence of Aristotle and Alexander on Averroes' conception of the Prime Mover as a methodology, which looks back to the origin, and Therese Scarpelli Cory's examination of light in Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroes as a developmentalist approach), others show a methodological tension between scholar and author. For example, Thérèse-Anne Druart's examination of the Arabic sources of Roger Bacon's *Moralis philosophia* takes a forward-looking author, Bacon, who uses sources for his own novel ends, but applies a retrospective methodology that highlights the influence of Avicenna and al-Fārābī on Bacon's thought. Similarly, Steven Harvey examines Averroes' own retrospective methodology, which aims to return to Aristotle, and shows the novelty of Averroes' approach.

Methodological decisions by authors talking about authors, talking about still other authors, build upon one another in interesting, and sometimes confounding, ways. The second thing to be remembered is that the organization of this book is itself a kind of lens, whose use betrays our own motivations, methodologies, and values as editors. Our readings of the contributions are not the authors' own, nor need they be yours. By creating a whole out of the parts, we have incidentally (as is always the case) created interstitial spaces. We invite you to examine, question, reject, and adopt our interpretations as you please.

## Part I: Origins

The authors in the first section of our book measure the premodern philosophers of Aristotelian tradition by their fidelity to the origins of their thought—the templates, or what are identified as such, from ancient Greek or Arabic lands, most notably of Aristotle and the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition. Faithful renderings of these origins are marked by steadfast allegiance to the letter, unwavering loyalty to the thought, firm adherence to the idea, and even commitment to the culture of the author, text, and audience.<sup>28</sup> Transformation is read as a departure from the original. But in order to know what it is *in* the letter, thought, idea, and culture, the essays in this section review, reconstruct, examine, and determine these origins mostly on the basis of our own contemporary scholarship, and it is against this background that they analyze historical interpreters. The historical actors studied in this section are found to either meet or fail to meet the criterion of fidelity to the original. They either recognize or fail to recognize the theoretical ideals of the original—two criteria that are themselves imbued with the epistemic values of contemporary scholarship, even of future scholarship, as our knowledge of the original is in constant flux and depends on ever-new findings of its truth in history.

The historiographical question about the kind of causality that the First Cause exerts according to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  7 is the subject matter of **David Twetten's** contribution. Prominent contemporary Aristotle scholars, Twetten suggests, render this causality narrowly as *telos* only. In contrast, Twetten reasons that the medieval Arabic philosopher Averroes takes a wider approach to the causality of the First Cause, which is the "source" or "form" along with the *telos* of the cosmos. For Twetten, Averroes comes closest to Aristotle's true intention, thus helping to measure contemporary interpretations according to their fidelity to Aristotle.

**Owen Goldin's** essay examines how Philoponus, the sixth-century commentator on Aristotle often known as John the Grammarian, understands "form" (*eidōs*) by harmonizing apparent tensions between Plato with Aristotle, a recurring theme in the long Aristotelian tradition. Though Philoponus' sense of form as universal was entirely conceptual

and thus faithful to Aristotle, it nonetheless remained open to the view of forms as conceptual *logoi* in the demiurgic mind of God and thus faithful to Plato. With this solution, Goldin suggests, the sixth-century Christian philosopher and scientist found new ways of explaining Plato and Aristotle that reconciled the opposing views of Ammonius and Proclus, even while rejecting the Proclean metaphysics of mind-independent universal forms. Goldin shows that Philoponus established new paths against the background of his immediate predecessors; his solution was fundamentally a return to its origins, to Plato and Aristotle.

Ascribing one's own doctrines to Greek origins was, at least in the Ismā'īlī context, a common stratagem in polemical writing. Studying the *Book of Ammonius on the Opinions of the Philosophers: "The Different Statements on the Principles [and] on the Creator,"* **Janis Esots** raises this question of misattributed origin and fidelity to the Greek original. He shows how the themes under scrutiny in the *Book* (misattributed to the Greek philosopher Ammonius)—*creatio ex nihilo* (*ibdā'*), the Divine Will, and the Neoplatonic notion of return—suggest some familiarity with its Greek origin, but not fidelity to it. When Esots moves on to later appropriations of the book by early Ismā'īlī thinkers such as Nasafī, Rāzī, and Sijistānī, he detects even greater deviations, for polemical purposes, from the Greek original, an original known to us today but not available in the same way to early Ismā'īlī thinkers.

**Josep Puig Montada's** essay guides us through the thicket of self-motion in Averroes' three commentaries on *Physics* 7 and illustrates that Averroes faithfully adhered to Aristotle in three different and evolving ways. He reproduced Aristotle's reasoning; he followed Alexander of Aphrodisias' guidance in reading Aristotle; and he held Aristotelian tenets as scientifically foundational. Three specific tenets guided Averroes' mature treatment of self-motion in his *Long Commentary on the Physics*: the divisibility of *per se* movables, the equivalence between parts and wholes at rest, and the inequivalence of mover and movable for those movables that display an equivalence between parts and wholes at rest. These tenets, Puig Montada submits, aided Averroes in concluding—against most commentators, with the exception of Alexander—that the notion of a "primary *per se* movable" is applicable to the First Mover alone. The mature Averroes thus remained faithful to Aristotle not only in terms of method and authority but also, increasingly, in content.

Unaltered uses of passages from the original can be counted as faithful returns to it. **Francisco J. Romero Carrasquillo's** essay presents us with Thomas Aquinas' unaltered uses and receptions of John Damascene's teachings on the body and on images in religious worship. Building upon a reconstructed understanding of the Damascene as an "Arab" in the cultural sense of the word (he was a Christian monk raised in Damascus in the seventh century), Romero Carrasquillo surveys explicit quotations and implicit excerpts of the Damascene in Aquinas' works. He concludes



that the Damascene was the Arab thinker most influential on Aquinas, even more influential than thinkers that we have commonly come to consider “the Arabs,” namely al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes.

Discrepancies between the original and later uses seem to stem from the user’s own intentions and circumstances, almost all of which lie outside the truly exegetical endeavor. These discrepancies are what **Thérèse-Anne Druart** finds in her reading of Roger Bacon’s use of the Latin translations of Ibn Sīnā’s *Metaphysics of the Shifā’* and al-Fārābī’s *De scientiis*. Druart identifies misinterpretations of doctrines, appearances of false facts, omissions of ideas, and cultural erasures in Bacon’s appropriations of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī in his *Moralis philosophia*. She thereby reveals how little Bacon was interested in the historical Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī and their philosophical sophistication. Instead, Bacon’s use was geared to his own doctrinal interests: with Avicenna, he classified moral philosophy as the most important philosophical discipline; with al-Fārābī, he molded his own rhetoric to entice people to love of Christianity and to virtuous action.

Infidelity to a system of philosophy despite fidelity to some of its ideas, contextualizations that conflate one system of philosophy with another, manipulations of ideas to fit in with one’s own system of thought, omitted references to originals with purposes of a similar kind—all these transformations strike a reader as incorrect renderings of the original. **Jules Janssens’** contribution on the presence of Ibn Rushd’s dialectical works in Ibn Taymiyya’s *Averting Contradiction between Reason and Revelation (Dar’ ta’arūḍ al-‘aql wa-l-naql)* proposes just such a reading. Janssens identifies Ibn Taymiyya’s epistemic standards of Islamic theology as standards extrinsic to Averroes’ system. He concludes that it was precisely these standards that ultimately provoked Ibn Taymiyya’s unfaithful renderings.

## Part II: Developments

The authors in the second section of this book show the ways in which philosophers in the Islamic and Latin lands adopted the philosophy of their origins so as to develop their own philosophy. This “adoption” was anything but mere repetition. It was a creative adaptation, recontextualization, and transformation, leading to new approaches, views, and understandings. The origins our authors treat are diverse: Aristotle, his Late Antique readers, and Christian and Islamic thought. But the contributions involve amalgamations of these origins, paying attention to the sophisticated, correlated, and synchronized transformative processes of the past. The range of transformations they describe relied on a range of agents. Editors, translators, and philosophers were all active contributors to a tradition. Their scholarly work gave rise to different Aristotelianisms, if we may call them that. These Aristotelianisms can be studied in isolation, recognizing their value and originality in separation, or they can be reviewed



in common, appreciating the correlations and parallels they yield. The formation of this common core in the premodern Greco-Islamic-Christian cultures and history was, we insist, an active intellectual appropriation, in which the readers used their sources as fountainheads of living ideas. Readers interacted with texts, constantly recovering, comparing, redefining, and transforming ideas to generate new approaches, new insights, new concepts, new arguments, and indeed new sources. The use of Greek sources within different cultures, religions, and historical contexts was dynamic, and its fruits deserve to be recognized in conjunction. The authors in this section pinpoint the means by which medieval authors developed their own received traditions, expanding and expounding upon them in dialogue with other sources.

For medieval Arabic and Latin Scholastic philosophers, the figure of light played an important instrumental role in explaining key theoretical components of philosophical psychology within the Aristotelian corpus, and it played a decisive theoretical role in optical intromission and extramission theories, mostly alongside the Aristotelian corpus. But it was Aristotle's own theory of light, and with it the fundamental question of how light is able to actualize color, that attracted the most intense discussion within the Aristotelian tradition. **Therese Scarpelli Cory**'s chapter takes us on a journey through the different transformations of light's ability to actualize color within this tradition. Cory argues that the two different options of thought available in the Arabic tradition, from Avicenna and Averroes, converged into one view in the three key proponents of Latin Scholasticism in the 1240s and 1250s: Albert the Great, Bonaventure, and Aquinas. The imagery that Cory finds in this univocal Scholastic view—"the transference of the corporeal form of luminosity" (p. 208)—presents us with a particularly striking case of transformation: Aristotle's mostly underdetermined functional theory led to a metaphysical rendering in the Latin world. Cory's essay reveals, therefore, that this development of philosophical theory pursued neither faithful adherence to the original nor a given theoretical preference. Rather, it resulted from bias and peer pressure—a historical momentum that, on the level of the agents, aims to legitimize or even canonize a given reading of the original theory.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than choosing one option of thought already available, a philosophical tradition can also develop by combining two available options to create a new one that is amenable to the convictions of the appropriating audience. **Cristina D'Ancona**'s contribution illustrates this kind of development in conversation with Richard C. Taylor's research on the *Liber de causis* (a short Neoplatonic treatise that was composed anonymously in Arabic in the ninth century and translated into Latin in the twelfth). D'Ancona elucidates how, in proposition 8[9] of the *Liber de causis*, the anonymous author combined Neoplatonic teaching on the causality of the first cause with an ontology that merged the Neoplatonic One with Pure Being and with Aristotle's divine Intellect. Although this

merging was obscured in Gerard of Cremona's Latin translation of the proposition, which left the Arabic term *hilya* (the aggregate of attributes and qualities) untranslated and raised associations with the Greek term *hyle* (matter), D'Ancona suggests, in reference to Taylor, that Thomas Aquinas was nonetheless able to understand the proposition's teaching due to the overall philosophical context. It seems that philosophical development within a tradition depends not only on merging of available theories but also on reading theoretical elements within larger, overarching contexts.

Epistemic norms, formulated as principles or axioms of theories, hold traditions together. One such principle in Aristotle and the Aristotelian tradition is that of truth. In her essay, **Olga L. Lizzini** uncovers how Avicenna transforms the meaning of truth (*al-ḥaqq*) found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* through the Arabic Plotinus and other sources, thus building a notion of "truth" with ontologically nuanced contents. For Avicenna, Lizzini shows, truth is tied to being, a reality that remains outside philosophical analysis. As such, it can be one of four things: the Necessary Existent, propositions expressing necessity, the principle of non-contradiction, or quiddity. None of these four falls under analysis or demonstration in the realm of philosophical logic, and in this sense all are thus foundational. All other truth outside these four ontological truths is true only secondarily, in relation to them, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, it does fall under philosophical analysis and demonstration. The development undergone by the notion of truth in Avicenna, in Lizzini's reading, is most visible in logic's reflection of ontology, in an idealized replication of one order of being in another. It was this secondary development, this implicit epistemic norm of reflection and replication, that would survive and exert its far-reaching impact on the philosophy of the Latin Middle Ages, if—once again—only implicitly.

The ontological nuancing of the foundations of metaphysics was not an issue for al-Fārābī, at least not in his logical corpus. All the more important was a sophisticated rearrangement of the epistemic foundations of Aristotelian logic, a logic that al-Fārābī inherited in the form of the Alexandrian organization of Aristotle's *Organon* into five argumentative arts: dialectic, sophistry, demonstration, rhetoric, and poetry. **Terence J. Kleven**'s contribution shows that al-Fārābī nuanced the foundations, the epistemic things prior to the syllogistic arts, by promoting four of them—received traditions, generally accepted opinions, sense perceptions, and first intelligibles—in two works that he added to the Aristotelian *Organon*, the *Introductory Letter* and the *Five Aphorisms*, and by discussing the application of one, "generally accepted opinions," in his exposition of the art of dialectic. Promoting the principled use of the syllogistic arts by paying close attention to their manifold epistemic foundations, Kleven suggests, enables al-Fārābī to develop an Aristotelian logic that avoids the Scylla of skepticism and the Charybdis of dogmatism.

Linguistic translations from Arabic either sprang new ideas on their Latin audience or gradually imposed them, often mediated through an initial phase of mental processing. For Dominicus Gundissalinus, archdeacon of Cuéllar and translator of key Arabic philosophical works, both scenarios applied at once, not least because he embodied both translator and audience. As **Nicola Polloni** elucidates, Gundissalinus' earliest treatise *De unitate et uno* was written in close conversation with Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*, the Latin translation of which he had made himself. Yet it would be unjust to reduce the archdeacon's treatise to a mere paraphrase of the *Fons vitae*. References to earlier Latinate authors—openly to Boethius (resulting in a pseudo-epigraphical attribution to him); tacitly in all other cases—were woven into *De unitate et uno*, probably, Polloni argues, with the aim of legitimizing the ontological and cosmological ideas contained in the *Fons vitae*. Polloni's contribution to this volume includes the first English translation of Gundissalinus' short work. The promotion of Ibn Gabirol's thought that Gundissalinus thus attempted did not last: the philosophical ideas of Avicenna later superseded those of Ibn Gabirol in his translation project and in his own works. In his late *De processione mundi*, Gundissalinus corrected his initial advancement of Latin philosophy through ideas from Ibn Gabirol and discarded these in favor of Avicenna's, though with the same aim of winning over his Latin audience.

Using Aristotelian philosophical concepts to expound systematic theological doctrines in new and better ways was a common practice amongst Scholastic thinkers. The extent to which such concepts exerted a comprehensive explanatory force for theological doctrines is questionable, however, especially in light of competing frameworks stemming from more proximate sources, such as Augustinian, Dionysian, and Cathedral School theologies. In her contribution, **Isabelle Moulin** examines the specific amalgamation of doctrinal backgrounds in Albert the Great's early view on sacramental theology. She suggests that in order to fully account for his theology of the sacraments, Albert skillfully fused Hugh of St. Victor's theological notion of preparation (apparently an adaptation of the Dionysian power of reception) and Augustine's theory of seminal reasons with Avicenna's notion of material disposition. Yet Albert's prime objective was not in fact the causation of the sacraments, but their character and efficacy as signs. Moulin's chapter shows, perhaps more than any other in the volume, that theoretical development relies on aligning seemingly equivalent ideas from different traditions to build synthetic systems, as Albert the Great's certainly was.

Synthesis was also on Averroes' mind when he composed his *Decisive Treatise* (*Faṣl al-maqāl*), but this time it was a synthesis of themes in philosophy and law. Set up as a legal determination of the role of philosophy within Islam, the *Treatise* commands capable Muslims to do philosophy, and proposes three distinct levels of discourse for that endeavor, all derived from Aristotle's logic: demonstration, dialectic, and rhetoric. The *Treatise*

consciously promotes just one of these levels of discourse, dialectical argumentation, as its very own tool, **Peter Adamson** shows. This may seem strange, Adamson suggests, since Averroes often uses “dialectic” as a term of abuse, such as when he finds the *mutakallimūn* guilty of engaging in dialectical argumentation. Yet Averroes also saw a positive role for dialectic, in clearing the ground for proper demonstrative, philosophical discourse. He put to use techniques recommended in Aristotle’s *Topics* by way of a silent methodological substitution in the *Treatise* and in a related work, the *Exposition (Kashf)*—a practice that resulted in a show-case rather than a tell-case of correct reasoning.

Appropriations of Aristotle’s ideas sometimes came at the price of seeming philosophical contradictions. A negative development of this kind comes to the fore in **Deborah L. Black**’s contribution, which carefully examines Averroes’ distinctive accounts of the imaginative faculty (*takhayyul*) in his commentaries on the *De anima* and the *Parva naturalia*. Black shows that while Averroes sought criteria for distinguishing the imagination from the lower and higher internal senses, the paradigmatic criterion—the capacity to perceive sensible objects in their absence—created more philosophical tensions than clarity. Averroes commented on Aristotle’s works with the aim of demonstrating the truth of their content, and the different interpretations of the imagination given in his commentaries could not meet that aim. But though Averroes’ project of developing Aristotle’s notion of imagination may have failed in terms of philosophical demonstration, it does reveal the dangers inherent in a philosophical commentary tradition: if the origin is taken seriously, perhaps to its extreme, it may turn out not to be as coherent as one might wish.

### Part III: Innovations

The authors who contributed to the final section of our book chose to emphasize their subjects’ originality without ignoring the historically embedded contexts of medieval authors. Through a careful examination of the origins, their content, ideas, arguments, and thoughts, the contributors claim to find not *sui generis* insights, divorced from a tradition that came before, but caesuras in the rhyming of tradition that introduce new lines of thought, new constellations of argument, and new fusions of ideas and scientific systems. And yet our authors do not uncover some intrinsic innovative bent among the medieval sages they discuss—this would perhaps take matters too far. Instead, they approach their subjects in a way that highlights particular innovation in thoughts, arguments, and ideas. They thus underscore that medieval thinkers were not only faithful receivers of the origins of traditions within which they wrote, nor mere appropriators and developers of those origins, but also creators of traditions in their own right.

Whether the study of the intellect was subject to metaphysics or to natural philosophy was a question left obscure in Aristotle. But Albert the Great took a clear stand on the point when he composed his autonomous work *De intellectu et intelligibili* and integrated it into his *Parva naturalia*. **Henryk Anzulewicz** submits that Albert was the only Scholastic thinker to hold this position, for which he was vehemently attacked by his student Thomas Aquinas. Nonetheless, he did not build his position on sand. Anzulewicz shows how, by carefully selecting teachings of Peripatetic psychology and cognition theories relevant to his own *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* and fending off erroneous views such as Averroes' mono-intellectualism, Albert created a new discipline in natural philosophy with its own subject matter. This comprised the perfection of the human intellectual nature, the conditions leading to such perfection, and the modes and scope of its realization in both theory and practice. Albert's combination and consolidation of source material for his autonomous *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* thus launched a new *scientia naturalis*, even though its heirs did not continue the legacy.

That linguistic translations are not merely about faithfulness to their original but bear surprising histories themselves is a theme rarely discussed in the literature. Yet the origins of the *Plotiniana Arabica*, a text whose authorship is unknown to this day, turn out to illustrate just such a case. **Michael Chase's** textual investigation of the paraphrastic translation of Plotinus' *Enneads* into Arabic reveals that the text is probably a multistage project of commentary, partial translation, and edition: a commentary by Plotinus' student Porphyry on Plotinus' *Enneads* written in the form of marginal glosses, parts of which, along with parts of the *Enneads*, were translated into Arabic by Ibn Nā'ima Ḥimṣī and probably then edited by al-Kindī. Each historical version of the text, if one may still call it that, certainly transformed its shape and meaning, a process that Chase highlights by investigating the *Plotiniana Arabica's* doctrine of creation by being alone. The end product, as is well known, itself initiated a new textual tradition and transformation history.

Claims made about one's philosophical return to the origins, especially when launched against an opponent who has supposedly turned his back on those origins, sometimes turn out to reinvent the pursuit of philosophy. This is what **Amos Bertolacci** shows in his contribution, discussing Averroes' self-attested "return" to Aristotelian orthodoxy and critique of Avicenna's originality. It emerges from Bertolacci's chapter that for Avicenna, doctrinal independence from Aristotle is one of the highest philosophical norms, both in saying and doing. For Averroes, in contrast, that norm is doctrinal adherence to the letter of Aristotle. The values of originality and orthodoxy—despite presenting contemporary scholars with apparently conflicting philosophical approaches that lead to opposite results—in fact turn out to be equally novel. What is at stake for both Avicenna and Averroes, according to Bertolacci, is nothing less than what

it means to do philosophy. But Averroes' reactionary attitude to Avicenna's originality was not the only new way of doing philosophy. With its apologetic approach, al-Jūzjānī's defense of Avicenna's orthodoxy in his introduction to Avicenna's *Shifā'* carves a middle way—more sophisticated perhaps, but certainly more subdued than Averroes' open opposition. In its ultimate aim, however, it coincides with Averroes' reaction: to alleviate the fear of the unknown.

The subordination of the religious sphere to the demonstrative sphere is a philosophical doctrine that most historians of medieval philosophy associate with Averroes alone. But **Joerg Alejandro Tellkamp** reveals that Marsilius of Padua promoted very similar ideas in his own writing, despite lacking access to their forerunners. Without being able to read Averroes' *Decisive Treatise* and *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, Marsilius, in his *Defensor pacis*, creatively reconceived Aristotle's *Politics* by means of a loose understanding of demonstration as found in *Posterior Analytics* and by applying that method to his own political *Lebenswelt*. This combination sufficed for Marsilius to become an "Averroist without Averroes"—through parallelism or correlation of approaches and ideas, and perhaps just a little contagion.

Even subtle amendments to philosophical systems can have a lasting impact and create new ways of framing debates or settling long-standing arguments. Examining the reception of Avicenna's discussions of God's causal role in the cosmos, this is what **Jon McGinnis** argues when he explores al-Ṭūsī's harmonization between the theological view of creation in time and the Avicennian notion of eternal creation. McGinnis suggests that Al-Ṭūsī brings new focus to the issue driving the passions at the heart of the creation debate: whether creation is willed or necessitated. By emphasizing a distinction between the agent and the sufficient reason for which the agent acts, al-Ṭūsī is able to rebuff Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's claim that eternal creation requires that God act of necessity, not will, even while altering the Avicennian position criticized by al-Rāzī. In the end, al-Ṭūsī offered a philosophical solution devoid of the necessity to choose, which, McGinnis shows, resulted in a free space for the philosophical debate to move on to other, seemingly more pressing themes.

Innovation and the emergence of new traditions in the history of philosophy come through the creation of new disciplines, layers of textual transformation, negotiation of philosophical values, correspondence of philosophical ideas, actors' choices, and certainly many more types of advancements. The same may or may not hold for our historiographies. But their correction by careful examination of the claims they make is another factor, and perhaps the key factor for innovation in this area. **Steven Harvey**'s contribution shows, by disposing of six long-held assumptions about Averroes' commentaries, that Averroes did not approach his commentaries in the rigid, architectonic way in which his corpus is sometimes described. The commentaries are not always easily categorized. Some are

liminal cases, and all seem to be carefully tailored to the subject matter at hand rather than following the formulaic structure that has long been part of our historiographies. In fact, Harvey raises the possibility that the structure of Averroes' commentary corpus was initially unplanned, thus suggesting that a commentary can itself be something novel. In his holistic view, Averroes' commentaries reveal the organic nature of writing and its relation to the commentary author. Then and now, texts, styles, and traditions, like the people who create them, must always grow and change.

★★★★★

Concluding this book is an appendix by Brett Yardley. Written in consultation with Yardley's mentor Richard C. Taylor, it details the history of the AAIWG, a group spearheaded by Taylor during his illustrious career. We include the piece for several reasons. First, in an effort to show that this book is itself a continuation of the Aristotelian tradition, we wish to give one example of the ways in which some of our authors are still part of that tradition. There are, of course, many other such groups, but the appendix chronicles what one of these communities looks like in our time. Second, the AAIWG, and especially the work of Richard C. Taylor, has nourished, sharpened, rebutted, affirmed, and inspired many of the contributions to this book. Several of our authors are members of the organization to which Taylor has devoted so much; all are friends and colleagues of the man himself. And third, it was in the context of AAIWG and Taylor's wisdom that we, as editors, conceived of this book and everything it contains. Let this description suffice as an introduction to all of the ways that Richard C. Taylor has advanced the study of premodern philosophy in the Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin traditions. We are deeply indebted to our dear friend.

## Notes

- 1 The two distinct moments of historiography are aptly described by Bergemann et al. in their chapter "Transformation." There, the authors refer to what I call "the origins" as "reference culture" (*Referenzkultur*) as opposed to "recipient culture" (*Aufnahmekultur*). Contrary to the artificial contrast that I draw here, for rhetorical reasons, between different historiographies arising from these two "cultures," the authors of the chapter argue that there is a mutual creation of the reference culture and the recipient culture, a phenomenon they call *allelopoiesis*: "Transformation thus means that the reference object is not fixed, cannot be stipulated once and for all; instead, under each particular set of media and other conditions of transformation it is changed, produced afresh, indeed 'invented'" (p. 40; here and throughout the volume, all translations are the authors' own unless otherwise attributed). Bergemann and his colleagues then provide a useful typology of transformation processes. Our considerations in the present introduction were originally inspired by this insight, but have since left the field of cultural studies to apply and adapt it to the material at hand, namely, our historiographies in medieval philosophy.



- 2 The preceding thoughts, in their structure and formulation, are inspired by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1. 1, 1094a1–1094a17. William David Ross' English translation can be found in Barnes, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2.
- 3 This is an insight I owe to Bergemann et al., "Transformation."
- 4 This point is made particularly clear in Böhme, "Einladung zur Transformation," 11. There, Böhme suggests initially that

transformations generate dynamics of cultural production where that which lies ahead of the transformation, to which it reflexively refers, and which is itself engendered and specified in the course of the transformation is always transformed as well. These processes [. . .] are marked by relations of interdependence. Transformation is a reciprocal, creative process of production that is not necessarily symmetrical. Depending on whether Antiquity is accorded unquestioned authority, to be venerated and imitated, or whether it is arbitrarily instrumentalized and used to consolidate one's own position, the weighting of the agents of transformation changes—sometimes more pathic and receptive attitudes prevail, sometimes more active and adapting ones—and with it the weighting, image, and role of Antiquity.

These insights anticipate on an abstract theoretical level our very concrete arrangement of the papers in this book.

- 5 The preceding thoughts, in their structure and formulation, are inspired by Aristotle's *Topics* 1. 1, 100a20–101a24. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge's English translation can be found in Barnes, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1.
- 6 This is the particular approach of "historical epistemology," as applied in many studies in the history of science. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's *On Historicizing Epistemology*, 2–3, summarizes different versions of historical epistemology before and after coinage of the term: "My use of the term *epistemology* requires a brief explanation. I do not use it as a synonym for a theory of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) that inquires into what it is that makes knowledge (*Wissen*) scientific, as was characteristic of the classical tradition, especially in English-speaking countries. Rather, the concept is used here, following the French practice, for reflecting on the historical conditions *under* which, and the means *with* which, things are made into objects of knowledge. It focuses thus on the process of generating scientific knowledge and the ways in which it is initiated and maintained" (original emphasis). Other important recent publications that describe and also critique historical epistemology are Nasim, "Was ist historische Epistemologie?"; Feest and Sturm, "What (Good) is Historical Epistemology?"; Sturm, "Historical Epistemology."
- 7 The preceding thoughts, in their structure and formulation, are inspired by Aristotle's *Physics* 1. 1, 184a10–184b14. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye's English translation can be found in Barnes, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1.
- 8 Here, I am referring to the famous "neither a word nor a concept" coined by Jacques Derrida and its link to the Latin *differre* (to defer), even though the meaning of *différance* remains "irreducibly polysemic." See Derrida, "La différance."
- 9 "Historicism" should be taken here in the sense used by both Karl Popper and Leo Strauss. Popper describes historicism as futile, and one of his central critiques is the inability of the historicists who adopt a *gestalt* theory of the past to ever know the whole, given that only certain aspects can be chosen for study at any moment and "all description is necessarily selective." See Popper, *Poverty of Historicism*, 71. Strauss contrasts "historicism" with "historical consciousness," an attitudinal approach that emphasizes "historical exactness" by striving to "understand the thinkers of the past exactly as they understood themselves." Strauss, "Political Philosophy and History," 67.



- 10 See Krause, “On Tradition,” in this chapter.
- 11 One need not adopt the naive view endorsed by Johann Martin Chladenius that we can access the author’s conception of an event directly through the author’s account, or Friedrich Schleiermacher’s view that one can understand a text so thoroughly that the hidden motivations of the author can be uncovered. Chladenius, *Einleitung zur richtigen Auslegung vernünftiger Reden und Schriften*, 307; Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, 18.3. But neither need one endorse the opposite extreme by claiming that the author is gone, insofar as the author signals a finality to meaning, and that what is signified by the text remains infinitely remote, as Roland Barthes describes. Barthes, “La mort de l’auteur.” Something more conciliatory is possible, perhaps in line with Michel Foucault when he writes: “It is easy to see that in the sphere of discourse one can be the author of much more than a book—one can be the author of a theory, tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in their turn find a place. These authors are in a position that I will call ‘transdiscursive.’ This is a recurring phenomenon—certainly as old as our civilization. Homer, Aristotle, and the Church Fathers, as well as the first mathematicians and the originators of the Hippocratic tradition, all played this role [. . .]. They are unique in that they are not just the authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts.” Foucault, “What is an Author?,” 216–17.
- 12 Krause, “On Tradition,” in this chapter.
- 13 The Aristotelian tradition encompasses some Neoplatonic philosophers, Late Antique commentators, and Syriac, Persian, Arabic, Jewish, and Latin Christian translators and interpreters from the Middle Ages; it extends to the Renaissance and even to modern and contemporary philosophy. The number of monographic studies and collective volumes that continue discussing and interpreting the *corpus Aristotelicum* is amazing. Some of them offer a broad historical approach, others focus on the reception of specific works of the *corpus*, yet others discuss the development of concrete problems raised within the *corpus*. Among many others, see Burnett, *Glosses and Commentaries*; Gutas, “Starting Point of Philosophical Studies”; Sharples, *Whose Aristotle?*; Leijenhorst, Lüthy, and Thijssen, *Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy*; D’Ancona, “Commenting on Aristotle”; Fazzo, “Aristotelianism as a Commentary Tradition”; Donini, *Commentary and Tradition*; Sorabji, *Aristotle Transformed*; Perkams, “Syro-Persian Reinvention of Aristotelianism”; and Sorabji, “Cross-Cultural Spread of Greek Philosophy.”
- 14 Oschman, “Response to ‘On Tradition,’” in this chapter.
- 15 See Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*; Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?*; Gerson, *Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*; Gerson, “What is Platonism?”; Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism*; Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy*.
- 16 Perhaps the most representative attempt to reconcile Aristotle and Plato within the Islamic tradition is found in al-Fārābī’s *On the Harmonization of the Opinions of the Two Sages* (Alfarabi, *The Political Writings*, trans. Butterworth, 125–67). Marwan Rashed, in “Authorship of the Treatise,” has questioned the authorship of this work. Beyond this discussion, al-Fārābī’s philosophy is characterized by the articulation of Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Aristotelian features. Avicenna, Maimonides, and many other philosophers from the three Abrahamic traditions inherited, directly or indirectly, al-Fārābī’s philosophical ideas. Alongside the role of al-Fārābī in reconciling Plato and Aristotle, there are early attempts in al-Kindī, the first philosopher of the Arabs (see Endress, “Building the Library”). The development and transformations of Platonism are as intriguing and fascinating as those of Aristotelianism.

- 17 This is a clear, even if unintentional, ramification of Aristotle's insights in *Phys.* 1. 1.
- 18 Although in several cases the process of translation, adaptation, and transformation of Aristotle and other philosophical and scientific texts can be reconstructed, the appropriation of vocabulary, concepts, and arguments began to generate new discourses in which Aristotle and his interpreters became, involuntarily and unconsciously, part of a common intellectual heritage within the Abrahamic traditions. The inheritance and exchanges between the three traditions have also influenced our way of understanding Aristotle in this volume.
- 19 See Badawī, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque*; Butterworth and Kessel, *Introduction of Arabic Philosophy into Europe*; d'Alverny, *La transmission des textes philosophiques et scientifiques*; Taylor and Omar, *Judeo-Christian-Islamic Heritage*; López-Farjeat and Tellkamp, *Philosophical Psychology*; and Fidora and Polloni, *Appropriation, Interpretation and Criticism*.
- 20 For instance, see Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus*; Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs*; Endress, "L'Aristote arabe"; Endress, "Circle of al-Kindī"; Gutas, *Greek Thought*; D'Ancona, "Greek into Arabic"; and Cameron and Marenbon, *Methods and Methodologies*.
- 21 History itself decidedly lacks the kind of intended or essential teleology that Aristotle discusses in *EN* 1. 1.
- 22 On the role of translation in premodern philosophy, see also Krause, Auxent, and Weil, *Premodern Experience of the Natural World*.
- 23 Oschman, "Response to 'On Tradition,'" in this chapter.
- 24 The work of the "Aquinas and 'the Arabs' International Working Group" has been published in several volumes and special issues. See *Proceedings of the Catholic Philosophical Association* 86 (2012) ("Philosophy in the Abrahamic Traditions"); *The Thomist* 76 (2012); *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 79, no. 2 (2012); *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (2014) ("Aquinas and Arabic Philosophy"); *Tópicos* 45 (2013); and *Anuario Filosófico* 48, no. 1 (2015) ("Tomás de Aquino y las tradiciones abrahámicas"). Furthermore, in 2018, Brepols opened the PATMA series ("Philosophy in the Abrahamic Traditions of the Middle Ages: Texts and Studies in Interpretation and Influence among Philosophical Thinkers of the Medieval Arabic, Latin, and Hebrew Traditions").
- 25 At least in the sense that this method ought to ensure shared first principles which empower dialectic, as described in *Top.* 1. 1.
- 26 Arnaldez, *Averroes*; Endress, "Le projet d'Averroès"; Mesbahi, "Ibn Rushd critique d'Ibn Sīnā"; and Baffioni, *Averroes and the Aristotelian Heritage*.
- 27 Gutas, "Ibn Tufayl on Ibn Sīnā's Eastern Philosophy"; Conrad, *World of Ibn Tūfayl*; Puig Montada, "Philosophy in Andalusia." See also Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*.
- 28 See the typology of transformation (*Transformationstypen*) in Bergemann et al., "Transformation," 47–56.
- 29 See *ibid.*, 47.

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**Part I**

**Traditions and  
Their Origins**



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# 1 Why the Prime Mover Is Not an Exclusively Final Cause

Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes

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## Contemporary Scholarship: Advances and Retreats

The dominant reading of Aristotle today (as well as of the great Aristotelians, Alexander and Averroes) is still that the prime mover is an exclusively final cause. One can readily generate this reading from one text, the “argument” of *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  7 (1072a26–27): the first mover moves while being unmoved, and, therefore, it moves as “an object of desire.” If one starts and finishes one’s account of Aristotle by reading this chapter, this reading is attractively simple.

There are two major versions of this reading. Since the nineteenth-century debate between Franz Brentano and Eduard Zeller, many have found it possible to imagine, with Zeller, that Aristotle’s first exclusively final cause is “desired” (metaphorically) by purely material, non-cognitive, celestial bodies.<sup>1</sup> This version is attractive given how difficult it is for us to take seriously the claim that the heavenly bodies are ensouled. It seems to fit Aristotle’s teleology, we think, that all physical bodies “aim at” or “strive for” the prime mover. The alternate version is championed by W. D. Ross and W. K. C. Guthrie: the animate heavens move through desire for an exclusively final cause.<sup>2</sup>

The obvious problem with the “exclusively final cause” account is that it is inconsistent with Aristotle’s *Physics*. There, everything moved is moved by a distinct efficient cause, and the first unmoved mover in the (non-infinite) series is reached through efficient causality.

Recently, Enrico Berti and Sarah Broadie, among others, have questioned the claim that for Aristotle, the First Cause is an exclusively final cause. Broadie, along with Aryeh Kosman, has defended the view that Aristotle’s prime mover is a sort of immanent soul of the outermost sphere.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, Berti argues (along with Aquinas, Brentano, and David Bradshaw) that Aristotle’s prime mover is a kind of transcendent efficient cause of the heavens.<sup>4</sup> For Berti and Bradshaw,<sup>5</sup> Aristotle’s heavenly bodies do not have or need, in addition (except as a heuristic hypothesis), souls efficiently moving them.<sup>6</sup> For Berti, the introduction of souls is an innovation



of Alexander of Aphrodisias.<sup>7</sup> That innovation makes possible the “traditional interpretation” of the prime mover, passed on subsequently by the Greek Neoplatonists to the entire tradition (found also in Ross): ensouled heavens desire to imitate and to be assimilated to the divine.<sup>8</sup> This reading fit a theological conception of the world, foreign to Aristotle but prevalent since the third century CE.<sup>9</sup> On Berti’s reading, Aristotle’s God is no final cause, even of himself.<sup>10</sup> For Berti, all of the medievals (Averroes included) were deceived by the Platonic idea that the world imitates the divine by exemplar causality, an idea first introduced, not by Aristotle, but by Alexander.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Berti blames Alexander for the “traditional interpretation” of the causality of Aristotle’s prime mover: that we are dealing “essentially with final causality, namely, with the fact that the immobile mover moves insofar as it is an object of love on the part of what is moved by it.”<sup>12</sup>

The argument of this chapter is, first, that Alexander of Aphrodisias is not the source of the “final cause only” interpretation,<sup>13</sup> since the greatest commentator on Aristotle, in fact, takes Aristotle’s prime mover to be an efficient cause.<sup>14</sup> For Alexander, celestial ensoulment, rather than being a threat to the prime mover’s efficiency, is precisely that through which efficiency is discovered. Second, Averroes largely agrees with Alexander on the causality of the heavens and Aristotle’s god, and, where Averroes disagrees, he is closer to Aristotle’s mind than is Alexander. I make these points largely by lining up, successively, the surprisingly parallel teachings of the two great commentators, then by introducing considerations from the text of Aristotle that lend support to their readings.<sup>15</sup>

### **Alexander and Averroes’ Parallel Defenses of the Prime Mover’s Efficient Causality**

How is it that Averroes and Alexander (unlike the majority of Aristotle scholars) come to bring out the prime mover’s efficient causality? First, they systematize Aristotle’s corpus, taking the results to be the grounds of “best science,” which they personally adopt. As a result, they are personally invested, unlike us, “in the details,” and they are convinced of the dependence of the terrestrial world on supernal efficient causes, the heavens, and their efficient movers. Indeed, in their systematizing, they do not ignore the claim of *Physics* 7–8 that everything in motion—and therefore, also the spheres—requires a distinct efficient cause. Each celestial sphere must have a distinct efficient cause proper to it, without which it cannot, as Ross has seen, “desire” a separate intellect (the object of desire in *Metaphysics* Λ 7). The following twofold causal account results: a celestial soul is the proximate efficient cause that rotates the heavenly spheres; and each celestial soul undergoes causation, in a way that is not exclusively final, by a separate intellect. Perhaps this latter is the most surprising historical point in my research on the two commentators. With it, I hope to honor my esteemed colleague, Richard C. Taylor, who, despite his respect for Aristotle, is the

Platonic form of a mentor in our profession, and whose effusion of goodness has done so much for colleagues and for the field. In what follows, I present textual evidence for this twofold non-final causality in Alexander and Averroes. Then, I show why Averroes' account of the prime mover's non-final causality is closer to Aristotle's own view than Alexander's is. In fact, I present a new interpretation of the causality of Aristotle's First Cause.

## **The Proximate Efficient Cause of the Heaven's Motion: A Sphere-Soul**

### *Alexander on Celestial Ensoulment*

*On the Principles of the Universe*, extant only in Syriac and Arabic, is the best source for Alexander's doctrine on the celestial souls (although we find other references, especially in the *Quaestiones*<sup>16</sup>). First, Alexander gives an argument for celestial ensoulment, an argument repeated by Averroes in the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*:

The divine body in its entirety is ensouled since the divine body is the best of bodies [. . .] and there exists a body which is better than all the soulless bodies, namely the ensouled body.<sup>17</sup>

Alexander immediately explains that celestial souls differ in kind from terrestrial souls because of their powers of intellectual desire:

[T]he souls of the divine bodies are not specifically the same as any of the souls that exist in material things [. . . T]he souls of the divine things do not share in any of the less perfect faculties [. . . T]he desire which is in these is by will [*iktiyār*], and the true and excellent will is the love of the good [. . .]. The cause of the natural motion of this divine body, then, is the impulse towards the true good. Desire in these things only exists through the intellect [. . . I]t is insofar as they perceive by their intellect that they desire the thing perceived.<sup>18</sup>

There follows in the same work the famous doctrine of Alexander, identifying the nature of the celestial body and its soul. But far from reducing souls to natures, Alexander concludes, apparently, that the soul does not form a hylomorphic composition with a body:

As for the divine body, since it is simple—because it could not be eternal if it were composite—and its motion is also one and simple, it does not have any nature at all other than the soul [. . .]. The divine body surpasses all simple bodies in that its nature, although it is a simple body, is soul and nature in utmost perfection. Therefore this soul is not the form of a body.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, perhaps all that Alexander means is that the celestial soul does not enter into a new composition (which can therefore also cease to exist) with a body that itself independently already has *some* form, nature, and natural motion of its own, as in the case of terrestrial souls. Unlike Averroes, Alexander does not develop the notion of a purely non-hylomorphic, Platonic celestial soul (or of formless celestial matter). Elsewhere, Alexander (as also Averroes, in the next section) still speaks of the celestial soul as the form, in some sense, of the body.<sup>20</sup> Yet, unlike Averroes, Alexander does not think that the special relation of celestial soul to body frees the soul from being *per accidens* moved in place along with its body. As Alexander puts it:

[T]he prime mover [ . . . ] is not moved even accidentally, and in this way it differs from the souls that are *always* causing motion; for, these are moved accidentally by being in what is moved.<sup>21</sup>

### *Averroes' Non-Hylomorphic Celestial Souls*

In other writings, I have laid out in detail Averroes' theory.<sup>22</sup> Here, one quotation will suffice to show the Commentator's substantial agreement with Alexander. In the *Long Commentary on the Physics*, Book 8, after Averroes' Aristotle has shown that, in order not to be moved *per accidens* with the heavens, the celestial soul must be non-hylomorphic, Averroes observes, inspired, I believe, by his reading of Alexander:

Ex hoc ergo patet corpus celeste non componi ex materia et forma et ipsum esse simplex, et quod forma ipsius non habet subsistere per ipsum, et quod ipsa est que movet ipsum, et quod in ipso non est forma materialis omnino.<sup>23</sup>

From this it is clear, therefore, that the celestial body is not composed of matter and form, and that it is simple, and that its form does not have subsistence through it, and that *this [form] is what moves it*, and that in it [the celestial body] there is absolutely no material form.

The doctrine that the celestial soul has no subsistence in the celestial body is confirmed more than once also in Averroes' extant Arabic works. And, of course, his view that the heavens matter is purely actual and lacks any substantial form is well known from *On the Substance of the Sphere*, among other works.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Prime Mover as Part of a First Self-Mover in Aristotle's Physics 8.5*<sup>25</sup>

Averroes and Alexander take quite seriously the causal account of motion in Aristotle's *Physics* 8. They both, with good reason, read Aristotle here

as taking for granted that the heavens are self-moved,<sup>26</sup> and I draw special attention to the presupposition in the following texts:

Aristotle, *Physics* 8.5, 256a33b1 (ed. Ross): *If this [first mover] is moved, and there is not another moving it, it is necessary that it move itself.*

*Physics* 8.5, 256b1–3: [ . . . ] so that [ . . . ] either immediately that which is moved is moved by *what moves itself*, or at some time we arrive at such.

*Physics* 8.5, 257a26–33: [S]o, either the first thing moved will be moved by what is at rest, or it will move itself. But, certainly, *were it requisite* to investigate whether what moves itself or what is *moved by another* is the cause and principle of motion, everyone would affirm the former. For, what is *per se* is always a cause prior to what is a being *per aliud* and is itself [a cause]. So, beginning again, we must investigate whether something moves itself, how and in what way.

If the heavens are ensouled, as for Aristotle, one must ask whether their soul's causality requires a superior cause of some kind.

## The Prime Mover Is an Intellect That Causes the Intellection of the Sphere-Soul

### *Alexander's Separate Intelligence Is an Efficient Cause of the Sphere-Soul's Intellection*

The existence of a separate Intelligence as an object of desire,<sup>27</sup> which only moves “in the way of perfection” (*‘ala jiha al-istikmāli*),<sup>28</sup> is evident in Alexander's *On the Principles of the Universe* and in his Commentary on *Metaphysics* Λ 1–7, extant in quotations by Averroes. What is surprising is the evidence for the claim that a separate Intelligence is, for Alexander, in some way an *efficient* cause of the celestial soul's intellect and desire. First, consider the fragment of Alexander's lost *Physics* commentary, quoted by Simplicius and by a Byzantine scholiast (I translate only the latter). Alexander comments on the famous passage in *Physics* 8.10 on the *location* of the prime mover (found after Aristotle's argument there that it has infinite power):

οὐχ ὡς ἐν τόπῳ δεῖ νῦν τὸ ἐν τινι ἀκούειν (<ἀ>μερὲς γὰρ <ἐ> δειχθῆ), ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὡς <εἰ>δους ὄντος τοῦ ἐν ᾧ ἐστίν—οὕτως γὰρ ἂν ψυχὴ εἴη καὶ ἐντελέχεια τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ πρώτου σώματος—, ἀλλ' ὡς οὐσίας ἐν οὐσίᾳ ἀσωμάτου αὐτῆς καθ' αὐτὴν ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς εἶδος. καὶ γὰρ εἰ ἔμψυχον ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ κινεῖται κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ ψυχὴν, ὃ εἶδος ἐστὶ αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ πρὸς γε τῷ κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ ψυχὴν κινεῖσθαι ἄλλου τινὸς δεῖται τοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτῷ τῆς κινήσεως παρέχοντος. ἐπὶ πάντων γὰρ τῶν ἐμψύχων ἔξωθεν τι ὄν αἴτιον αὐτοῖς

καὶ ἀρχὴ γίνεται τῆς κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν <τοπ>ικῆς κινήσεως, εἴ γε ὀρμὴ <καὶ> ἔφεσις τινος κατὰ τόπον κίνησιν τῶν ἐμψύχων ἀποτελεῖ.<sup>29</sup>

[O]ne should understand the “in something” here [in the phrase “in the center or in the circumference”], not as “in a place,” but [also] not as [the “in”] of a form that is in [something]; for, [the prime mover] is shown to have *no parts*. For, in this way it would be a soul and actuality of the potency of the first body. Instead, [one should understand it] as [the “in”] of an *ousia* that is per se incorporeal, [which is] *in* [another] *ousia*, but not as [its] form. For, if the heaven is ensouled and is moved in accord with the soul in it—which [soul] is its form—in addition to being moved, as is the case, in accord with the soul in it, it needs something other providing<sup>30</sup> to it the principle of motion. For, in the case of all ensouled things, there is some cause that is from outside [such things] [*exōthen*], which becomes the principle of the local motion in accord with [their] soul, if, as is the case, impulse [*hormē*] and desire [*epheis*] for something accomplish the locomotion of ensouled things.

I have underlined the words that are roughly equivalent to “whence is the beginning of motion,” the phrase that Aristotle routinely contrasts with “that on account of which,” i.e., words referring to efficient versus final causality. By contrast, the wording is clear and decisive in the Byzantine scholiast’s final fragment from the end of Alexander’s commentary on the *Physics*, edited recently by Marwan Rashed:

τὸ πρῶτον κινουὺν ἠρώτηται αὐτὴ ἢ δεῖξις τοῦτο. πῶς τὸ κινούμενον ὑπὸ τ<ινος> κινεῖται ἔξωθεν ὄντος; καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν αὐτ<οκ>ινήτων οὕτως ἔχον ἐδ<ε>ίχ<θη>. καὶ γὰρ τούτοις τὸ ἐνδό<σι>μον τῆς κινήσεως ἔξωθεν. διὸ καὶ ὁ αἰθήρ, καίτοι ἐμψυχὸς ὢν, δεῖται καὶ ἔξωθέν τινος αἰτίου ποιητικοῦ.<sup>31</sup>

How is what is moved, moved by something that is from the outside [*exōthen*]? For, even in the case of self-movers, it has been shown that the same thing is the case. For, even in these, “what endows” [*to endosimon*] motion is from the outside. Wherefore, even the *aithēr*, although it is ensouled, needs also some efficient cause [*aition poietikon*] from the outside.

It is important to notice in these two texts the relation of efficient causality between the celestial soul and its prior cause. Another text has been recently brought to light in which Simplicius emphasizes, beyond any doubt, that Alexander’s prime mover is an efficient cause.<sup>32</sup> Simplicius writes:

ἐπειδὴ δέ τινες οἴονται ποιητικὸν αἶτιον τοῦ παντὸς μὴ λέγειν τὸν Ἀριστοτέλην, ἀλλὰ μόνον τελικὸν καὶ τοῦτο καὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ἀρέσκειν νομίζουσιν, ἀναγκαῖον δοκεῖ μοι τῶν ἐνταῦθα λεγομένων

ὑπὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ γνησιωτάτου τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους ἐξηγητῶν ἀκούειν αὐτοὺς ἐχόντων οὕτως. “τὸ δὲ πρῶτον εἶδος καὶ ὡς ποιητικὸν ἂν εἴη αἴτιον. λέγει γὰρ ἐν τοῖς Μετὰ τὰ φυσικά, ὅτι τοῦτο τὸ κινούμενον ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ, τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ πέμπτον σῶμα, τὰ ἄλλα κινεῖ τὰ ἐν γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ. οὕτως μὲν οὖν ποιητικόν. καθόσον δὲ πάντα τῇ τοῦτου ἐφέσει τῆς οἰκείας τελειότητος τυγχάνει, ὡς καὶ μικρῷ πρόσθεν εἴρηται, καὶ καθόσον, ὡς αὐτὸς εἴρηκε πάλιν ἐν τοῖς Μετὰ τὰ φυσικά, ‘κινεῖ δὲ ὡς ἐρώμενον,’ εἴη ἂν ὡς τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸ οὐ χάριν αἴτιον. τοιοῦτον γὰρ τὸ ὀρεκτόν.” ἰδοὺ σαφῶς καὶ κατὰ τι μὲν ὡς ποιητικὸν κατὰ τι δὲ ὡς τελικὸν αἴτιον ὑπέθετο τὸν νοῦν, αὐτὸς παρέστησεν.<sup>33</sup>

Some think that Aristotle does not affirm an efficient cause [*poietikon aition*] of the universe [*to pan*], but only a final [cause], and they believe that this [conclusion] satisfies also Alexander. So, it seems to me necessary that they listen to what is said at this point by Alexander, the most authoritative of the interpreters of Aristotle, which goes as follows. “The first form would be a cause also as efficient. For, he [Aristotle] says in the *Metaphysics*: this thing that is moved by it—namely, the fifth body—moves the rest, namely, what is in generation and destruction. Now, on the one hand, it is in this way an efficient cause. On the other hand, to the extent that all things attain their proper perfection by desire for this—as was also stated a little earlier—and to the extent that, as [Aristotle] himself says in the *Metaphysics*, it moves as what is loved, it would be a cause as end and as ‘that on account of which.’ For, what is desired is such a thing.” See how he [Alexander] has set forth clearly his [Aristotle’s] thesis, including in what respect the intellect is an efficient cause and in what respect it is a final cause.

Still, this text by itself does not make clear what efficient causal relation obtains between the prime mover and what it immediately causes. As a result, the Alexander fragment can be made compatible with the claim that the prime mover is an exclusively final cause of its immediate effect.<sup>34</sup> Could a relation of efficient causality obtain between the first intellect and the celestial soul, in keeping with the analogy in the previous two texts between a locally self-moving animal and the external source of its locomotion through desire?

Elsewhere, as is well known, Alexander identifies the agent (*poietikon*) intellect in human intellection with the First Cause, the cause of our intellection.<sup>35</sup> This same reasoning applies equally to the efficient cause of the intellection of the sphere-souls. For, Alexander writes in his treatise *On the Soul*:

ἐν πᾶσιν γὰρ τὸ μάλιστα καὶ κυρίως τι ὄν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι /89/ τοιούτοις. τό τε γὰρ μάλιστα ὀρατόν, τοιοῦτον δὲ τὸ φῶς,

καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς ὀρατοῖς αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι ὀρατοῖς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ μάλιστα καὶ πρῶτως ἀγαθὸν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀγαθοῖς αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι τοιούτοις. τὰ γὰρ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τῇ πρὸς τοῦτο συντελεῖα κρίνεται. καὶ τὸ μάλιστα δὴ καὶ τῇ αὐτοῦ φύσει νοητὸν εὐλόγως αἴτιον καὶ τῆς τῶν ἄλλων νοήσεως. τοιοῦτον δὲ ὄν εἴη ἂν ὁ ποιητικὸς νοῦς. εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἦν τι νοητὸν φύσει, οὐδ' ἂν τῶν ἄλλων τι νοητὸν ἐγίνετο, ὡς προεῖρηται. ἐν γὰρ πᾶσιν ἐν οἷς τὸ μὲν κυρίως τί ἐστιν, τὸ δὲ δευτέρως, τὸ δευτέρως παρὰ τοῦ κυρίως τὸ εἶναι ἔχει. ἔτι, εἰ ὁ τοιοῦτος νοῦς τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον, ὃ αἰτία καὶ ἀρχὴ τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσι τοῖς ἄλλοις, εἴη ἂν καὶ ταύτη ποιητικὸς, ἢ αὐτὸς αἴτιος τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσι τοῖς νοουμένοις. καὶ ἔστιν ὁ τοιοῦτος νοῦς χωριστός τε καὶ ἀπαθῆς καὶ ἀμιγῆς ἄλλω [. . .] ἀπαθῆς δὲ ὄν καὶ μὴ μειμιγμένος ὕλη τινὶ καὶ ἄφθαρτός ἐστιν, ἐνέργεια ὄν καὶ εἶδος χωρὶς δυνάμεώς τε καὶ ὕλης. τοιοῦτον δὲ ὄν δέδεικται ὑπ' Ἀριστοτέλους τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον, ὃ καὶ κυρίως ἐστὶ νοῦς. τὸ γὰρ ἄυλον εἶδος ὁ κυρίως νοῦς. διὸ καὶ τιμιώτερος οὗτος ὁ νοῦς τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τε καὶ ὕλικου, ὅτι ἐν πᾶσιν τὸ ποιοῦν τοῦ πάσχοντος τιμιώτερον καὶ τὸ χωρὶς ὕλης τοῦ σὺν ὕλη.<sup>36</sup>

[I]n all things, “what is” [*to on*] properly and maximally with respect to something is causal of the being [*to einai*] also for others [so that they are] of such a kind. For [. . .] that which is primarily and maximally good is causal also for other good things of their being [*to einai*] such. For, the other good things are judged in association with this [maximal good]. Therefore, it is quite fitting that what is maximally and by its own nature intelligible should be causal of the intellection of other things;<sup>37</sup> and the agent [*poietikon*] intellect would be such a being [*to iouton on*]. For, were there not something intelligible by nature, then none of the other things would have become intelligible, as was said before. For, in all things in which one is “something” properly, and another secondarily, [what is] secondarily has being [*to einai*] from [what is] primarily. Further, if the First Cause, which is the cause and principle of being for all other [beings], is the intellect of such a kind, it would be an agent insofar as it is causal of being [*to einai*] for all things *intellected* [so that they are such].<sup>38</sup> The intellect of such a kind is separable, impassible, and unmixed with another [. . .] And, since it is impassible and unmixed with any matter, it is also immortal, being actuality and form separate from potency and matter. The First Cause, which is also intellect properly speaking, has been shown to be such a being by Aristotle.

Here, for Alexander, the prime mover is the efficient cause, in the case of all intelligibles, of the fact that they are intelligible to an intellect, including—we may add what is entailed—to the intellect of the celestial soul. We are left to speculate how this is the case.<sup>39</sup> What is clear is that the First Cause is the agent intellect in some way, not only for humans



but also for the living celestial bodies.<sup>40</sup> Because there are celestial souls that use intellect in moving their spheres with particular directions and velocities, the efficient cause of the intelligibles that they intellect, and thus of their intellection, must be said to be the prime mover and agent intellect.<sup>41</sup>

A feature of this passage from *On the Soul*, then, is its reasoning as to why the first being or prime mover is a first efficient cause. The highest intelligible is intelligible by nature and the agent cause of all other intelligibility. Implicit therein are Alexander's systematic grounds for why the First is related as efficient cause to the proximate movers of the heavens. We see the results of this relation in an important passage, *Questiones* 1.25 (on providence), where Alexander juxtaposes his theology, intellect theory, and cosmology:

Τῶν οὐσιῶν κατὰ Ἀριστοτέλη ἡ μὲν ἐστὶν ἀσώματος τε καὶ ἄνευ σώματος εἶδος τι ἄυλον καὶ χωριστόν, ἐνέργειά τις οὕσα πάσης δυνάμεως κεχωρισμένη, ἣν οὐσίαν καὶ νοῦν καλεῖ, νοῦν δὲ τὸν κατ' ἐνέργειαν, ἀεὶ γὰρ νοοῦντα καὶ νοοῦντα τὸ τῶν ὄντων ἄριστον, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν αὐτός. αὐτὸν δὴ ἀεὶ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς οὗτος. τὸ γὰρ μάλιστα νοητὸν ὁ μάλιστα νοῦς νοεῖ, μάλιστα δὲ νοητὸν τὸ χωρὶς ὕλης εἶδος. τῇ γὰρ αὐτῆς φύσει ἡ τοιάδε οὐσία νοητή [. . .] ἀλλὰ μὴν ἡ τοιαύτη οὐσία ὁ προειρημένος νοῦς ἐστὶν, διὸ ἐαυτὸν νοεῖ. καὶ γὰρ εἰ ἡ τοιαύτη οὐσία μηδὲν ἔχουσα δυνάμει ἀεὶ ἐνεργεῖα ἐστὶ νοητή, ἐνεργεῖα δὲ ἐστὶ νοητὸν τὸ ἀεὶ κατ' ἐνέργειαν νοούμενον, εἴη ἂν νοούμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦ τοῦ αἰδίου τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖα, τοιοῦτον δὲ ἡ προειρημένη οὐσία ἦν, πρώτη οὐσία νοῦς τε ὁ πρῶτος καὶ νοητὸν τὸ πρῶτον καὶ νοῦς ἀεὶ νοῶν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχων. [. . .] /40/ καὶ τοιαύτη μὲν, ὡς διὰ βραχέων ἐπιδείξασθαι, ἡ πρώτη τε καὶ ἀσώματος καὶ ἀκίνητος καὶ ἴδιος οὐσία, καὶ μετ' ἐκείνην τὸ θεῖον σῶμα τὸ κυκλοφορητικὸν ἔμψυχον καὶ κατὰ ψυχὴν κινούμενον. καὶ ἐπεὶ πᾶν τὸ κατὰ ψυχὴν κινούμενον ἐφέσει τινὸς ἢ ἀποστροφῆς κινεῖται, καὶ τὸ κυκλοφορητικὸν δὲ σῶμα κατὰ ψυχὴν κινεῖται τὴν κίνησιν τὴν κύκλω, ἢ μόνη κινήσεων πασῶν αἰδίου τέ ἐστὶ καὶ συνεχῆς καὶ ὁμαλή τις, δῆλον ὡς καὶ τοῦτ' εἴη ἂν ἐφέσει τινὸς κινούμενον. ἀλλὰ μὴν <εἰ> πᾶσα σωματικὴ οὐσία ὑστέρᾳ τοῦ σώματος ἐκείνου, οὐδενὸς τούτων ἐφέσει κινεῖσθαι οἷόν τε αὐτό. τῆς ἄρα πρώτης οὐσίας αἰδίου τε καὶ ἀκινήτου λείπεται ἐφιέμενον αὐτὸ κινεῖσθαι τὴν αἰδίου περιφορὰν. ἢ δ' ἔφεσις αὐτῷ οὐ τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτό, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ὁμοιωθῆναι κατὰ δύναμιν αὐτῷ, ὁμοιοῦται δ' αὐτῷ κατὰ τὴν κίνησιν (τῷ τε αἰδίῳ καὶ τῇ ὁμοιότητι καὶ ὁμαλότητι τῆς κινήσεως).<sup>42</sup>

Of *ousiai*, according to Aristotle, one [sort] is incorporeal and without body, a form which is immaterial and separate, being an actuality separated from all potentiality. This *ousia* he also calls intellect, and



intellect in actuality; for, [he says,] it is always intellecting, and intellecting the best of beings—and that is itself. /83/ This intellect always intellects itself; for, what is maximally intellect intellects what is maximally intelligible, and what is maximally intelligible is the form apart from matter. For, this sort of *ousia* is intelligible by its own nature [. . .]. But certainly the aforementioned intellect is such an *ousia*, and for this reason it intellects itself. For, if such an *ousia*, possessing nothing in potentiality, is always intelligible in actuality, and what is intelligible in actuality is what is always actually intellected, it will be intellected by the intellect that is eternal and in actuality; and the aforementioned *ousia* is such a thing: the primary *ousia* and the primary intellect and the primary intelligible and an intellect that is always intellecting and that possesses its *ousia* in this [. . .]. /84/ And, on one hand, to express it briefly, of such a kind is the primary and incorporeal and unmoved and eternal *ousia*; and after it [is] the divine body that moves in a circle, that is ensouled and that is moved with respect to its soul. And since, on the other hand, everything that is moved with respect to its soul is moved by desire for or aversion from something, and the body that moves in a circle is moved as to its soul with respect to circular motion,<sup>43</sup> which alone of all motions is an eternal and continuous and uniform [motion], it is clear that this too will be moved by desire of something. But certainly if every corporeal *ousia* is posterior to that body, it cannot be moved by desire for one of these. Therefore, it remains for it to be moved in its eternal rotation by desiring the primary, eternal and unmoved *ousia*. Its desire is not to acquire it, but to be made similar to it according to [its] potency; and it is made similar to it with respect to its motion, by the eternity, similarity and uniformity of the motion.<sup>44</sup>

It follows from the preceding passages from Alexander's *De anima* and *Physics* commentary that the prime mover, for Alexander's Aristotle, is both an efficient and a final cause of the operations of the outermost celestial soul, namely, of its intellection and desire.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Averroes' Separate Intelligence Is a Cause of the Infinite Operation of the Sphere-Soul***

Averroes follows Alexander and all previous Aristotelian cosmologists in distinguishing celestial soul from Intelligence. Thus, he writes:

[I]t has by now been shown that this [everlasting] motion must be put together [*mū'alifa*] through two movers: a mover that is finite with respect to causing motion [*al-taḥrīk*]—and this is the soul that is *in* it [the heavenly body]; and a mover that is infinite with respect to causing motion—and this is the *power* [*al-qūwa*] that is *not* in matter. According

as [the heavenly body] is moved by the finite power that is *in* it, it is moved in time. [ . . . ] Through the difference in the proportion [*al-nisba*] in the heavenly bodies—namely, between their bodies and their souls—there is a difference in [their] quickness and slowness. And, through their agreement in the fact that they are not moved except by a power that is in what is not material, there exists in them the permanence and continuity of their motion.<sup>46</sup>

So, here we see Averroes' doctrine, developed elsewhere, that the celestial soul causes the determinate velocity and direction of the spheres, whereas the separate Intelligence or prime mover is responsible for the infinite duration. If the proximately moving celestial soul were infinitely powerful, argues Averroes elsewhere, the heavens would be moved with an infinite velocity.<sup>47</sup> But if there were only celestial souls of finite power, and no separate Intelligence that is infinitely powerful, the heavens would come to a rest. The argumentation is partly stated in Averroes' *On the Substance of the Sphere 2*:

Et debes scire quod istud corpus celeste non indiget tantum uirtute mouente in loco sed etiam uirtute largiente in se et sua substantia permanentiam eternam. Quoniam etsi sit simplex, non habens in se potenciam ad corrupcionem, tamen est finite accionis necessario quia est finitum dimensionum determinatarum a superficie continente ipsum. Et omne tale, cum intellectus posuerit id existens per se absque hoc quod aliud largiatur ei permanentiam et eternitatem, necesse est ut ita sit de finitate sue permanencie sicut est de finitate sue accionis. Et ideo necesse est esse hic intellectum potenciam largientem ipsi permanentiam eternam quemadmodum largitur ipsi motum eternum. Et non hoc tantum sed necesse est hic esse uirtutem que largiatur ei motum proprium sue accione que est eternitas inter ceteros motus, scilicet motum localem, qui est in circuitu et figuram sibi propriam isti motui, scilicet, spericam, et mensuram propriam uniuersis istorum corporum, et conuenientiam inter ea ad inuicem in ordine et quantitate. Ita quod ex omnibus perficitur unus actus, scilicet, totus mundus.<sup>48</sup>

You should understand that that celestial body needs not only a power moving it in place but also a power imparting in itself and in its substance eternal permanence. For, even if the [celestial] body is simple, having no potency in itself for corruption, nevertheless *it is necessarily of finite action*, since it is finite, having dimensions determined by the surface containing it. And, it is necessary in the case of every such thing, though the intellect might have supposed it to be something existing per se and lacking another imparting to it permanence and eternity, that *there belong to it a finitude of its permanence just as a finitude of*

*its action.* And for this reason, it is necessary that there be *an intellect as a power imparting* to it eternal permanence just as it imparts to it eternal motion. And, not only this, but it is necessary that there be a power that imparts to it a motion *proper to its action* [ . . . ] namely, circular locomotion, and a shape proper to this motion, namely, spherical, et cetera.

What is especially worthy of attention in Averroes' reading of the prime mover is, first of all, that the separate Intelligence for the outermost sphere is proved already in *Physics*, and therefore specifically in *Physics* 8.10 (whereas no more than a celestial soul is proved in *Physics* 8.6), in the affirmation of an infinite power. As Averroes sees things, *Metaphysics* Λ picks up on the prime mover proved in *Physics* 8.10 and asks what it is and how it moves. We see the causal role of the Intelligence also in *On the Substance of the Sphere* 2:

[E]t cum consideravit in istis uirtutibus declaratum est ipsi ipsam esse uirtutem appetitiuam de uirtutibus anime tantum. Et cum consideravit in uirtutibus appetitiuis celestibus, uidit eas moueri ad appetibile nobilius ipsis. Et cum consideravit de uirtutibus appetitiuis celestibus, inuenit eas infinitarum potenciarum. Et cum consideravit continuacionem motus eterni, fuit declaratum ei quod continuacionis motus non est quo mouentur. Sed illud quod largitur eis continuacionem, est illud appetibile. Et quia continuacio non uenit nisi a motore non moto, sequitur quod illud mouens non sit corpus nec potencia in corpore, et quod est intelligencia abstracta. Quia declaratum est in libro de anima quod omne quod est tale, est intelligencia abstracta. Et istud corpus /248/ celeste intelligit hanc intelligenciam.<sup>49</sup>

And when [Aristotle] considered these powers [in the celestial body], it was declared that there belongs to it, from among the powers of the soul, only the appetitive power itself. And when he considered the celestial appetitive powers, he saw that they are moved toward an appetible [object] that is more noble than they. And when he considered the celestial appetitive powers, he found them to be among the *finite* powers. And when he considered the continuation of eternal motion, it was declared that the cause of the continuation in their motion is not *that by which they are moved*, but what imparts to them continuation is that appetible [object]. And, because continuation only comes from an unmoved mover, it follows that that mover is neither a body nor a power in a body, and that it is an “abstract” [i.e., separate] intelligence. For, it was declared in the book *On the Soul* that everything that is of such a kind is an “abstract” intelligence. And that celestial body<sup>50</sup> /248/ understands this intelligence.

Could we imagine that for Averroes, as for Alexander, the prime mover is an efficient, productive cause, and agent intellect, of the intelligibles in the intellect of the celestial soul? On this point, I argue, Averroes' thought is more Aristotelian than Alexander's.

## Averroes' Aristotelian Account of the Prime Mover's as Non-Final Cause

### *Aristotle's Prime Mover Moves as the Art Rather Than as the Artist*

My argument begins with a reading of Aristotle I developed starting from two recent scholarly advances. First, Jean-Baptiste Gourinat has shown that our standard characterization of one of Aristotle's "four causes" as "efficient" (*to poietikon*, *to poioun*) stems from Alexander, not from Aristotle himself.<sup>51</sup> Aristotle uses the term "maker" and "making cause" (*to aition poietikon*, though only once, as Gourinat observes), but his preferred term is "whence is the source of motion" (*hothen hē archē tēs kinēseos*). As a designation of one of the four causes, this term, together with its variations, is found, in a partial or complete way, on some forty-five occasions.<sup>52</sup> We should therefore, I argue, speak of the third of the four causes, not as an "efficient" versus a "final cause," but as a "source cause" versus an "end cause": "that whence begins motion" versus "that on account of which." What does one discover when one examines the forty-plus texts in Aristotle on "source causality"?

On the one hand, Alexander does have grounds for taking "efficiency" as the model for the third cause. Aristotle gives as examples of what he calls a "maker," "changer" (*to metablētikon*), "generator" (*to gennētikon*), or "mover" (*to kinēsan*, *to kinoun*) the following: the father and mother, the doctor, the builder, the carpenter, the teacher, as well as fire, a torch, the soul, the appetitive part of an animal, the nutritive soul, and the heart. On the other hand, Thomas Tuozzo has recently drawn attention to the following text (*Physics* 2.3, 195b23–26), in which Aristotle speaks of, not these, but a prior "source cause" as chief or foremost:<sup>53</sup>

One must seek out the cause that is topmost [*to aition . . . to akrotaton*] [. . .]. A human, for example, builds a house [not as human but] because [he or she is] a builder; and a builder [builds] in accord with the building art [*oikodomikē*]. Therefore, this is the prior cause, and so [it is] in the case of all things [*pantōn*].

In fact, over one-tenth of the forty-plus passages containing "source cause" language speak of art as a source cause whence begins motion, whether the art of statuary, or the art of medicine, or the art of building. Similarly,

the adviser (*bouleusas*) is said to be a source cause, as are chance and luck, and the “right” and “left” of animals. None of these are “efficient” causes, makers, or artisans. But if we think of them as, literally, “whence motion begins,” we may see that this “source” is something on which depends the artisan, builder, or doctor. It is the form in the artist’s mind, the blueprint in the builder, the medical knowledge in the doctor.

Aristotle’s prime mover is the final cause of the proximate efficient causes that move the heavenly bodies, the sphere-souls: it moves them as their end. But the prime mover is not an exclusively final or “end cause.” Once we understand that to deny exclusively final causality is not to affirm “efficient causality,” we can approach Aristotle’s prime mover in a new light. The prime mover is not only a final cause but also a source cause, whence begins the motion of the heavens. Whereas in itself it is a separate *ousia*, as cause it is the form or art in the intellect of the sphere-soul. We will thereby be able to read texts of Aristotle, such as the following, in a new way, as does Averroes (see below, on Anaxagoras’ teaching):

The mover is (1) in the case of natural things, [another] human [for example,] in the case of a human, and (2) in the case of what comes from thought, the form or its contrary. Thus, there will be in a way three causes, but in [another] way four. For, the medical [art] is in a way health, and the building [art] is the form of the house, and a human begets a human. Further, besides these there is the way that *the first of all things* moves all.

(*Metaphysics* Λ 4, 1070b30–35)

In other words, the First moves as the art in the first artist’s mind, and it is thereby both a source cause and an end cause.<sup>54</sup>

### *Averroes’ Prime Mover Is an Agent Only by Being Form*

As Averroes divides the sciences, physics proves the existence of the prime mover as the source of infinite celestial motion. *Metaphysics*, by contrast, investigates the same substance as form and end. Thus, Averroes writes:

[N]atural philosophy [. . .] provides the material and efficient causes of movable substance; the formal and final causes are not in its capacity. But the expert in this science [metaphysics] makes clear **the cause of movable substance under the description of formal and final**. For, he knows that the moving principle whose existence has already been shown in natural philosophy is the principle of sensible substance *as form and end*.<sup>55</sup>

How, then, and where does Averroes discover the prime mover’s formal causality?

The key to Averroes' account of the prime mover is his analogy of the baths in  $\Lambda$  7, text-commentary 36. In the case of immaterial causes, an end desired (analogous to the baths) is one with the agent that desires it. Such an object of desire, he says, would be agent by being form. Averroes puts the matter as follows:

If the form of the baths, for example, were not in matter, it would be *motive* in the way of an *agent* and in the way of an end without there following any multiplicity at all. And so, one must realize that in the movers of the [ensouled] *heavenly bodies*, it [form] is motive *in both ways* without being multiplied. Insofar as these intelligibles are *form for them* [the heavenly bodies], they are motive *in the way of the agent*, and insofar as these are ends for them, they [the heavenly bodies] are moved by them with respect to [their] desire.<sup>56</sup>

Insofar as Averroes uses the notion of “agent,” he is in the tradition of Alexander, seeing the prime mover as a “maker.” But, as Averroes clarifies, that agency consists only in being form for the intellect of the celestial soul. Unlike Alexander, Averroes does not see God as the agent or active intellect of intellects of humans and celestial souls alike (let alone in the same way). So, agency or efficiency is being used in an extended sense, as Averroes explains elsewhere:

Eternal things do not have an agent except by similitude, and of the four causes they have only formal and final. Were they to have something like an agent, it will only be insofar as it is *form for it*, conserving it.<sup>57</sup>

Of course, Averroes takes such an interpretation to be what Aristotle means in saying that the prime mover moves as an object of desire. That is, it moves not only as an end to be attained, but it moves as a form or perfection already completely attained by the intellect that loves it. Thus, Averroes agrees with Aristotle's criticism in *Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  10 of Anaxagoras, for whom the First Cause was merely a productive intellect:

[Anaxagoras' teaching is] unlike our teaching that the prime mover moves in the way of perfection and completion. In the same way we find that medicine “moves” toward itself—since it moves toward health, and medicine is the *form* of health. If health were not in a subject, **as is the case with the prime mover**, medicine would **move** in both ways together, I mean insofar as it is the agent and end of motion.<sup>58</sup>

In this text, we see the Commentator capturing Aristotle's mind better than even the greatest of the Greek commentators: The prime mover is the

art for the mind of the divine artist, the celestial soul, who by moving the heavens, causes terrestrial generation and preserves the forms of all things. To move by being form and perfection, by being intelligized by the celestial soul, is what it means to move as “object of desire.” But such causation embraces both “whence begins motion” and “that on account of which” it occurs. W. D. Ross famously explained the prime mover’s causality with this formula: It is “the efficient cause by being the final cause, but in no other way.”<sup>59</sup> Averroes comes the closest to capturing the Stagirite’s mind: The prime mover is efficient by being formal and otherwise not at all. In other words, the prime mover acts as an agent only by being intelligized as a form by the celestial soul, which is an efficient cause in the proper sense. Contrary to Alexander, the prime mover is the art in the intellect of the celestial soul, and, as such, is the first source cause and the final cause of all other change.

## Conclusion

Aristotle, as is well known, has a comparatively thin view of the causality of the First Cause. But this is counterbalanced by his thick view of the efficient causality of the proximate movers of the heavenly spheres: on their causality depend, immediately or remotely, all generated terrestrial substances. Experts steeped in Aristotle’s *Physics* 8, like Broadie and Paulus, have seen, with the ancient and medieval commentators, that celestial ensoulment is presupposed by Aristotle’s argument there, as makes sense against the Platonic background.

If celestial souls are efficient causes of celestial motion, they appear to make redundant a prior efficient cause. Aristotle does not live in a theological age, as Berti aptly puts it, such as an age heavily influenced by the Hebrew scriptures. Aristotle says that the immobile mover moves as an object of desire. His lack of further explanation has sometimes been taken for a lack of theological interest, though this account contradicts famous statements in his *Nicomachean Ethics* 7–8 and *Parts of Animals* 1.5. On my view, Aristotle has systematically envisioned for his topmost cause a thinner causality than our term “efficiency” suggests. Nevertheless, the notion of a “source cause,” a source whence motion or change begins, remains conceptually distinct from a final cause. The prime mover is both a source and a goal of the co-eternal acts of a subordinate intellect. For Alexander and Averroes, to move as an object of desire involves both. Each commentator distinguishes in the celestial soul the “moment” of intellection—an assimilation in some way to the form of something higher—from the “moment” of desire, or better, love, which is for the sake of something notionally posterior to the assimilation. Alexander explains the source as a true efficient cause: the prime mover is the agent intellect of celestial intellection (however that is to be interpreted). Averroes instead takes formal causality modeled on art or medicine to explain the agency or source

causality of the prime mover. A superior intellect serves as form for a subordinate eternal, immaterial intellect, to the intellect of the celestial soul. The form is the art or “kinetic code” of the celestial soul’s own notionally distinct desire and subsequent efficient causality. In this way, the prime mover is a non-exclusively final cause of the intellection of the celestial soul, and thereby of all terrestrial things.

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## Notes

- 1 Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, 2/2:455–56; Schwegler, *Die Metaphysik des Aristoteles*, 4:263–64 (cited by Berti, “Da chi è amato,” 69); Duhem, *Le système du monde*, 1:175; Wolfson, “Plurality of Immovable Movers,” 238; Randall, *Aristotle*, 139–44. For inanimate heavens as Aristotle’s middle position, see Guthrie, “Development of Aristotle’s Theology,” 169.
- 2 Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, ed. Ross, 1:136\*–37\*; Guthrie, “Introduction,” xvii–xx, xxxvi. Ross here actually criticizes a view he ascribes to Averroes: that God is the first celestial soul. If so, then the celestial matter desires its form—a claim that Ross argues is not Aristotelian.
- 3 Broadie, “Que fait le premier moteur,” 380, 398–99. For Broadie, the prime mover is not “a source of motion as though metaphysically exterior to the sphere” (I quote from her unpublished English original). The classic defense of this position, in Mugnier, *La théorie du premier moteur*, arose in response to the claim that Aristotle’s prime mover is a world soul (see Werner, *Aristotele*). For Kosman, “Aristotle’s Prime Mover,” 139, 144–47, 150–51, the prime mover is “like” a soul: “On the reading I shall recommend, therefore, there is a sense in which Aristotle’s Prime Mover remains a self-mover” (139).
- 4 Berti, “Unmoved Mover(s),” 186–87; 190: not an immanent soul; Berti, “De qui est fin.” The latter paper is quite different from the 1997 Italian version, Berti, “Da chi è amato.”
- 5 Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 32, 38–44.
- 6 Berti, “La causalità,” 646–47, 652. The “heuristic hypothesis” refers to Berti’s interpretation of *Metaph.* 12. 6 as affirming what is *at least* a “transcendent soul,” assumed hypothetically, but which turns into a separate substance; Berti, “Da chi è amato,” 62–63.
- 7 Berti, “Il dibattito odierno,” 289; Berti, “La causalità,” 637. For Berti, perhaps Alexander derives this claim from middle Platonism, especially from the *Didaskalion* of Alcinoüs (Berti, “La causalità,” 653); it had been suggested by Theophrastus, but opposed as Platonic (Berti, “La causalità,” 651–52; also Berti, “Il movimento del cielo,” 227–28).
- 8 Berti, “Da chi è amato,” 66–75; Berti, “La causalità,” 637.
- 9 Berti, “Continua il dibattito,” 213; Berti, “Il movimento del cielo,” 243. The medieval version might at first face appear similar to Berti’s: the universe



- imitates and is assimilated to God, who is both a first efficient and final cause of all. But the efficiency of most medievals is creative or emanative, and not Aristotelian; see also Berti, “Da chi è amato,” 70.
- 10 Berti, “Ancora sulla causalità,” 16–25; Berti, “La finalità”; and Stevens, “La causalité de l’intellect.”
  - 11 Berti, “Il movimento del cielo”; Berti, “Continua il dibattito,” 207, 213. See also Broadie, “Que fait le premier moteur,” 385; Berti, “Da chi è amato,” 67 and 74, where Berti agrees with Broadie that exemplar causality is not the same as formal causality. For a response to Berti, see Rashed, “Introduction,” 135–39.
  - 12 “L’interpretazione tradizionale della causalità del Motore immobile, [. . .] cioè che il Motore immobile muova in quanto oggetto di amore, [. . .] è stata formulata per la prima volta, a nostra conoscenza, in maniera rigorosa dal primo grande commentatore della *Metafisica*, Alessandro di Afrodisia.” Berti, “La causalità,” 637; see also Fazzo, “L’exégèse,” 607, 625; Salis, *Il commento di pseudo-Alessandro*, 401–2 (although at 142–43, Salis ascribes efficient causality to Alexander’s prime mover). Berti notes elsewhere that Averroes disagrees with (this reading of) Alexander. For Averroes’ prime mover is both an efficient and a final cause: efficient insofar as it is a form or idea existing in the celestial soul; Berti, “Il movimento del cielo,” 241. Thus, Berti corrects his previous view that for Averroes, the prime mover is both an efficient celestial soul *and* an intelligence that is a final cause (cf. the “sphere mover monism” of Moses of Narbonne’s reading of Averroes); Berti, “Da chi è amato,” 68. As to Alexander, Berti by 2007 has changed his mind, or at least his emphasis, seeing Alexander’s prime mover as *both* efficient and final cause, as for most of the subsequent tradition. Berti, “Ancora sulla causalità,” 7.
  - 13 Syrianus is the first I have found for whom Aristotle’s prime mover is a final cause only. Syrianus, *In Metaphysica commentaria*, ed. Kroll, B.1, 8.30–33 and 10.20–11.9; M.5, 117.16–20.
  - 14 Berti, “Da chi è amato,” 70, aptly observes that the creationist/emanationist reading of Aristotle has been an obstacle to a contemporary appreciation of the efficiency of Aristotle’s prime mover. Accordingly, when Simplicius famously criticizes Alexander for taking god to be a final cause, not efficient, of the heavens, we readily imagine Simplicius to be ascribing the “exclusively final cause” interpretation to Alexander. On the contrary, Simplicius repeatedly ascribes to Alexander efficiency over the motion, though not over the very being, of the heavens. For discussion, see Sharples, “Aristotelian Theology,” 19 n. 94; Twetten, “Aristotelian Cosmology,” 335–37. Nevertheless, an investigation of what “efficient causality” means is clearly in order, as I undertake in a preliminary way below.
  - 15 I treat other parallel argumentation in Alexander and Averroes in Twetten, “Whose Prime Mover,” 379–90.
  - 16 For references and discussion, see especially Sharples, “Alexander of Aphrodisias on Divine Providence,” 206–9. For the recent view that “Alexander did not attribute a distinct self-moving soul to the spheres,” see Blyth, “Heavenly Soul,” 451 n. 43.
  - 17 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On the Principles*, §7, ed. Genequand, 46.9–10 (I quote Genequand’s translation throughout). For the view that the Arabic *De principiis* is a heavily adapted work based on Alexandrine materials, see D’Ancona, “Review.” In a fine study, Adam Takahashi infers from the use of “divine” in Aristotle and Alexander (as here), that “Alexander adopted Aristotle’s ‘immanent’ view of deity by respecting the conception of celestial bodies as gods.” Takahashi, “Interpreting Aristotle’s Cosmos,” 35; see also 42, 45, 50, and 52, where the same view is ascribed to Averroes and to Albert following

- him. I suggest that the semantic range of *theos* and *theios* is wider than our capital-G term “God” and need not signify the First Cause or the highest being in the universe.
- 18 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On the Principles*, §9–13, ed. Genequand, 48.3–50.11.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, §19–20, 52.15–54.3. For the claim, made also by Averroes, that “soul” in the case of the heavens is used in an equivocal sense in comparison to terrestrial souls, see Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De anima*, ed. Bruns, 28.25–29.10; Averroes, *Tahafot at-Tahafot*, ed. Bouyges, 14, 473.2–5. See also Accattino, “Alessandro di Afrodisia e gli astri,” 41, 47–51; Fazzo, *Aporia e sistema*, 143–44.
  - 20 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On the Principles*, §17, ed. Genequand, 52.7–8; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentaire perdu à la Physique*, 818 (267b6–7), ed. Rashed, 639, quoted in full below at note 29.
  - 21 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentaire perdu à la Physique*, 652 (8. 6, 258b14–259a8), ed. Rashed, 564. As I read this passage, *Phys.* 8. 6 for Alexander affirms a prime mover that is beyond the eternally moving celestial souls, which are *per accidens* moved with their bodies. For Golitsis, it appears, *Phys.* 8. 6 for Alexander concludes to a final cause only, since all efficient causes are moved with their effects, even if only accidentally. Golitsis, “La réception,” 255.
  - 22 Twetten, “Averroes on the Prime Mover,” 114–23; Twetten, “Averroes’ Prime Mover Argument,” 12–27; and for the background, see Twetten, “Aristotelian Cosmology.”
  - 23 Averroes, *Commentarium magnum super Aristotelis librum VIII Physicorum*, c. 10, t. c. 79 (f. 427AB), ed. Guldentops, 13.148–51.
  - 24 Averroes, *Averroes’ De substantia orbis*, ed. Hyman, c. 1. 46–53, 98–101, 124–32, 187–88; c. 2. 2–8; c. 3. 100–6.
  - 25 There is an ambiguity here that is never dealt with in Aristotle or in the classical texts; “prime mover” is used in different senses, as appropriate to the “scientific” context of its use. The prime unmoved mover in *Phys.* 8. 6 must later be understood to be a celestial soul, especially on the readings of Alexander, Simplicius, and Averroes. The prime unmoved mover of *Metaph.* Λ, perhaps also of *Phys.* 8. 10, must be, by contrast, a separate intellect. Albert the Great will later distinguish between “primarily prime” and “secondarily prime” movers.
  - 26 See also the important findings of Paulus, “La théorie du premier moteur,” 267–77, 293, 421.
  - 27 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On the Principles*, §15–25, ed. Genequand, 54.2–56.10; §50, 68.8–12; §97–100, 94.16–98.6.
  - 28 Averroes, *Tafsīr mā ba’d at-tabī’at* Λ 4, t. c. 24 (on 1070b30–35), ed. Bouyges, 3:1529.14–15. See also below for Averroes’ explanation of moving by way of perfection, which it is likely *he thinks* is Alexander’s reading.
  - 29 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentaire perdu à la Physique*, 818 (267b6–7), ed. Rashed, 639.
  - 30 The language of *to parechon* here is suggestive of *to periechon*, which is causal in the case of animal self-movers in *Phys.* 8. 2 and in 8. 6, 259a4, b12.
  - 31 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentaire perdu à la Physique*, 826 (8.10, 267b17–18), ed. Rashed, 644. This passage invites consideration of the view that the heavens have been wrongly said to be self-moved for Aristotle; see Blyth, “Heavenly Soul,” esp. 460–63. On Blyth’s reading, which he thinks may have been Alexander’s (*ibid.*, 430 n. 5), the heaven is ensouled, but its only psychic function is the wholly passive or responsive function of *aithēr* (cf. Simplicius on the passive *nature* of celestial body as *distinct* from its soul), which is analogous to the function of *pneuma* in animals. The advantage of this reading is that *aithēr* needs “no additional agent except the entirely independent and

self-sufficient intellect that is the prime mover” (ibid., 462). For Blyth, the prime mover is an exclusively final cause, which stimulates “a spontaneous psychophysical response of rotation,” just as “the joyful physical response of a lover in the presence of his beloved” is the “spontaneous, non-deliberate increase in the lover’s heart rate [. . .] and so forth” (ibid., 463). But if celestial motion requires no distinct efficient cause, it is difficult to see what argument, whether in *Phys.* 7–8 or in *Metaph.* Λ, requires us to affirm a distinct final cause of celestial motion. Also, variations in the spheres’ speed and direction must be ascribed, since not to a first intelligent efficient cause, to different kinds of celestial *aithēr* or their souls. We should grant to Blyth that there is no literal ascription of self-motion to the heavens in *Phys.* 8 and the *De motu animalium*; still, as Paulus, “La théorie du premier moteur;” has shown, the ascription follows from Aristotle’s words and analysis there.

- 32 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentario al De caelo, primo libro*, ed. Rescigno, 430–31; see also Golitsis, “Alexandre d’Aphrodise,” 229 n. 27. Rescigno, *Commentario al De caelo, primo libro*, 433–35, in the end agrees that Alexander affirms a prime mover that is both a final and an efficient cause of celestial motion (although it is not clear how, given that the heavens are moved by soul). Rescigno cites other important evidence: Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros 2.* 6 (198a5–6), ed. Diels, 354.18–28, 356.18–30. Asclepius (Ammonius) ascribes both efficient and final causality to the prime mover of both Aristotle and Alexander; Asclepius: *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum*, ed. Hayduck, 28.20–35. For Alexander’s account of the prime mover as lying behind Plotinus’ account of causality at the level of Intellect, see Chiaradonna, “Plotinus’ Account,” 40–43.
- 33 Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros*, 1. 9 (192a34–b1), ed. Diels, 258.14–25.
- 34 For Golitsis, “Alexandre d’Aphrodise,” 220–27, Simplicius has altered Alexander’s position in order to defend the “harmonizing” view of the school of Ammonius contrary to the school of Proclus. Golitsis’ Alexander, by contrast, holds the prime mover to be an efficient cause *only* insofar as it “moves,” as object of desire, the heavens—which are *true* efficient causes of generation and corruption (ibid., 225, 230–33). In short, Alexander’s prime mover for Golitsis is an exclusively final cause of celestial motion, and Proclus draws on this account and ascribes it to Aristotle. I suggest that when Simplicius refers to “some” who ascribe to Aristotle an exclusively final First Cause, he has in mind Syrianus and Proclus, never Alexander (see note 14 above); and that the weight of evidence supports the view that Simplicius accurately reports Alexander in this case. See also the important study Golitsis, “Simplicius, Syrianus and the Harmony.”
- 35 For the rejection of this standard reading, see Papadis, “‘L’intellect agent.’” For a criticism, following Philoponus, of Alexander’s reading, see Boeri, “Alejandro de Afrodisia.” The standard view, that Alexander’s prime mover is the (human) active intellect, need not by itself entail that it is an efficient cause, given the familiar reading that Aristotle’s active intellect is an exclusively final cause. For this reading in Alexander, see, for example, Tuominen, “Aristotle and Alexander,” 67; Guyomarc’h, *L’unité de la métaphysique*, 295, and cf. 286–91; Guyomarc’h, “Alexandre d’Aphrodise,” 159–60, 165. For discussion, see Sharples, “Alexander of Aphrodisias,” 1206–8.
- 36 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De l’âme*, ed. Bergeron and Dufour, 88.26–89.18.
- 37 This appears to be an objective genitive, so that what is intelligible by nature is the cause of the intelligibility in all other things.
- 38 In my 2016 study, I took this sentence in a purely hypothetical way. However, Accattino, “Alessandro di Afrodisia interprete,” 286, argues that, in addition

- to the witness of Philoponus (ibid., 279–80), a passage from *Quaestiones* 1. 25 removes all doubt as to Alexander’s position (see next quotation).
- 39 The “Principle of the Causality of the Maximum” (PCM) is a key guiding principle that allows Alexander to unify the discipline of metaphysics, as has been brought out by Guyomarc’h, *L’unité de la métaphysique*, 104–11, 117, 300–1. No one imagines that the PCM is being used, as one finds in Aquinas, to demonstrate that the First Cause is, even for Aristotle, productive of all being *ex nihilo*. Nor need we suppose, as some do, that the agent intellect efficiently introduces intelligible forms into human and cosmic intellects, although the medieval doctrine of a *dator formarum* appears to be traceable to this passage of Alexander’s *De anima*. Alexander uses the PCM in a non-univocal way, observe Accattino and Donini (Alexander of Aphrodisias, *L’anima*, ed. Accattino and Donini, 291). In the case of the heavens, the PCM applies in an efficient sense: the source of the celestial souls’ intelligible objects is, not themselves, but a superior being (Averroes will work out the metaphysics as to how this can occur for Aristotle). If the PCM can be read as involving an exclusively final cause in the case of the “good,” such a reduction cannot be made in the case of the celestial souls, or in the case of light, another of Alexander’s examples. For another appeal to the PCM as efficient, see Fotinis, “Alexander on Aristotle’s Notion of the Intellect,” 164–65. Accattino and Donini, ibid., 292–93, give a plausible account as to how the First Cause indirectly causes (the permanence of) forms in matter in the terrestrial world by being the ultimate source of generation and corruption, as for *De caelo* 2. 10. On a minimalist account, the agent intellect thus causes very indirectly the intelligible forms abstracted by the human intellect from our sense awareness of these material forms. In short, the preponderance of evidence indicates that the prime mover and the agent intellect are in some sense efficient causes for Alexander. The main reason to reduce efficient to final causality has been our inability to see how any sense of efficiency distinct from finality can be ascribed to Aristotle and his Peripatetic commentators.
- 40 The prime mover as efficient cause of intellection in the heavens is ascribed to Aristotle in contemporary scholarship: Menn, “Aristotle’s Theology,” 446–47; Menn, “Aim and the Argument,” ch. IIIg1, 3–4 and 9, ch. IIIg2, 11–14; Tuozzo, “Aristotle and the Discovery,” 46. Others, of course, interpret Aristotle’s active intellect as God in the sense of an exclusively final cause. Salis, *Il commento di pseudo-Alessandro*, 175 and 185, ascribes celestial souls to Alexander, and subsequently raises the question (discussing ps.-Alexander) of how it is possible for the spheres to be moved by an external mover (efficiently) as well as by their own souls (386). The answer must have to do with the fact that a celestial soul causes motion through its intellect. Alexander may answer that a separate Intelligence is the source of a soul’s intelligibles through which it moves. Salis herself (414) highlights in *Metaph.* Λ. 10 what we shall see is one of the bases for Averroes’ answer: subsistent medicine would be one with the mind of a cosmic doctor (the celestial soul).
- 41 Alexander is the ultimate source of the claim, developed by Avicenna and subsequent medieval commentators, that the celestial soul, as a finite power of a body, does not account for the infinite duration of celestial motion, a duration that requires a separate intellectual cause. See the fragment found in Simplicius: Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentario al De caelo, secondo, terzo e quarto libro* 2. 1, 129d.29–35 (380.13–19), ed. Rescigno, 136; as well as the passage quoted above, Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentaire perdu à la Physique*, 818 (267b6–7), ed. Rashed, 639. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus*, 3:380, 388–89, emphasizes that Alexander’s *De anima*, unlike his *De intellectu*, does not specify the relation of the active intellect to the human intellect. It implies merely an

- indirect influence, in that the active intellect is the cause of the intelligibility in intelligible material things (presumably by being the ultimate cause of their existence). By contrast, Alexander's *De intellectu* describes a direct role of the active intellect (which is not there identified with God): it "makes" the intellect in potency to be in act, and, as itself intelligible, it can of itself become an immediate object of thought. It is not far-fetched to suppose that for Alexander, the active intellect's causality of non-material intelligibles in the celestial soul is similar.
- 42 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Quaestio* 1. 25, in *La provvidenza*, ed. Fazzo, 184–88 (*De anima*, ed. Bruns, 39.9–40.20).
  - 43 The fact of the celestial soul's *per accidens* motion is used to argue that it desires something external and higher than itself.
  - 44 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Quaestiones* 1. 25, trans. Sharples, 82–84 (trans. significantly modified).
  - 45 The Syriac translation (alone) of *On the Principles of the Universe*, which often gives a better reading than either Arabic translation, three times uses the expression "maker of the whole" of the prime mover; Fiori, "L'épitomé syriaque," 147–48, 152–53 (§ 12 and § 28). See Fazzo and Zonta, "Toward a 'Critical Translation,'" 87, 89.
  - 46 Averroes, *Tafsīr mā ba'd al-ṭabī'at* Λ 7, t. c. 41, ed. Bouyges, 3:1630.2–5 and 8–11.
  - 47 Averroes, *Commentarium magnum super Aristotelis librum VIII Physicorum*, c. 10, t. c. 79 (f. 426HI), ed. Guldentops, 11.104–14. For the reasoning, see Twetten, "Averroes' Prime Mover Argument," 28–36.
  - 48 Averroes, *De substantia orbis* 2, in Alvaro de Toledo, *Commentario al "De substantia orbis"*, ed. Alonso, 151.1–152.3; cf. Hebrew, *Averroes' De substantia orbis*, ed. Hyman, 2.59–68.
  - 49 Averroes, *De substantia orbis* 4, in Alvaro de Toledo, *Commentario al "De substantia orbis"*, ed. Alonso, 247.1–248.1; cf. Hebrew, *Averroes' De substantia orbis*, ed. Hyman, 4.15–23 (in two cases my translation follows, instead, the Junta and Hyman editions).
  - 50 Averroes frequently uses "celestial body," etc., in a way that includes celestial soul; see Twetten, "Averroes' Prime Mover Argument," 62 n. 204.
  - 51 Gourinat, "Origine du mouvement," 91–92; see also Bonelli, "Alexandre d'Aphrodise," 121. For the prior observation that "efficient" is our categorization, not Aristotle's, see Natali, "Causa motrice," 111–12. For the position that Alexander turns form into a moving cause, perhaps under the influence of stoicism, see Natali, "Causa formale."
  - 52 I take a "complete" formula to designate the third of the four causes through all three components of the "whence formula": (1) "whence" (ὄθεν, πόθεν, ἐντεῦθεν, ἔκ τινος ἔξω, or ὅπου); (2) source, principle, or beginning (ἀρχή, ἀρχεται, πέφυκεν ἀρχεσθαι, πρῶτον [ἔστι], ὑπάρξει, or γίνεται); and (3) motion, change, or becoming (κίνησις, μεταβολή or γένεσις). By contrast, we find over fifteen "partial" formulae that use two of the components: "whence is motion" (ὄθεν ἢ κίνησις) or "as the principle of motion" (ὡς ἀρχὴ κινήσεως). For details, see Twetten, "Aristotle Less Transformed."
  - 53 Tuozzo, "Aristotle and the Discovery," 32; Tuozzo, "How Dynamic," 448.
  - 54 After this paper was completed, I discovered Hamlyn, "Aristotle's God." For Hamlyn, the prime mover is the art rather than an artist, and is thereby understood as a final and formal, not an efficient cause. In a forthcoming paper, I show that for Aristotle it will be correct to call the prime mover not only a source cause but also an "efficient cause" in his sense, even though the prime mover moves efficiently only by being the art in the intellect of the celestial soul.

- 55 Averroes, *Tafsīr mā ba'd al-ṭabī'at* Λ 1, t. c. 6, ed. Bouyges, 3:1433.8–14.  
56 Ibid. Λ 7, t. c. 36, 3:1594.14–1595.2.  
57 Averroes, *Commentum magnum super libro De caelo* 4. 1, t. c. 1, ed. Carmody and Arnzen, 654.16–19.  
58 Averroes, *Tafsīr mā ba'd al-ṭabī'at* Λ 10, t. c. 55 (1075b8–11), ed. Bouyges, 3:1724.3–8.  
59 Ross, *Aristotle*, 187.

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## 2 Philoponus and Forms

*Owen Goldin*

Koenraad Verrycken has argued that we can make a clear distinction between the earlier and later thought of Philoponus.<sup>1</sup> On his account, Philoponus changed his mind in the course of his career, moving from an acceptance of Platonic forms to a rejection of them,<sup>2</sup> and evidence of Philoponus' attitude towards forms is a primary basis for dating Philoponus' texts. I here argue that the matter is not so simple. For in later Neoplatonism "form" (*eidōs* or *idea*) can refer to a number of entities: (1) an exemplar subsisting prior to the demiurgic intellect, (2) the idea within the mind of a demiurgic intellect, (3) a universal characteristic shared by a number of particulars, and (4) a universal within the human mind. If these distinctions are kept in mind, and if we keep in mind the need to distinguish between those texts in which Philoponus reports the views of others and those in which he presents his own views, there is no need to attribute to Philoponus any change of mind concerning forms. Philoponus comes to disagree with Ammonius concerning forms only regarding how to interpret Plato and Aristotle, not what kinds of being there are. Ammonius thinks that Plato rejects pre-demiurgic forms; Philoponus thinks that Plato accepts them. Ammonius thinks that Aristotle thinks that Plato rejects pre-demiurgic forms; Philoponus comes to think that Aristotle thinks that Plato accepts them.

Clarity on this matter is helpful in two respects. First, as scholarship of the last several decades has revealed, Philoponus is an extremely interesting philosopher. He is working in the margins that separate both Platonic and Aristotelian thought, and pagan and Christian thought. Like a number of his contemporaries, and like many medieval successors (on some of whom he was an important direct or indirect influence), he is aware of the philosophical problems that emerge when integrating these traditions. His keen and original philosophical mind allows for innovative and intriguing solutions to those problems. This is why the manner in which Philoponus himself navigated these issues, as both philosopher and commentator, is of considerable interest. Second, the story told here is illustrative of a general tendency among late ancient and medieval philosophers. Terms, like *eidōs* and *idea*, that have their origin in nontechnical language are employed by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle in different ways that impart

to them considerable theoretical weight. Later syncretic philosophers are compelled by such texts to distinguish different senses of the same term, but there are pressures that muddy these distinctions. Some of these are philosophical (as when Neoplatonists take the forms of physical things to be not only the effects but the manifestations of intelligible forms) and some derive from the context in which they are working (as when translations of Scripture and its exegetes employed *pneuma* in ways suggestive of both theoretical and nontheoretical uses). Analysis of the ways in which a philosopher like Philoponus navigates such waters could shed light on the larger themes of how medieval philosophy, indeed all philosophy, has built on and responded to early and contemporary theoretical and nontheoretical usage in doing its work.

### Philoponus' Neoplatonic Background

Within the Platonic dialogue that is his namesake, *Timaeus* relates that forms exist by themselves, independent of any cognitive agent, eternally inviolate. Because they are perfectly what they are, they are the paradigms according to which other things, to the extent possible, participate in goodness. A divine agent, the Demiurge, employs them as patterns by which he (with his assistants) creates the physical cosmos. It is by virtue of these patterns that the particulars have the structural and intelligible characteristics that they have (29d–30d).

*Timaeus* was a central text for the Neoplatonic enterprise of synthesizing Plato's metaphysical explorations into a grand system. The central figure is Plotinus, who derived from the dialogue a metaphysical map, details of which were filled, elaborated upon, and occasionally corrected by Proclus. The teachings of Proclus were adopted and employed (again, not without revision) by his student Ammonius in his commentaries on Aristotle. Ammonius was the teacher of Philoponus, and it is his commentaries that allow us to see when Philoponus is following his tradition and when he is making a decisive break.

Plotinus, writing more than six centuries later than Plato but three centuries before Philoponus, tried to unpack the metaphysical relationships that hold among paradigm, Demiurge, and image. He accepts the Aristotelian principle that an intellect knows an intelligible form by becoming identical to that form (*DA* 3.8, 431b29–432a1; *Enn.* 5.5), and accordingly holds that there is no ontological distinction between the Demiurge and the forms. The trans-human intellect is responsible for human intellection of form. As the pattern of created beings, it is their exemplary cause. As Demiurge, it is their efficient cause (through the intermediacy of soul). Plotinus accounts for this activity by means of the same metaphor that he employs in accounting for the generation of intellect out of the One: that of overflow.<sup>3</sup> The metaphor of an artisan shaping images is supplemented by that of a unity gushing forth a multiplicity. This allows for a blurring

of the ontological divide between form as intelligible pattern and form as inherent characteristic, which as we shall see was taken advantage of by syncretic readings of Plato and Aristotle.

For Plotinus, it is not at all clear how the Demiurge, the cosmic intellect, and the particular human intellect by which we know forms are all related. Human intellect cannot be the same as cosmic intellect, as we do not always know all things. But if it is different, how are the forms that are identical with cosmic intellect going to be identical with us, when we know them? Further, how can intellect, a perfect whole, give of itself to lower levels, which necessarily involve greater multiplicity, without compromising its integrity and unity?

Plotinus addressed these problems by asserting that although there is only one intellect, it nonetheless has a multiplicity of effects. Insofar as it participates in noetic activity, thought of forms is the activity of what Plotinus calls “undescended soul” (*Enn.* 4.8, 8.1–11), soul insofar as it is unified with intellect. But as temporally localized, this activity occurs at the level of “descended soul.” He further addressed the ontological problem of how forms are unities with many manifestations by claiming that although forms are unified, insofar as they are identical with the demiurgic intellect, the very same forms are actively emanating participants at the levels of soul and nature.

One might well think that metaphysical moves of this sort are no solution at all. For it would seem that the unified intellect has been broken up into a multiplicity, and the sort of unity proper to intelligible reality has been attributed to temporal things.

Many of the complexities of Proclus’ metaphysics, written some two hundred years after Plotinus’ *Enneads* and two generations before Philoponus in the fifth century CE, can be understood as new attempts to deal with the same issue we just encountered in Plotinus. His starting point is Plato’s distinction between two kinds of principle, the Demiurge and the forms that He looks upon, a distinction in kind which he takes more seriously than Plotinus. Proclus rejects Plotinus’ view that the particular soul can, as such, engage in noetic activity, by virtue of the undescended soul (*Elem. Theol.* §211). The soul’s activity is noetic, though its essence is eternal (*Elem. Theol.* §191). All noetic activity is at the level of intellect, and only intellect. But within any thinker, including the Demiurge, a distinction is to be made between what is thinking and what is thought. As Proclus puts the distinction in *Tim.* 323.20–22, “the Paradigm is both prior to the Demiurge and in him, prior to him in the intelligible mode [*noētōs*], in him in the intellective mode [*noerōs*].”<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, Proclus posits two kinds of intellect. The participated intellect (*metakhomenos nous*) is intellective and looks to the forms and is implicated in their dispersal among particulars. The unparticipated intellect (*amethektos nous*), in which the forms that are looked have their primal undispersed status (*Elem. Theol.* §101, 166) is intelligible. The participated intellect is the Demiurge, which, as in Plato,

is distinct from and lower than the intellect that contains those forms that stand outside of all direct relation to their participants. It is participated intellect which contains the forms that are implicated in the dispersal among particulars. Forms also exist within the participated intellect, as ideas within the demiurgic mind.<sup>5</sup> (It is important to note here that what Proclus calls “participated Forms” are not these forms in the participated intellect but forms as they are particularized within their participants.<sup>6</sup>) The forms in the mind of the Demiurge are intrinsically productive, which is why one must recognize within them an implicit multiplicity by which corresponding formal characteristics are imparted to the many particulars that participate in them.

Accordingly, in the context of Proclus’ metaphysics, there are three different things that one can mean in affirming that eternal forms exist. (It is important to distinguish these three levels of form since it is possible to subscribe to a generally Platonist metaphysics, yet not accept them all.) (1) Forms exist, all together, as the unparticipated intellect. (2) They exist, discretely, as object of knowledge of the participated intellect. (3) Finally, they exist at the level of soul, as causal principles informing matter, emanating from the participated intellect. It is in this sense that Proclus refers to them as demiurgic *logoi*. They are demiurgic not insofar as they inhere within the Demiurge, as objects of thought, but insofar as they themselves penetrate the ontological levels of soul and physicality, giving them formal characteristics and what limited intelligibility they can accept.<sup>7</sup>

Aristotle, whose works were well known to Proclus, understood Platonic forms as universals, and much of his criticism of Plato (in *Metaph.* A 9 and elsewhere) is accordingly based on his denial of the existence of subsistent universals. What role do universals play in Proclus’ ontology?

Proclus distinguishes three kinds of beings that can be called a universal. There are the universals “before the many,” those “in the many,” and those “after the many” (*In Eucl.* 1, 50.24–51.9). Universals “before the many” are conceptual entities in a mind that abstracts and thereby thinks of a common feature. It is by the intermediacy of these that human minds can, to a limited extent, grasp the intelligible forms of which they are imperfect copies. They are not truly universals, as it is not concepts as such that are predicated of things.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, a universal before the many is a form which “produce[s] plurality by offering its appearance to the many instances.”<sup>9</sup> This sort of form is a perfect pattern and is not itself predicated of imperfect particulars. Accordingly, it would not constitute a universal according to Aristotle’s definition of a universal, as what is predicated of many particulars (*DI* 17a37).<sup>10</sup> The universal before the many is a universal only insofar as it is a single thing to which many stand in relation, for which reason, as Richard Sorabji puts it, its status as a universal to is “heavily qualified.”<sup>11</sup> In contrast to universals that are dependent on those particulars of which they are predicated,<sup>12</sup> they are ontologically independent of the things modeled after them. For this reason, when Aristotle

presents arguments against forms as subsistent universals, this does not speak to whether or not there are demiurgic forms, as Proclus understands them. A fortiori, forms as they exist prior in a pre-demiurgic mode, too, would not be universals, in the strict Aristotelian sense.

The other kind of universal, whose status as universal is unqualified, is that of the common features that are predicated of many things (“the universal in the many”). Aristotle would have no problem with positing the existence of this, but as inherent in particulars, it is not a Platonic form.

For many years, scholars of Late Antiquity understood Ammonius,<sup>13</sup> Proclus’ student, as having adopted a metaphysical scheme that is a radically simplified version of that of Proclus.<sup>14</sup> Although the simplification is not as extensive as that argued for by earlier scholars,<sup>15</sup> there is evidence that Ammonius explicitly rejected Proclus’ distinction between participated and unparticipated intellect, that is (in the terms employed by Plato) between the Demiurge and the forms existing independently of the Demiurge, to which it looks.

One finds in much late Neoplatonism the hermeneutic principle that Plato and Aristotle are in agreement in nearly all respects. Proclus did not follow Iamblichus in this attempt to harmonize Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics,<sup>16</sup> but many Aristotelian commentators in the Platonic tradition, including Ammonius, did. Ammonius accordingly follows Aristotle in denying that universals, in the Aristotelian sense, can be subsistent. In his commentary on the *Categories*, Ammonius explicitly endorses Aristotle’s assertion at *Cat.* 2a36 that universals, which are predicated of substances, are dependent on the substances that they are in.<sup>17</sup>

Evidence concerning Ammonius’ views on the ontological standing of ideas within the Demiurge is found primarily in a commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* by his student Asclepius, expressly labeled as derived from the lectures of Ammonius.<sup>18</sup> Asclepius is explicit that Aristotle and Plato are in agreement concerning forms (71.27–29). At 44.31–36, Asclepius discusses Aristotle’s view that it was Socrates who first sought universal *definienda*:

Plato called all such things Ideas, saying that they were demiurgic *logoi*, from which the things here come to by participation—what is beautiful here from what is beautiful without qualification, and what is good from what is good without qualification, and the human being from The Human Being. You yourself say this, Aristotle!

After all, Aristotle had said that the Unmoved Mover (the Demiurge) is to the cosmos as the general is to the army (*Metaph.* Λ 1075a12–7); just as the order in the army is due to what has been planned by the general, the order in the cosmos arises from metaphysically prior patterns in the mind of the Demiurge. Further, it was Aristotle himself who said: “Those who say that the soul is the place of forms are right, except that this is true not

of is not the entire soul, but the intellectual soul [*oute holē all' hē noētikē*]” (DA 3.4, 429a27–28). Aristotle’s assertion explicitly concerns the (human) potential intellect; Asclepius glibly cites the passage to support the interpretation of Aristotle as positing forms as present in the active (demiurgic) intellect (69.19–20, 167.29–33).<sup>19</sup> Such a theoretical commitment to demiurgic *logoi*, however, does not entail positing forms at an ontologically higher level, as independent of the demiurgic intellect.

At 393.34–394.2 Asclepius comments on Aristotle’s *Metaph.* Z 6, 1031a28–31, where Aristotle wonders whether a substance that is ontologically primary (as Platonic ideas are said to be) is the same as its essence. Asclepius writes: “He refers to those who place Ideas in the highest rank and say that they are self-subsistent substances [*ousias einai authupostatous*], towards which the Demiurge looks when he makes what he makes.” Here, Asclepius interprets Aristotle as referring disparagingly to the hypostasis of an intelligible substance prior to the Demiurge, not to that positing intelligible entities in the mind of the Demiurge, for, according to Ammonius, Aristotle believes in these.<sup>20</sup> Aristotle departs from Plato only in regard to his terminology. Plato would call these *logoi* substances (*ousiai*); Aristotle would not. He calls them demiurgic *logoi*.<sup>21</sup> Both posit what the Demiurge knows as the grounds of intelligibility of particular things. When Aristotle denies that there are forms that are separate, he is in agreement with Plato, who likewise did not believe in

transcendent Ideas, that is to say, Forms in what Proclus would call “the unparticipated intellect” (165.35–167.29<sup>22</sup>). [. . .] But that is not to go further and say that there is horse-itself and cow<-itself> and such things existing in reality by themselves, just like perceptibles [*οὐκέτι μέντοι γε αὐτοῖππος καὶ βοῦς καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα αὐτὰ καθ’ αὐτὰ ἐν ὑποστάσει ὄντα, ὥσπερ καὶ τὰ αἰσθητά*].

(67.33–34)

Only if there were forms existing independently of the Demiurge would there be a point to the criticism Aristotle makes of the forms in *Metaph.* A (that positing forms needlessly reduplicates an ontology, insofar as forms are eternal versions of perceptible substances) (167.35–168.18).

We see on the basis of these passages that Ammonius does not take Aristotle to be in conflict with Platonic metaphysics, rightly understood. This is confirmed by Ammonius *In Isag.* 41.21–47.7, where there is an explicit and unqualified identification of the universals “before the many” with ideas in the mind of the Demiurge. It shall be further confirmed by passages from Philoponus, who needs to be treated independently, on account of the complex nature of his texts.

We have seen that Plato offers a metaphysical scheme according to which intelligible forms are ontologically distinct from imminent characteristics; it is just this distinction with which Aristotle takes issue. The distinction



was blurred among the Neoplatonists for two reasons: first, in order to solve the puzzle of participation, and second, under the pressure of a tradition of reading Plato and Aristotle as in fundamental agreement. *Eidos* and *idea* refer to intelligible structural principles as present in both participated and unparticipated intellect, to formative principles in soul, which is the intermediary between the intelligible and the sensible, and to universal characteristics in sensibles. The terms are not strictly speaking equivocal, as it is the same form manifesting itself in different ways at different ontological levels. We shall see Philoponus insist on a more robust kind of equivocality. On his view, Plato and Aristotle must be understood as referring to different kinds of things as “forms.” This allows for a forthright declaration that the universals that we cognitively grasp are not Platonic forms.

### Philoponus on Forms

We turn now to Philoponus, who at first sight, in different texts, says different things about Platonic forms and Aristotle’s stance concerning them. As Pantelis Golitsis has argued,<sup>23</sup> dating Philoponus’ texts by appealing to seeming inconsistencies within them (as Verrycken does) is a risky business. Some texts are commentaries; some are not. A primary purpose of a commentary is to explicate the meaning of the text. Philoponus is not shy about disagreeing with Aristotle in the course of his commentaries, but that is not to say that every time Philoponus offers an exegesis of a text he is thereby endorsing the (purportedly) Aristotelian teaching he is presenting. The narrative of Philoponus’ development that Verrycken reconstructs is also challenged by the occasional appearance of a supposedly later view in a supposedly earlier text.<sup>24</sup> That said, there are no doubt some discrepancies in Philoponus that must be accounted for developmentally. The challenge is to do so only when appropriate. How does it stand in regard to what Philoponus says concerning the paired issues of whether Plato and Aristotle were in agreement concerning the forms and whether there are in fact Platonic forms?

We begin with a passage from Philoponus’ commentary on *De anima*, one of his early commentaries said to be transcribed from the lectures of Ammonius with “some critical observations of his own.”<sup>25</sup> Philoponus is discussing *DA* 402b5–7, in which Aristotle aporetically wonders whether the inquirer into the soul must seek a single definition, as one would seek a definition of “living thing,” or rather a plurality of definitions for different kinds of soul, as one would seek the definitions of individual species of living being. Aristotle explores the possibility that the latter is the case, as “the living being in general [*katholou*] either is nothing or something posterior.” According to a standard reading of the passage, Aristotle is (aporetically) claiming that the discrete object of definition is an *infima species*, not its genus. On Philoponus’ interpretation, however, the question is not whether “living thing” is independently definable, but whether it

is independently existing.<sup>26</sup> He takes Aristotle's answer to be "no"—an answer thought to be consistent with the existence of Platonic forms. Aristotle's point is that all beings are particulars; accordingly, any definition of a universal (whether genus or *infima species*), such as Proclus' universals "in the many" and "after the many," is a definition of a non-entity, or of some derivative aspect of a particular. "Some have thought that here he speaks of the Forms, alluding to Plato. But this is not the case. For Aristotle, too, thinks that the genera and species exist prior to the plurality <of the individual instances>." Philoponus echoes Ammonius in supporting his view that Plato and Aristotle agree on the priority of forms over particulars by citing Aristotle's assertions that the order within the cosmos derives from a single commander and that the soul is a place of forms. He concludes: "Consequently he also is aware of the transcendent formal *logoi* of things" (37.25–26). Aristotle's dismissive words concerning universals are taken to refer only to those which Proclus called "after the many."

[T]he living being, when viewed as a universal, is nothing or is something posterior. If he wishes the definition of living being to apply universally, and definitions do not concern the genera that are before the many [. . .] (for it is not even possible to define these, since they are demiurgic *logoi*) and since we define the things that exist in thought only (for what we express in the definition is the notion we have about things) and since these things came into being later, we have been right in saying that he says these things in reference to the things that came into being later.<sup>27</sup>

We note that demiurgic *logoi* are here said to be causes of things, not objects of definition or knowledge. Particulars are known by virtue of a universal conceptual entity whose existence is derivative on the human mind that thinks them.<sup>28</sup>

In his *Posterior Analytics* commentary, also said to be derived from Ammonius' lectures with critical remarks by Philoponus, we find this description of the common, defined feature, which Proclus would have called the universal "in the many":

[W]e say that each is among the existing things and subsists by virtue of being defined by a common account, even if it has its subsistence in the particulars [. . .]. Therefore the universal is not among the things that do not exist, but rather <exists> to a higher degree than particulars do, given that it is imperishable, and all particulars are perishable, and that that which imperishable is among things that are, to a higher degree than that which is perishable.<sup>29</sup>

Philoponus (presumably following Ammonius) is not here talking of forms but of universals "in the many." Within *Metaph. Z*, Aristotle makes

clear that the substantial form of a composite substance, although in one sense dependent for its existence on that in which it inheres, in some sense exists as a real, eternal being, on which that particular depends. This view echoes those made explicit by Alexander of Aphrodisias, surely no enthusiast of Platonic forms.<sup>30</sup> However Platonic it sounds, the present passage is not evidence of Philoponus' belief in mind-independent Platonic forms.

We turn next to another text from the *Posterior Analytics* which bears on these questions. Verrycken cites it as evidence of a change of attitude, but we need not draw this conclusion, if we keep in mind the Proclean distinction between form as unparticipated and as participated, as well as the distinction between the question of whether there are subsistent universals and whether there are Platonic forms.

The context is a commentary on Aristotle's discussion of whether it is possible for demonstrative chains to be infinite in length. Aristotle employs the premise that the minor term of any demonstration must be substantial. A quality like "white" cannot be a subject term. What of the form of white? Understood as Plato understands it, the form is indeed a basic subject that is an object of scientific understanding, and accordingly could be an ultimate minor term of a demonstration. Aristotle rejects this possibility, and accordingly Platonic forms. As he puts it: "So goodbye to the Forms. For they are but noodling, and even if there were such things, they would be irrelevant in regard to the argument. For demonstrations are concerned with these sorts of things" (83a32–35) (i.e., not with the whiteness that is separate from colored objects, but with the whiteness of colored objects). The conclusion is that demonstrative chains must have bottoms, the substantial kinds that constitute the genus of a science.

Philoponus agrees with Aristotle that terms like "white," "humanity," and "equal," which are studied by the sciences, always subsist in another subject:

For how can there subsist whiteness or humanity or equality itself by itself? For since all of these forms and those like them are material [i.e., such as must be inherent in matter], they cannot subsist otherwise than in some subject, I mean in a body or in absolute matter.

(242.17–20)<sup>31</sup>

Philoponus' exposition of Aristotle is problematic, first, because the notion of matter is absent from *Posterior Analytics* and second, because "human" is precisely the sort of term (a substantial kind, falling under a biological genus) that can serve as an ultimate subject of demonstration. Be that as it may, Philoponus interprets the text as concerning substantial and non-substantial terms alike, and what is at issue for him is the universality of the terms employed by demonstration. Such terms are real only as inherent in matter. Aristotle's point, as Philoponus (approvingly) interprets it, need not bear on whether there exists a "white" or "humanity" which

is not itself a direct object of human knowledge, but is rather a cause of the whiteness and humanity that we do know.

Philoponus tells of some exegetes who deny that the universal terms that are known must subsist in a subject and appeal to Aristotle's own writings to support the view that there is such a thing as a form of "white": "And when people speak in support of them [the forms] they say that Aristotle explicitly proclaims on every occasion that the demiurgic *logoi* of things are ideas." The evidence that these people are reported to have cited in support of this reading of Aristotle is familiar to us. The Unmoved Mover is like a general, responsible for the order of his subordinates (243.2–6). The Unmoved Mover thinks itself; this means that it thinks all things (243.6–7). The soul is the place of forms (243.7–8). Ammonius is no doubt one of the Aristotelian exegetes that Philoponus has in mind.

They say that it is in regard to those who misunderstand the doctrines concerning the ideas and think that whiteness subsists by itself and not in the demiurgic *logos* or think this of a bodiless humanity, as if it had nose and feet and hands and such things, that he was always wont to attack the argument about such ideas.

(243.9–13)

Ammonius' argument that Plato and Aristotle are in agreement concerning the forms was directed against unnamed opponents who argued that Plato posited humanly knowable forms that exist independent of the Demiurge. Philoponus gives us new evidence that according to Ammonius, Aristotle himself did not believe that there are forms that subsist by themselves, independent of the Demiurge. Given Ammonius' view that both Plato and Aristotle offer true accounts, this is additional evidence that Ammonius did indeed simplify Proclean metaphysics and eliminated unparticipated intellect as intermediate between the One and the Demiurge. He affirmed forms as subsistent within participated intellect and takes this to be consistent with the principle that known forms always exist in some sort of material substrate. These demiurgic ideas are not the universals that we know, namely, the referents of the terms employed in demonstration.

Philoponus continues with a sentence that Marije Martijn and I have translated as follows:

But I find thoroughly unconvincing the defense to the effect that even though it was Plato who posited the Forms as demiurgic *logoi* existing within the Demiurge, Aristotle himself always says the same things and never objects to this, and that, even if he meant the same thing [as Plato], while Plato says that ideas are such a thing [i.e., demiurgic *logoi*], others misunderstood him [*ἐμοὶ δὲ πάνυ δοκεῖ ἀπίθανος ἢ τοιαύτη ἀπολογία. εἰ γὰρ λόγους δημιουργικοὺς ἐν τῷ δημιουργῷ ἐνόησας τὰ εἶδη ὑπετίθετο ὁ Πλάτων, οὐκ ἂν ποτε πρὸς τοῦτο ἐνέστη*

ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης πανταχοῦ ὁ αὐτὸς ταῦτὰ λέγων. κἂν ἐπεσημειοῦτο δὲ αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὅτι Πλάτων μὲν τοιάσδε ἔλεγε τὰς ἰδέας, ἕτεροι δὲ κακῶς ἐκλαμβάνουσι].

(243.13–17)

On our account, Philoponus is now saying that Aristotle does not agree with Plato. In his own voice, he continues: “Rather it is obvious that he is always doing battle against the doctrine [of forms], not those who conceive of it incorrectly.” Philoponus cites the *Timaeus*, according to which the Demiurge looks to forms as external exemplars, as evidence that Plato’s forms were not mere ideas in the demiurgic mind. Rather, Philoponus says that Plato thinks that they have existence independent of the Demiurge.

In a recent article, Golitsis has amended our translation in a way that has the passage register agreement with Plato:

But I think that such a defense is thoroughly unconvincing; for if Plato had posited the Forms as demiurgic *logoi* existing within the Demiurge, Aristotle himself, who everywhere says the same things, would have never objected to this; and he would have pointed out that Plato meant the Ideas to be such, but others misunderstood him.<sup>32</sup>

Martijn and I understand ἡ τοιαύτη ἀπολογία as referring to the account that he is about to work through. We take Philoponus to be rejecting as “unconvincing” the defense that Aristotle and Plato were not in agreement concerning the forms. In contrast, in line with his general strategy of countering Verrycken’s hypothesis concerning Philoponus’ development, Golitsis apparently takes it to be retrospective: ἡ τοιαύτη ἀπολογία refers to the view that Plato and Aristotle *were* in agreement that forms exist as demiurgic *logoi*. We interpret the phrase “Aristotle always says the same things,” attributed to those with whom Philoponus disagrees, as indicating that he always agrees with Plato. Philoponus takes them to be wrong: Plato and Aristotle do not always agree. A case in point is the matter of whether there are pre-demiurgic forms. Golitsis, in contrast, apparently understands it as Philoponus’ proclamation of Aristotle’s consistency (at least in regard to forms). As Golitsis translates the passage, Philoponus says that Plato did not in fact believe in demiurgic forms at all, and it is on this point that Aristotle rightly calls out Plato. But note how the passage continues, in lines not quoted by Golitsis:

And it is obvious that in reality Plato did not say that the forms are simply [ἀπλῶς] *logoi* within the Demiurge, but he granted them subsistence in themselves and said that the equal itself and the animal itself and such things were something, and also said that it is in regard to these, as paradigms of images, that the Demiurge fabricated the things here.

(243.17–25)

The use of ἀπλῶς (simply) is significant. Philoponus' objection is against the view that forms were *only* demiurgic *logoi*, that is to say, against the denial that Plato took there to be forms prior to the Demiurge. This is indeed a modification of Ammonius' teaching (which may or may not be a new development on Philoponus' part),<sup>33</sup> but it does not constitute evidence that he himself rejects demiurgic forms, or that he takes Aristotle to reject demiurgic forms.

Golitsis takes the passage in question to be evidence that Philoponus departed from Ammonius—not, as I suggest, in regard to the question of whether Aristotle or Plato (or Plato as interpreted by Aristotle) believed in pre-demiurgic forms, but in regard to the question of whether there are forms at all. In Golitsis' view, in line with his general strategy of minimizing Philoponus' development, Philoponus clearly registers his opposition to Platonic forms and, if one appreciates the context of the various passages that bear on the question, there is no reason to think that Philoponus ever changed his mind on the matter. I agree with Golitsis that the passages from the *De anima* and *Posterior Analytics* commentaries do not signal development, but that is because the teachings they put forward are simply not in conflict. The first passage concerns the status of universals; Philoponus endorses Aristotle's view that universals are human conceptions, not forms. The second concerns whether there are forms at all; Philoponus does not dispute the views of Ammonius and Aristotle (as he understands him) that there are forms as demiurgic *logoi*.

Philoponus' treatise *Against Proclus' On the Eternity of the World* is devoted to showing that the metaphysics of Proclus, according to whom forms have a kind of existence prior to the demiurgic intellect, is philosophically problematic. Philoponus has in his sights Proclus' emanative scheme according to which higher, more unified beings necessarily give of themselves, resulting in entities at a lower level of reality, marked by higher degree of multiplicity. On this view, it is, as it were, of the essence of an entity at a higher level that it be productive in this manner. Proclus adopts Plato's metaphor of paradigm and image to account for this productive activity.<sup>34</sup>

If the pattern of the world is eternal, and if its essence [*to ti ēn einaī*] is being a pattern and it has this power not accidentally but in itself, being a pattern by its very being,<sup>35</sup> then, since it is eternal in its being, it would presumably be eternally a pattern. And if being a pattern is present to it eternally, there would necessarily always be a copy too; for a pattern its relative to [its] copy.

(24.2–9)<sup>36</sup>

Philoponus does not indicate what a grievous error Proclus made: the move from the eternity of the forms to the sempiternity of their productive agency. Instead, he focuses on the very existence and nature

of the forms, which, Philoponus points out, are assumed by Proclus to both exist and to “have their essence in being patterns.” This premise is a kind of *endoxon* of Proclus’ dialectical argument. But not everyone believed that there were such forms. Most notably, Aristotle did not. Philoponus mentions the arguments of *Metaph. A 9* to show that Aristotle’s arguments against the forms were not, as some (no doubt including Ammonius) suggested, against the forms as misunderstood, but against the forms as Plato, in fact, understood them. The present passage very definitely marks a change from the interpretation of Aristotle’s criticisms that we saw in other writings. Again, however, it is important to be careful concerning what kind of form is under consideration. According to the passage from Aristotle, which Philoponus quotes at length, Socrates’ inquiry into definitions was a search for “universals,” and Plato “took the view that this had to do with other things and not with anything perceptible; for a common definition cannot be of any perceptible thing, since they are always changing” (987b4–6). Form here is a knowable commonality, the universal in the things, which is the object of knowledge. Philoponus understands Plato to be saying that this is a form. That, for Philoponus, is Plato’s mistake. Philoponus cites the fact that Aristotle criticizes not Socrates, who defined the common features of things, but Plato, who misunderstood Socrates, in support of his view that Aristotle accepted that there are indeed definable universals in things. The question at issue for Aristotle is exactly what it is that is being defined, and what it is that is known by virtue of such a definition. It is not a subsistent form. This conclusion, however, does not entail denying the existence of demiurgic *logoi*. Nothing in the present text contradicts those other texts in which, following Ammonius, Philoponus takes Aristotle to accept that these demiurgic *logoi* exist. Philoponus’ remark here that Aristotle’s target is the positing of forms as “separate from perceptibles” (28.11–12) has Aristotle concerned with the ontological status of universals, and accordingly does not preclude his acceptance of demiurgic *logoi* ontologically independent of and prior to their participants.

Accordingly, when Philoponus supports his interpretation of Aristotle’s criticism of the forms by writing that

if Aristotle had not been attacking Plato’s own position on the Forms but, as these [commentators] claim, [that of] people who had misunderstood him, he would have specified precisely this at the outset and not have refuted the doctrine of the Forms generally and without qualification [*ἀπλῶς καὶ ἀδιορίστως*],

(29.8–12)

the sense is not that Aristotle rejected all forms without reservation, but that Aristotle rejected *point blank* one of Plato’s lines of argument to the

effect that there is a certain kind of form (that which is said to exist prior to and independent of the Demiurge), without distinction between the argument as Plato intended it and as misinterpreted.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

I draw the following conclusions concerning Philoponus' stance concerning Platonic forms. For Philoponus, all universals are conceptual, and arise through the human effort to understand the world through grasping commonalities. Philoponus never decisively rejects Platonic forms, as understood in as *logoi* in the mind of God, identified with the Platonic Demiurge. So understood, these forms are not universals. Rather they are particulars that are such as can cause a multiplicity of particulars to exist. He attributes such causal principles to Aristotle, and to Plato as interpreted by Aristotle, without correction. He does, however, implicitly take issue with forms subsisting prior to the demiurgic intellect, and accordingly follows his teacher Ammonius in rejecting the Proclean interpretation of Plato's metaphysics. In earlier commentaries, he echoes Ammonius in his assertion that those who attribute to Plato the existence of pre-demiurgic principles err in the interpretation of Plato. In other works, he signals that they got Plato right.

This chapter is not the occasion for the task of offering a full history of the cognate terms *eidos* and *idea* from their senses in everyday Greek to their technical philosophical senses, or to fully work through the philosophical ramifications of the blurry nature of the boundaries between these senses. I have instead concentrated on Philoponus' response to state of play of these terms and the theoretical entities to which they were intended to refer, at the cusp of the transition from ancient to medieval philosophy. Nonetheless, some general observations would be in order. Philosophy begins with reflection on the everyday world and employs nontechnical language to allow for greater precision and sophistication in this sort of reflection. Examples are *Meno* 72b, where Socrates appeals to the common look (*eidos*) of different bees to indicate what it means to look for a common *eidos* for virtue, and Aristotle's frequent appeals to shapes of artifacts such as sculptures and spheres as examples of the role played by form according to his hylomorphic analysis. These root meanings continued to have semantic pull even as the analyses of Plato, Aristotle, and their exegetes and followers gained in philosophical significance, and one can speculate that this may have played a role in how Plotinus and Proclus tried to find a place for Aristotelian hylomorphism in the context of Platonic ontology: the form that is the paradigm for the particular that participates in it is understood as akin to the shape that an intelligent artisan imparts to unstructured stuff. In the case at hand, this semantic pull seems to have been strengthened by a widespread conviction that Plato and Aristotle were in basic agreement (which was at least partially rooted



in a general societal veneration for the ancients). But it is always an option for a philosophical free spirit like Philoponus to look at the texts afresh, in order to come to a new understanding of how different philosophers were using the same terms in different ways, in the context of arguments for quite different conclusions, and to use this realization as a starting point for fresh philosophical analyses. We can speculate that immersion in an alternative textual tradition (that of early Christianity) may have played a role in allowing Philoponus to realize that there are radically different ways of reading the same texts and of making sense of the ontological structure of the world.

## Acknowledgments

It is an honor to dedicate this contribution to Richard C. Taylor, friend and colleague of many years, who has done so much to clarify the intricate and philosophically rich story of the reception of Aristotelian thought from late ancient to medieval thought. The paper is an expansion, reworking, and rethinking of ideas originally put forward in Philoponus, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Goldin and Martijn, 2–6. I owe much to discussions with David Twetten and Dirk Baltzy, and to the suggestions of Katja Krause and Nicholas Oschman, but any missteps into the Neoplatonic bog are mine alone.

## Notes

- 1 Verrycken, “Development”; Verrycken, “John Philoponus.”
- 2 Throughout, I employ the lower case for both “form” and “idea,” making no typographical distinction between the terms as employed in nontechnical contexts, Aristotelian contexts, and a Platonic or Neoplatonic context. This chapter is intended to trace some of the consequences of how the terms *eidos* and *idea* were or were not understood as having different senses in different contexts, so although such a typographical device could add clarity in some contexts, it would detract from clarity in others.
- 3 See esp. *Enn.* 5. 2. 1.
- 4 Proclus, *Plato’s Timaeus*, trans. Runia and Share, 178. Gerson, *Aristotle*, 215, takes the distinction to have its root in what he takes to be a mistaken interpretation of *Tim.* 29a–e.
- 5 “[T]he Forms in the Living Being Itself, which are established within the bounds of the intelligible, are not said by Plato to move or ‘leap’ in among bodies, but to give being to all things by their existence alone. If then, to create through activity and motion is secondary to the creation that is prior to action and motion, it is clear that what is established intelligibly and immovably in the Living Being Itself has a higher rank than the demiurgic ideas. And the Demiurge is form-giving in two ways, both by virtue of the source in himself, and by virtue of the intelligible Ideas; for among the latter are the universal causes of all things” (802.22–35), Proclus, *Plato’s Parmenides*, trans. Morrow and Dillon, 170.
- 6 See, for example, Proclus, *In Parm.* 3, 797.4–798.26.
- 7 Helmig, *Forms and Concepts*, 191–95.

- 8 See *ibid.*, 208–9.
- 9 Proclus, *First Book of Euclid's Elements*, trans. Morrow, 41. On such universals, see also *In Parm.* 796.37–797.3.
- 10 See Sorabji, “Universals Transformed,” 291–95.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 308. See also Philoponus, *Categories*, 16–17.
- 12 Ammonius, *In Cat.* 41.3–11.
- 13 The present account of Ammonius' views of the forms (and, by extension, that offered by the earlier Philoponus) differs from that put forward in Philoponus, *Posterior Analytics*, according to which Ammonius, like Proclus, took forms to exist at both pre-demiurgic and demiurgic levels.
- 14 Praechter, “Richtungen.”
- 15 See Verrycken, “Metaphysics”; Verrycken, “La Métaphysique.”
- 16 On which see Elias, *In Cat.* 123.1–3.
- 17 Ammonius, *In Cat.* 41.3–11. On the complexities encountered in reconstructing Ammonius' position from this passage, see Sorabji, “Universals Transformed,” 308.
- 18 Its subtitle is ΣΧΟΛΙΑ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΜΕΙΖΟΝ Α ΤΗΣ ΜΕΤΑ ΤΑ ΦΥΣΙΚΑ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΟΥΣ ΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΑ ΥΠΟ ΑΣΚΛΗΠΙΟΥ ΑΠΟ ΦΩΝΗΣ ΑΜΜΩΝΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΡΜΕΙΟΥ.
- 19 Other passages in which Asclepius attributes to Aristotle's Demiurge a plurality of demiurgic *logoi* are collated by Verrycken, “Metaphysics,” 220 n. 172.
- 20 In contrast, Ammonius does sometimes distinguish between intellect as thinker and forms as thought; see, for example, 165.36–37. But there is no evidence that this is more than a verbal distinction between two aspects of the same realities. Ammonius, *In Porph.* 42.16–20: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀπλῶς νοήσεις αὐτὰ εἶναι τοῦ δημιουργοῦ βούλεται, ἀλλὰ πάντως οὐσίας νοητάς, πρὸς ἃς ἀφορῶντα τὸν δημιουργὸν ὡς πρὸς ἀρχετύπους εἰκόνας τὰ τῆδε ποιεῖν (“For he does not mean to say that they [universals prior to the many] are only thoughts of the Demiurge, but they are to be sure intelligible substances, towards which the Demiurge looks when making the things here, as one looks towards archetypes”), is denying that forms are mere thoughts, not that they subsist at the ontological level of the Demiurge. (On the commentators' denial that forms are thoughts, see Gerson, *Aristotle*, 214.) I should, however, mention two problematic passages. Asclepius, *In Meta.* 363.1–5, raises the possibility that Aristotle may have been right in taking Plato himself to be among those who misunderstood the forms as existing prior to the Demiurge, but the text is noncommittal on the issue. (See Gerson, *Aristotle*, 225, on how Asclepius is open to the possibility that Plato and Aristotle's views on forms are not identical, even if “in harmony.”) At *In Porph.* 43.25–44.4, Ammonius seems to interpret Plato as taking the Demiurge to have within it impressions (*ektupōmata*) of independently existing forms. The commentary, however, is thought to be contaminated with a number of later interpolations. See Busse, “Praefatio,” vi; Blank, “Ammonius.”
- 21 Ammonius, *In Isag.* 41.21–42.7. Ammonius employs this term in a way different from the manner seen in Proclus, according to whom demiurgic *logoi* are ontological and epistemological principles at the level of soul. Henceforth I use this phrase in its Ammonian sense.
- 22 On this passage, see Madigan, “Syrianus and Asclepius,” 151–52.
- 23 Golitsis, *Les Commentaires*, 27–37; Golitsis, “John Philoponus' Commentary,” 401–6.
- 24 Verrycken deals with these cases by means of what might seem like an extravagant appeal to the possibility that later material was inserted into earlier text.

- One example is in Philoponus, *An. Post.* 242.14–243.25, on which see below. See Verrycken, “Development,” 257.
- 25 On the sense of *epistasis*, see Golitsis, “John Philoponus’ Commentary,” 401–6. On Philoponus’ stance in regard to Ammonius in those texts in which he feels free to add his own “critical observations,” see Golitsis, *Les Commentaires*, 23–27; Golitsis, “John Philoponus’ Commentary,” 401–6; Sorabji, “Dating,” 367–73. It is not certain that in these commentaries Philoponus is presenting interpretations of Aristotle with which he agrees, for there is evidence that Philoponus registered disagreements with his teacher Ammonius while the latter was still alive. See Philoponus, *In Phys.* 583.13–29. On this passage, see Golitsis, “John Philoponus’ Commentary,” 401.
  - 26 In this regard, Philoponus is following the second of the two possible interpretations that Alexander of Aphrodisias offers of the Aristotle passage, at *Quaestiones* 1.11, 23.21–24.22. But for Alexander the point is that the genus *insofar as it is a universal* is nothing or posterior, since a particular would still be what it is even if things so happened that it was a unique instantiation of the genus, while for Philoponus the question is whether the genus as such exists at all. See Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Quaestiones*, trans. Sharples, 50–55, with references to the extensive discussion this text has occasioned.
  - 27 Translation modified from Philoponus, *On the Soul*, trans. van der Eijk, 53–54.
  - 28 The view that what Ammonius called demiurgic *logoi* are not definable can be traced back to Proclus’ denial that Plato’s Forms are objects of definition (*In Parm.* 939.10–22; 986.10–14), on which see Sorabji, “Universals Transformed,” 295–96. This approaches the more radical view Philoponus expresses late in his career (*Arbiter* 7 = John of Damascus, *Book of Heresies* 83.52–68) that universals have conceptual existence alone. See Sorabji, “Universals Transformed,” 310–11. This view, too, is not in tension with positing demiurgic forms which, as unique exemplars serving as causes, are not universals.
  - 29 Translation modified from Philoponus, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Goldin and Martijn, 73.
  - 30 See Sorabji, “Universals Transformed,” 300–3.
  - 31 The translation of this and the comment by Aristotle just above are from Philoponus, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Goldin and Martijn, 43.
  - 32 Golitsis, “John Philoponus’ Commentary,” 402.
  - 33 See note 28 above.
  - 34 Proclus discusses the limitations of the metaphor at *In Parm.* 910.13–24.
  - 35 As Share points out, this phrase is used among Neoplatonists in reference to causal relationships in which the agents “exercise causation while themselves remaining absolutely immutable.” Philoponus, *Against Proclus*, trans. Share, 93 n. 50.
  - 36 Philoponus, *Against Proclus*, trans. Share, 32–34.
  - 37 The rest of Philoponus’ refutation of Proclus here is a *reductio*, proceeding on the assumption these forms do, in fact, exist. The Forms, Philoponus tells us, must be substances. As such, they are not inherent in the mind of the Demiurge but are posited as independent of the Demiurge (33.6–17; 36.16–17)—that is to say, they are Forms in the unparticipated intellect. But in this case, Proclus’ argument does not go through. “But if they will claim that they are not substances but certain demiurgic *logoi* or concepts in accord with which the creator frames things—for what else could they be if they are not substances?—even so there is no obvious necessity that products based on these demiurgic *logoi* should in every case coexist with them. Once more the necessity is in the other direction” (36.17–24), translation modified from Share, in Philoponus, *Against Proclus*, trans. Share, 39.

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### 3 Pseudo-Ammonius' *Ārā'* *al-falāsifa* and Its Influence on Early Ismā'īlī Thought

*Janis Esots*

Pseudo-Ammonius' *Kitāb Amūniyūs fī ārā' al-falāsifa [al-mawsūm bi] ikhtilāf al-aqāwīl fī al-mabādī [wa] fī al-bāri'* (Book of Ammonius on the Opinions of the Philosophers [entitled] "The Different Statements on the Principles [and] on the Creator") is a doxographical text that was paraphrased from one or several Greek sources—directly or via Syriac—into Arabic at some point in the mid-ninth century CE, by a scholar who remains anonymous, but was probably associated with al-Kindī's circle.<sup>1</sup> It claims to represent a summary of the views of several major Greek philosophers, ranging from Thales to Proclus, on issues including the unity of God, the creation of the world, the hierarchy of being, and soteriology. The only surviving copy, which forms part of the unicum MS Aya Sofya 2450 (fols. 107a–135b), was discovered in 1958 by Samuel Miklos Stern.<sup>2</sup> It seems to have been copied in Iran in the fourteenth century CE.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, a significant portion of the text appears to be corrupt, and the scribe seems to have had only a limited command of Arabic.<sup>4</sup> The *Ārā' al-falāsifa* was edited by Ulrich Rudolph in 1989, along with a German translation and detailed commentary.<sup>5</sup>

In a later article,<sup>6</sup> Rudolph describes the work as "a treatise of philosophical and religious persuasion, concealed behind the *façade* of a doxography."<sup>7</sup> However, he admits that the author had some genuine knowledge of ancient Greek philosophy—this being evident from the short remarks he occasionally makes (e.g., the remark about Plutarch of Chaeronea's opinion about the eternal presence of ideas in God's mind<sup>8</sup>). Rudolph concludes that "within the Arabic doxographic texts of the ninth century, the genuine identities and doctrines of the Greek philosophers [. . .] are not the most central issues," because "they are given a new role," which is "explained by the context in which they are quoted."<sup>9</sup>

In his turn, Paul Walker, an expert on early Ismā'īlī thought, believes that

the existence of the *Pseudo-Ammonius* may be due to Ismaili interest in proving the philosophers wrong, or at least predominantly so. The motive in both cases is to demonstrate philosophical incoherence specifically in areas involving knowledge of the spiritual realm, i.e. the world of intellect, soul, origination and the Originator.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, Walker continues, Pseudo-Ammonius' text seems to support Abū Ḥātim Rāzī's preference for Proclus, Democritus, and possibly Plato over Aristotle, for the same reasons that Rāzī cites in favor of those thinkers. He and Pseudo-Ammonius agree so closely, Walker speculates, that possibly they both belong to the same movement, the *Ismā'īlī da'wa*.<sup>11</sup> This is not a bad conjecture—but it does not go much further: there is no further evidence of Pseudo-Ammonius' *Ismā'īlī* affiliation.

Walker is right to say that “by providing a catalog of philosophical sectarianism, the *Ismā'īlī* writers could [ . . . ] show how there was truth in philosophy but also how only properly oriented persons could find it.”<sup>12</sup> The choice of the Pseudo-Ammonius and the *Longer Theologia* as the key philosophical texts by the early *Ismā'īlī* missionaries (especially Nasafī and Sijistānī), however, could have been dictated by the summary character and conciseness of these texts, not solely by certain type of information and concepts found in them. In other words, at the time when Nasafī and Sijistānī were active, these texts—in the absence of better ones—were regarded as reliable compendiums of Greek philosophical knowledge not only by the representatives of the *Ismā'īlī da'wa* but also by the educated elite of different parts of the Islamic world in general. A generation later, the works of al-Fā rābī, which reflected the Greek philosophical heritage to a much fuller extent, became available. Then, another *Ismā'īlī da'wī*, Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī, did not hesitate to use them and to incorporate some of al-Fārābī's teachings into his own doctrine, thus subjecting to a substantial revision the Neoplatonic cosmological system that Nasafī and Sijistānī had reproduced.

That said, the influence of Pseudo-Ammonius on early *Ismā'īlī* thought appears to be undeniable. In what follows, I will discuss how this influence may have shaped the *Ismā'īlī* treatment of three major theological and philosophical problems: the *creatio ex nihilo* (*ibdā'*) and its relation to procession, God's will and action, and the return or reversion.

### **Creatio ex nihilo (*ibdā'*)**

The creation from nothing is one of the key articles of faith of the three major monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)—and, simultaneously, an opinion that none of the Greek philosophers would endorse. The history of medieval Arabo-Islamic philosophy can, to a significant extent, be described as an arduous attempt to reconcile the two stances, which led to the emergence of a variety of eclectic ontological and cosmological theories. As early as in the early tenth century CE, the *Ismā'īlī* authors offered their own solution, to which the *Ismā'īlīs* have adhered until our day. It consists in splitting the process of origination into two radically different phases: the creation (*ibdā'*) of the First Intellect by the Creator and the subsequent procession (*inbi'āth*) of other levels or degrees of the world from that Intellect. Pseudo-Ammonius, who offers a

good number of quotations from Greek thinkers in which they apparently endorse the *creatio ex nihilo*, rendered the early Ismā'īlī authors a much-appreciated assistance.

There were two important issues to be sorted out: whether the Creator created all things from absolute nothing or had some form or model of these things in His mind (which could have been either the model of the world as a whole or the models of its parts—the latter option, in turn, raises the question about the way in which God knows or does not know the particulars); and whether this creation took place during a certain period of time or happened instantaneously.

Pseudo-Ammonius quotes the alleged opinion of Thales, according to which the Creator

created what He created, at which creation there was no form in His essence present, because, before the creation, there was only Himself, and none else [ . . . ]. The creation consists in making something from what was nothing. And when something is made, it is made not in the aspect of the essence of the Maker, but in the aspect of the essence which is external to that. Inevitably, the maker of something possesses no form of what it makes something [from nothing]—otherwise, he would not be the maker of something [from nothing]. Since, however, he is the maker of something [from nothing], that making of something is not from something that precedes the making, and what is made something, is [previously] nothing. If the case is such, the maker of the things does not need the form of the thing in order to make it. Had he possessed that form, he would be coupled [*muqārīn*] with that form: whosoever has a form, which is its discrete constituent, is inevitably coupled with that form. Since the First Creator attains to the infinite, he is not obliged to possess a form without which He cannot create. Rather, if He possessed the form, He would not be the Creator [from nothing].<sup>13</sup>

This opinion, of course, has nothing in common with the teachings of the historical Thales of Miletus—the one who speaks here is an apologist of the *creatio ex nihilo* theory in its pure form, which rules out the possibility of the presence of any form, model, or paradigm of the created things (or the world as a whole) in God's knowledge. He attributes the opinion to an ancient sage in order to adduce importance to his creationist agenda.

A similar view is attributed to Xenophanes:

The First Creator is an eternal ipseity, God, who is the source of permanence and beginninglessness. Being the principle of every logical and rational attribute, He cannot be perceived through these attributes. And, since it is so, it is meaningless to claim that the form of some created thing is with Him, or is not with Him, and to speculate



how He created and why, because the Intellect is created, and whatever is created, is preceded by the Creator, and the preceded thing will never perceive [properly] the preceder. And, since the preceded cannot perceive the preceder, how can it describe the latter?<sup>14</sup>

However, a radically different view is ascribed to Plutarch of Chaeronea:

The Creator [. . .] always is in His eternity, which is the Eternity of eternities; and He is the Creator, and nothing else. But the form of every creature which emerges in the precincts of creation, [before that] is present in His preceding knowledge; and there are infinitely many forms with Him; and if the form [of the creature] were not eternally with Him, it could not remain.<sup>15</sup>

Hence, it is asked how the thing can subsist and preserve its identity in the absence of the form of that thing in God's knowledge. "Plutarch" answers that if the form of the thing were absent from God's knowledge, the thing would perish together with its matter. This, however, he argues, would mean the invalidation of "hope and fear," i.e., the promise of reward and the threat of punishment in the hereafter. Pseudo-Ammonius dismisses this "argument from the afterlife" without examining it in detail, as self-evidently wrong.<sup>16</sup>

Let us see how the issue is treated by the *Ismā'īlī* authors. Nasafī, in his *al-Maḥṣūl*, writes:

The Intellect issues the forms from its cause, which is the Word, in the same way as the sun gives the recipients a share of its light, but not of its body. Since its pouring out of what is in it, namely, the potency of its cause, which is the Word, and its endowment of the recipients, occurs in this way, the cause of the things that emerge from the Intellect is the Word, not the ipseity of the Intellect, except that the Intellect becomes an intermediary between the Word and what is below the Intellect.<sup>17</sup>

The Word (*kalima*) is represented here as a storage place of the forms of the created things: the Intellect acquires or "borrows" them from the Word and transfers to the existents of lower levels. The passage does not directly address the issue of whether the Creator creates using a form preexistent in His knowledge or not. Implicitly, however, it relates the forms to the level of the Word, which represents an intermediary between the Creator and the Intellect. (One is tempted to identify these forms with the Stoic and Neoplatonic *logoi*, rather than with Plato's *eide*.)

In his *Kitāb al-yanābi'*, Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī (who was probably Nasafī's student), says:

The world's acquiring a form conceived in made things is a sign of the inability of the maker to manifest a thing whose form does not precede

it. As for the true Creator, whose command is creation from nothing, He does not require the form of what He creates to be known to Him in order for His wisdom and power to reach the fullest limit of perfection and organization. Do you not observe concerning the lowest of universals among the beings created from nothing, which is Nature, how it causes natural things to appear by the power that was given to it by its own cause without having to conceive for these a form in knowledge? Rather, the power that was given to it puts everything in its place and settles each in its position. Accordingly, we say that the Creator, who is He (there being nothing with Him), whose command is pure creation from nothing, pure truth, pure knowledge, and pure word, is the Creator of the [two] worlds and what is in them both, their form not being a known thing with Him.<sup>18</sup>

As we see, Sijistānī believes that even Nature, the lowest and weakest of the beings created from nothing, manifests the things (not being their creator proper) without previously conceiving their form. Such being the case, it is unreasonable to assume that the Creator needs to conceive/possess the forms of the things in order to create them. Let us bear in mind that Sijistānī is probably the most outspoken representative of the apophatic or negative theology among the Ismā'īlī authors (known for his employment of the method of double negation, possibly borrowed from Damascius): in this view, his treatment of the issue could hardly have been different.

The view that the Creator from nothing has no need in the forms of the things which He creates was shared (if not initially proposed) by the authors of such Arabic paraphrases of Plotinus as Pseudo-Aristotle's *Theology* (a paraphrase of selected passages from *Enneads* 4–6) and Pseudo-Fārābī's *Risāla fī al-'ilm al-ilāhī*, and was endorsed by the majority of theologians (*mutakallimūn*).

Thus, Pseudo-Aristotle's *Theology* (*Uthūlūjīyā*) argues:

When the Creator intends to make a thing, He does not [first] make a model [of it] in Himself and [then] reproduce it externally, because, before He creates from nothing, there is no thing. Likewise, He does not create a model in Himself, because His essence is the model of every thing, and the model does not imitate [anything else].<sup>19</sup>

In turn, Pseudo-Fārābī states in his *Risāla fī al-'ilm al-ilāhī*:

It is impossible that any created form would exist before the Creator makes it present in some matter. Similarly, Nature originates the forms in matter, but is not able to produce any self-subsistent form which would exist outside that matter.<sup>20</sup>

As for the position of the *mutakallimūn*, Ash'arī in his *Maqālāt* asserts that God does not create His creation following a preceding example.<sup>21</sup>

A crucial passage in the *Kitāb al-khayr al-mahḍ* (§17) explains that the Creator from nothing and other makers/givers act in two different ways: whereas the Creator gives things their ipseity by creating them from nothing (*bi naw' ibdā'in/per modum creationis*), the others give the things their respective benefits by imposing on the beneficiary a certain form (*bi naw' ṣūratin/per modum informationis/specificationis*).<sup>22</sup> If that is so, the form is not involved in the *ibdā'* at all. One is tempted to conclude that ipseity (*huwiya*, literally “he-ness”) here is identical with the existence of the thing.

Peter Adamson believes that this is exactly the case: “God creates being, and this created being is then delimited by form through the act of Intellect.” A few pages later, he explains: “Pure being, then, can be the only immediate expression of the power of God, and this being can only be differentiated through the further activity of something that has a certain degree of multiplicity, namely Intellect.”<sup>23</sup>

The situation is, however, complicated by another brief passage, found among the so-called “scattered quotations” (*al-nuṣūṣ al-mutafarriqa*) from Plotinus.<sup>24</sup> According to this,

although [it is correct to say that] the Intellect is the cause of the things that are below it, [this must be qualified to the effect that] it is only the cause of the form of the thing, not the cause of its ipseity [JE: that is, existence]. *The First Agent, however, is the complete cause of the thing. This means that He is the [direct] cause of the ipseity and the form of the thing, without the intermediary of the Intellect and the Soul.*<sup>25</sup>

So one wonders whether the Creator from nothing, the First Agent, creates the ipseity (= existence/being) only, creates both the ipseity and the form, or creates only the ipseity (= existence) but is nevertheless the direct cause of the ipseity and the form. The third case is evidently absurd and can be dismissed. Apparently, the dominant stance was expressed by the first opinion: the Creator from nothing creates only the ipseity or existence which subsequently receives the form and is delimited by it. Is this the view that was held by Nasafī and Sijistānī? I would give a cautious reply: to some extent, yes (as we remember, Sijistānī views nature as the existentiator of natural things). Nevertheless, one is still tempted to think that this view implies the presence of the possible or hypothetical essences of these things in God’s knowledge. In other words, the problem remains without a definite solution.

The view that God creates the things *ex nihilo* without a previous form or model is not unrelated to the opinion that such creation occurs at once (*daf'atan wāḥidatan*), i.e., instantaneously. Pseudo-Ammonius tells us that such is the opinion of at least three ancient Greek thinkers: Democritus, Zeno of Citium, and Chrysippus. Democritus holds that

the first created thing is not the matter, or the Intellect—rather, it is the four mixtures, namely the elements, from which all simple things are then instantaneously created. As for the compound things, they are created from matter as both lasting and perishing, although their lasting and perishing differs in kind.<sup>26</sup>

The two Stoics, Zeno and Chrysippus, in turn, believe that “the First Creator is pure one and identical to Himself, and only to Himself. He created the Intellect and the Soul instantaneously; [then,] through their mediation, He created all that is below them.”<sup>27</sup>

The latter statement is repeated almost verbatim by Abū Ḥātim Rāzī, an Ismā'īlī missionary in central Iran, a contemporary of Nasafī and his opponent on a number of issues:

The Creator is [one and] pure, [and] He is only “That.” He created the Intellect and the Soul instantaneously; then, through their mediation, He created all that is below them.<sup>28</sup>

Incidentally, the *Theology* of Pseudo-Aristotle also refers to the instantaneous (or, more precisely, atemporal) character of the Creator's action: the Pure Agent, “when He acts, looks at His essence and performs His action at once.”<sup>29</sup> Could this, rather than Pseudo-Ammonius, have been the ultimate source of the principle of the instantaneous creation? We know that the *Theology* was translated into Arabic before AH 227/842 CE; the Arabic version of Pseudo-Ammonius dates back to approximately the same time.<sup>30</sup> Both texts were part of a major project—a “programme *de propaganda philosophia*,” to quote Endress—initiated by al-Kindī and his circle,<sup>31</sup> and were extensively used by the Ismā'īlī authors. It seems, nevertheless, that each early Ismā'īlī author had his own preferences: while Sijistānī (in particular in his late *Kitāb al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*) extensively quotes from the longer version of the *Theology*, Rāzī in his *A'lām al-Nubuwwa* (particularly in section 4.2, “On the differences between the philosophers concerning the principles”) draws heavily on Pseudo-Ammonius.

### God's Will and Action

Another important issue discussed by both Pseudo-Ammonius and the Ismā'īlī authors is that of God's will and action. Pseudo-Ammonius presents a range of opinions on the subject, attributing them to Thales, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch. The quoted statements elucidate the relationship between the willer (willing subject), the will, and the willed (object). As noticed by Rudolph, some of these statements bear a remarkable similarity with the views of certain Mu'tazilites, contemporaries of the paraphraser. Thus, the opinion ascribed to Anaxagoras and Plutarch, according

to which will does not possess a form of its own but is identical with the willer and the willed, coincides with the view of al-Nazzām (d. between 220 and 230/835 and 845).<sup>32</sup> In turn, the alleged position of Plato and Aristotle, according to which will and action (i.e., *ibdā'*) each has a form of its own, coincides with that of al-Ḥudhayl (d. 226/840).<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, Thales and Empedocles allegedly adhered to the belief that from the point of view of the Creator, the will is identical with Him, while from the point of view of the creation, it is identical with the creation.<sup>34</sup> According to yet another position (not attributed to any particular thinker), from the point of view of the Creator, the form of will is identical with the form of action, whereas from the point of view of the “trace” or creation, will is identical with the creation itself.<sup>35</sup> This, again, is not entirely different from al-Nazzām’s point, according to which the will for creation is identical with creation.<sup>36</sup>

There appears to be a remarkable difference in the views of the early Ismā‘īlī authors regarding the problem of will and action, which stems from their disagreement concerning the presence or absence of an intermediary between the Creator and the creation. In his *al-Maqālīd*, Sijistānī, who treats the Command (*amr*) or Word (*kalima*) as a separate hypostasis between the Creator and the Intellect, identifies God’s will with His command (“His command which is His will”<sup>37</sup>). However, this opinion is dismissed by Kirmānī. In his *al-Riyāḍ*, Kirmānī argues that

the Intellect is not different from the Word, and vice versa, rather they are a single essence and a single entity, which, when it is considered in relation [to different things] receives names with different meanings.<sup>38</sup>

Simultaneously, the Intellect is also “the essence of God’s command, and as such the cause of the existence of all things.”<sup>39</sup> In Kirmānī’s opinion, it is impossible to consider the (divine) Word, Command, or will as a separate entity or hypostasis that mediates between the Creator and the creation. The Creator and the creation have nothing in common, he argues; thus, by definition, there cannot be an intermediary of any sort between them.<sup>40</sup> Hence, the will is nothing but the Intellect.

Sijistānī’s position, according to which God’s will is an intermediary between Him and His creation, is compatible with the views of “Anaxagoras” and “Plutarch” (will does not possess a form of its own, but is identical with the willer and the willed) and the belief of “Thales” and “Empedocles” (from the point of view of the Creator, the will is identical with Him, while from the point of view of the creation, it is identical with the creation), and may represent a combination of both (and thus, in fact, a combination of the views of certain Mu‘tazilite thinkers). The position of Kirmānī, who identifies the will with the First Intellect and claims there is an unbridgeable abyss between the latter and the Creator, cannot be identified with any of the opinions on the issue quoted by Pseudo-Ammonius; hence, it must be based on different theories and sources.

## Return/Reversion

The return of the result and the end to its beginning and principle, one of the key tenets of Platonism, is interpreted in Islamic thought in a number of ways. Pseudo-Ammonius proposes at least four important considerations on this issue, which resonate to differing extents in the Ismā'īlī texts.

- a The lower world subsists owing to the presence of the (particles of) light of the first principles in it.<sup>41</sup> Rudolph points to the possible Manichaean origin of this opinion, attributed to Anaximenes.<sup>42</sup> According to the Manichaean tenets, the liberated particles of light form a "Column of Light" (*amūd min nūr*).<sup>43</sup> Although Pseudo-Ammonius does not mention the term, the idea of the liberation of the particles of light from matter and their subsequent return or ascent is implicitly present in the passage. Later, in Ṭayyibī Ismā'īlism, this seminal idea developed into an elaborated teaching on the Column of Light, understood as an uninterrupted chain of lights of influx (*mādda*) and support (*ta'yīd*) that descends from the Creator to the First Intellect, and then, in due order, to other levels. Acting as a divine magnet (*magnāṭīs ilāhī*), this column attracts the forms of the lower degrees to those of the higher ones.<sup>44</sup> The soul of the believer is connected to the column via the point of light, situated in its innermost part. Upon the increase of the illumination it receives from the column of light, this point expands into a form of light, which experiences permanent attraction from the column of light. Upon the soul's separation from the body, it unites with the form of light (which manifests itself to the dying individual in his imagination, representing the personification of his acquired divine knowledge and good deeds performed), and they become a single angelic light.<sup>45</sup>
- b Separation of the particular intellects from the Universal Intellect and the particular souls from the Universal Soul occurs due to their immersion in the prime matter, whereas their escape from it takes place through a reunion with the Universal Intellect or the Universal Soul, respectively.

Pseudo-Ammonius attributes to the Stoics an opinion according to which

the pollution of the soul and grubbiness of the bodies afflict the human being in the aspect of its particularity, whereas the purification and refinement occur in the aspect of its universality. When the particular soul separates from the Universal Soul, and the particular intellect from the Universal Intellect, they coarsen and enter the domain of the body, because whenever the particular soul and the particular intellect descend, they unite with the body, which belongs to the domain of water and earth, both of which are heavy and tend to move downwards. In turn, whenever the particular soul unites with the Universal Soul, and the

particular intellect with the Universal Intellect, they ascend due to their unification with the body, which pertains to the domains of fire and air, both of which are light and tend to move upwards.<sup>46</sup>

Rāzī quotes the opinion about the two bodies of the particular soul (earthy and watery, and airy and fiery) in his *A'lām al-nubuwwa* merely as a doxographical curiosity, without explicitly approving or disapproving of it.<sup>47</sup> As discussed above, later the Ṭayyibī Ismā'īlīs produced an elaborate theory of the ascent of the particular soul along the Column of Light, which, acting as a divine magnet, attracts the souls to itself.<sup>48</sup> The Universal Soul and Universal Intellect were interpreted as different levels of the spiritual reality of the Imam.

- c The particular souls immersed in the matter make supplication to the Universal Soul, which supplicates the Intellect, which, in turn, invokes the Creator. In reply to her supplication, the particular soul receives support from the Universal Soul and, eventually, after the lapse of many eons, becomes permanently united with it. This rather elaborate theory—which *inter alia* implies the periodical renewal or rebirth of the world owing to the divine support received and hence presupposes the occurrence of periodical cycles in natural and human history—is attributed by Pseudo-Ammonius to Empedocles and Heraclitus.<sup>49</sup> While it is by no means the only source of the Ismā'īlī teaching on the divine support (*ta'yīd*) that from the Creator, via the First Intellect, descends and spreads to all levels of the world, this source gives a strong endorsement to that teaching and may have contributed to giving it the particular shape in which we encounter it in the works of early Ismā'īlī authors.

The opinion attributed to Empedocles and Heraclitus also implies that if the particular souls can unite with the Universal Soul, they are parts, not traces, of the latter—which was the view of Nasafī and Sijistānī,<sup>50</sup> whereas Rāzī and Kirmānī believed the particular soul to be the trace of the Universal one:<sup>51</sup> the part can and does return to the whole, but the trace cannot return to its author.<sup>52</sup>

- d Pseudo-Ammonius attributes to Democritus the opinion that the “husks” (that is, bodies) will eventually (at the end of the great cycle?) disappear, and the world will become a simple spiritual affair.<sup>53</sup> Such an opinion is an indispensable part of any messianic worldview, and clearly not unreminiscent of the Qarmāṭī (and Nizārī) Ismā'īlī teaching of the *qiyāma* as the abolishment of the exoteric layer and laws pertaining to it.

## Conclusion

The discovery of the manuscript of Pseudo-Ammonius by Samuel Miklos Stern, its edition and German translation by Ulrich Rudolph, and the research on it by Everett Rowson, Paul Walker, Daniel De Smet, and

Rüdiger Arnzen have made the *ārā' al-falāsifa* known to a wider circle of scholars and established its important role in the formative period of Arabo-Islamic philosophy. However, due to the loss of the original version of the book (which was apparently significantly more extensive), a number of questions about its influence on the development of subsequent philosophical tradition, in particular in the Ismā'īlī milieu, currently cannot be answered with full certainty. The paraphraser certainly took a very relaxed attitude towards his source(s), adjusting it/them as, in his opinion, the current theological and philosophical discourse required. On many occasions, he ascribed certain opinions of his contemporaries to the ancient Greek thinkers, thus apparently attending to the demands of circumstances. Hence, the Arabic version of Pseudo-Ammonius can by no means be treated as an impartial scholarly doxography; on the contrary, it was intentionally designed as a polemical tool, in order to reshape the contemporary philosophical and theological discourse in the desired way.

Were the early Ismā'īlī authors Nasafī, Rāzī, and Sijistānī, who lived and worked some three or four generations later, aware of this? I believe they were. They used Pseudo-Ammonius for their own polemical purposes, in order to show the intellectual superiority of the Ismā'īlī doctrine and, by doing so, to win the support of the local elites in different parts of the Islamic world. The names of the Greek sages, whose alleged opinions they endorsed or dismissed, gave additional weight to the teaching they were propagating, whereas the establishment of the historical veracity of the opinions associated with the ancient thinkers was not their primary concern.

## Notes

- 1 This can be concluded from the paraphraser's use of certain philosophical terms, coined by the translators of the *Plotiniana Arabica*, in most cases either belonging to al-Kindī's circle. See Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, index (76–153); also Esots, "Image of the Sage."
- 2 Rowson, "Al-Āmirī on the Afterlife," 256; cf. Altmann and Stern, *Isaac Israeli*, 70 n. 1.
- 3 De Smet, "La *Doxographie du Pseudo-Ammonius*," 497.
- 4 See Rowson, "Al-Āmirī on the Afterlife," 257.
- 5 Pseudo-Ammonius, *Doxographie*, ed. Rudolph.
- 6 Rudolph, "La connaissance des présocratiques"; in an abridged English version as Rudolph, "Presocratics."
- 7 Rudolph, "Presocratics," 68. Cf. Walker's description: "a collection of opinions, falsely attributed to the ancient philosophers" (Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism*, 52).
- 8 Rudolph, "Presocratics," 68.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 10 Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism*, 40.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 52.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 152.



- 13 قال ثالثيس إنّ القول الذي لا مردّ له هو أنّ المبدع كان ولا شيء مبدع وأبدع الذي أبدع ولا صورة له عنده في الذات لأنّ قيل الإبداع إنّما هو فقط... والإبداع إنّما هو تأييس شيء ممّا لم يكن وتأييس الشيء إذا أيّس ليس يكون حينئذ نحو ذات المؤييس بل نحو ذات ما هو خارج منه فلا محالة أنّه لم يكن لذلك المؤييس صورة البتة وإلا فليس هو بمؤييس فإذا كان هو مؤييس الأشياء فالتأييس لا من شيء متقدم ولا شيء إنّما هو مؤييس فإذا كان كذلك فمؤييس الأشياء لا يحتاج إلى أن يكون عنده صورة الشيء بأييسيته وإلا فقد يلزمه إن كانت الصورة عنده أن يكون مقارناً للصورة التي عنده لأنّ من كانت الصورة عنده قائمة منفصلة فلا محالة أنّه مقارن لتلك الصورة والمبدع الأول إذا بلغ ما لا غاية بعده فإنّه لا يلزمه أن تكون الصورة عنده وإلا فليس هو مبدعاً ولو كانت الصورة عنده لم *Doxographie 2, 1–12, ed. Rudolph, 34–35). Cf. Arnzen, Platonische Ideen, 51–52.*
- 14 قال كسنوفانس فإنّه كان يقول إنّ المبدع الأول هو أنّية ازلية، الإله الذي هو ينبوع الديمومية والقدمية لا يدرك بنوع صفة منطقية ولا عقلية، ميّداً كل صفة وكل نعت منطقي وعقلي وإذا كان هذا هكذا فقولنا إن صورة ما في هذا العالم المبدع لم تكن عنده أو كانت أو كيف أبدع ولمّ أبدع محال لأنّ العقل مبدع والمبدع مسبوق بالمبدع ولا يدرك المسبوق السابق أبداً فإذا كان المسبوق لا يدرك لأنّ العقل مبدع والمبدع مسبوق فكيف يجوز أن يصف المسبوق السابق؟ *(Doxographie 4, 1–6, ed. Rudolph, 36). Cf. Arnzen, Platonische Ideen, 52.*
- 15 قال فلوطرخس إنّ البارئ جلّ وعلا لم يزل بالأزلية التي هي أزلية الأزليات وهو مبدع فقط وكل مبدع ظهرته صورته في حدّ الإبداع فقد كانت صورته في علمه الأول والصورة عنده بلا نهاية ولو لم تكن الصورة معه *(Doxographie 3, 1–4, ed. Rudolph, 35). Cf. Arnzen, Platonische Ideen, 52.*
- 16 *Doxographie 3, 5–12, ed. Rudolph, 35–36.*
- 17 إنّ العقل إنّما يفيد الصور من علته التي هي الكلمة كما ان الشمس تفيد القابسين من ضوءها، لا من جرمها، وإذا كان إخراجها لما فيه من قوة علته التي هي الكلمة وإفادتها إياهم كذلك منها استبان أنّ الكلمة هي التي صارت علة الأشياء البارزة من العقل، لا هوية العقل، وإلا ان العقل *(al-Nasafī, al-Maḥṣūl, quoted in al-Kirmānī, Kitāb al-riyāḍ, ed. Tāmir, 226.14–18).*
- 18 Walker, *Wellsprings of Wisdom*, 151 (ch. 33; translation modified). The Arabic text runs: وإن اكتساب العالم للصورة المتصورة في المصنوعات آية عجز الصانع عن اظهار الشيء لم يتقدم عليه صورته. فاما المبدع الحق الذي أمره الإبداع فلا يحتاج أن يكون صورة ما يبدعه معلومة عنده، لتكون حكمته وقدرته في غاية الكمال والهيبة. الم تر أن ادنى المبدعات في الكلية – وهي طبيعية – كيف تظهر الأشياء الطبيعية بقوتها الموهبة لها من علتها من غير تصوير لها صورة علمية؟ بل قوتها الموهبة لها تضع كل شيء موضعه وتنزله منزلته. وكذلك نقول: إنّ المبدع الذي هو كان ولا شيء معه، أمره إبداع محض، وحق محض، وعلم محض، وكلمة محضة، مبدع العالمين بما فيهما ولا تكون صورهما معلومة عنده *(al-Sijistānī, Kitāb al-yanābī, ed. Ghālib, 151).*
- 19 وأمّا البارئ فإنّه إذا أراد فعل شيء فإنّه لا يمثّل في نفسه ولا يحدث صنعة خارجة منه، لأنّه لم يكن *(Aflūṭīn) شيء قبل أن يبدع الأشياء، ولا يتمثل في ذاته لأن ذاته مثال كل شيء، فالمثال لا يتمثل (Aflūṭīn 'inda al-'arab, ed. Badawī, 163.2–4).*
- 20 لا يمكن أن تكون صورة من الصور الصناعية موجودة قبل أن يصورها الصانع في بعض العناصر وكذلك تفعل الطبيعة الصور في بعض العناصر ولا تقوى على أن تفعل صورة من الصور قائمة *(Pseudo-Fārābī, Risāla fī al-'ilm al-ilāhī, 167–68).*
- 21 بذاتها إلا في عنصر *(al-Ash'arī, Maqālāt al-islamiyyīn, 156, l. 9).*
- 22 نّ الهوية الأولى ساكنة وهي علت العقل، وإن كانت تعطى الأشياء كلها الهوية فإنها تعطىها بنوع إبداع. وأمّا الحياة الأولى فإنها تعطى ما تحتها الحياة لا بنوع إبداع، بل بنوع صورة. وكذلك العقل إنّما يعطى ما تحته – من العلم وسائر الأشياء بنوع صورة، لا بنوع إبداع، لأنّ نوع الإبداع إنّما هو *(Kitāb fī al-khayr al-mahd, 19).*
- 23 Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus*, 133 and 141.
- 24 In *Aflūṭīn 'inda al-'arab, ed. Badawī, 185–98.*
- 25 وإن كان العقل علة الأشياء التي تحته، فإنّه ليس بعلة تامّة للشيء، لأنه إنّما هو علة صورة الشيء فقط لا علة هوية. فأمّا الفاعل الأول فإنّه علة تامّة. وذلك أنه علة هوية الشيء وصورته *(Aflūṭīn 'inda al-'arab, ed. Badawī, 185). Emphasis added.* Apparently, the First Agent acts as a cause of the thing in two different ways, in respect to its ipseity and its form (cf. the discussion on the causality of the One as the *dunamis ton panton* in D'Ancona, "Plotinus.")

- 26 بمقراطيس واصحابه . كانوا يقولون في المبدع الأول إنه ليس هو العنصر فقط و لا عقل بل الأخلاط الأربعة وهي الأسطقتات ثم منها أبدعت الاشياء البسيطة كلها دفعة واحدة فأما المركبة (*Doxographie* 8, 1–3, ed. Rudolph, 41).
- 27 كان خروسبوس وزينون من اهل المظلة وكان رأيهم وقولهم الخالص أن البارئ الأول واحد محض (*Doxographie*) وهو هو أن فقط أبدع العقل والنفس دفعة واحدة ثم أبدع جميع ما تحتها بتوسطهما 17, 3–6, ed. Rudolph, 61).
- 28 إن البارئ محض هو أن فقط، أبدع العقل و النفس دفعةً واحدةً ثم أبدع جميع ما تحتها بتوسطهما (al-Rāzī, *A'lām al-Nubuwwa*, 143).
- 29 فإذا فعل فإنما ينظر إلى ذاته فيفعل فعله دفعةً واحدةً (*Afluṭīn 'inda al-'arab*, ed. Badawī, 51.14; cf. *Doxographie*, ed. Rudolph, 150, where the references to several Is-mā'īlī texts are given).
- 30 D'Ancona, "Theology Attributed to Aristotle," 16.
- 31 Endress, "New and Improved Platonic Theology," 569.
- 32 فأما أنكساغورس فإنه كان نخب مذهب فلوطرخس في البارئ والإرادة وفعل فكان يزعم أن الإرادة ليست غير المراد ولا هي أيضًا غير المريد وكذلك أيضًا الفعل ليس غير الفاعل ولا غير المفعول لأن الإرادة لا صورة لها ذاتيةً فإن صورة الإرادة وصورة الفعل إنما تقومان وتكونان إما بالفاعل وإما بالمفعول (*Doxographie* 24, 1–5, ed. Rudolph, 72; see Rudolph's commentary *ibid.*, 199).
- 33 فأما أفلاطون وأرسطاطاليس فإنهما كانا لا يقبلان هذا من أنكساغورس بل كانا يقولان إن صورة الإرادة و صورة الفعل قائمتان لأنهما أبسط من صورة المراد وذلك أنهما قالوا انظروا إلى القاطع للشيء، وهو الفاعل إذا قطع الشيء وانظروا إلى المقطوع وانظروا إلى القطع فالقاطع هو المؤثر أثره في الشيء والمقطوع هو المؤثر فيه القابل لأثر المؤثر فالأثر ليس هو المؤثر ولا المؤثر فيه (*Doxographie* 24, 8–12, ed. Rudolph, 72–73; see Rudolph's commentary *ibid.*, 199).
- 34 فأما الأولون مثل ثاليس وأنبادقليس فإنهم قالوا بأن الإرادة الأولى أعنى إرادة المبدع هي من المبدع (*Doxographie* 24, 29–30, ed. Rudolph, 74).
- 35 الإرادة و الفعل من جهة صورة في البارئ ليست هناك صورة الإرادة و صورة الفعل متفرقين بل (*Doxographie* 24, 22–23, ed. Rudolph, 73–74).
- 36 إرادة لتكوين هي التكوين (al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-islamiyyīn*, 190.13; see Rudolph's commentary in *Doxographie*, ed. Rudolph, 200). Could this identity of the (alleged) opinions of Greek sages and the (true) views of the Mu'tazilite thinkers—contemporaries of the Arabic version of Pseudo-Ammonius—be treated as evidence of an intentional misattribution, to the effect that the principal purpose of the compiler of the latter text was to reflect the spectrum of the opinions current in his own time and pertaining to the issues that preoccupied him and his contemporaries? I am inclined to think so, but this is the subject of a separate discussion, in which I cannot engage here.
- 37 أمره الذي هو إرادته (al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*, 111). Cf. a slightly modified statement في الإرادة من أمر الله هو ما عند المبدع in al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-If-tikhār*, 106.
- 38 ليس العقل شيئاً هو غير الكلمة ولا الكلمة شيئاً هي غير العقل بل الذات واحدة والعين واحدة (al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-riyāḍ*, 66; cf. *ibid.*, 126 and 227).
- 39 هو ذات إمر الله علّة لوجود الأشياء كلها (al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-riyāḍ*, 172).
- 40 For a detailed analysis of Kirmānī's position, see De Smet, *La quiétude de l'intellect*, 123–46.
- 41 هذا العالم يدثر ويدخله الفساد من أجل أنه ثقل ذلك العالم الروحاني البسيط الشريف، وإنما هو قشر ولولا ما فيه من نورية تلك الأوائل لما ثبتت طرفة العين وإنما ثباته بقدر ما يصفى العقل جزءه الذي فيه وتصفى النفس جزءها الذي فيه وفي الأجزاء النيرة الشريفة وإذا صفت هذه الجواهر (*Doxogra- phie* 21, 7–13, ed. Rudolph, 70–71).

- 42 *Doxographie*, ed. Rudolph, 196.
- 43 See, e.g., Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 337.
- 44 Al-Walīd, *Al-Dhakhīra*, 79.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 143. Daniel De Smet has recently published an interesting and detailed article on the subject (De Smet, “La colonne de lumière”). Unfortunately, he does not deal with the Manichaeic motifs of Pseudo-Ammonius there.
- 46 [حكماه اهل المظلة] ذكروا أنّ دنس النفس أوساخ الأجساد إنّما تكون لازمة لهذا الإنسان من جهة الأجزاء، وإنّما التهذيب والتطهير من جهة الكل لأنّه إذا انفصلت النفس الجزئية من النفس الكلية والعقل الجزئي من العقل الكلي غلظت وصارت من حيز الجرم لأنّها كلّما سفلت فإنّما تتحد بالجرم والجرم من حيز الماء والأرض وهما ثقيلان يذهبان سفلا وكلّما اتّصلت النفس الجزئية بالنفس الكلية والعقل الجزئي بالعقل الكلي ذهبت علواً لأنّها تتحد بالجسم والجسم من حيز النار والنفس الكلية والعقل الجزئي بالعقل الكلي ذهبت علواً لأنّها تتحد بالجرم والجسم من حيز النار والهواء وكلاهما لطيفان يذهبان علواً (*Doxographie* 17, 22–28, ed. Rudolph, 62–63).
- 47 Al-Rāzī, *A’lām al-Nubuwwa*, 143.
- 48 Al-Walīd, *Al-Dhakhīra*, 79.
- 49 *Doxographie* 22, 1–6, ed. Rudolph, 71–72.
- 50 See, e.g., al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-yanābī’*, 110 (ch. 18).
- 51 See, e.g., al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-iṣlāḥ*, 31; al-Kirmānī, *Kitāb al-riyāḍ*, 88; al-Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-‘aql*, 496.
- 52 See De Smet, *Philosophie ismaélienne*, 113–25, for further discussion.
- 53 إنّ هذا العالم إذا اضمحلت قشوره وذهب دنسه صار بسيطاً روحانياً بقي جوهر المهذب (*Doxographie* 26, 20–21, ed. Rudolph, 78).

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## 4 Roger Bacon and His “Arabic” Sources in His *Moralis philosophia*

Thérèse-Anne Druart

For a long time, scholars have been aware of Arabic influences on Roger Bacon, particularly Avicennian influences. In 1926, on the Latin side of medieval scholarship, Gilson even called Bacon “le type accompli de l’augustinisme avicennisant,”<sup>1</sup> and, on the Arabic side, Fr. Bouyges, SJ, wondered whether Roger Bacon read books in Arabic, even though he ultimately concluded that it was unlikely.<sup>2</sup> In 1934, in his study on “Latin Avicennism,” Fr. De Vaux, OP, claimed that “among the great thirteenth-century authors, Bacon is the best informed on Avicenna’s life and works.”<sup>3</sup> In a rather scathing article, Fr. Crowley, OFM, rejected both Gilson and De Vaux’s claims and argued that Bacon is neither Avicennist nor *avicennisant*. Yes, Bacon calls Avicenna “Aristotle’s main imitator and expositor, second only to Aristotle” (“Praecipuus imitator Aristotelis, et dux ac princeps philosophiae post eum”), but Bacon did not adopt Avicenna’s views on key issues, such as the active intellect or an emanationist and necessitarian conception of creation.<sup>4</sup> Crowley seems to have brought research on this issue to a halt, until John D. North published a substantive paper in 1999 on “Roger Bacon and the Saracens,” in which he lists many cases of Bacon’s using Avicenna even while arguing positions that would have surprised Ibn Sīnā a great deal. Jules Janssens, in the second supplement to his annotated bibliography on Ibn Sīnā, which covers the years 1995–2009, gives no fewer than eighteen further references to this topic.<sup>5</sup>

More recent studies have shown that al-Fārābī also had some influence on Roger Bacon’s moral philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Yet such studies have not much analyzed how Roger Bacon deploys his “Arabic” sources and understands them. This paper asks how Bacon uses such sources in what he considered the most important part of his *Opus maius*: the seventh and last part, his moral philosophy.<sup>7</sup> In the second half of this part, Roger Bacon calls on Avicenna in order to argue for the importance of *moralis philosophia*, and he calls on al-Fārābī in order to argue for the necessity to develop a little-known form of rhetoric, namely poetics.

My aim in this article is, first, to briefly list all the “Arabic” sources I found in the *Moralis philosophia* and then locate the two main sources—Avicenna’s

*Metaphysics* of the *Shifā'* (especially 9.7 and 10.2–5)<sup>8</sup> and al-Fārābī's *De scientiis* (especially 2 and 5, in Gerard of Cremona's translation) in the general structure of the text.<sup>9</sup> Second, I show how Bacon uses Avicenna to bolster his main claim, that moral philosophy is the most important philosophical discipline, and go through each of the six parts of *Moralis philosophia* to examine how these sources are used. Finally, I present some tentative conclusions.

### **The Arabic Sources for the *Moralis philosophia* and the General Location of the Two Main Sources in the Structure of the Text**

Bacon must have been a voracious reader, enjoying the hunt for unusual sources. Here is a list of all the "Arabic" sources Bacon uses in his *Moralis philosophia*:

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Albumasar:	<i>De magnis coniunctionibus</i> <i>Introductorium in astronomiam</i>
Algazel:	<i>Logica</i> (he does not realize this is al-Ghazālī's Arabic adaptation of one of Avicenna's Persian texts, <i>Dānesh-Nāmeḥ</i> ) <sup>10</sup>
Alfarabius:	<i>De scientiis</i> , Chapters 2 and 5 in Gerard of Cremona's translation as explained above <i>Commentary on Rhetoric</i> , probably <i>Didascalica in rhetoricam Aristotelis ex glosa Alfarabii</i> <sup>11</sup> <i>Commentary on Physics</i> , misattributed to Averroes <sup>12</sup> The pseudo-Farabian <i>De ortu scientiarum</i> <sup>13</sup>
Avicenna:	<i>Metaphysics</i> , mainly 10.2–5 and 9.7, but also 1.1 <i>Preface to the Shifā'</i> ( <i>Sufficiencia</i> ) <sup>14</sup> <i>De anima</i> 5.1 and 4 <i>De arte medicinae</i> <i>Logic</i> (Bacon indicates that <i>De caelo</i> is a spurious text, despite its attribution to Avicenna)
Averroes:	<i>De caelo</i> 1.2 <i>Physics</i> 2 <i>Rhetoric</i> <i>Poetics</i> , but Bacon complains of its poor translation
Others:	<i>Book of Causes</i> <i>Secretum secretorum</i> , which he falsely attributes to Aristotle

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Two of these sources, Avicenna's *Preface to the Shifā'* and al-Fārābī's *Commentary on the Physics*, were used by Bacon despite their seeming lack of circulation.

As most of these sources are little used or simply referenced, I shall concentrate on the sources that Bacon quoted extensively or with which he engaged. While writing *Moralis philosophia*, Bacon certainly had the

text of Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 9.7 and 10.2–5 on his desk,<sup>15</sup> as he quotes it often and, at times, at some length, whereas his references to al-Fārābī's *De scientiis*, ch. 2 and 5 are not quotations but simply allusions to parts of a chapter.<sup>16</sup> The location of both texts in the general structure of *Moralis philosophia* is interesting.<sup>17</sup> Bacon considers Parts 1–3 theoretical and Parts 4–6 practical. His theoretical Part 1 includes the general *proemium* and the principles or roots of moral philosophy, i.e., our relation to God. This part refers to Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 10, even quoting it at times. Part 2, which centers on one's relation to neighbors and family, also quotes the same text—even, surprisingly, on the importance of matrimony, though Avicenna's views on matrimony are far from Christian (and his own reputation concerning sexual matters, of which Bacon probably knew nothing, does not recommend him for expertise on this topic).<sup>18</sup> Part 3, which deals with one's relation to oneself, and so with virtues and vices, is mostly derived from Seneca.

The practical part shifts to arguments for the true religion, since philosophy leads to theology. Part 4 argues for the superiority of Christianity over the other religions and makes surprising use of al-Fārābī's *De scientiis* 5, which deals with the perfect and imperfect states. As the historical al-Fārābī subordinates religion to philosophy and not the other way around, this choice of source is puzzling. I was rather relieved to discover that in the third and last distinction, which focuses on the Eucharist, Bacon abstains from any "Arabic" sources. Part 5 explains how to incite love for and practice of the true religion by means of a specific kind of rhetoric, namely a kind of poetics that is little known among the Latins, except as practiced by Augustine in his *De doctrina christiana*, but is explored in the texts of al-Fārābī (*De scientiis* 2). The very brief Part 6 (only one page) addresses forensic oratory and laments the poor Latin translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Averroes' *Commentary* on the *Poetics*, as well as the lack of a translation of Aristotle's own *Poetics*. Once again it refers to al-Fārābī.

This very general sketch suggests that Roger Bacon is unconcerned with exegesis. He simply uses his sources as authorities to convince the pope of his own views and manipulates them for his own purposes. Of course, at times one may ask whether some of his most astonishing statements arise from a lack of knowledge of both Islam and Islamic culture, or from inevitable shifts in meaning resulting from the translation process. Besides, Bacon had no access to most of Avicenna's and al-Fārābī's other works, and therefore had very limited knowledge of their positions on some key issues. A thirteenth-century Latin reader would not have been as surprised and dismayed by Bacon's strange use of his sources as current scholars in Arabic philosophy surely are. Before turning to a careful examination of the parts of this text, let us first look at how Bacon justifies the whole enterprise of his moral philosophy.



## **Bacon's Justification for Considering Moral Philosophy the Crown of the Philosophical Enterprise and Closest to Theology**

Bacon regards moral philosophy as the end and mistress (*dominatrix*) of all the philosophical sciences (1, *proemium*, 6–7). For him, the study of metaphysics not only precedes that of moral philosophy, but is for its sake, as providing its principles or roots (*radices*). Surprisingly, the main authority for this subordination of metaphysics to moral philosophy—which in fact comprises ethics, economics, and politics—is none other than Avicenna. Ibn Sīnā, of course, wrote very little on moral philosophy, even if he is “the most outstanding expositor of Aristotle” (*precipuus Aristotilis expositor*, 1.2, 6). It is still more surprising to realize that Bacon was fully aware of this fact: he may well be the only medieval Latin philosopher who refers to Avicenna’s preface to the whole *Shifā’*, in which Avicenna explains that, being unsure if he would ever write a standalone ethics, he has briefly addressed ethics at the end of his metaphysics. This is Bacon’s account:

By these principles metaphysics is continuous with moral philosophy and comes down to it as its end: thus Avicenna joins them beautifully at the end of his *Metaphysics*. The other principles, however, are peculiar to this science and are not to be explained in metaphysics, although Avicenna adds a number of them. But in the beginning of his volume he gives the reason for this: that he had not constructed a moral philosophy and he did not know whether he would complete one; and therefore he mixed with these metaphysical principles many that are nevertheless proper to moral philosophy.

(1.1, 6, trans. MMF<sup>19</sup>)

Bacon’s peculiar reading of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* 10.3–5, as crowning the whole philosophical enterprise (rather than as an accidental feature), justifies his own emphasis on and understanding of moral philosophy. Curiously, in *proemium* 8, Bacon claims that the main authors for moral philosophy are Avicenna, Aristotle, and Averroes, though during his life only some of their texts were available in Latin. Bacon also extensively uses Augustine, particularly his *De doctrina christiana*, as well as either Cicero or Seneca, and also makes reference to Boethius.

### **Part 1: Our Relation to God or the Principles of Moral Philosophy**

As we saw earlier, Bacon explains that the purpose of metaphysics is to provide the fundamentals or roots (*radices*) of ethics. Bacon reads Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* of the *Shifā’* as illustrating this view, since the last chapter of Book 9, its penultimate book, as well as the last four chapters of the

whole book deal with moral issues. Bacon then lists seventeen metaphysical principles for his moral philosophy and goes into more detail, focusing upon an abbreviated list of six principles. He begins with the triune God, moves to incarnation, then to creation, the immortality of the soul and the bodily resurrection, felicity in the afterlife, and finally misery in the afterlife. Once he has gone through all six principles, he deals with the last root, the law of divine worship (*cultus*). Bacon finds support in Avicenna not only for his claim that moral philosophy is the crown of the philosophical enterprise but also for each of the six primary principles except incarnation, even using Avicennian philosophy to support the notion of the triune God and bodily resurrection. He also relies upon Avicenna for the laws of divine worship. At the beginning, Bacon's main sources are *Metaphysics* 10.2, 3, and 5 and 9.7. On the immortality of the soul, resurrection of the body, felicity and misery in the afterlife, Bacon frequently quotes *Metaphysics* 9.7. The Arabic title of this chapter is *fi'l-ma'ād* ("On the Return"), but the Latin version speaks of *de promissione divina* or divine promise, and Bacon enthusiastically adopts this expression.

In what follows, I examine in more detail how Bacon integrates, so to speak, Avicenna into his own project.

### ***The Introduction***

In his introduction to moral and civil philosophy or science, Bacon tells us that such science "is concerned with the salvation of the human being to be perfected through virtue and felicity, and this science aspires to that salvation as far as philosophy can" (1, *proemium*, 4, trans. MMF with modifications). Of course, salvation is essential and, thus, so too is moral philosophy, which is the *dominatrix* (1, *proemium*, 7) or "mistress" of human wisdom. Therefore, moral philosophy must be founded upon principles from metaphysics, which Bacon explains in Part 1 (1, *proemium*, 14). For Bacon, metaphysics and moral philosophy *maxime convenient* (1, *proemium*, 16), and so metaphysics inquires into God, eternal life, and so on, for the sake of ethics.

### ***The Seventeen Principles***

Bacon lists no fewer than seventeen principles to serve moral philosophy, all of which are established through metaphysics. The thirteenth speaks of God's promise of rewards and punishment in the afterlife, referring to Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 10.2 (533.24–28 and 535.51, *de promisso*), though later on, the main source for this topic will be Book 9.7. The seventeenth and final principle is his most detailed and longest account and deserves particular attention, as it seems to speak of the pope. In clever but curious fashion, it mixes what Avicenna writes concerning the prophet in 10.2

with his examination of the roles of the caliph and the imām in 10.5. The Latin translation makes the imām a *sumus sacerdos* and the caliph a “successor” in the title but a *vicarius* in the body of the chapter.

### **Bacon Latin**

Decimoseptimo, quod uni tantum debet fieri revelatio, quod iste debeat esse mediator Dei et hominum, et vicarius Dei in terra, cui subiciatur totum genus humanum, et cui credere debeat sine contradictione, quando probatum fuerit certitudinaliter quod iste sit talis, ut nunc est assignatum; et iste est legis lator et summus sacerdos, qui in spiritualibus et temporalibus habet plenitudinem potestatis, tanquam “Deus humanus, ut dicit Avicenna in decimo Metaphisice, quem licet adorare post Deum.”

### **Bacon English (MMF)**

Seventeenth, that the revelation must be made to one only; that he must be the mediator of god and men and the vicar of God on earth, to whom is subjected the whole human race, and in whom one must believe without contradiction when it has been proved with certitude that he is such as I have described him; and he is the lawgiver and the high priest who in spiritual and in temporal things has the plenitude of power, as a “human God,” as Avicenna says in Book X of the *Metaphysics*, “whom it is permissible to adore after God.”

### **Avicenna Latinus**

2, 533.14: Igitur necessarium est prophetam esse, et necessarium est ipsum esse hominem, et necessarium est eum habere proprietatem quae non est ceteris hominibus, ita ut homines percipiant in ipso esse quiddam quod differat ab ipsis, et illud est miracula quae praediximus.

5.552–3.14–17: In quocumque autem convenerit cum illiis sapientia speculative, hic iam factus est felix; et cui cum hoc datae fuerint proprietates prophetiae, fortasse fiet deus humanus, quem licet adorari post Deum quia ipse est res terreni et mundi et est vicarius Dei in illo. (This is the last line of the whole text.)

This comparison of Bacon’s and Avicenna’s passages offers a good example of the way in which Bacon often plays with Avicenna’s text. Notice that Bacon neglects to quote the final refrain concerning the topic of prophecy from Avicenna’s text, though he speaks of revelation (while “revelation” is also used in Chapter 2 to explore prophecy). He also expunges Avicenna’s cautious *fortasse* from the last sentence.

Bacon’s section listing these seventeen principles concludes by showing how ethics continues metaphysics, which regards ethics as its end. Bacon goes on to explain that the lawgiver should speak of “the properties of

God in particular, and of angels, and the happiness and the misery of the other life, and the immortality of bodies, and things of this sort to which the metaphysician could not aspire" (1.1, 7, trans. MMF), as the metaphysician focuses on showing simply that the thing is. Hence, the moral philosopher will at times add to what the metaphysician says, but, as a moral philosopher, he does not need to explain all the secrets (*secreta*) of God, the angels, and others, but only those that are necessary to the multitude, on which all men should agree lest they fall into questions and heresies, as Avicenna teaches in the chapter "Roots of Moral Philosophy" (1.1, 8). This warning not to teach secrets refers to 10.2 (534.29–535.57), in which Avicenna claims that ordinary people (*vulgus*) have trouble understanding complex philosophical views which the wise "legislator," also known as the prophet, will hide under metaphors and similes.

### ***The Six Primary Principles***

Having completed his introduction, Bacon reduces his seventeen principles to only six: the triune God; the incarnation and the antichrist; creation; the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body; felicity in the afterlife; and misery in the afterlife. What the philosophers know about these topics derives from revelation to the patriarchs and prophets. This derivation explains how philosophers attained some glimpse of the Trinity and attested to its existence, but could not explain it fully. Bacon indicates that Avicenna (1.2., 6.3–4), *precipuus Aristotilis expositor*, maintains that there is a Holy Spirit (*spiritus sanctus*) in the "Roots of Moral Philosophy" (10.2, 533.20, *et revelatione sancti spiritus*). The Arabic text in fact quotes "the descent of the Holy Spirit" from Qur'ān 16, The Bee, 102, which is a reference to the angel Gabriel involved in the revelation to Muhammad. Bacon takes the *spiritus sanctus* as referring to the third person of the Trinity and infers from there, thanks to a curious *a fortiori* argument, that as the procession of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son is most difficult to understand, any philosopher maintaining that there is a Holy Spirit is also aware of the Father and the Son. One may wonder whether Bacon's limited knowledge of Islam explains his misunderstanding of what Ibn Sīnā meant by the Holy Spirit or whether he is being somewhat disingenuous here.

Having dealt with the theme of the triune God and ascertained that Avicenna at least glimpsed the existence of the Trinity, Bacon moves on to discuss the incarnation and the antichrist, to which he is unable to find any allusions in Avicenna's "Roots of Moral Philosophy."

Curiously, concerning the next theme, creation, Bacon shows little knowledge of Avicenna's views. He begins this section by explaining that Aristotle in his *Regimen of Kingdoms*—of course, a pseudonymous work—assumes the reality of creation and even refers to Adam and Enoch. His next authority is Abū Massar. As for Avicenna, Bacon simply says that he

too “explicitly establishes that there is creation” (*Et Avicenna, in Moralibus, omnino ponit creationem*, 1.4, 2.25–26). This must refer to 9.1. Next, Bacon turns to the topic of angels. He assimilates Avicenna’s separate intelligences (the unmoved movers of Avicenna’s cosmology) into his angelology, as is common in the Islamic and Christian traditions, and conflates the views of Aristotle and Avicenna:

In regard to the beings first created we find another principle of this science; of this kind are the angels, good and bad. In the first place, therefore, because of the motions of the bodies of the world, which they have discovered to be about sixty, philosophers have assumed that there are that many good angels, because those motions are voluntary [*voluntarii*] and therefore are caused by the angels. This, moreover, is evident from the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle and Avicenna.

(1.4, 3; Burke’s trans. modified, 646)

Aristotle did wonder whether there were fifty-five or forty-seven unmoved movers, but Avicenna posits only ten intelligences in his emanationist system. Crowley claims that Bacon is neither Avicennian nor *avicennisant* as he “does not lapse, even momentarily, into teaching the necessity of creation.”<sup>20</sup> Bacon’s affirmation that the motions of the heavenly bodies are voluntary certainly supports Crowley’s claim.

Ibn Sīnā presents a very sophisticated and complex approach to creation in his metaphysics, allowing for continuous creation, but Bacon does not take Avicenna’s sophistication into account, seriously misrepresenting it. In this section, he expounds more upon the angels than on the act of creation. He quotes at length Apuleius of Maudara, whose *De deo Socratis* relays the doctrine of the guardian angels in Plato’s *Symposium*.

Bacon then moves to the fourth theme, the immortality of the soul. In fact, he dedicates most of this section to the resurrection of the body, as the immortality of the soul has already been touched upon in metaphysics, whereas metaphysicians could not express an opinion (*dare sententiam*), either general or particular, about the resurrection of the body. Aristotle and Avicenna have given us universal ways (*vias universales*) to the soul’s immortality (1.5, 1). Despite his claim that metaphysicians cannot express an opinion, Bacon is very happy to assert that Avicenna accepts the resurrection of the body:

Moreover, Avicenna says in the *Morals* that Muhammad spoke only of the glory of the body; but we know, as he says, that the glory of our souls is greater, since we are not asses, reckoning only the delights of the body; and therefore he finds fault with his own lawgiver and wishes to investigate another who promises not only the glory of our bodies, but rather that of our souls.

(1.5, 4; Burke’s trans. modified, 649)

This refers to the beginning of 9.7.<sup>21</sup> As for the reference to the pleasures of the asses, it comes from two pages further down (509.37–43). Bacon asserts that Seneca, Socrates, and Plato concur with Avicenna's views on the importance of the soul's glory, and returns to Avicenna's position:

Avicenna, moreover, says in the *Morals* that the resurrection of our bodies must be assumed and that the entire man will be glorified in soul and body if he obeys the commands of God.

(1.5, 5; Burke's trans. modified, 649)

One understands that Bacon can construe *corporalis autem felicitas iam assignata est in lege*—bodily felicity has already been assigned in the law (by law, he means Scripture)—as an endorsement of bodily resurrection, thus attributing to Avicenna the view that the entire human being (*totus homo*) will be glorified in soul and body. Yet one wonders why he does not perceive Avicenna's strongly dualistic outlook in 9.7 or in the *De anima*. Perhaps Bacon's repeated insistence that the human being is not simply a soul or a body—being, rather, both in unity—blinded him or led him to suppress this dualism.

Bacon did not make much use of Avicenna on the immortality of the soul, but he mined Avicenna's 9.7 for his discussion of felicity in the afterlife. He often quotes sentences, sometimes almost successively, and his quotations are word for word, with any minor differences generally stemming from inconsistencies in the manuscripts. He also paraphrases in order to summarize. Concerning felicity, Bacon claims that one needs to add principles beyond those touched upon by the metaphysicians, even if the philosophers have excellently (*pulchre*) identified the four causes hindering our knowledge of eternal life. These causes are sin, the care for the body, the embrace of the sensible world, and the lack of revelation (1.6, 1). Avicenna is his source for the first three causes. First, however, Bacon acknowledges that philosophers can have knowledge of the eternal promise, but argues that they were not able to give precision about it due to the four causes he lists. As justification, he immediately quotes Avicenna as saying:

Our condition as regards these matters is like that of a deaf person who has never heard in his privation of the power of imagining the delight of harmony, although he may be certain of the reality and nature of its sweetness.

(1.6, 2; Burke's trans., 651; 509.46–48)

Bacon backs up the point by making another reference to Avicenna, this time at 514.40–50, on the paralytic who could not enjoy delicious food before he was cured. Comparisons with disabled people are metaphors for sin, according to Bacon, and sin hinders our knowledge of the afterlife. This example also illustrates the second cause of human ignorance,

care for the body. Piling up quotations from Avicenna, Bacon tells us that Avicenna elegantly (*eleganter*) says that we “in our age and in this body have been plunged in much turpitude, and therefore do not perceive that delight, although there are in us some of its causes,” etc. (512.4–10). Bacon comments that we lack perception of this delight because revelation is still necessary. The last quotation from Avicenna brings the section on sin to a conclusion:

The comparison of our perfect delight with our imperfect one will be like a comparison of the sensible delight in smelling the odors of delicious foods with the delight we experience in actually eating them.  
(1.6, 5; Burke’s trans. modified, 652; 513.32–35)

Bacon then moves on to care for the body. Two quotations from Avicenna constitute the whole passage (513.32–35; 518.22–28). The end of the second one speaks of the relation between soul and body, and once again Bacon does not seem to notice its dualist overtones:

Not that the soul has been impressed on the body and immersed in it; but because there is a bond [*ligatio*] between these two, which is the natural desire to direct the body and to excite its affections.  
(1.6, 6; Burke’s trans. 652; 518.25–28)

Attention paid to the sensible world constitutes the third impediment to precise knowledge of felicity in the afterlife. Bacon simply paraphrases Avicenna’s views:

The third [but Delorme–Massa reads fourth, apparently with all the manuscripts] is the attention one bestows on this world of sense, although a man may not sin nor be occupied with bodily interests. For since we are given over to the world of sense, we neglect the insensible and spiritual world, as Avicenna shows. In these statements he clearly and greatly [*in quibus evidenter et magnifice tangit causas impediētes*] touches upon the causes that hinder us in our consideration and love of felicity.  
(1.6, 7; Burke’s trans. 652–53)

Not only does Avicenna identify the causes that hinder human beings but he also indicates what can help us to know, love, and taste the delight of the future life: purification from sin; withdrawal from the desire to govern the body; moving the mind from the sensible to the intelligible; and confirmation, through revelation and prophecy, of what the human mind cannot attain. In these matters, as Avicenna says, “we believe the testimony of the prophet and the legislator who receives the law from God” (1.6, 8; Burke’s trans., 653; the last sentence is an allusion to 507.93–96).

Bacon then claims that Aristotle and Cicero were, in fact, prepared for divine enlightenment (*illuminationes*), received it, and thus knew that felicity is a beatitude of the whole human being, both in body and soul, which "eye has not seen nor ear heard," as Avicenna says (1.6, 12). Although Bacon is quoting Avicenna when he speaks of what "eye has not seen nor ear heard" (10.2, 535.55–56), he does not realize that Ibn Sīnā did not coin this phrase, but was quoting a famous hadith.

This long section about felicity in the afterlife ends with a summary description of beatitude, focusing first on the speculative intellect and second on the practical intellect; in both cases, Bacon appeals, via quotation, to Avicenna's thought. Avicenna claims that in beatitude, the speculative intellect becomes an intelligible world and understands the form of the whole intelligible world. In this intelligible world, it will "perceive that which is absolute beauty and true grace" (*cernens id quod est pulcritudo absolute et decor verus*) (1.6, 15; 9.7, 510.72 and following). As for the practical intellect, its delight will not be sensible delight, but rather the delight befitting pure and spiritual living substances. Such delight is more excellent than any other delight and constitutes felicity (1.6, 16; 514.51–55).

For this section, Bacon closely follows Avicenna's text, quoting Avicenna heavily and accurately. This five-page section is lifted from Avicenna (9.7), but Bacon does not slavishly copy Avicenna: he reorders the material to fit his own design. The quotations do not always follow Avicenna's order of exposition.

After the section on felicity in the afterlife, Bacon moves to a shorter discussion of eternal misery. He introduces it with a quotation from Avicenna in support of his claim that philosophers

have maintained that God has prepared a promised felicity which eye has not seen [this is an allusion to the hadith quoted earlier] nor the heart of human beings apprehended for those who obey him and dreadful punishment [*promissionem terribilem*] for those who disobey him.

(1.6, 1; Burke's trans. modified, 655)

This quotation does not come from 9.7, but from 10.2, 533.24–26. The rest of this section ignores Avicenna.

Having presented the six principles that metaphysicians have touched upon, Bacon moves to the last of the roots or fundamentals of moral philosophy. This root involves the laws of divine worship (*leges cultus*). Once again, Bacon focuses on showing that non-Christian philosophers have discovered some of them. All his authorities are either pagans or Muslims, as he expresses contempt for Jewish practices. Again, Avicenna is often quoted.



Bacon introduces his views with a summarizing paraphrase of the passage in 10.2, the chapter on prophecy, which he used at the beginning of the section of misery in the afterlife:

It is evident that because of our infinite reverence for God a worship is his due. This is due him also because of the blessing of our creation, which is the effect of his infinite power, and because of future felicity. Because of the first, Avicenna says in his *Moral Roots* that “obedience to God’s precepts is right”; because of the second, he says that “obedience must be given to the commands of him whose creatures we are.” Because of the third, he says that God “has prepared a promised felicity for those obedient to him and for the disobedient a terrible future punishment.”

(1.8, 2; Burke’s trans. modified, 656; 10.2, 533.19–28)

Moving to more specific prescriptions, Bacon tells us:

In this worship, according to Avicenna and others, temples, prayers, oblations and sacrifices, and fasts must be appointed for the faithful, and also pilgrimages particularly to the seat of the legislator, in order that he may be kept in memory and held in veneration.

(1.8, 7; Burke’s trans. modified, 657; 10.3, 537.92–538.03)

The Latin paraphrase of the Arabic text may have hidden from Bacon that, in this passage, Ibn Sīnā tries to give a rational justification for three of the five pillars of Islam: prayer, Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina (where Muhammad had lived). Still unaware of what Ibn Sīnā is referring to (or deliberately ignoring it), Bacon indicates how to show proper humility toward God, once again by quoting Avicenna:

“The teacher ought to instruct one who prays in the proper means by which he may be prepared for prayer, just as a human being is wont to prepare himself to meet a human king in cleanliness and with a becoming appearance. Such a teacher should cause his pupil to form the habit of cleanliness and of presenting a becoming appearance, and should train him in the manner of a human being preparing himself to meet a king with humility and downcast look, with limbs restrained, and without needless turning of the body and disturbance.”

(1.8, 8; Burke’s trans. modified, 657; 10.3, 538.4–539.2)

In this passage, Ibn Sīnā is justifying ritual ablutions before prayer, as well as both the specific garment to be worn during the pilgrimage and the ritual postures to be executed during prayer. All these prescriptions were set by the prophet Muhammad. But Bacon wishes to go further and adds

a paraphrase of what, for Ibn Sīnā, a caliph or an imām would institute to properly motivate their people:

Philosophers such as Avicenna and others decide that great festivals should be appointed, for the reason that "they cause nations to assemble and give them boldness in the law ["in the law" is added by Bacon] and inspire an emulation of it. Such festivals also give an opportunity for the prayers of the multitude to be heard; and because of these prayers they receive blessings from God. And similarly for the same reasons general fraternities should be formed."

(1.8, 9, Burke's trans. modified, 657–58; 10.5, 549.74–550.79)

Interestingly, Bacon skips the fact that such solemnities should be organized only in the presence of the "successor" of the prophet—the caliph.

Interestingly, after quoting Hermes Mercurius at length, Bacon indicates that we should not dwell on such sacrifices, oblations, and ceremonies, as they were superstitious and for the most part ineffectual. Whether Bacon's recommendation to avoid over-consideration of these things refers only to Hermes Mercurius' points or also to Avicenna's prescriptions is not clear to me. But he justifies his dismissal by saying: "Hence also the philosophers themselves practiced such customs because of civil statutes and because of popular prejudice, not because of their truth, as Seneca states" (1.8, 13; Burke's trans., 658).

Having discussed the first part of *Moralis philosophia*, I may now draw preliminary conclusions about the way Roger Bacon uses Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 9.7 and 10.2–3 and 5. There is no doubt that Bacon has Avicenna's text on his desk and knows it well. There is also no doubt that he does not slavishly copy passages, but rather reorders the quotations for his own purpose. Despite railing against the uncritical use of authorities at the beginning of the *Opus maius*, Bacon loves to use Avicenna to support his own views. Avicenna is his main authority to justify making moral philosophy the crown of philosophy and claiming that metaphysics' aim is to provide principles for it. Though Bacon is aware that Avicenna's metaphysics ends with ethics only by accident, he deliberately selects Avicenna as his model. Bacon desires to show that philosophers derive their views not only from philosophy itself, but from revelation, as given to the patriarchs and the prophets. He illustrates this concerning his six main principles: the triune God, the incarnation and the antichrist, creation, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, felicity in the afterlife, and misery in the afterlife. Each time he claims that metaphysicians address an issue, he is happy to use Avicenna's text for the purpose.

Bacon at times misconstrues that text, and so attributes to Avicenna views he does not hold as well as erasing the Islamic context of some passages. Concerning philosophical views that Ibn Sīnā does not hold, Bacon does not transmit Ibn Sīnā's distinctly dualist view of the human being or,

consequently, his caution about affirming bodily resurrection in the *Metaphysics*. Bacon also suppresses the necessitarian character of creation in Ibn Sīnā. Whether the language of the available Latin translation misled him, I cannot say. It is also possible that Bacon's strong commitment to God's freedom with regard to creation blinded him, just as his commitment to the unity of the human being may have blinded him to Ibn Sīnā's own view. Or perhaps he was aware of Ibn Sīnā's positions, but deliberately ignored them. Concerning allusions to Islamic views and practices, Bacon misinterprets *spiritus sanctus* as referring to the third person of the Trinity, rather than to the angel Gabriel (and seems not to recognize its source in Qur'ānic verse). Catching the Qur'ānic reference and its true meaning requires a familiarity with Islam that was likely unavailable to Bacon.

His use of the last sentence of the *Metaphysics* to speak of the pope in rather exaggerated terms may not be so innocent, as he must have been aware that this sentence referred to the prophet, spoken of in 10.2, and his successors, spoken of in 10.5. After all, Bacon was preparing his text for the pope. But the vocabulary used by the Latin translator did not make the allusions to the caliph and the imām very clear. What is obvious for a reader of the Arabic text, with basic knowledge of Islam and its technical vocabulary, may not be so clear to a reader of the Latin version, who had very little knowledge of Islam. The same goes for allusions to pillars of Islam and Muslim rituals. Let us now see whether Bacon uses Avicenna (and later on al-Fārābī) in similar ways in the rest of his *Moralis philosophia*.

## Part 2: Our Relation to Other People

Part 2, which is rather brief (only four pages), addresses the laws and statutes dealing with relations between human beings.<sup>22</sup> Most of it is lifted from Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 10.4–5, though Bacon shifts quotations around as he reorders them for his own purposes.<sup>23</sup>

Bacon begins by excising and excluding fornicators and sodomites from the community, as they draw human beings away from institutions of superior importance for cities, especially marriage (10.4, 544.98–100; 2.1, 2, 39 MMF). Probably finding little useful material concerning marriage in Avicenna's text, Bacon says nearly nothing about it, but moves on to the hierarchical organization of the city and the necessity for every member of the community to work. All idle people should be expelled, except in cases of infirmity or old age. The infirm and old should be taken care of by means of taxation and so on. This much longer section quotes extensively from Avicenna's rational defense of *zakāt*, one of the five pillars of Islam (2.1, 4–5; 10.4, 542.67–543.80). Bacon then moves to the topic of inheritance, still quoting Avicenna, and inserts a sentence about contracts imported from 10.5, 550.79–80. Returning to 10.4, he condemns professions such as gambling and teaching inappropriate subjects, for example, teaching a pupil how to steal. He crowns this section by following Avicenna

on fighting enemies of the law, tolerating other good constitutions at least until the time when "the best law" (of course, the Islamic one for Ibn Sīnā) "must be extended throughout the whole world" (Bacon 2.1, 9; Avicenna, 10.4, 550–80). Bacon ludicrously concludes with the comment: "and in this statement the Christian law is hinted at."<sup>24</sup>

The next section of the text, 2.2, talks of the lawgiver's succession (*propheta*, but there is a variant, *legislator*), i.e., Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 10.5, 548–49.55–71.

Having closely and almost exclusively followed Avicenna, Bacon concludes Part 2 in a surprising manner: according to him, Latin laws derive from the Greek laws, but their principles apparently can only be found in Avicenna—who, of course, born in 930 CE, is considerably posterior to the Greeks:

In this part is comprehended the civil law, which is now in use among the Latins, as is manifest from the roots of this part. Moreover, it is certain that the Latins have derived their rights and laws from the Greeks, that is, from the books of Aristotle and Theophrastus, his successor, as well as the laws of the twelve tables, which are taken first from the laws of Solon the Athenian.<sup>25</sup>

Bacon's suppression of Avicenna's Islamic outlook is either impressively original (but disingenuous) or the result of an extremely naive reading (and some disregard for truth).

Another thirteenth-century philosopher, Gundissalinus, in the section on practical philosophy in his own *De divisione philosophiae*, also follows Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 10.2–4 fairly closely, but without citing him explicitly.<sup>26</sup>

### Part 3: In Relation to Ourselves

The very long Part 3 (140 pages) focuses on virtues and vices and makes very little use of Avicenna. At its beginning (3, proemium, 1), it simply refers to Avicenna's *De anima* 5.1 (69–7.9–12) and *Metaphysics* 10.2 (530.82–85), which indicate that the human being "should not live alone like the brute animal, which in its life suffices to itself alone."<sup>27</sup>

In the second distinction, 3, which treats of sensuality (*voluptas*), in 13, Bacon quotes Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 9.7, 516.95–98:

The human being will not be set free from this world and its allurements, unless after becoming wholly dependent on that celestial world, he desires that which is there, and the love of those things that are there withdraws him completely from the consideration of that which is behind him.

(Burke's trans. mod., 685)<sup>28</sup>

In this part, the paucity of references to and quotations of Avicenna is not surprising, given that in the *Shifā'* Avicenna does not deal at all with the topic of virtue and vice. Bacon therefore mainly pillages Seneca.

In Parts 2 and 3 of the speculative section of the *Moralis philosophia*, Bacon uses Avicenna's *Metaphysics* in the same way as in the first part. He quotes Avicenna extensively and does not hide his source, nearly always making overt references to him. He does, however, change the order of Avicenna's arguments, jumping from one chapter to another, and pays almost no attention to the context. At times Bacon "de-islamicizes" the *Metaphysics*, as does Gundissalinus, but in a less casual manner. Now that we have examined the speculative section of moral philosophy, let us move to the practical sections.

#### **Part 4 of Practical *Moralis philosophia***

The practical section of Bacon's moral philosophy focuses on true religion.<sup>29</sup> Part 4 tries to persuade us to believe and receive the true religion; Part 5 tries to persuade believers to love that religion, perform appropriate works, and detest and turn away from what is contrary to true religion.<sup>30</sup> The sixth part concerns forensic oratory in the service of justice.

Bacon moves from the principles of speculative moral philosophy to an argument in favor of the true religion—that is, of course, the Christian religion—in contradistinction to the pagans, who have little knowledge of God and no priests (among them the *Pruceni*, who seem to be the Prussians<sup>31</sup>); the idolaters, who at least have priests; the Tartars, who worship the unique God; the Jews; and the religion of the antichrist.<sup>32</sup> At times, Bacon distinguishes the Tartars from the Saracens (i.e., the Muslims), but the exact relation between these two groups remains obscure to me.<sup>33</sup>

One may wonder how Bacon manages to conflate political philosophy with an attempt to defend the true religion against rivals. First, he equates the Greek notion of happiness with the aim of human salvation or happiness in the afterlife. He uses Avicenna's 10.2, 535.55–56, who quotes the hadith describing the afterlife as that which "eye has not seen nor ear heard," which he already used twice in Part 1. Needless to say, Bacon did not recognize it as a hadith, but he seems to love it and quotes it again more than once.

Second, Bacon uses al-Fārābī's *De scientiis* 5 to present al-Fārābī as a follower of Aristotle concerning the description of the various imperfect political regimes, which are distinguished by their aims: pleasure, riches, honor, power, and fame.<sup>34</sup> Since al-Fārābī, in his own text, had gradually introduced the word "religion" (*milla*) and his translator, Gerard of Cremona, translated this as *secta*, Bacon abandons the focus on political regimes and turns instead to sects or religions. He therefore attributes the aims of the imperfect states to the various religions: the Saracens illustrate

voluptuousness with their many wives,<sup>35</sup> the Tartars illustrate lust for power (*libido dominandi*). Some pagans favor riches and so are buried with gems and gold. Idolaters yearn to accumulate goods that they will enjoy in the afterlife; the Jews look for temporal blessings and corporeal rewards in the afterlife. As for the Christians, they look for spiritual blessings by spiritual means.<sup>36</sup> To build up his case for the supremacy of Christianity, Bacon uses both Avicenna and al-Fārābī. He still quotes from Avicenna directly, but pays little attention to the finer points of al-Fārābī's text, simply making reference to it or vaguely alluding to it.

In the second distinction, 1.1, without indicating that he is doing so, Bacon points to a passage in al-Fārābī's *De scientiis* 5, which indicates that there are two methods by which one can convince people of the validity of a religion: by using rational arguments (that is, philosophy) and by appealing to miracles (ed. Galonnier, 306.203–7). Bacon refers to these two modes again near the end of this distinction (8.14), but this time attributes them to al-Fārābī explicitly. In section 1.15 of this same distinction, Bacon alludes to Avicenna's claim in *Metaphysics* 1.1 that metaphysics demonstrates the existence of God.<sup>37</sup>

In the same distinction, in 2.1, Bacon argues that human beings ought to do God's will, serving Him with all reverence. In 3, he quotes Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 10.2, 533.23–26 about the necessity of obeying God's precepts, and in 4, he quotes Avicenna's assertion that the obedient are promised felicity. These passages have already been quoted in Part 1. Bacon interjects that felicity is such that "eye has not seen nor ear heard," once again unknowingly quoting his favorite hadith. He adds that "for the disobedient he has prepared terrible promise." In 6 and 14, in order to emphasize the importance of spiritual reward in the afterlife, Bacon quotes *Metaphysics* 9.7, 507.94–98, in which Avicenna criticizes Muhammad for speaking only of corporeal rewards and punishments.<sup>38</sup> In 18, wishing to highlight the grandeur of heavenly life after death compared with pleasure in this life, Bacon makes reference to Avicenna's contrast between the blind, the deaf, and the paralytic and those who see, hear, move, and enjoy food, as spelled out in 9.7 (not *in quinto* as Bacon says). Again, Bacon has already quoted these passages in Part 1. The next section refers to al-Fārābī, who had established a similar contrast between the uneducated child and a wise man.<sup>39</sup> Following Avicenna in 10.2, Bacon then conjectures the political necessity of prophecy.

Part 4 returns to the subject of prophecy, and in 1 there is a hidden reference to Avicenna's 10.2, echoing that revelation comes to one person only, as otherwise discords and heresies arise. Roger avoids referring to Avicenna's requirement that the legislator be a human being, possibly having realized that this goes against Christ's divinity. The legislator is once again said to be *vicarius* of God on Earth (last line in 10.5) and al-Fārābī is said to hold the same view. Part 5 once again indicates that Avicenna criticized Muhammad for speaking only of corporeal pleasures rather than

spiritual ones (4) and in 5 indicates that among the Saracens and the Tartars, the caliph occupies the same position as the pope.

In 8.3 of Part 4, Bacon presents al-Fārābī's *De scientiis* 5 in such a way as to suggest that Christ is the *legis lator perfectus* and Christianity is therefore the true religion (in fact, al-Fārābī's text refers to the *rex perfectus*, 294.96–298.137). Commenting on this fourth part, North dryly indicates that “again it is odd that Bacon uses Avicenna and al-Fārābī as his authorities.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Parts 5 and 6 of Practical *Moralis philosophia*: The Importance of Rhetoric (and Poetics) in Moral Philosophy**

Having argued that Christianity is the true religion, Bacon aims to convince people to love Christianity and to live morally, according to its edicts, so that they may be saved. He recognizes that it is more difficult to inspire love for something in someone than it is to convince them of the truth. Likewise, it is difficult to put theory to practice, convincing someone to act properly. The difficulty in the transition from knowledge to action stems from the feebleness of the human intellect concerning “operables” (*operabilia*), which are much more difficult to understand than the objects of speculative knowledge (*sciencialia*). This difficulty is compounded by the corruption of human will, which does not like moral restrictions and finds no pleasure in them (5.1, 1). Bacon illustrates this intellectual difficulty by referring to Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 9.7 and citing those born deaf, who have no appreciation of harmony (1.2), an example he also used earlier in the text, in Part 1. Just as those born deaf lack an appreciation of harmony, human beings in their natural state lack an appreciation of moral strictures. Bacon illustrates the will's corruption by referring to another of Avicenna's examples in 9.7, the paralytic who cannot sense tasty food though it is presented to him (1.3). Again, he had made use of this example earlier, in Part 1, but this marks the end of Avicenna's presence. References to him now fade, leaving space for al-Fārābī and his rhetoric, or, more precisely, his poetics.<sup>41</sup>

In fact, Bacon says that what is generally called rhetorical, Aristotle properly calls poetical. In an excellent article, Irène Rosier-Catach explains how little Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* were known in Bacon's time.<sup>42</sup> Bacon repeatedly bemoans Hermann's poor translation of Averroes' commentary on the *Poetics* and Hermann's neglect of the project of translating Aristotle's *Poetics* itself (see particularly 5.3, 9; 5.4, 21; and again at length in 6.2–4). Aristotle's *Rhetoric* fared better, but few people made use of it or of al-Fārābī's commentary in Bacon's day (5.2, 6–7, and 6.2). The type of rhetorical argument that Bacon advocates inclines people to love proper actions and to perform them, but does not concern the truth or falsity of propositions (5.3, 19).



Part 5 proposes a Farabian type of rhetorico-poetical argument, but Bacon does not explore it in detail, simply acknowledging that Augustine takes a similar tack in *De doctrina christiana* 4. Bacon refers to al-Fārābī's *De scientiis* and *Glosa*, but does not really quote from them, preferring to make his references through allusions or hints. Hackett, Galonnier, and Rosier-Catach provide material from Bacon's *Opus tertium*, which fleshes out the brief remarks in the *Moralis philosophia*.<sup>43</sup> Both Hackett and Rosier-Catach indicate that in the *Opus tertium*, persuasion reaches its climax when it includes music. Hackett also gives an English translation of a relevant passage from the first part of the *Opus maius*, in which Bacon claims to find the importance of music for persuasion in al-Fārābī's *De scientiis*, though there is no such claim therein.<sup>44</sup> Yet al-Fārābī does highlight the importance of music for persuasion in several other texts. As far as we know, none of these, or even parts of them, were translated into Latin, but somehow Bacon knew about this Farabian feature.<sup>45</sup> Did somebody orally translate an element of al-Fārābī's work for him?

Obviously, Bacon had Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 9.7 and 10.2–5 on his desk, but he seems to rely on memory when advocating the use of the Farabian rhetorico-poetical argument.

### Tentative Conclusion

Having considered only one of Bacon's texts, my conclusions here must be limited. Moreover, any definitive study would have to also address the way Bacon uses his "Arabic" sources in comparison with his use of Christian or ancient sources, an interesting topic that is worthy of study.

Does Bacon treat other sources as high-handedly as he does his "Arabic" sources? He is not ashamed of these sources, since he highlights them, often giving specific citations for the passages he quotes or to which he refers. He even emphasizes them for some of his key claims, such as his appeal to Avicenna's *Metaphysics* for the dominance of moral philosophy over all other philosophical disciplines and his appeal to al-Fārābī for requesting a specific kind of rhetoric conducive to love of the true religion and to the performance of appropriate action. Yet Bacon pays no attention to context or the authors' intentions, and casually manipulates the texts to serve his own purposes. Roger Bacon's Avicenna and Alfarabi have little to do with the historical Ibn Sīnā or al-Fārābī. His pragmatic approach to Avicenna's text, in particular, badly neglects the philosophical sophistication of Ibn Sīnā's thought. In short, Bacon causes bewilderment for any true Farabian or Ibn Sinian scholar.

### Notes

- 1 Gilson, "Pourquoi Saint Thomas," 104.
- 2 Bouyges, "Roger Bacon."



- 3 De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, 57.
- 4 Crowley, "Roger Bacon and Avicenna," 82.
- 5 Janssens, *Annotated Bibliography*, 708.
- 6 For instance, Hackett, "Moral Philosophy"; Hackett, "Roger Bacon"; Rosier-Catach, "Roger Bacon, al-Fârâbî et Augustin."
- 7 Roger Bacon, *Moralis philosophia*, ed. Delorme and Massa. This edition, based on Bacon's own manuscript, is divided into parts, then into sections, and, finally, into numbered paragraphs. I will use this system of reference. Robert B. Burke's English translation, based on an earlier and less complete edition, lacks half of Part 4 and the whole of Parts 5 and 6 (Roger Bacon, *Opus majus*, vol. 2). The second edition of Prens and Macfarland, *Medieval Political Philosophy*, includes partial translations of *Moralis philosophia* (based on the Delorme-Massa edition) by Richard McKeon, Donald McCarthy, and Ernest Fortin, using Delorme-Massa's reference system (referred to in the following as "MMF"). Jeremiah M. G. Hackett and Thomas S. Maloney are working on a full translation with introduction and notes, to be published by the Franciscan Institute, Saint Bonaventure University.
- 8 For the Latin version of Avicenna's *Metaphysics*, I use Avicenna, *Avicenna latinus*, ed. Van Riet, referring to page and line. Delorme-Massa, published before Van Riet's edition, refers only to the 1508 Venice edition. For an English translation of the original Arabic, see Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, ed. Marmura.
- 9 For the Latin version of al-Fârâbî's *De scientiis* (*Enumeration of the Sciences*), see Gerard of Cremona, *Le De scientiis Alfarabii*, ed. Galonnier (129–46 discuss Bacon's use of al-Fârâbî). This edition includes a full French translation of the Latin text. Delorme-Massa is referring to an older edition. The so-called translation by Gundissalinus of al-Fârâbî's *De scientiis* is incomplete, more a free adaptation than a translation, and not the one used by Bacon, as he refers to the very end of the text dealing with *kalâm*, which Gundissalinus carefully skipped. There are several English translations of ch. 5 of the original Arabic text, but none of ch. 2. For ch. 5, see Charles E. Butterworth's translation in the second edition of Prens and Macfarland, *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 19–23.
- 10 The *Logica* is the first part of a text known in Latin as the *Summa theoricarum philosophiarum*. For its influence on Latin thinkers, including Bacon, see Minnema, "Algazel Latinus," in particular 212, which gives an impressive list of Baconian references.
- 11 Al-Fârâbî, *Deux ouvrages*, ed. Langhade and Grinaschi. The *Didascalía in rhetoricam Aristotelis ex glosa Alfarabii*, of which we have only fragments of the original Arabic text, can be found at 123–252.
- 12 Delorme-Massa gives no reference, but it seems to be a text edited by Birkenmajer, "Eine wiedergefundene Übersetzung." The original Arabic seems to be lost. This text contains a summary of *Phys.* 5–8, and does not seem to have circulated much.
- 13 Al-Fârâbî, *De ortu scientiarum*, ed. Baeumker. Bacon thinks it was written by al-Fârâbî.
- 14 See Birkenmajer, "Avicennas Vorrede," which includes an edition of the brief introduction by Avendeuch, the translator, then a text by Avicenna's disciple followed by Avicenna's own introduction. This text seems to have been used by Bacon only. Bertolacci, "Albert the Great," argues that Albert too probably had access to this text.
- 15 For this text I use Avicenna, *Avicenna Latinus*, ed. Van Riet, to which Delorme had no access. For an English translation based on the Arabic, I refer to Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, ed. Marmura.
- 16 For this text I shall refer to Galonnier's Latin edition, to which Delorme had no access. For a partial English translation based on the Arabic, but that covers

- ch. 5, I refer to that of Charles E. Butterworth in al-Fārābī, *The Political Writings*, 76–84.
- 17 For a useful general presentation of *Moralis philosophia*, which highlights some of the points made here, see Hackett, "Moral Philosophy."
  - 18 Lameer, "Avicenna's Concupiscence," tries to minimize this bad reputation.
  - 19 "MMF" refers to the Delorme-Massa edition and translation. For the Latin translation of the preface, see Birkenmajer, "Avicennas Vorrede."
  - 20 Crowley, "Roger Bacon and Avicenna," 88.
  - 21 "Tu autem iam scis delectationes corporum et gaudia quid sunt. Lex enim nostra quam dedit Mahometh ostendit dispositionem felicitatis et miseriae quae sunt secundum corpus. Et alia est promissio quae apprehenditur intellecte et argumentatione demonstrative et prophetia approbat" (507.94–99).
  - 22 See Part 2. 1, 1: "Secunda pars descendit ad leges et statuta hominum inter se."
  - 23 The Latin translator of Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 10. 3–5 had summarized some passages and used a vocabulary that Christianized some specifically Islamic terms. For instance, Arabic 10. 4, 9 refers to a *ra'īs*, a leader or chief, as a *praefatus*. The reader of the Arabic with some knowledge of Islam will notice that in these two chapters, Ibn Sīnā defends four of the five pillars of Islam, but the medieval Latin reader was probably unaware of this.
  - 24 See Part 2. 1, 9.16–17: "Et in hoc verbo lex christiana innuitur," trans. MMF.
  - 25 "Et sub hac parte comprehenditur ius civile, quod nunc est in usu latinorum, ut manifestum est ex radicibus huius partis. Et certum est quod Latini a Grecis habuerunt iura et leges, scilicet a libris Aristotilis ac Theophrasti, eius successoris, preter leges duodecim tabularum, quae primo transtulerunt de legibus Solonis Atheniensis" (2. 2, 3; trans. MMF).
  - 26 Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae*, ed. Fidora and Werner, 252–60.
  - 27 "Nam homo est animal sociale, et de sua proprietate est, ut dicit Avicenna quinto De anima et in Radicibus moralis phylosophie, ut non vivat solus sicut brutum animal, quod sibi soli in vita sufficit" (3, proemium, 1).
  - 28 The reference in Delorme-Massa to 10. 3 must be a typographical slip.
  - 29 Useful context on the second half is given by North, "Roger Bacon and the Saracens," particularly the section on the Sects, 147–53.
  - 30 See Part 5, proemium, 1: "Tacti sunt iam articuli quarte partis Moralis philosophie seu civilis scientiae, quae consistit in persuasione secte fidelis, ut recipiatur et credatur. Nunc sequitur pars quinta, que nititur persuadere ut ametur et operibus debitis comprobetur in observa[n]cia legum et morum honestate, cum desiderio future felicitatis, ut omnia contraria legibus et virtutibus et beatitudini abhorreamus, odio habemus et fortiter detestemur et opera declinamus," trans. MMF.
  - 31 See North, "Roger Bacon and the Saracens," 148.
  - 32 See Part 4, First Distinction, 1 and 2; trans. MMF.
  - 33 North, "Roger Bacon and the Saracens," 142, says: "The Tartars, or as we should say the Mongols, were not to be confused with the Saracens. They were by tradition Shamanists, and their gradual acceptance of Islam had not at that time [Bacon's time or that of his source Willem van Ruysbroeck] gone very far."
  - 34 Bacon is not aware that al-Fārābī's political philosophy derives far more from Plato than from Aristotle, as Aristotle's *Politics* does not seem to have been translated into Arabic. He reads the same aims in Boethius' *Consolation*.
  - 35 An interesting point, given that in his use of 10. 4 in his own Part 2, Bacon had skipped everything concerning divorce and remarriage.
  - 36 See Distinction 1. 1, 5–12.
  - 37 This refers to the general argument of 1. 1, rather than to a specific passage.

- 38 A favorite passage for Bacon: he had already quoted it in Part 1.4, 4.
- 39 Gerard of Cremona, *De scientiis Alfarabii*, ed. Galonnier, 304.179–91, of which Bacon gives a very free summary.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 151.
- 41 On the role of rhetoric in moral philosophy according to Bacon, see Hackett, “Moral Philosophy,” and Galonnier in Gerard of Cremona, *Le De scientiis Alfarabii*, 129–45. Both provide interesting passages from other Baconian works, which show the importance of this theme.
- 42 Rosier-Catach, “Roger Bacon, al-Fārābī et Augustin.”
- 43 Hackett, “Moral Philosophy,” 31–33; Rosier-Catach, “Roger Bacon, al-Fārābī et Augustin,” 103–6.
- 44 Hackett, “Moral Philosophy,” 35–37.
- 45 I found a hint of the importance of music for poetics and persuasion in Dominicus Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae*, 194–200. On the importance of music to perfect poetry, see Druart, “Why Music Matters”; Druart, “What Does Music.”

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## 5 Averroes' Commentaries on Book 7 of Aristotle's *Physics*

Josep Puig Montada

Aristotle's tenet that everything that moves is moved by something else did not remain uncontested by his readers; the possible existence of self-movers or—put the other way—self-moved movables could not be disregarded concerning the motion of the celestial spheres, the animals, and, in particular, the four elementary bodies. Averroes had to face this issue while reading and interpreting Aristotle's *Physics*. Since he did so in different forms and periods, I start this chapter with some observations on the formats he used to understand and explain Aristotle.

### About the Commentaries and Their Structure

Averroes wrote three kinds of commentaries on Aristotle's works in addition to the so-called “Questions,” but some observations about this division into short, middle, and long commentaries should be made. The first kind should not be called a commentary, since it is a kind of abstract of the original work—the Arabic term is *mukhtaṣar*—and can be part of a collection (*jawāmi'*) that abridged Aristotle's logical or natural works.

In the Latin Middle Ages and into the late Renaissance, Averroes was best known for his long commentaries, which he wrote on only five works of Aristotle that he considered to be of main import: *Posterior Analytics*, *Physics*, *On the Heavens*, *On the Soul*, and *Metaphysics*. The Arabic term for this kind of work is *tafsīr*, sometimes *sharḥ*.<sup>1</sup> Averroes follows the method of the Greek commentators of Aristotle, and even the Muslim commentators on the Qur'ān. The commentary is lemmatized—that is, Aristotle's text is divided into units, known as *lemmata* (*textus* in the Latin version)—and in Arabic they are announced by the verb *qāla*, “he said.” Each unit is commented on (*commentum*) sentence by sentence, and digressions may follow.

When writing his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, Averroes could already read the complete text of the *Metaphysics* that had been translated by Uṣṭāth (Eustathius) for al-Kindī (d. 873 CE) except the first book, *Alpha Meizon*, which it probably lacked. However, the first two books of the *Metaphysics* appear in reverse order with respect to the Greek in the *Long Commentary*:<sup>2</sup> *Alpha Elatton* (“the lesser”) is placed before *Alpha Meizon*. As Cecilia Martini writes, *Alpha Meizon* is very critical of Plato's doctrines,

and its absence from the first translations made the general understanding of the *Metaphysics* easier.<sup>3</sup> When the *Alpha Meizon* became available to Averroes in the tenth century via Naẓīf Ayman al-Rūmī's Arabic translation, it made sense to Averroes to place the *Alpha Meizon*, which explains what wisdom and philosophy are, after *Alpha Elatton*, which deals with some previous questions of method.

His exegesis of Book 7 (Z) of the *Metaphysics*, namely *Tafsīr al-maqāla al-sābi'a min-mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a* (literally: Explanation of the seventh book of what comes after nature), opens with an introduction to its content:

This treatise is the first treatise in which the kinds of being [*maujūd*] are investigated and investigation of them is here intended initially, because this science divides first into three main sections; the first is the division of being into substance and accident, the second, its division into potentiality and actuality, and the third one into unity and plurality.<sup>4</sup>

After the introduction, the lemma containing *Metaphysics* 7, 1028a10–13 follows in the Arabic translation of Eustathius, who renders *to on* as *hu-wīya*, which is an abstract noun (*iyya*) derived from *huwa*, the *ḍamīr al-faṣḥ* or personal pronoun used to contrast the subject with the nominal predicate; it usually means “identity.” After the *lemma*, different parts of it are reproduced and explained, often as paraphrases. When the subject matter requires it, Averroes extensively comments on it and draws the opinion of former scholars into the discussion, with a preference for the viewpoint of Alexander of Aphrodisias.

For the middle commentaries, he uses two methods. The first is the method of paraphrasing, which is similar to that of the *Long Commentary*. The *Middle Commentary on the Metaphysics* exemplifies such a method. Let us take the beginning of Book Z, or 7, as an instance. The Ross translation of the passage, 1028a10–15, reads:

There are several senses in which a thing may be said to “be,” as we pointed out previously in our book on the various senses of words; for in one sense the “being” meant is “what a thing is” or a “this,” and in another sense it means a quality or quantity or one of the other things that are predicated as these are. While “being” has all these senses, obviously that which “is” primarily is the “what,” which indicates the substance of the thing.

1028a [10] τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς, καθάπερ διειλόμεθα πρότερον ἐν τοῖς περὶ τοῦ ποσαχῶς: σημαίνει γὰρ τὸ μὲν τί ἐστι καὶ τόδε τι, τὸ δὲ ποιὸν ἢ ποσὸν ἢ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστον τῶν οὕτω κατηγορουμένων. τοσαυταχῶς δὲ λεγομένου τοῦ ὄντος φανερόν ὅτι τούτων πρῶτον ὄν τὸ τί ἐστιν, ὅπερ σημαίνει [15] τὴν οὐσίαν.

It is important to remember that Book 7 was only Book 6 in the old Arabic order, since *Alpha Meizon* was unknown for a long time, even to Averroes at the time he wrote the *Middle Commentary*. This is the order in the Hebrew version, the only version extant from the Arabic original,<sup>5</sup> which starts:

*Exposition of the issues of Aristotle's Sixth Book on the Metaphysics*

**He said**

Existing and being are predicated in many kinds according to what we have explained in the previous book. Among them is that which denotes “what is” the determinate thing that is not in a substrate, and among them is that which denotes qualities in a determinate [thing], or quantities, or something else than those things which do not inform about the determinate thing that is not in a substrate, what it is, and they are the other nine categories.<sup>6</sup>

Averroes employed *huwīya* and *mawjūd* as synonyms for “being” and the Hebrew gives both *nimṣa* and *yeshut*, although in the reverse order. The paraphrase is, however, “enhanced” by an observation on the “other nine categories” how being is predicated of them in addition to substance. There has been discussion whether Aristotle’s positions in the *Categories* and in the *Metaphysics* are compatible, but, as we see, Averroes integrates the classification of the *Categories* directly into the *Metaphysics*.

The second method followed by Averroes in the middle commentaries is much more ambitious. He was convinced that Aristotle’s doctrines had a demonstrative character, so that they could be articulated in a thoroughly systematic way, and he tried to present them in the form of syllogisms. He also organized the content of each book, as much as possible, in divisions, *jumla* (“paragraph”)—*summa* in the Latin translations—and subdivisions, *faṣl* (“chapter”), Latin *capitulum*. The *Middle Commentary on the Physics* fits this pattern. There are two Hebrew translations and they are fully extant, although in manuscript only (as we will see below). The Arabic original contains a summary that was placed at the beginning of its extant commentary. The summary was edited twice, first by Maʿšūmī and then by al-ʿAlawī.<sup>7</sup> The summary of Book 7 contains the following kinds of headings, paragraphs, and chapters:

*Seventh Book of the Hearing*

What is discussed in it is enclosed in six chapters:

First [chapter]: Every movable has a mover

Second: In the movables in place must be a first movable by itself and not moved by anything external.

Third: Demonstration that every mover moves by contact, by comprehensive discourse on all kinds of change.

Fourth: There is neither motion in the genus of quality like shape and figure, nor in the genus existing in the soul and in the animated



[animals] under the aspect that they are animated, like science, health and illness, that they exist in quantity insofar as quantity.

Fifth: Demonstration that not every motion is commensurable with every other and that their relation in velocity is not of an equal, larger nor smaller ratio.

Sixth: Demonstration of the properties and accidents existing in the mover and the movable under the aspect of multiplication and division.<sup>8</sup>

When Averroes takes on the organization of the subject matter of an Aristotelian work in this way, he goes a step further than he did in the so-called short commentaries, insofar as he highlights the coherence of the Aristotelian arguments by producing a systematic exposition as far as possible. Still, Averroes cannot be as detailed as in the long commentaries, which became the major instruments for understanding Aristotle in the medieval Latin world.

### **The Self-Mover Question in the Commentaries of Averroes**

Aristotle's *Physics* deals with a wide range of issues extending from mechanics to metaphysical concepts such as cause or principle. I would venture to say that Averroes' contributions are related to at least these three issues: Is motion a category in itself? Are there minimal parts of the elemental bodies? How are Aristotle's arguments for the existence of a first unmoved mover to be understood?

When Averroes argued for the existence of a first unmoved mover, he developed a cosmological theory that would reverberate in theological doctrines. David Twetten has carried out extensive research showing how the arguments for motion and its causes found mainly in the *Physics* played a key role in building late Greek and medieval cosmology, the latter being where Averroes made his contribution. Twetten shows that the Arabic philosophers had "an understanding of Aristotle's cosmology heavily influenced by the intermediate Greek thought." The Greek philosopher he points to and examines first is Alexander of Aphrodisias and his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, specifically the discussion of the first unmoved mover in Book 8.<sup>9</sup> Alexander's commentary is lost, but Marwan Rashed succeeded in reconstructing some of its parts, which is of help to us here.<sup>10</sup>

Book 8 is the last of the *Physics* and the ancient editors placed it there for good reason. Books 5, 6, and 8 form a unity revolving about the knowledge of motion: Aristotle classifies motions and changes, examines the contrariety and the unity of motion and rest, defends the continuity and divisibility of motion, realizes that there always has been and will be motion, proves that what is moving is moved by something else (but that a first mover is needed that is not moved by anything else), and concludes that there is a first mover that is eternal and one. Therefore, the transition from a cosmological description to a theological doctrine is smooth.



Book 7 seems to be redundant in the context: it repeats the argumentation that whatever is moving is moved by something else and claims that there is a primary mover which is not moved by anything else. Aristotle's arguments as they are given in *Physics* 242a38–49 and 242a5–15 can be organized in the following six theses:

- 1 Let us divide AB at point G: AG + GB.
- 2 If GB does not move, AB will not move.
- 3 If AB moved, AG would have to be moving while GB would be at standstill—this 3) is a proof by supposition of contradictory, *suppositio ex contrario*.
- 4 If so, AG is the primary *per se* movable and AB the *ab alio* movable.
- 5 But we assumed that AB moves *per se* primarily.
- 6 Thus if GB does not move, neither does AB.

The long chain of commentators—Greek in particular, but also Arabic writing<sup>11</sup>—had already observed this possible redundancy. Averroes' Andalusian predecessor Avempace (Ibn Bājjā) knew about the discussion on Book 7:

Some people said that its doctrine was superfluous [*fadl*], others said it was repetitive. Themistius expunged all its beginning because the thought that all these meanings had been proved by adequate demonstrative arguments in Book 8. The discrepancy was so strong that Galen composed his famous book on the essence [*qalb*] of Aristotle's written arguments there.<sup>12</sup>

Avempace does not say whether he had Themistius' or Galen's books. However, Averroes, who had read this work of Avempace, was a careful scholar and he would have sought them out as much as possible. In any case, he was aware of the issue and took a stand.

### **The Short Commentary, the Primary Movables**

We will look first at the *Short Commentary on the Physics*, which Averroes composed in or shortly before April 1159.<sup>13</sup> He shows he is familiar with the doubts and qualms of former commentators. However, straight away he formulates three premisses that he considers Aristotle to employ in this Book:

- 1° Every *per se* and primary movable is divisible and composite of parts.
- 2° If we assume any part of a primary movable to be at rest, the whole must be at rest.
- 3° Everything that is at rest because of one of its parts is at rest, moves because of something else, and the mover in it is other than the movable.<sup>14</sup>

Averroes reminds us that Premiss 1° was demonstrated in Book 6, and he is right in the valuation. There, Aristotle concluded that anything moving is divisible and that which is without parts cannot be moving except accidentally (6.10, 240b8–241a26).

Premiss 2° is self-evident for Averroes “if we understand what a primary movable is” (*Jawāmi*’, 114.3). According to him, a primary movable is that movable which does not move because of one of its parts, and he names the four elements, fire, air, water, and earth, as instances of primary movables. *Physics* 8.4 may be the passage that inspires Averroes, since there Aristotle addresses so-called natural motion of, for instance, fire or earth, and asserts that such movables contain the principle of motion in themselves and not accidentally (255a25–26). Nevertheless, Alexander seems to be Averroes’ main source of inspiration here.<sup>15</sup>

Premiss 3° is, again, self-evident for Averroes because if the primary movable ceases from motion because of one of its parts, it is not moved by itself: “If the mover were the movable, the rest of it would not come to a standstill” in this case (*Jawāmi*’, 114.18–115.1).

Averroes’ use of these premisses here has an antecedent in Alexander of Aphrodisias. Franz Rosenthal described and Shlomo Pines analyzed an Istanbul manuscript in which Alexander refuted the innovative ideas of Galen (d. 210 CE) criticizing and amending Aristotle’s natural philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Rescher and Michael Marmura used this manuscript and a better one from El Escorial library for their edition and English translation *The Refutation by Alexander of Aphrodisias of Galen’s Treatise on the Theory of Motion*. There we read that Galen disputed the statement in Book 7.1 that everything that moves is moved by something because if one imagines that one part of it comes to rest, then one necessarily imagines that the whole stops. Galen thought that only things “whose source of motion is internal to them and whose motion is not due to anything from the outside” match this description.<sup>17</sup> We also read that Alexander defended Aristotle, insisting on the distinction between motion *per se*, and accidentally: only the things that move *per se* move as a whole.<sup>18</sup> Galen had his own understanding of motion as a whole and of the things that move *per se* and he argued against Aristotle:

Since the things whose natural principle of motion is in them are the first simple bodies, and since these consist of similar parts, the part in these things is no other than the whole. Hence, Aristotle was not definitely right with respect to continuous things [in holding] that when one part of them stops the whole then stops.<sup>19</sup>

In his answer, Alexander denied that the thing that moves *per se* “and according to the first intention” refers only to the simple bodies; “according to the first intention” is interpreted as “according to the whole.” Aristotle maintained, in Alexander’s words, that “among the things that move [*ta-taḥarrak*] essentially, some move by themselves, some naturally, and some unnaturally by compulsion.”<sup>20</sup>

Alexander pointed out that each element has a minimal possible size, thus each part is other than the whole. Interestingly, Averroes emphasizes this aspect: there are minimal parts or magnitudes of the elements that have the capacity of motion; if there were a lesser part, it could not move. Ruth Glasner has discovered the influence of Alexander of Aphrodisias in particular upon Averroes concerning this question.<sup>21</sup> Thanks to her research, we are able to understand the remarks that Averroes already makes in his *Short Commentary* on what is a primary movable:

This doubt arises in the elements and there [the first movable *per se*] is the smallest magnitude of fire than can move upwards or the smallest magnitude of earth that can move downwards.

(*Jawāmi'*, 114.4–7)

Glasner's monograph, *Averroes' Physics: A Turning Point in Medieval Natural Philosophy*, deals masterfully with the complexity of Averroes' sources. Her philological work has shed new light on issues that concerned Averroes and were of great significance for the development of natural science. One of these is the Aristotelian doctrine of the continuum as opposed to atomism. According to Aristotle, a body can be infinitely divided. Glasner sustains that Averroes developed a third position, "a theory of actual parts, that is, a corpuscular theory."<sup>22</sup>

Whether the smallest part actually exists or is a physical qualification (limitation of divisibility) is something that Averroes does not answer, because he continues his summary with no other explanation than "this is so because the dimensions of the beings are limited" (*Jawāmi'*, 114.9). The context, however, hints at an answer in the second direction, namely, physical qualification, which opens the path to both atomism and corpuscular theory.

Although Averroes seldom enters into discussion with his predecessors in his short commentaries or epitomes, he does so here. There have been doubts, he recounts, about Aristotle's affirmation "Every movable insofar as movable has a mover" (*Jawāmi'*, 115.18). Something can come to rest because rest is altogether possible but if rest is not possible at all, as in the celestial bodies, the demonstration is incomplete. Averroes believes he can solve the objection by distinguishing between being movable as such and being movable with a certain character, *şifā*, namely, being eternal and not having a contrary that can stop it.

Avempace had already raised the issue in his commentary on Book 7 and given a similar answer for the celestial bodies: "No part of the circular bodies can come to rest because their mover has no contrary, but not because their bodies are moving."<sup>23</sup> Averroes, who makes the answer his own, does not give him credit but makes the following comment:

One might wonder why Abū Bakr [Avempace] solved this doubt here with this solution and he did not in Book 6 where he said that there is neither a faster nor a slower movable for every movable, and he went from the demonstration by Aristotle to another, but this is not something that we are now following, and let us return to where we were.

(*Jawāmi'*, 116.13–16)

His reference to Avempace is most probably in the passages regarding individuals and the geometrical line in Avempace's commentary on Book 6,<sup>24</sup> which distinguishes between first and second intentions, literally intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt*). Specific variation in velocity is something that only the first intentions have and it is not something that exists proportionally. Then, if the faster moved instantaneously and the slower in an indivisible magnitude, there would be no faster motion.

Averroes' criticism above seems to be unjustified, and he will bring back the discussion about celestial bodies in his *Long Commentary on the Physics* 7.1. Next, the text of the *Short Commentary* proceeds to summarize the arguments of *Physics* 7.1, 242a49–243a31, regarding a first movable and a first mover, which are also found in the *Middle Commentary on the Physics*. For this reason, one should compare what Averroes has just said here with what he says in the *Middle Commentary*.

### The Major Role of the Middle Commentary

Averroes finished what we should consider the first draft of the *Middle Commentary* in Seville on 1 Rajab 565 (March 21, 1170). It is not preserved in Arabic, but we have two Hebrew translations: one by Zerahya ben Yishāq She'altiel Hen (d. Rome 1284) and another some decades later by Kalonymos ben Kalonymos (d. Arles 1316). Over fifty copies of the latter are extant, but both translations are still unpublished. Their colophons record the same date for the completion of the *Middle Commentary on the Physics*.<sup>25</sup>

Three Latin translations were made from the Hebrew versions: one by Abraham de Balmes (Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica, Vat. Lat. 4548), another by Vitalis Dactylomelos (Paris, BnF, lat. 6507),<sup>26</sup> and a third by Jacob Mantino (Iuntina edition, Venice 1526, fols. 434–456, only the first three books). All of these were men of the Italian Renaissance: Abraham de Balmes ben Meir (ca. 1460–1523) was a Jewish physician from Lecce; Vitalis Dactylomelos made the translation for Cardinal Grimani, who died in 1523; Jacob Mantino, Giacomo Hebreo (d. 1549), was also a Jewish physician, to whom David Kaufmann devoted a well-known monograph.<sup>27</sup> Folio 169 (169r. 21–28) of the Vatican manuscript has the same colophon as the Hebrew translations:

The work on this exposition was finished on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> of Rajab of the year 565 according to the Moorish computing in the town of Seville. Since we already composed in our youth an exposition for the general audience in form of a short epitome [*qīṣūr*], now I decided to make this improved exposition of it and I hope by God to make [the same] for all other books of Aristotle.<sup>28</sup>

Glasner has explained that the two Hebrew translations of the *Middle Commentary* rely on different originals, both authentic, that Averroes composed in different stages. In some cases, Zerahya's and Kalonymos' translations may reflect different views, and one should search there for any progress in Averroes' thought as this is known to occur at the beginning of Book 7.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, I will refer to Kalonymos' translation as representative of Averroes' last viewpoint and use the Bodleian manuscript Huntington 79, a Byzantine manuscript of the late fifteenth century.

Like all the other books, Book 7 begins with a summary: "What is discussed in this book is enclosed [*nikhlal, continetur*] in six chapters, etc." and the first chapter, *pereq*, begins with the well-known "He says that":

Every movable [*mitno'e'a, mobile*] in place without something external must be moved by something moving it and being different from the movable. In those movables that are moved externally the subject is evident since they are moved by a mover that is different from the movable. That about which doubts arise is about those things that move in place without something external, and in particular, the simple bodies, like earth, water, air, and fire, because one could believe that they move by themselves and that in them, the movable and the mover are identical, as well as in the animals. It was shown [in the animals] that the movable is different from the mover since it is self-evident that the soul is its mover and the body its movable because motion ceases when the soul ceases.

(Kalonymos 72r° 9–17; Balmes 122v° 26–123r° 7)

Averroes has preferred another way of reading Aristotle, by focusing on the two classes of motion where doubts arose: the local motion of the elements and that of the animals. These are the two categories mentioned by Alexander in the scholium mentioned above;<sup>30</sup> the natural motion of the elements seems to be more relevant in the context.

Next Averroes defines what a primary and *per se* movable is, and this should help show how he understands Aristotle. A *per se* movable is moved by itself and can be primary or not. A primary movable does not move because one of its parts moves by itself, or "it can move." Here is Glasner's translation of the passage:

The demonstration of this [of Aristotle's moving-agent argument] is: That which is moved essentially is either First or not-First. [1] The

First-Moved is that which is not moved due to a part of it that is moved essentially or can be moved essentially, e.g., a part of earth or water [so small] that no smaller part can assume the form of water, for a limited magnitude is inherent to the natural bodies.<sup>31</sup> [2] The not-First[-Moved] is that which is moved as a whole because a part of it moves essentially, e.g., the motion of any magnitude of earth greater than the smallest part, or the local motion of an animal due to the vital heat that is in it. It is thus clear that the not-First-Moved is moved by something else, which is the First-Moved.<sup>32</sup>

I would like to draw attention to the distinction that Averroes makes when he says that a part of the movable “moves or can move” *per se*. It is obvious that “can move” is related to the natural motion of the elements: “A magnitude smaller than this magnitude cannot receive the form of water, because this [minimal] magnitude is inherent to the natural bodies” (Kalonymos 72v<sup>o</sup> 20–21). Some minimal magnitude is a necessary condition for any element and no form [*surah*] can be impressed if it does not have this magnitude; however, Averroes remains unclear about the dimensions of the magnitude. I would say that he opposes the hypothetical motion of a minimal magnitude of fire or any element, on the one hand, and the actual motion of any magnitude larger than the smaller part of earth, on the other. The motion of the animal in place is caused by the motion of the elementary heat existent in it, which is also factual motion (Kalonymos 72r<sup>o</sup> 23–24).

Therefore, the natural motion of the elements and the motion of the animals “can” have a primary movable, because “it has been proved that if something exists moving itself, so that the mover and the movable in it are one thing in itself, it must be primary” (Kalonymos 72r<sup>o</sup> 24–25). Averroes does not expound on the activity of the *minimal partes* because what matters is the right understanding of the concept of “*per se* primary movable” and because his aim is to prove that a “*per se* primary movable” cannot be moved and come to rest by itself. That is to say, the Platonic doctrine of self-motion is false and the solution goes another way.

In order to prove this, he links Aristotle's argumentation to the content of Book 6, saying that “in the previous treatise has been explained everything movable is divisible” and that for this reason, he can assume that the movable AB is necessarily divisible at G (Greek E, Kalonymos 72v<sup>o</sup> 7–9). Then Averroes reproduces Aristotle's arguments found in *Physics* 242a38–49/242a5–15 as mentioned above.

We have no need to indicate either the weakness of the arguments or the discussion between Galen and Alexander, since even Simplicius' commentaries show that there was awareness of it long before contemporary scholarship pointed it out, as W. D. Ross did, for instance.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, for Averroes and his mentor Alexander, Aristotle was right. Averroes recognizes that he found it difficult to understand Aristotle's words because he first had to grasp what a primary movable is: “Men fell into many errors

concerning this demonstration so that we were very confused for some time. For us it was very hard to grasp the depth of Aristotle” (Kalonymos 72v<sup>o</sup> 27–73r<sup>o</sup> 2). And if the first condition is not comprehended, then the argument is invalid.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Long Commentary, the Validation**

Averroes’ *Long Commentary on the Physics*, as published in the Iuntina edition, represents the same viewpoint and creates the impression that Averroes had sufficiently dealt with the problem, indicating that it was clear to him what primary *per se* movable meant.

In this commentary, there must be first movables because natural bodies do not divide infinitely into that for which they are natural bodies—for example, because the first movable in fire is the minimal part that is capable of being fire in actuality. Similarly, the first movable of natural heat is its minimal part of heat that can move the animal. Therefore, Averroes concludes, should any particle of such mobile come to rest, the whole of it would rest too.<sup>35</sup>

Although bodies are infinitely divisible, the elements insofar as they have essential properties are not, and fire cannot subsist as fire unless it does have a minimal or numbered magnitude. Four kinds of movables were eligible as movable *per se*: the four elements, the natural heat of the animated beings, the animals, and the heavenly body. Here, the *Long Commentary* asserts that “the doubt concerned the elements because in the case of the animals it is obvious that the mover is different from the movable” (Venetiis 1562, 307K).

For Averroes, that doubt was dispelled, but he also saw the limitations of the proof. Aristotle’s proof is true but “it belongs to [the category] of true signs.”<sup>36</sup> *Demonstratio per signum vel per effectum* (sometimes distinguished) was opposed to *demonstratio essendi* in Latin Scholasticism, since the first proves a cause from its effect while the second proves the ontological cause for its existence.<sup>37</sup> In the *demonstratio per signum*, the middle term is cause only for our knowledge of the conclusion, not for our knowledge of its existence. For Averroes, this proof (and others in Book 7) were true but relative, that is not absolute, demonstrations.

He now analyzes the difficulties raised by heavenly bodies in regard to the proof. One cannot imagine that the whole would come to rest should one part of it stop. While one cannot imagine it, it is an admissible hypothesis. The hypothesis, however, does not stand because the heavenly bodies do not move by themselves, and he gives an odd instance:

Therefore when we say that if one small part of the heavenly body comes to rest the whole would come to rest, it is necessarily moved by another, this is a true inference, for instance, as when we say: “If the stone flies it has wings, and if it is impossible that the stone has wings,

so too it is impossible that one part of the heavenly body comes to rest." However, should we assume that the heavenly body moves by itself, the opposite of the preceding connection necessarily follows, that is, if that some part comes to rest, verily the whole comes to rest, as if something could be supposed from which it would follow that what flies does not have wings, for instance, if we assumed that it flew *per se*, it would keep in the air.<sup>38</sup>

It belongs to the very essence of a heavenly body that none of its parts can come to rest, just as it is impossible for a stone to have wings. This is because it does not move by itself, and we would expect Averroes to proceed to demonstrate that the heavenly body is moved by another. However, he does not do this because he is only paving the way for the Eighth Book.

### Concluding Remarks

We have seen Averroes' stand on the value of Book 7 in his three commentaries. Glasner has shown the steps of an evolution of Averroes' thought in her detailed analysis of all available commentaries, and in particular of the Hebrew translations and manuscripts.<sup>39</sup> Thus, for a more extensive examination I refer readers to her work.

Here I would like to mention the role that Averroes' knowledge of *The Refutation by Alexander of Aphrodisias of Galen's Treatise on the Theory of Motion* most probably played in the development of his position. He is likely to have heard of it through Avempace, but he may not have had the treatise when he wrote the *Short Commentary*. If he received it later, he probably then revised his previously written versions of the middle and long commentaries and developed the distinction between primary and not-primary movables.

Concerning the doctrine of the *minima naturalia*, it should first be noted that the comparable Latin construction we find in Scotus' translations is *minima pars* (Venetiis 1562, 307I); in Abraham de Balme's translation, it is *numerata* (Balme 123r° 17). The doctrine was later discussed by Scholastic and Renaissance philosophers. Glasner and McGinnis have proved in regard to Averroes and Avicenna, respectively, that it must be taken into serious consideration, and that further investigation is necessary.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, Averroes did not expand on the doctrine, because his main concern here—and in general—was to argue for the existence of a First Unmoved Mover, and by doing so to integrate Aristotle's philosophy into Islamic theology. Thomas Aquinas would go further, making the argument of motion the first *via* to prove God's existence.

The proof from motion requires two premisses: everything that moves is moved by another, and the chain of movers—movables cannot proceed to infinity. Both tenets are asserted in Book 7 and, of course, Aristotle's proofs are valid for Averroes. Book 8 leads the argumentation in a



similar direction and doubts arose among the commentators. Averroes was aware of these, but he was convinced that Aristotle had good reasons for “inserting” Book 7. He found it necessary in order to reinforce the first premiss: everything that is in motion is moved by another, excluding any self-moved movable. The argumentation that a young Aristotle may have formulated intending to reject Plato’s doctrine of the self-mover was directed by Averroes toward establishing God as the Unmoved Mover.<sup>41</sup>

The *Long Commentary on the Physics* was translated by Michael Scot into Latin at the beginning of the thirteenth century and became very influential in the Latin West during the late Middle Ages. It helped to explicate Aristotle as well as to encourage a discussion on many issues that Aristotle had brought to light, including that of the self-mover.

Averroes’ defense of the tenet *omne quod movetur necesse est ab aliquo moveri* delayed the progress of the new science, but we should see it primarily as one of the confronting positions in the discussion about self-motion. Interest in Averroes’ viewpoints enjoyed a revival in the Renaissance; the *Middle Commentary* was as useful and documented as the *Long Commentary*, but it was a systematic exposition in which Averroes argued straightforwardly. This could be the reason why three translations were commissioned for the *Middle Commentary* in which the hypothesis of the *minimal part* gained relevance.

Finally, we see that from the beginning of his reading of Aristotle, Averroes was very aware of the doubts raised by adversaries of the principle that every movable has a mover. He considered the simple elements and the celestial bodies to be the main instances of possible self-movers. Averroes rejected the possibility of both instances, and his argumentation developed increasingly in the course of the three so-called commentaries, a process in which the *Middle Commentary* made a major contribution by clarifying the meaning of “primary *per se* movable.”

## Acknowledgments

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## Notes

- 1 See Puig Montada, “Averroes’ Commentaries.”
- 2 Ibn Rushd, *Tafsīr mā ba‘d al-Ṭabī‘a*, ed. Bouygues.
- 3 Martini, “Arabic Version,” 173–84.
- 4 Ibn Rushd, *Tafsīr mā ba‘d al-Ṭabī‘a*, ed. Bouygues, 744.1–745.10.
- 5 It is most likely that Elia Del Medigo partially translated the long commentary, but not the middle, in spite of this affirmation by the editor: “Habe, studioso lector, Mediam huiusque Auerrois Cordubensis Commentationem tantopere expectata, ex Arabico in nostrum ab Helia Cretense, uiro

- Philosophiae et Medicinae consultissimo, conuersam." Aristotle, *Metaphy.*, fol. 233E.
- 6 Averroes, *Il Commento medio*, ed. Zonta, 108.1–7.
  - 7 Ma'šūmī, "Ibn Rushd's Synopsis"; al-'Alawī, "Min Talkhīṣ al-Samā' al-Ṭabī'ī."
  - 8 Al-'Alawī, "Min Talkhīṣ al-Samā' al-Ṭabī'ī," 247–48.
  - 9 Twetten, "Aristotelian Cosmology and Causality," 319–21.
  - 10 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentaire perdu*, ed. Rashed.
  - 11 Lettinck, *Aristotle's Physics*, 513–15.
  - 12 Ibn Bājjā, *Sharḥ al-Samā' al-Ṭabī'ī*, ed. Fakhry, 42.11–14.
  - 13 Madrid, BNE, árabes 5000, fol. 66v<sup>o</sup>, colophon closing the *jawāmi'* of four Aristotelian books on nature—*Physics*, *Coming-to-be and Passing-away*, *Meteorologica*, and *On the Heavens*—reads "Monday 16 Rabi' I, 554 H.," should be Tuesday, April 7, 1159.
  - 14 Ibn Rushd, *Jawāmi' fi-l-Falsafa (Short Commentary on the Physics; hereafter Jawāmi')* ed. Puig Montada, 113.5–8.
  - 15 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentaire perdu*, ed. Rashed, 427 \*433.
  - 16 Pines, "Omne quod movetur necesse."
  - 17 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Refutation*, ed. Rescher and Marmura, 33.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, 19–20.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, 33–34.
  - 20 *Ibid.*, 36, 45.
  - 21 Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*, 152–59.
  - 22 *Ibid.*, 145.
  - 23 Ibn Bājjā, *Sharḥ al-Samā' al-Ṭabī'ī*, ed. Fakhry, 102.1–12.
  - 24 *Ibid.*, 78.13–79.5.
  - 25 The following manuscripts were used. For Zerahya: Jerusalem, The National Library of Israel, Online catalogue of manuscripts, Heb. 4<sup>o</sup> 1108, here fol. 71v<sup>o</sup> 17–18. For Kalonymos: Adolph Neubauer Catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, vol. 1. Oxford, 1886: Neubauer 1380, Huntington 79 (Uri 393), here fol. 99r<sup>o</sup> 1–3.
  - 26 *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Regiae*, 250.
  - 27 Kaufmann, *Jacob Mantino*.
  - 28 I thank the Thomas Institut, Cologne, for the free access: <http://dare.uni-koeln.de>. The passage was compared with the Hebrew, Kalonymos, Huntington 79, fol. 99r<sup>o</sup> 5–11.
  - 29 Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*, 163–65.
  - 30 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Commentaire perdu*, ed. Rashed, 427 \*433.
  - 31 Glasner translates "for such a magnitude is bounded in natural bodies," I cannot figure out the Arabic word that lies beyond the Hebrew terms מִגְדָּר [mugdal], מִגְדָּרָה [mugdar], or נִמְנָה [nimnah] according to the various manuscripts. Abraham de Balmes seems to write *magnitudo numerata [permeat?] corpora naturalia*, (123r.18) "a numbered magnitude is inherent to the natural bodies." The pivotal idea is one and the same.
  - 32 Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*, 152; cf. Balmes 123r<sup>o</sup> 11–20.
  - 33 Aristotle, *Physics*, 669.
  - 34 Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*, 165.
  - 35 *Aristotelis De physico*, Iuntina edition (hereafter Venetiis 1562), 307I TC2; Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, ed. Schmieja, 6.10–16.
  - 36 Venetiis 1562, 308A; ed. Schmieja, 6.26–28.
  - 37 Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* 1.13 (also *Prior Analytics* 2.27) has been seen as the source of the distinction between the two kinds of demonstration. The distinction was well studied by the Greek commentators (see Martijn, Leunissen, and de Haas, *Interpreting Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*), and some of their works entered the Arabic tradition. Thomas Aquinas' commentary on the *Posterior*

- Analytics* of Aristotle is a good instance of the distinction in Scholasticism; see lect. 7, cap. 8.
- 38 Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, ed. Schmieja, 8.1–9. Because of some contradiction in the Iuntina wording (Venetiis 1562, 308B–D), I prefer Schmieja’s edition here.
- 39 Glasner, *Averroes’ Physics*, 163–68.
- 40 See McGinnis, “Small Discovery.”
- 41 Lang, *Aristotle’s Physics*, 37–44.

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- “Balmes”: Abraham de Balmes, Latin translation, from the Hebrew, of the *Middle Commentary on the Physics*, Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica, Vat. Lat. 4548.
- “Kalonymos”: Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, Hebrew translation of the *Middle Commentary on the Physics*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, catalogue A. Neubauer 1380, Huntington 79.

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## 6 The Influence of Mansūr Ibn Sarjūn (John of Damascus) on Aquinas' Philosophy of Religious Worship

*Francisco J. Romero Carrasquillo*

Any serious discussion on medieval Arabic philosophy and its influence on Aquinas is bound to ask what exactly Arabic philosophy is. This issue is not only a matter of historical speculation: there is a practical need to decide which thinkers should be considered part of the “canon” of Arabic philosophers, along with the greats: al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes. This issue has been raised many times in the meetings of the “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’ International Working Group,” organized by Richard C. Taylor and his colleagues.

Although different scholars answer the question differently, I am not alone in understanding the term “Arabs”—in the phrase Aquinas and “the Arabs”—to be primarily a *linguistic* and *cultural* term.<sup>1</sup> I emphatically do not take it to be a necessarily religious reference. Likewise, “Arabic” philosophy and “Islamic” philosophy are not synonymous, even if in practice some members of our profession use the terms interchangeably. The non-identity of these terms explains why scholars of medieval Arabic philosophy often include non-Muslims, such as Avicenna and Maimonides, within the canon of Arabic philosophers.<sup>2</sup> Understanding the term in a religiously neutral sense can lead to a much deeper appreciation of the rich interreligious dialogue that is at the heart of medieval Arabic philosophy. It forces us to consider Muslims, Christians, and Jews as being part of the great philosophical conversation that is Arabic philosophy. It precludes us from imagining the Islamic thinkers as philosophizing in isolation from other religious traditions.

In this vein, I wish in this essay to point to one particular medieval Arab—a Christian theologian from Syria—who had a significant influence on Aquinas' philosophical and theological thought. His Arabic name was Mansūr Ibn Sarjūn (d. 750 CE), although he is far more commonly known by his religious name, John of Damascus or John Damascene. Although as an adult Ibn Sarjūn became a Christian monk and later wrote in Greek, his origins were Syrian. He was born and raised in Damascus in the late seventh century, shortly after the region came under Arab Umayyad rule. Before entering religious life, he served as a fiscal administrator at

Damascus. He not only spoke Arabic, but was fully immersed in the nascent Islamic world. Ibn Sarjūn preceded al-Kindī and the *falsafa* tradition that he inaugurated in the ninth century, but was steeped in works of Aristotelian thought and was, therefore, one of the first thinkers within the Arab world to come into contact with Greek philosophy.

One of Ibn Sarjūn's major contributions to later Christian theology came from his involvement in the controversy around Iconoclasm, a Byzantine religious movement with Islamic undertones that vehemently opposed the use of images in Christian worship as idolatrous. The controversy led Ibn Sarjūn to develop a philosophical account of religious worship, one that includes a nuanced understanding of "veneration" and "adoration" and of the role of the body in worship. His account is ultimately grounded on a (vaguely) Aristotelian hylomorphic view of the nature of human beings and of human knowledge, which begins with the senses and only thereby reaches intelligible and spiritual realities.

St. Thomas Aquinas was deeply influenced by Ibn Sarjūn's thought, especially on the topic of religious worship. And yet the reception of "the Damascene," as he was nicknamed in the Latin West, has not been sufficiently studied in the secondary literature. This essay addresses the gap by presenting Aquinas' account of the use of the body and of externals in worship as dependent on John's work. My aim is twofold. I argue, first, that besides Avicenna, Averroes, Maimonides, and so on, we should consider Mansūr Ibn Sarjūn/John Damascene as an important figure among those other "Arabs" who had a massive influence in the thought of St. Thomas. Second, I wish to present Thomas' account of religious worship as an area in which he was heavily influenced by John Damascene.

Thus, in the first section, I review the historical context in which John Damascene developed his theory of worship, highlighting his origins in the Arab world. In the second section, I present Aquinas' dependence on John for his account of physical religious practices such as eastward prayer, "adoration," or the offering of sacrifices. In the third section, I address the particular issue of the use of icons or religious images, and the type of worship offered to icons of Christ, in these two thinkers.

### **Ibn Sarjūn: An Aristotelian in the Early Arab World**

Mansūr Ibn Sarjūn was born to a Syrian Christian family prominent in the fiscal administration of Damascus. In 651, Mu'āwiya, the first Umayyad caliph, had made Damascus the capital of his empire. Ibn Sarjūn's grandfather, whose name was also Mansūr Ibn Sarjūn, not only survived this transition of the city of Damascus and the Middle East from Persian to Arab rule, but even managed to retain his position as fiscal administrator or vizier. Later on, in the eighth century, his grandson came into the scene, pursuing a classical Greek education (the *enkyklios paideia*), and then seems to have inherited the vizier position, as some scholars have suggested.<sup>3</sup> He

then left the administrative post to become a monk in Arab Palestine, near Jerusalem, possibly at the monastery of Mar Saba. He died there around 750 CE.

Ibn Sarjūn's theological work must be seen within the Islamic context in which he was immersed. His career as a theologian was spent in the company of Melkite Christians, Arab Palestinian monks, who were "living and working almost literally under the shadow of the mosques of the Dome of the Rock and of al-Aqsa."<sup>4</sup> Ibn Sarjūn lived his whole life within the Umayyad Empire. He never set foot in the Byzantine Empire, but he belonged to it at least intellectually, and was perhaps the greatest expositor of its theology. In this sense, he is a Byzantine theologian among the Arabs: a "Melkite" theologian, that is, a Christian immersed in the Arabic world but a supporter of the Christianity of the Byzantine emperor (Syriac: *malkā*; Arabic: *malik*). He wrote in Greek, because the transition to Arabic as the language of learning in the region had not yet been accomplished, but within a generation of his death, his early disciples already wrote in Arabic, as did his earliest biographers. Moreover, his works were translated into Arabic shortly after his death (long before they were translated into Latin), "for the benefit of John's successors in the Middle East who in the generation after John began to think and express their faith in what had become their vernacular."<sup>5</sup>

His principal work, the *Pēgē gnoseōs*, known in English as *The Fountain of Knowledge*, has a complex manuscript tradition and has come down to us in many different forms. It was originally divided by Ibn Sarjūn into three parts, and the different parts eventually were published as separate works, or as partial combinations of sections. Only one early manuscript contains all three sections; most manuscripts contain only one of the three sections as a stand-alone text. Different versions of the first part, which later became known as the *Dialectica*, contain synopses of Aristotelian and Porphyrian logic as well as a presentation of the philosophical terminology considered necessary for defending Christian Orthodox theology, including terms such as *physis*, *ousia*, *hypostasis*, and *energeia*. This philosophical preamble to a Christian dogmatic work is not unprecedented, for since the seventh century in Palestine, there had been a tradition developing that produced several small books on logic, written in Greek for Christian apologists involved in the great Christological disputes of the time—for example, Monophysitism, Monotheletism, or Monoenergism. These logical treatises, Ibn Sarjūn's included, drew "on the logical treatises of Aristotle and later philosophers, such as Porphyry and the sixth-century Aristotelian commentators of Alexandria."<sup>6</sup> Whether or not Ibn Sarjūn was directly familiar with Aristotle's texts, he certainly had access to Aristotelian ideas through this Greek Palestinian tradition of Christian polemical works.

The second section of *The Fountain of Knowledge* consists of a long catalogue of doctrines that Ibn Sarjūn considered to be heretical. This section



is now known by the title *On Heresies*. Interestingly, the last chapters of *On Heresies* contain an exposition and attack of the so-called “heresy of the Ishmaelites,” in other words, Islam.<sup>7</sup> These chapters very likely make Ibn Sarjūn the first author of a Christian polemic against Islam.<sup>8</sup> In them, he quotes the Qurʾān and hadith texts—some scholars have argued that he is translating directly from Arabic—and argues dialectically against Islamic beliefs. He gives a definition of Islam, situates Muhammad historically, summarizes his teaching and relationship to Christianity, and responds to Muslim objections to Christianity.

The third section of the work, titled *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (*Ekdosis akribes tēs Orthodoxou Pisteōs*), is historically the first systematic and comprehensive presentation of Christian theology from the perspective of Greek Patristics. Although Aquinas and his contemporaries in the thirteenth-century Latin West had access to a few other works by Ibn Sarjūn (mainly letters and homilies), only the third section from *The Fountain of Knowledge* was available to them, under the title *De fide orthodoxa*. It was translated from the original Greek into Latin by Burgundio of Pisa in the twelfth century.<sup>9</sup> By 1224, the manuscript tradition had divided Burgundio’s translation into four books, corresponding to the division of the *Sentences*. In that form it gradually became “the principal means of access to the dogmatic tradition of the Greek East for the scholastics of the High Middle Ages.”<sup>10</sup> Modern scholars of medieval philosophy typically see in this work the great precursor of the later Scholastic *summae*, and the only one written in Greek.

Beyond *The Fountain of Knowledge*, Ibn Sarjūn also wrote other dogmatic treatises, some of great importance for the development of religious thought in Byzantine theology, but they were not available in Latin translation in the thirteenth century. Among them are his three treatises titled *On Images*, which contain one of Ibn Sarjūn’s most original contributions to Christian theology: his defense of the use of images in worship. These works were surely occasioned by the decision made by the Byzantine Emperor Leo III in 727 CE to issue a ban on the use of images or icons in Christian worship, giving rise to the Iconoclast controversy, a Christian theological dispute in Byzantium in the eighth and ninth centuries over the use of icons (or religious images). Through these treatises, Ibn Sarjūn became one of the protagonists in the controversy. His fervent defense of the use of icons in worship became highly influential in the debate that culminated with the Second Council of Nicaea (787 CE), which condemned Iconoclasm as a heresy. The target of his works on images was Byzantine Iconoclasm, but as scholars have noted, the sources of his arguments also suggest the influence of local Islamic Iconoclast concerns.<sup>11</sup> Besides containing a Christian theological defense of the use of images in worship, based—as one would expect—on Scripture and the Greek Patristic tradition, these treatises also contain a few underlying points relating to the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of mind, and semiotics,



which serve him as a rational foundation whereby he could defend his conclusions without reference to Scripture or tradition. Like later medieval Christian philosophers, Ibn Sarjūn was able to use Aristotelian teachings to defend his faith rationally. In particular, he uses the Aristotelian view of human knowledge as beginning in the senses to argue for and defend the physical, sensible elements that are characteristic of Christian worship, especially icons.

Although these treatises did not make it to the Latin High Middle Ages, the *De fide orthodoxa* did, and it contains in summary form the same philosophical content relating to religious worship. Aquinas was deeply familiar with the *De fide orthodoxa*, and it is in this form that he inherited and utilized the work of “the Damascene” (*Damascenus*). This work was of massive importance not only for Aquinas’ theology (the Trinity, Christology, etc.) but also for his philosophy, including areas such as the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of religion.

The foregoing discussion shows that John Damascene was culturally an Arabic thinker, even if he did not write philosophy in Arabic. If we accept this premise,<sup>12</sup> then it follows that he is among the most influential “Arabs” in Aquinas’ thought, on a par with Avicenna and Averroes. This is evidently so if we take the sheer number of citations of the *Damascenus* in Aquinas’ works as an indication of the extent of Aquinas’ debt to him. A search in the *Index Thomisticus* for the term *Damascenus* and inflected variants of the name (*Damascen\**) turned up 953 “places,” that is, distinct texts. This is more than any other Arab author in Aquinas’ corpus, leaving aside the *Liber de causis*, to which Aquinas dedicated an entire commentary. In fact, it is slightly more than the total number of results for both Averroes and Avicenna combined: a similar search resulted in 537 places in the whole corpus for *Averroes* or *Commentator* and their variants (*Averro\** AND *Commentat\**) and 410 places for *Avicenna* and its variants (*Avicen\**).

In order to illustrate one area of influence—and because it is an inherently interesting philosophical theme—I shall devote the rest of my essay to Aquinas’ reception of John Damascene’s philosophy of religion. In the next section, I present his dependence on John for the exterior acts of religious worship, and in the third section, I delve into the particular issue of the worship of religious images.

### **Damascene and Aquinas on the Rationale for Exterior Religious Worship**

In both the *Sentences* commentary and the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas develops a philosophical and theological doctrine of *latria* or *religio*—both of these terms denoting the worship due to God alone, as distinct from *dulia*, a sort of respect owed to other religious figures, such as the saints. In both works, he makes ample use of Damascene’s philosophy of religion to defend his conclusions. Explicit references to Damascene on worship are not

frequent, but when they do occur, they tend to furnish Aquinas with the fundamental premises of his argument.

In the *Sentences* commentary, distinction 9, Aquinas addresses the question of whether the humanity of Christ can be worshipped with *latría*. This “distinction” of course implies ascertaining first the very nature of *latría*. Aquinas conceives *latría* as a virtue that gives to God alone what is His due. It is the kind of worship that is due to the Creator alone, and not to any creature. He explicitly contrasts *latría* with *dulia*, a lesser form of “veneration” that may be given to creatures that have some sort of excellence. After a philosophical discussion of the nature of *latría* in general, the distinction ends with a theological defense of the thesis that the humanity of Christ, in virtue of its hypostatic union with the Second Person of the Trinity, is worthy of *latría*.

Later in the *Summa*, we find these two issues—the nature of *latría*, and the *latría* due to Christ—addressed separately. In the “Treatise on Religion” in the *Secunda secundae* (qq. 81–100), Aquinas addresses the nature of *religio* or *latría*, which is now placed within the context of the virtues annexed to justice, and defined as the virtue that offers to God His due worship. It is not until the *Tertia pars*, within the Christological section of the *Summa theologiae*, that we find the question of whether the humanity of Christ is deserving of *latría*. In this section of the essay, I will focus on the *Secunda secundae* texts where Aquinas makes use of Damascene’s doctrine on *latría*. I shall leave the discussion from the *Tertia pars* to the third section of the essay.

Among Aquinas’ first references to Damascene within the discussion of the nature of *latría* or *religio* in the *Summa theologiae* is one that relates to exterior religious worship. In the first question on the nature of *religio*, Aquinas asks whether it includes exterior actions or is an interior or spiritual act only. His reply is that *religio* must include both exterior and interior acts, and ultimately his rationale for this is the hylomorphic nature of human beings. His response in the first text focuses on the nature of human cognition:

Now the human mind, in order to be united to God, needs to be guided by the sensible world, since “invisible things [. . .] are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,” as the Apostle says (Romans 1:20). In divine worship, therefore, it is necessary to make use of corporeal things, that the human mind may be aroused thereby, as by signs, to the spiritual acts by means of which he is united to God. Therefore the internal acts of religion take precedence of the others and belong to religion essentially, while its external acts are secondary, and subordinate to the internal acts.<sup>13</sup>

Following this reasoning, Aquinas makes a fundamental distinction between the interior or mental acts of worship and the corresponding

exterior or physical acts of worship. The interior acts of worship are two: prayer and devotion. The exterior acts fall into three general categories: acts of “adoration”; acts whereby something external is offered to God (e.g., sacrifice or oblations); and acts whereby something belonging to God is “assumed” (e.g., vows and oaths, whereby someone “assumes” God’s name).<sup>14</sup> Much of the section on *religio* in the *Summa theologiae* is ordered according to this division.

The first of the exterior acts of *religio*, that of “adoration” (*adoratio*), is of particular interest here. First of all, the terminology can be misleading. We might be inclined to think of adoration as simply being synonymous with “worship,” the kind of reverence that is reserved to the deity. But Aquinas and Damascene, who in this regard simply follow the traditions in which they are immersed, already have a particular term for divine worship, namely, *latria* (*latreia*). *Adoratio* for Thomas, and *proskynēsis* for John, mean concretely any kind of a physical humbling of the body, such as genuflections, prostrations, or bowing down, before something sacred or something that is worthy of respect or veneration. As such, *adoratio* and *proskynēsis* signify primarily physical acts comprising a set of bodily postures. In the context of divine worship, these acts of *adoratio* or *proskynēsis* are of course done as signs of an interior attitude of *latria*, but in themselves they are physical acts.

Second, it is within this discussion of *adoratio* that John’s influence is felt most strongly. Aquinas cites him explicitly to this effect in a later text within the discussion of *religio*:

As Damascene says in the fourth book, since we are composed of a twofold nature, intellectual and sensible, we offer God a twofold adoration; namely, a spiritual adoration, which consists in the internal devotion of the mind; and a corporeal adoration, which consists in an exterior humbling of the body.<sup>15</sup>

In this passage, Aquinas is actually paraphrasing a text where Damascene gives a defense of the practice of worshipping toward the East. There, we read:

It is not without reason or by chance that we worship towards the East. But seeing that we are composed of a visible and an invisible nature, that is to say, of a nature partly of spirit and partly of sense, we render also a twofold worship to the Creator; just as we sing both with our spirit and our bodily lips, and are baptized with both water and Spirit, and are united with the Lord in a twofold manner, being sharers in the mysteries and in the grace of the Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

In other passages where John draws heavily from the ascetical and mystical theology of Dionysius the Areopagite, he offers an epistemological

rationale for exterior worship: the exterior actions of worship are means by which the mind moves from sensible images to grasp intelligible, spiritual reality.<sup>17</sup> For example, in his third treatise *On Images*, we read:

For since we are twofold, fashioned of soul and body, and our soul is not naked, but as it were, covered with a veil, it is impossible for us to go to the spiritual apart from the bodily. So just as we hear with our bodily ears audible words and understand something spiritual, so through bodily sight we come to spiritual contemplation.<sup>18</sup>

Although Aquinas did not have access to this last text, he concludes his argument defending the need for exterior adoration in a similar vein:

And since in all acts of *latría* that which is without is referred to that which is within as being of greater import, it follows that exterior adoration is offered on account of interior adoration; in other words we exhibit signs of humility in our bodies in order to incite our affections to submit to God, since it is connatural to us to proceed from the sensible to the intelligible.<sup>19</sup>

This fundamental principle derived from Damascene will reappear without a mention of its source in many of Aquinas' texts that aim to give a rationale for any given exterior act of worship. In reference to sacrifices, for example, Aquinas says:

The mode befitting to humans is that they should employ sensible signs in order to signify anything, because they derive knowledge from sensibles. Hence it is a dictate of natural reason that humans should use certain sensibles, by offering them to God in sign of the subjection and honor due to Him, like those who make certain offerings to their lord in recognition of his authority. Now this is what we mean by a sacrifice, and consequently the offering of sacrifice is of the natural law.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Contra Gentiles*, he expresses the same doctrine in a more detailed way:

Because it is connatural to humans to receive knowledge through the senses, and most difficult to transcend sensible things, God has provided for human beings that even among sensible things there should be made for them a commemoration of things divine, so that thereby the intention of human beings be called back toward divine things. And for this reason sensible sacrifices have been instituted, which humans offer to God, not as though God needed them, but to represent to humans the fact that they ought to offer themselves and all they have to God, as to their end, Creator, Ruler, and Lord of all.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, we see that Aquinas had Damascene in mind when constructing his “Treatise on Religion.” This awareness is especially noticeable when Aquinas discusses the exterior acts of religion. He follows Damascene in using the Aristotelian account of human knowledge as beginning in the senses as the rationale for all exterior religious worship. Aquinas may not have been fully aware of the historical circumstances in which Damascene arrived at his account of exterior religious worship, that is, in the midst of the nascent Islamic world and in reaction to the Iconoclast controversy. But he certainly was an eager recipient of this doctrine, which was in fact developed among “the Arabs.”

### **Aquinas’ Reception of Damascene’s Doctrine on the Use of Images in Worship**

Another key area in Thomas’ thought where we see a reception of John’s philosophy of religion is the discussion on the adoration that is due to Christ. In the *Summa theologiae*, this discussion appears within the Christological section of the *Tertia pars*. There, Aquinas raises several important theological issues with interesting philosophical underpinnings: for example, the question (inherited from the *Sentences*) of whether Christ’s humanity is deserving of the adoration of *latria*, as well as other related questions, such as whether the adoration of *latria* is to be given to the image of Christ and whether *latria* is to be given to the cross of Christ, to His mother, and to the relics of the saints.

One of Aquinas’ most basic points in this question is that Christ’s humanity, though in itself created, is deserving of *latria* by virtue of its hypostatic or personal union with the Second Person of the Trinity: “the adoration of *latria* is not given to Christ’s humanity by reason of itself, but by reason of divinity to which it is united.”<sup>22</sup> In the *sed contra*, he quotes Damascene directly as his authority on the matter: “Damascene says in the fourth book, ‘On account of the incarnation of the Divine Word, we adore the flesh of Christ not for its own sake, but because the Word of God is united thereto in person.’”<sup>23</sup>

In his reply to the arguments, he also cites John Damascene to the effect that if we were to consider the humanity of Christ abstractly, prescinding from the hypostatic union and thinking of it strictly as a creature, then we would have to say that the adoration due to it is only the “adoration of *dulia*,” which is the respect or veneration owed to some creatures, not to God:

But since, as Damascene says in the fourth book: “If by a subtle distinction you divide what is seen from what is understood, it cannot be adored insofar as it is a creature”—that is, with the adoration of *latria*. And then thus understood as separate from the Word of God, the adoration of *dulia* is owed to it; not just any kind of *dulia*, such as

that which is universally given to other creatures, but a more excellent kind of *dulia*, which is called *hyperdulia*.<sup>24</sup>

As he explains in later articles in this question, the “adoration of *dulia*” is the kind of veneration given to the saints and their relics, and *hyperdulia* is given to the mother of Christ.

Yet, perhaps surprisingly, the humanity of Christ is not the only creature which is in some way deserving of *latria*. Other created things that deserve *latria* (without this entailing the sin of idolatry) are the true cross of Christ—the actual historical instrument of Christ’s passion—as well as any image or icon of Christ. “Icons” or images can mean any pictorial representation of Christ or of the cross of Christ, whether in fresco form or mosaics, “made of colors, pebbles, any other material that is fit, set in the holy churches of God, on holy utensils and vestments, on walls and boards, in houses and in streets,” in the words of the Second Council of Nicaea, addressing the issue of Iconoclasm.<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, in another *sed contra* Aquinas relies again on St. John Damascene for a quote by St. Basil the Great on this point. “Damascene quotes Basil as saying: ‘The honor given to an image reaches to the prototype,’ that is, the exemplar. But the exemplar itself, namely, Christ, is to be adored with the adoration of *latria*; therefore also His image.”<sup>26</sup> What follows the *sed contra* is a remarkable text in which Aquinas uses Aristotelian semiotics as a basic premise to address the issue on his own terms:

As the Philosopher says in the book *De memoria et reminiscentia*, there is a twofold movement of the mind toward an image: one indeed toward the image itself as a certain thing; another, toward the image insofar as it is the image of something else. And between these movements there is this difference; that the former, by which one is moved toward an image as a certain thing, is different from the movement toward the thing: whereas the latter movement, which is toward the image as an image, is one and the same as that which is toward the thing. Thus therefore we must say that no reverence is shown to Christ’s image, as a thing, for instance, carved or painted wood: because reverence is not due save to a rational creature. It follows therefore that reverence should be shown to it only insofar as it is an image. Consequently the same reverence should be shown to Christ’s image as to Christ Himself. Since, therefore, Christ is adored with the adoration of *latria*, it follows that His image should be adored with the adoration of *latria*.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, we can think of an image in two ways: as a thing in itself, or as a sign. When we think of it as a thing in itself, we do not necessarily treat it as we treat the object of which it is a sign, but when we do think of it as a sign, we treat it in the same way as we treat the object of which it is a

sign. For example, if I look at a picture of my wife, it is entirely reasonable for me to point to the picture and say “I love her.” No one would think that what I mean is that I love the picture itself, *qua* inanimate object. All of my affection in this case is directed at the person of my wife, almost as though the picture were not involved. I do not give the picture itself a different kind of love from the love I give my wife. To paraphrase Basil and Damascene, my attitude toward the image is directed at the exemplar. Hence, it matters not whether I point to the picture and say “I love her” or actually point to my wife and say “I love her”: it is the same love that is expressed in both cases. Aquinas is therefore saying that similarly, in the case of religious worship, it matters not whether the *latría* given to Christ is given to Him directly or by means of an image or icon: it is *latría* all the same. The worship given is not directed at the image in itself as a thing, but to Christ through the image, the latter being only a sign that leads the mind to Christ.

Given this doctrine on the adoration of images, Aquinas now has the trouble of explaining why, even though in the Hebrew scriptures the use of images was forbidden in worship, the prohibition nonetheless no longer applies since the coming of Christ. He cannot simply claim that the prohibition is only of adoring images, and that Christians only venerate them, as many Christians argue today. Rather, he is committed to the doctrine he received from John Damascene that images of Christ are deserving of *latría*. His response focuses on the doctrine of the twofold movement of the mind toward an image, affirming that whereas in the case of Old Testament idolatry, the adoration of images was adoration of the gods of the Gentiles, since the coming of Christ the adoration of images has been of God Himself made man:

[B]ecause, as was said above, the movement toward the image is the same as the movement toward the thing, adoration of images is forbidden in the same way as adoration of the thing whose image it is. Therefore here we are to understand the prohibition to adore those images which the Gentiles made for the purpose of venerating their own gods. [ . . . ] But no corporeal image could be made of the true God Himself, since He is incorporeal; because, as Damascene says, “It is the highest absurdity and impiety to make a figure of what is Divine.” But because in the New Testament, God was made man, He can be adored in His corporeal image.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, according to Aquinas, the great difference between Judaism and Christianity with regards to the adoration of images is that in Judaism, God cannot be represented in imagery because God is strictly incorporeal, whereas in Christianity, God is believed to have taken human flesh and it is, therefore, possible not only to represent Him, but also to worship him, through imagery.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed Aquinas' reception of John Damascene's doctrine of religious worship. Damascene heavily influenced Aquinas' philosophy of religion, especially his understanding of the role of the body and of images in religious worship. Damascene's and Aquinas' account of the use of bodily postures in worship is grounded on the hylomorphic nature of human beings and on the nature of human knowledge, which begins with the senses and only thereby reaches intelligible and spiritual realities. Physical religious practices such as eastward prayer, adoration—bodily postures such as bowing, kneeling, or prostrations—as well as the offering of sacrifices and the use of religious images are means whereby the human mind is led by the senses to the contemplation of higher realities. On this foundation, both Damascene and Aquinas develop a theory of the type of worship due to images of Christ in particular. Both authors make the bold claim that images of Christ are deserving of the worship of *latría*. For John, this is so not because these images are creatures but because they are images of God-made-man, and the worship given to an image is directed to the prototype of the image. Aquinas develops this thinking through Aristotelian semiotics, explaining that the movement of the mind towards an image is the same as the movement of the mind to the thing of which it is an image. Hence, it matters not whether Christ is worshipped directly or through an image: what is being worshipped in the image is not a creature, but God Himself as represented by the image, the latter being only a sign that leads the mind to God.

Beyond these points on the two authors' philosophy and theology of worship, I have also argued that Mansūr Ibn Sarjūn is one of the sources that ought to be considered in any discussion regarding "Aquinas and 'the Arabs.'" In fact, John is perhaps the most influential of all of these "Arabs." This is evidenced both by the number of references in Aquinas' corpus to the *De fide orthodoxa*, which exceeds the number of references to any other "Arab" author, as well as the scope of these references, which includes topics as central for Aquinas as Trinitarian theology, Christology, philosophy of mind, semiotics, and the philosophy of religion. Ibn Sarjūn is usually thought of as a Christian monk whose thought is representative of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition. But in fact, he was a Melkite theologian, a Middle Eastern Christian who was loyal to his Byzantine faith background but nonetheless was fully involved in the Islamic world and lived his entire life as a subject of the Umayyad Empire. Although he preceded al-Kindī and the *falsafa* tradition by about a century, he was steeped in the works of Aristotle and is, therefore, not only one of the first thinkers within the Arab world to come into contact with Greek philosophy but also Aquinas' most influential source from the Arab world.



## Notes

- 1 For the purposes of this essay, I use the term “Arabs” to refer not only to thinkers who wrote in Arabic, but more broadly to those who worked and lived in lands dominated by Arabic culture, independently of their religious beliefs. In this sense, I call John of Damascus an “Arab,” and an “Arabic” thinker, even though he did not write in Arabic—not unlike the way I would call Aquinas an Italian even though he did not write in Italian. See the footnote regarding the term “Arabs” on the homepage of the “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’ International Working Group”: “The project title reference to ‘the Arabs’ comes from the works of Aquinas who, like other thinkers of the Latin West, was unaware of ethnic differences among the Arabic-writing thinkers of the classical rationalist tradition in the Islamic cultural milieu. Al-Kindī, known as ‘the Philosopher of the Arabs,’ was of Arab lineage. Al-Fārābī was born in Turkestan and studied in Baghdad. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) was born to a family culturally Persian in Afshana, near Bukhara, in present-day Afghanistan. Ibn Rushd (Averroes) was born in Cordoba and probably should be considered Andalusian or Maghrabi. Note also that Maimonides is included among the philosophers of the tradition since his philosophical thought was importantly formed through study of Al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes, among other sources, and in significant respects is a continuation of that tradition.”
- 2 See Adamson and Taylor, “Introduction.”
- 3 See Louth, *St. John Damascene*, 14.
- 4 Louth, *St. John Damascene*, 14. Besides situating John in a specific cultural setting (Middle Eastern Christian Orthodoxy), the term has also theological implications. See Griffith, “‘Melkites,’ ‘Jacobites.’”
- 5 Louth, *St. John Damascene*, 84.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 12. Cf. Koterski, “Aristotelian Heritage.”
- 7 See Rhodes, “John Damascene in Context.”
- 8 See Janosik, *John of Damascus*.
- 9 See Backus, “John of Damascus.”
- 10 Louth, *St. John Damascene*, 84.
- 11 See Schick, *Christian Communities*, 180–219; Louth, *St. John Damascene*, 197. Incidentally, there is another work on Islam associated with Ibn Sarjūn, a dialogue titled *A Dispute Between a Saracen and a Christian*. This work has been traditionally attributed to Ibn Sarjūn and was known in the West in the thirteenth century in the Latin translation by Robert Grosseteste; it is probably not of Ibn Sarjūn’s direct authorship, but is likely based on his oral teaching. Regardless, it is inherently interesting in that in it we find a Christian engagement with early Muslim speculative theology (*kalām*), including issues such as the reconciliation of divine predestination and human free will, and the question of the created or uncreated nature of the word of God.
- 12 Aquinas obviously did not view John in the same way as modern scholarship, which has identified him as an Arab. As mentioned in note 1 above, Aquinas was unaware of ethnic differences among Middle Easterners. But this should not lead the reader to object that I am reading John’s influence on Aquinas through an anachronistic lens. I do not wish—or need—to argue that Aquinas was deeply aware of John’s ethnic or even cultural and linguistic background. Aquinas knew John primarily as a Greek theologian, as a venerable representative of the Byzantine tradition. However, he knew that John was from Damascus. And Thomas was not entirely oblivious to Middle Eastern Christianity. Both the crusades and the Dominicans’ missionary activity surely made him aware of it to some extent—enough for him to dedicate one of his works to the “cantor of Antioch” (see Aquinas, *De rationibus fidei*, ed. Leonina). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to think that Thomas viewed

John at least vaguely as a Middle Eastern Christian. At any rate, whatever Aquinas' awareness may have been of the cultural background of the *Damascenus*, it is an undeniable fact that in reading and following him, Aquinas was being influenced by another "Arab" besides the members of the later *falsafa* movement.

- 13 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. Leonina (hereafter: *ST*), 2a–2ae, q. 81, a. 7c: "Mens autem humana indiget ad hoc quod coniungatur Deo, sensibilibus manuductione, quia invisibilia per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur, ut apostolus dicit, ad Rom. Et ideo in divino cultu necesse est aliquibus corporalibus uti, ut eis, quasi signis quibusdam, mens hominis excitetur ad spirituales actus, quibus Deo coniungitur. Et ideo religio habet quidem interiores actus quasi principales et per se ad religionem pertinentes, exteriores vero actus quasi secundarios, et ad interiores actus ordinatos." This and all translations of Aquinas' texts are taken (with slight modifications) from Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. See also Quoëx, "Les actes extérieurs"; Romero, "Finality of Religion."
- 14 To pray is to approach God in order to ask something from him—in doing so we implicitly acknowledge our utter dependence upon him and therefore our subjection to him (cf. *ST* 2a–2ae, q. 83, a. 17c). Devotion is "nothing else but the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God" (*ST* 2a–2ae, q. 82, a. 1c). Adoration is the practice whereby one uses one's body to reverence God. See Curran, "Thomistic Concept"; Dewan, "St. Thomas."
- 15 *ST* 2a–2ae, q. 84, a. 2c: "[S]icut Damascenus dicit, in IV libro, quia ex duplici natura compositi sumus, intellectuali scilicet et sensibili, duplicem adorationem Deo offerimus, scilicet spirituales, quae consistit in interiori mentis devotione; et corporalem, quae consistit in exteriori corporis humiliatone."
- 16 John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 4. 12, trans. Chase, 352–33.
- 17 For more on this theme in John and his dependence on Aristotelian epistemology, see Koterski, "Aristotelian Heritage." For more on John's epistemology with regard to the Divine Essence, see Steineger, "Naturally Implanted Knowledge."
- 18 John of Damascus, *On Images*, trans. Louth, 3.12.
- 19 *ST* 2a–2ae, q. 84, a. 2c: "Et quia in omnibus actibus latriae id quod est exterius refertur ad id quod est interius sicut ad principalius, ideo ipsa exterior adoratio fit propter interiorem, ut videlicet per signa humilitatis quae corporaliter exhibemus, excitetur noster affectus ad subiiciendum se Deo; quia connaturale est nobis ut per sensibilia ad intelligibilia procedamus."
- 20 *ST* 2a–2ae, q. 85, a. 1c: "Est autem modus conveniens homini ut sensibilibus signis utatur ad aliqua exprimenda, quia ex sensibilibus cognitionem accipit. Et ideo ex naturali ratione procedit quod homo quibusdam sensibilibus rebus utatur offerens eas Deo, in signum debitae subiectionis et honoris, secundum similitudinem eorum qui dominis suis aliqua offerunt in recognitionem dominii. Hoc autem pertinet ad rationem sacrificii. Et ideo oblatio sacrificii pertinet ad ius naturale."
- 21 Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 3, c. 119, ed. Leonina, 370: "Quia vero connaturale est homini ut per sensus cognitionem accipiat, et difficillimum est sensibilia transcendere, provisum est divinitus homini ut etiam in sensibilibus rebus divinatorum ei commemoratio fieret, ut per hoc hominis intentio magis revocaretur ad divina, etiam illius cuius mens non est valida ad divina in seipsis contemplanda. Et propter hoc instituta sunt sensibilia sacrificia: quae homo Deo offert, non propter hoc quod Deus eis indigeat, sed ut repraesentetur homini quod et seipsum et omnia sua debet referre in ipsum sicut in finem, et sicut in Creatorem et Gubernatorem et Dominum universorum."
- 22 *ST* 3a, q. 25, a. 2 ad 1: "Adoratio latriae non exhibetur humanitati Christi ratione sui ipsius, sed ratione divinitatis cui unitur."

- 23 *Ibid.*, s.c.: “Damascenus dicit, in IV libro, adoratur autem caro Christi, incarnato Deo verbo, non propter seipsam, sed propter unitum ei secundum hypostasim verbum Dei.”
- 24 *Ibid.*, c.: “Sed quia, ut dicit Damascenus, si dividas subtilibus intelligentiis quod videtur ab eo quod intelligitur, inadorabilis est ut creatura, scilicet adoratione latriae. Et tunc sic intellectae ut separatae a Dei verbo, debetur sibi adoratio dulciae, non cuiuscumque, puta quae communiter exhibetur aliis creaturis; sed quadam excellentiori, quam hyperduliam vocant.”
- 25 Second Council of Nicaea, in Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum*, 13:377C: “[T]am quae de coloribus et tessellis, quam quae ex alia materia congruenter in sanctis Dei ecclesiis, et sacris vasis et vestibus, et in parietibus ac tabulis, domibus et viis.”
- 26 *ST 3a*, q. 25, a. 3, s.c.: “Damascenus inducit Basilium dicentem, imaginis honor ad prototypum pervenit, idest exemplar. Sed ipsum exemplar, scilicet Christus, est adorandus adoratione latriae. Ergo et eius imago.”
- 27 *ST 3a*, q. 25, a. 3c: “Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut philosophus dicit, in libro de Mem. et Remin., duplex est motus animae in imaginem, unus quidem in imaginem ipsam secundum quod est res quaedam; alio modo, in imaginem in quantum est imago alterius. Et inter hos motus est haec differentia, quia primus motus, quo quis movetur in imaginem prout est res quaedam, est alius a motu qui est in rem, secundus autem motus, qui est in imaginem in quantum est imago, est unus et idem cum illo qui est in rem. Sic igitur dicendum est quod imagini Christi in quantum est res quaedam, puta lignum sculptum vel pictum, nulla reverentia exhibetur, quia reverentia debetur non nisi rationali naturae. Relinquitur ergo quod exhibeatur ei reverentia solum in quantum est imago. Et sic sequitur quod eadem reverentia exhibeatur imagini Christi et ipsi Christo. Cum igitur Christus adoretur adoratione latriae, consequens est quod eius imago sit adoratione latriae adoranda.”
- 28 *ST 3a*, q. 25, a. 3 ad 1: “Et quia, sicut dictum est, idem est motus in imaginem et in rem, eo modo prohibetur adoratio quo prohibetur adoratio rei cuius est imago. Unde ibi intelligitur prohiberi adoratio imaginum quas gentiles faciebant in venerationem deorum suorum [. . .]. Ipsi autem Deo vero, cum sit incorporeus, nulla imago corporalis poterat poni, quia, ut Damascenus dicit, insipientiae summae est et impietatis figurare quod est divinum. Sed quia in novo testamento Deus factus est homo, potest in sua imagine corporali adorari.”

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## 7 Ibn Taymiyya on Ibn Rushd in the *Dar' ta'āruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* (with Special Attention to His Quotations of Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*)

*Jules Janssens*

Even if Ibn Taymiyya's fame has significantly increased among scholarly circles in the West over the last fifty years, he is not always as well-known as one would expect. Before entering this chapter's topic proper, I therefore give a brief outline of his life. Ibn Taymiyya was born in the city of Harran in 1263 CE. Due to the Mongol invasions, his family fled to Damascus six years later. After his father's death in 1284, he started his public life there as a teacher of several Islamic sciences in different Ḥanbalī institutions—Ḥanbalism was one of the four schools of “law” (*fiqh*) in Sunni Islam. Ibn Taymiyya participated actively in the resistance against three successive Mongol attacks against Damascus during the years 1299–1303. Due to some of his entirely new ideas in legal and theological matters, he came into conflict with other scholars, even among his Ḥanbalī colleagues. He was several times sentenced to imprisonment, *inter alia* in 1306–07 in Cairo, a city to which he was sent after a serious debate in Damascus about the orthodoxy of his creed, and in Damascus, to which he had returned in 1313. He was imprisoned for the last time in 1326 in the citadel of Damascus, where he died in his cell in 1328. In his own time, then, Ibn Taymiyya was a rather contested figure, even inside his own school. The available biographical evidence suggests that he had only a small group of intimate, faithful disciples, and that for several centuries after his death he was considered a rather unimportant scholar in the history of the Ḥanbalī legal school.<sup>1</sup>

At first sight, Ibn Taymiyya's works do not appear to have received much attention, and only after the rise of the Wahhabīs in Saudi Arabia during the eighteenth century does he seem to have become an important thinker in the Islamic world.<sup>2</sup> In the West, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that his works received any serious attention. Thereafter, the number of publications on Ibn Taymiyya increased explosively, both in the Arab and the Western world. The major tendency seems to consist in considering Ibn Taymiyya an outstanding scholar who, based

on a profound knowledge of a wide range of writings of very different kinds, constructed a new rational system by far superior not only to those of his time but—in the eyes of many, especially Muslim, scholars—even to those of the present day.

I certainly do not deny that Ibn Taymiyya was an erudite man. He clearly read a large number of books, including work by thinkers such as Ibn Rushd (known in Latin as Averroes).<sup>3</sup> However, I will try to show that he read the works of this Andalusian philosopher mostly, if not exclusively, in function of his own personal agenda, which, as already indicated, was far from being approved by the majority of his contemporary Muslim colleagues either in law or in *kalām* (theology). Even more importantly, I will try to show that Ibn Taymiyya often disregards the precise context in which Ibn Rushd himself makes his affirmations, and is highly selective in what he quotes, and especially in what he comments on (readers can find an overview of his quotations in Table 7.1 at the end of this chapter).

In his critical edition of Ibn Taymiyya's *Dar' ta'arud al-'aql wa-l-naql* (Averting Contradiction between Reason and Revelation), Muḥammad Rashād Sālim identified—in spite of a few omissions and minor mistakes—most passages of Ibn Rushd's works that formed the basis for Ibn Taymiyya's references.<sup>4</sup> Based on Sālim's index of names, as well as on the references he provides in the footnotes, it is easy to detect that Ibn Taymiyya's quotations of Ibn Rushd derive from only three works of the great Andalusian philosopher: *al-Kashf 'an manāḥij al-'adilla fi 'aqā'id al-milla* (Uncovering the Methods of Proofs with Regard to the Articles of Faith of the Creed), *Mas'ala* (Question), generally known as *Ḍamīma* (Appendix), and *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence).<sup>5</sup> Significantly absent from this list is Ibn Rushd's *Faṣl al-maqāl* (Decisive Treatise). The absence is significant not only because, together with the three works mentioned, it constitutes Ibn Rushd's dialectical, non-demonstrative, theological-philosophical corpus,<sup>6</sup> but also—and perhaps even more importantly—because it offers the actual basis for the further doctrinal developments of Ibn Rushd's *Kashf*. Indeed, in the opening lines of that work, Ibn Rushd states that he has already dealt with the convergence between (rational) wisdom and Revelation (*shar'*) in an earlier work, undoubtedly referring to the *Faṣl al-Maqāl*. In particular, he underlines that in the earlier work, he specified the sharp and crucial distinction between the outer sense of the *sharī'a* (destined for the masses), and its being in need of *ta'wīl* (exclusively reserved to the elite)—a distinction he had precisely drawn in the *Faṣl*.<sup>7</sup>

Since Ibn Taymiyya, as will soon become evident, almost certainly possessed a complete copy of the *Kashf*, he also in all likelihood read Ibn Rushd's remark about the *Faṣl*, even though one looks in vain for any reference to it in the *Dar'*. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya had access to the *Faṣl*, as evidenced by the quotation of passages of the work in his *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya fi ta'sīs bida'ihim al-kalāmiyya* (Demonstration of the Deceit of

the Jahmiyya in Their Founding Innovative Kalām Ideas)—though he mentions it there under a somewhat different title, *Taqrīr al-maqāl fī taqrīr mā bayna 'l-sharī'a wa-'l-ḥikma min ittiṣāl* (Decisive Determination about the Continuity between Sharia and Wisdom [Philosophy]).<sup>8</sup> Given that the *Bayān* is almost certainly earlier than the *Dar'*, it looks likely that Ibn Taymiyya consciously disregarded the *Faṣl* in the *Dar'*, and that he did so on doctrinal grounds. Despite Ibn Taymiyya's full agreement with Ibn Rushd regarding the idea that there exists only one truth, there is a clear difference: he in no way accepts the existence of a radical distinction between an outer and an inner sense of Revelation. On the contrary, for Ibn Taymiyya the Qur'ānic truth is a rational truth, or better, *the* rational truth, and is accessible to both the masses and the elite. He regards Ibn Rushd as belonging to the *'ahl al-wahm wa-'l-takhyīl* (people of delusive imagination and fancy), for whom the prophetic, revealed revelation, at least in its very outer wording, does not correspond to the truth, but nevertheless has to be believed by the common people for their welfare.<sup>9</sup> I therefore am inclined to believe that Ibn Taymiyya considered the *Faṣl* to be utterly mistaken in its basic conception.

But why did he quote the other dialectical, “theological” works of Ibn Rushd? One paper alone will not suffice to answer this question comprehensively. However, in what follows, I will begin to indicate some elements that might pave the way for such an answer.

### Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd's *Kashf*

First of all, I will concentrate on Ibn Taymiyya's quotations of the *Kashf*.<sup>10</sup> In his *Dar'*, Ibn Taymiyya refers to this work once (7:345.3) as *al-Uṣūl fī 'l-aqā'id* and another time (6:212) as *Manāḥij al-'adilla fī al-radd 'alā al-uṣūli-yīn*. Of its five parts (plus the conclusion), he quotes Parts 1–4 completely, except for the very first lines of chapter 1. He divides Ibn Rushd's *Kashf* into smaller entities, each of which is introduced by *qāla* (“he said”). This is similar to Ibn Rushd's longer commentaries, which divide Aristotle's texts into lemmata. However, unlike Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyya does not provide a commentary on each lemma. He leaves some lemmata without any comment, while for others he provides only a partial comment.

Relevant in this respect is that in volume 6 of the *Dar'* (in a chapter where Ibn Taymiyya discusses the issue of God's “overness,” *'ulūw*<sup>11</sup>), the second half of chapter 4 of the *Kashf* (which deals with the topics of directions and vision) is quoted almost without interruption, though divided into nineteen long parts.<sup>12</sup> The only exception is a small inserted comment (233.9–13) in which Ibn Taymiyya remarks on the explanation given by al-Juwaynī (a major early Ash'arite theologian, d. 478/1085) for the vision of what is not a body. This explanation, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, is of the same “genre” as the alternative Ash'arite view previously mentioned by Ibn Rushd. Certainly, Ibn Taymiyya admits that compared to his



Ash‘arite predecessors, al-Juwaynī innovates when he specifies that things differ from each other through their “states” (*aḥwāl*). But he observes that al-Juwaynī nevertheless does not substantially deviate from their basic opinion on this issue: that a thing is seen or perceived only insofar as it is “existing.” Consequently, Ibn Taymiyya seriously weakens the difference between the two views. He seems to suggest that Ibn Rushd’s presentation in its actual formulation makes, or at least gives too much the impression of, a distinction between two substantially different views.

Still, preceding the inserted long quotation of the *Kashf*, Ibn Taymiyya stresses (6:211–12) that Ibn Rushd’s intellectual and demonstrative discussion on direction sharply diverges from the dialectical (rhetorical) discussions that prevailed in *kalām*.<sup>13</sup> Ibn Taymiyya notes, however, that the philosophers (Ibn Rushd is explicitly mentioned as one of them) are unjustified in their claim to have given “demonstrative” knowledge on many issues, and this applies not only to metaphysics but also to physics and even mathematics.

Moreover, in his general and concluding consideration (6:237.8–249) on the same inserted quotation of the *Kashf*, Ibn Taymiyya states (238) that Ibn Rushd is simply mistaken in what Ibn Taymiyya calls *mu‘tazilite*, “inspired,” rejection of the existence of attributes in God. Nevertheless, Ibn Rushd dismisses Ibn Sīnā’s way of demonstrating the impossibility of the existence of attributes in God as inaccurate—on this point, according to Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Rushd agrees with al-Ghazālī that Ibn Sīnā’s proof shows only the impossibility of composition in God, not of the existence of multiple attributes in Him. Similarly, when Ibn Rushd replaces the argument (which Ibn Taymiyya claims is defended by Ibn Sīnā and the Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite *mutakalimūn*) for God’s incorporeality, related to the impossibility of “seeing” God, by an argument based on the immateriality of the soul, he is utterly mistaken—all the more so since al-Ghazālī has shown that the incorporeality of God cannot be proved along these lines. Ibn Taymiyya concludes (239) that Ibn Rushd praises al-Ghazālī where Muslim scholars condemn him, and condemns him where they praise him. All in all, he shows himself highly critical of Ibn Rushd’s view.

But several remarks and observations arise from this passage. First, Ibn Rushd’s discussion of how to understand a plurality of attributes in God is developed in not the fourth but the third part of the *Kashf*, so that the link with the preceding quoted passage from the *Kashf* is extremely loose. However, everything indicates that Ibn Taymiyya’s “historical” characterization of Ibn Rushd’s denial of a multitude of divine attributes is based on elements derived from the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*’s fifth Discussion (more precisely, the point where Ibn Rushd discusses al-Ghazālī’s presentation of the philosophers’ proof for the denial of a plurality in the necessary existent), and from the sixth Discussion (where al-Ghazālī argues that the philosophers have no proper demonstration for denying a plurality of attributes in God).<sup>14</sup>

Second, as to divine incorporeality, one finds in the *Kashf* section just quoted a long refutation of both the Mu'tazilite and the Ash'arite proofs, but looks in vain for any criticism of Ibn Sīnā. For a beginning of such criticism, one might refer anew to the fifth section of the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, in a rather short passage where Ibn Rushd affirms that Ibn Sīnā is the only philosopher who believed the heavenly body is composed of matter and form (hence indirectly implying that God, given His simplicity, cannot be a body).<sup>15</sup>

Third, Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Ibn Rushd's rejection of Ibn Sīnā's way of proving the absence of multiple attributes in God, as fully aligned with al-Ghazālī's, is questionable. For Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā's way simply does not lead to the denial of an eternal compound, whereas for al-Ghazālī, the very idea that God is uncompound forms the absolute basis for the philosophers' denial of the divine attributes.<sup>16</sup>

Fourth, even if nobody will deny that there is a major resemblance between the views of Ibn Rushd and the Mu'tazilites on identifying the divine attributes with the divine essence, it sounds surprising to state, as Ibn Taymiyya does, that Ibn Rushd has "chosen" (*ikhtāra*) the Mu'tazilites' way, unless this qualification is to be understood in a very broad sense—especially in view of Ibn Rushd's criticism, formulated near the end of the third part of the *Kashf*, that the Mu'tazilites publicly affirmed the identity between the divine Self and His attributes (which is something beyond the comprehension of the common man, and therefore must not, in Ibn Rushd's view, be revealed).<sup>17</sup>

Fifth, Ibn Taymiyya suggests that when he rejects the possibility of "seeing" something incorporeal, Ibn Rushd completely dismisses al-Ghazālī's argumentation that the immateriality of the soul cannot constitute a basis for proving God's incorporeality, in which one cannot but detect a reference to the ninth Discussion of the *Tahāfut*—however, Ibn Taymiyya pays no attention whatsoever to Ibn Rushd's counterarguments.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, Ibn Taymiyya gives the impression that Ibn Rushd, if not often, then at least several times, rates some of al-Ghazālī's doctrinal views very positively. In fact, as far as I can see, Ibn Rushd never speaks about al-Ghazālī in eulogistic terms. In the *Kashf*, he mentions only one such case—al-Ghazālī's affirmation that God is the One from whom the mover of the first heaven has proceeded—but not without noting that the expression of this philosophically inspired metaphysical idea is limited to a single one of al-Ghazālī's works, *Mishkāt al-anwār* (The Niche of Lights), and, moreover, largely contradicts what he says elsewhere about such metaphysical affirmations.<sup>19</sup> As to the *Tahāfut*, Ibn Rushd only very seldom states that al-Ghazālī is in agreement with the philosophers—and when he does, he limits himself to noting that no further examination or discussion is needed. More importantly, Ibn Rushd often stresses that al-Ghazālī misrepresents the prevailing, and in his view correct, philosophical doctrines due to his use of Ibn Sīnā's innovative philosophical ideas. Ibn

Rushd's criticism of al-Ghazālī is thus not restricted to the instances where al-Ghazālī expresses himself in a "theological" way.

Even if, as discussed above, Ibn Taymiyya's observations offer interesting insights into Ibn Rushd's place in the history of schools of thought in the Islamic world, it is obvious that they miss important nuances. Ibn Taymiyya does not offer any precise source reference. The long quoted section of the *Kashf* plays a surprisingly limited role, and above all, he remains silent about details that might require a more qualified judgment. Therefore, these observations must be described as rough generalizations that are clearly based on Ibn Taymiyya's conviction of the presence of full rationality in the Islamic revelation, as understood (most of the time perfectly) in the first generations of Islam.<sup>20</sup>

In this sense, it comes as no surprise that Ibn Taymiyya approves (242) Ibn Rushd's comment in the *Kashf* that "all wise men [*ḥukamā'*] are in agreement that God and the Angels are in Heaven, as also all religions are in agreement on it."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, he does not hesitate to point out that this view is of the same genre as that of the early *mutakallimūn*, who defended the reality of the divine attributes (designated by Ibn Taymiyya as *al-mutakallimūn al-ṣifātiyya*). According to Ibn Taymiyya, for both Ibn Rushd and those *mutakallimūn*, the qualification of God and the angels as being in Heaven does not require that they have corporeity or that Heaven is a spatial place. In discussing these matters, Ibn Taymiyya repeats (243) a few lines of the *Kashf* (B, 84.21–23; Q, 178.12–14):

Thus, if the demonstration [can be] founded on the being of an existent in that direction [i.e., the direction of being "elevated"], [that existent] must be other than a body. What is impossible there is the existence of a body, not the existence of what is not a body.

Based on this affirmation, Ibn Taymiyya justly claims that for Ibn Rushd, the existence of an incorporeal entity, and only of an incorporeal entity, is possible outside the outermost sphere (not at least because of the Aristotelian definition of place as the containing surface—explicitly referred to by Ibn Taymiyya, and repeated again in a slightly modified way on page 248).

In addition, he detects an almost complete identity between Ibn Rushd's view and that of the Kullābiyya, an early *kalām* school, characterized by its anti-Mu'tazilism, of which otherwise little is known, probably because it became integrated in early Ash'arism.<sup>22</sup> According to the heresiography of the tenth-century Ismaili scholar Abū Tammām, Ibn Kullāb (d. ca. 241/855), the founder of the school, "maintained that God is on the Throne but not in a particular place and not in a body."<sup>23</sup> For Ibn Kullāb and other members of his school, God is seated on His throne in His essence. Note, however, that this is to be understood not in a metaphorical way, but in a literal kind of qualified anthropomorphism (qualified in that no divine attribute is either identical with, or non-identical with,

God's essence).<sup>24</sup> Certainly, Ibn Rushd denies, as the Kullabites do, that God is a body or in a place. But his Aristotelian concept of God as Unmoved Mover and First Cause (referred to later by Ibn Taymiyya on page 246) unmistakably implies that one has to interpret an expression such as "God's seating on the Throne" (Q, 25, 59) in a metaphorical way.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, it is striking how Ibn Taymiyya, in what I would describe as a personal rewording of Ibn Rushd's argumentation (244–45), develops a complex syllogism. This concludes that the affirmation of the existence of something incorporeal, which is above the world and can be designated, is stronger than that of a self-subsistent thing, which is neither in nor outside the world and cannot be designated. I looked in vain for the expression of this alternative in exactly these terms in Ibn Rushd. As already noted, Ibn Rushd sees the absence of place in the surface of the outermost sphere as being what excludes the existence of a body there and, moreover, reveals the surface to be a "position" (*wadʿ*) devoid of place and time. Of course, it may reasonably be deduced, as Ibn Taymiyya does, that Ibn Rushd accepts the existence of something incorporeal above the world that can be designated. Strictly speaking, the same conclusion can be drawn with regard to the position of the Kullabites. However, their point of departure lies not in the supra-lunar sphere, but in their conception of the divine attributes as being neither God nor not-God, and in their complete rejection of any metaphorical interpretation. I therefore cannot see that Ibn Rushd objects to the Muʿtazilites in exactly the same terms as the Kullabites did before him, as Ibn Taymiyya claims. In bringing together the two views, Ibn Taymiyya seems to want to show that even in philosophy, one can find arguments consistent with the traditional "orthodox" point of view. These philosophical ideas are not really innovative, however, since they find support in earlier "good" theology, as expressed in this particular case in the Kullabiyya school.

Another fragment of Ibn Rushd's *Kashf*, quoted a few lines later (245.5–7, *Kashf* B, 83.18–20; Q, 177.3–4), further confirms this impression. In this fragment, which opens the treatment of direction (*al-qawl fi ʿl-jihā*), Ibn Rushd states:

As to this attribute [Ibn Taymiyya specifies in a small addition: the attribute of "overness," *ʿulūw*, but note that this *terminus technicus* is absent in Ibn Rushd's *Kashf*], the people of the Law at first did not hesitate to affirm it with regard to God, until the Muʿtazilites negated it; then afterwards the later Ashʿarites followed them in denying it.

Ibn Rushd indicates that it was a generally accepted belief among the early Muslims that "heaven" is in the direction of "above," in accordance with the face value of the letter of the Qurʾān. Now the Muʿtazilites, one of the first great *kalām* schools (which originated as early as the second/eighth century), based on rational considerations, estimated that placing

God somewhere “above” cannot be done without making Him a body, and thus making oneself guilty of anthropomorphizing Him. Undoubtedly influenced by Ibn Sīnā’s criticism of an overly “physical” approach to God, the latter Ash‘arites, starting with al-Juwaynī, found it necessary to free God of any directionality. Ibn Taymiyya, however, finds Ibn Rushd’s observation correct. He also underlines that it is superior to Ibn Sīnā’s (which considers the statement “every existent being can be designated” a notoriously estimative proposition, meaning that it is false with regard to a non-sensible subject).<sup>26</sup>

Most significantly, Ibn Taymiyya puts Ibn Rushd, at least as far as his acceptance of God’s “overness” goes, in the company of the devotees of the Karrāmiyya—founded by Ibn Karrām (d. 255/869), who defended the idea that God is “above”<sup>27</sup>—and the Ḥanbalites. In contrast, he places Ibn Sīnā’s view in line with the Mu‘tazilites, the Rāfiḍites (followers of a Shi‘ī movement, to be dated at the same period as early Mu‘tazilism), the Ismā‘ilites (adherents of another Shi‘ī movement, which gave rise to an important theological-philosophical current in the fourth–fifth/tenth–eleventh centuries: the Baṭiniyya, severely criticized by al-Ghazālī), and thinkers of other groups who are guilty of *bid‘a*, in other words inventors of innovative views in matters of belief that are condemnable, but do not constitute unbelief.

Hence, Ibn Rushd corroborates the correct opinion expressed in two earlier schools, whereas the wrongness of Ibn Sīnā’s doctrine is revealed by its resemblance to the highly questionable view of several “dubious” theological currents. But is not clear why Ibn Taymiyya mentions the Karrāmiyya, who were a marginal current inside the *ṣifāṭiyya*,<sup>28</sup> together with Ḥanbalism, a strict Salaf school of jurisprudence and tradition. Does he want to show that the same idea has been expressed in three extremely different currents of thought? This cannot be excluded, but he does not explicitly indicate as much. Similarly, the presence of the Rāfiḍa in the list linked with Ibn Sīnā is not easy to understand, at least not in view of the existence of serious elements of dispute between Rāfiḍites and Mu‘tazilites, as shown in the refutation by al-Khayyāt (a Mu‘tazilite theologian, d. ca. 300/913) of Ibn al-Rawandī (fl. third/ninth century).<sup>29</sup>

Through this list, Ibn Taymiyya in all likelihood wants to show how far away from the “genuine” Islamic interpretation Ibn Sīnā’s point of view really is. Indeed, Ibn Sīnā’s stance is similar not only to what Ibn Taymiyya considers the erroneous view of the Mu‘tazilite school (Sunnī in origin), but, even worse, two Shi‘ite schools. Ibn Rushd, in contrast, is placed in much better company because of his statement that there is no strict need to interpret God’s being in Heaven metaphorically for the broad public. Nonetheless, Ibn Taymiyya stresses (246) that Aristotle and his followers (among whom Ibn Rushd normally figures as one of the main representatives) have no real doctrine on prophecy and only little to tell on “divine matters,” on which they have very few correct views and

are mostly mistaken. He underlines that there are two distinct philosophical discourses: that of the Aristotelian philosophers, such as Ibn Rushd, whom he has previously (137) labeled “philosophical baṭīnites,” and that of Ibn Sīnā and his school. To be sure, he mistakenly regards Ibn Sīnā’s school as representing the one, real philosophy, as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī affirms and as is evidenced by al-Ghazālī’s criticisms. More importantly, Ibn Taymiyya remarks (248) that the Aristotelians, in spite of speaking confusedly about the people of the Sunna and the experts in tradition such as Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghādāī (d. 547/1157) and Ibn Rushd, are more in accordance with sound reason and authentic tradition (*ṣarīḥ al-ma’qūl wa-ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl*) than Ibn Sīnā, whose view aligns with the Mu’tazilites and the Shi’ites. Disregarding a few of Ibn Taymiyya’s further comments on this issue, I limit myself to indicating that in a final passage (248–49), he concentrates on the issue of God’s being, or not, in place. He points out divergences on both the intentional and the lexical side of the word “place,” which can give rise to answering the question in different ways. However, he insists once more that everyone has agreed on this point with the exception of some “later philosophers”—not specified, but undoubtedly a reference to Ibn Sīnā and his school.

Up to this point, Ibn Taymiyya seems to make little use of Ibn Rushd’s *Kashf*, and only in selected contexts. As just discussed, three passages of the *Kashf* receive more detailed attention (one directly, when quoted; the two others in a more general, final consideration). Given this limited use, it is extremely puzzling that Ibn Taymiyya quotes the whole section of the *Kashf*. More important still is that Ibn Taymiyya nowhere discusses the same fundamental question as Ibn Rushd does, namely the idea that one must not interpret what the religious law itself does not indicate as open to interpretation, in order not to mislead the masses.

When we survey other parts of the *Kashf* quoted by Ibn Taymiyya, the picture becomes even more complex. Sometimes he offers (1) a larger, general commentary, either (a) with repetition of earlier quoted passages of parts thereof (e.g., 9:98.1–107.6, related to 94–95) or (b) without such repetition (e.g., after 7:345.3–347.8). At other times, he presents (2) a specific commentary, either (a) related to a specific fragment in a series of fragments (e.g., 9:78.7–17; 79.6–80.2; 80.11–81.2) or (b) isolated and strictly limited to what is affirmed in the fragment (e.g., 9:82.13–84.2; 9:91.5–92.20; 9:110.10–112.4). Finally, (3) a commentary placed in a broader perspective (e.g., 9:113.3–119.18) is occasionally inserted.<sup>30</sup> Only in cases 1a and 2a–b is a division of the text fully understandable.

Also worthy of attention is the fact that the chapters of the *Kashf* are quoted in different parts of the *Dar’* and do not follow the original order of Ibn Rushd.

The quotation of the very beginning of chapter 1 of the *Kashf* is offered in volume 7, “aspect” (*wajh*) 44 (miscellaneous point 20), which has as its object the question whether rational inquiry is required or not in fixing

the sense (literally: the hearing, *samʿ*) of the Revelation. In these opening lines of the *Kashf*, Ibn Rushd insists that there exist many divergences about the exact meaning of the Revelation, and distinguishes mainly four groups in his day: the Ashʿarites, the Muʿtazilites, the Baṭinīs, and the *ḥashwiyya* or literalists. According to Ibn Taymiyya (347), Ibn Rushd is misleading in his exposition of the positions of the *kalām*, primarily (although not only) because he does not mention that the Salaf, the spiritual leaders and the most outstanding of the Muslims, do not belong to any of these four groups. All in all, Ibn Rushd cannot be trusted as a guide for both a complete survey and a correct judgment of the different theological schools and currents.

The remaining part of chapter 1 is quoted in volume 9 (though starting with a brief reminder, on pages 68–69, of Ibn Rushd’s mentioning of four groups at the beginning of the chapter, already quoted in volume 7). It is divided into two separate sections. In the first (69–132), Ibn Taymiyya outlines Ibn Rushd’s survey of the different methods that have been used to show God’s existence: literalist, early and late Ashʿarites (together with a reference to Ibn Sīnā), Sufis, and a brief note in which he indicates—cautiously, because of the unavailability of their writings in Andalusia—that the Muʿtazilites probably had a doctrine very similar to that of the Ashʿarites. This section, in turn, is spread over three chapters. In the first chapter (66–107), Ibn Taymiyya quotes the exclusively Revelation-based acceptance of God’s existence as defended by the literalists, as well as what Ibn Rushd labels the “first method” to prove God’s existence, i.e., the showing of the necessity of the creation in time of the world, as the ancient Ashʿarites advocated. The second chapter (107–20) reproduces Ibn Rushd’s discussion of the first premise underlying the second method held by the later Ashʿarites (especially as expressed for the first time by al-Juwaynī in his work *al-Niẓāmiyya*), i.e., that it is possible for the world to be the opposite of what it actually is (according to Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā also accepted this premise, though only to a certain degree). As to the third chapter (120–211), it opens (120–32) by quoting Ibn Rushd’s presentation of the second premise of the late Ashʿarites, namely that every possible being is created, followed by his discussion of the Sufis and his brief note on the Muʿtazilites.<sup>31</sup> In the next two chapters, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the views of the *mutakallimūn* with regard to God’s action and the forthcoming of the possible things from Him is closer to the (rational) truth of the Revelation than to that of the philosophers. At the same time, Ibn Taymiyya strongly stresses that Ibn Sīnā’s idea of the possible in itself, as necessary through another, is opposed to that of the Aristotelians, as expressed, for example, in the *Concise Exposition (talkhīṣ)* of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* by Thābit Ibn Qurra (d. 288/901).<sup>32</sup>

After all this, at the beginning of a new and last chapter (321–434) Ibn Taymiyya quotes the last part of the first chapter of the *Kashf*, in which Ibn Rushd sets out his own method to prove God’s existence, namely by



way of two principles: providence and invention. It is startling that he begins this section with the expression “and then Ibn Rushd said” (*thumma qāla Ibn Rushd*), as if he had quoted something of Ibn Rushd’s just before, whereas in reality there is a gap of almost two hundred pages. At first sight, one might think of a misplacement originating during the transmission of the text. But it looks more reasonable to suppose that Ibn Taymiyya consciously opted to place it where it actually is. In fact, in his “concluding” remark to this section (333–36), Ibn Taymiyya observes that Ibn Rushd is right to reject certain intellectual proofs of the *mutakallimūn*—although the better *mutakallimūn* were already aware of this—and to pose the Qurʾān as alerting all men, both masses and elite, to God’s existence. On the other hand, he stresses that Ibn Rushd’s view, with its sharp distinction between common men and elite, is ultimately weaker than the one expressed in *kalām*. In fact, Ibn Rushd does not recognize the profound rationality inherent to the Revelation. Ibn Taymiyya finds a further strong confirmation for his fundamental rejection of Ibn Rushd’s point of view in the latter’s discussion of divine unity, as given in the second chapter of the *Kashf*. He quotes it in its entirety (336 ff.), but—unlike in his quotation of the last part of the first chapter, where one finds only one such substantial comment—several times interspersed with rather long commentaries.<sup>33</sup>

Immediately after quoting the last paragraph of chapter 2, in which Ibn Rushd indicates that the true understanding of the divine “unity” implies two meanings (the affirmation of God’s existence and the negation that there is any other god similar to Him), Ibn Taymiyya quotes the beginning (379) of chapter 3 of the *Kashf*, a passage that concentrates on God’s knowledge (in its entirety, the chapter is dedicated to the issue of the divine attributes). Ibn Taymiyya places this discussion in the framework of an all-encompassing examination of the topic of divine *tawḥīd* (God’s unicity and unity) (336). For him, Ibn Rushd’s treatment of the divine attributes, whether positive, negative, or active, suffers from the same kind of shortcoming as his exposition on God’s existence. However, it should be noted that in his final remark on chapter 2, Ibn Rushd does not refer to the topic of God’s attributes, but only specifies that a true confession of *tawwīd* implies the affirmation of God’s existence *and* the denial of the existence of another godhead. This affirmation receives not a single comment by Ibn Taymiyya. Certainly, Ibn Rushd would not deny that a correct understanding of the divine attributes is intimately related to the confession of the divine *tawḥīd*, but he presents it primarily as a “description” of God, the profound sense of which is strictly reserved to the few men who have a measure of knowledge sufficient to attain demonstrative knowledge, in other words the philosophers. This is undoubtedly the reason why he deals with it in three separate chapters, the first of which discusses the ascription of attributes to God, the second the denial of any resemblance between God and man, and the third God’s way of acting. This actual order of presentation is more in line with Ibn Taymiyya’s own agenda than with



that of Ibn Rushd. Once he has taken the decision to include here the exposition on God's knowledge that opens the third chapter of the *Kashf*, it is indeed quite natural that Ibn Taymiyya follows it with that of the *Mas'ala/Damīma* (to which we will return somewhat later), since divine knowledge is its central theme.

Hereafter, Ibn Taymiyya pays extensive attention to Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's view on God's knowledge, as developed in his *Kitāb al-Mu'tabar*. For the present investigation, it is interesting to note that Ibn Taymiyya mentions three major philosophical views (401): Aristotle as restricting God's knowledge to His own essence; Ibn Sīnā, who defends a divine knowledge of the particulars in a universal way; and a third that accepts a divine knowledge of the particulars as particulars. In this third case, Ibn Taymiyya introduces a distinction between two views: Ibn Rushd's, qualified here as bringing the divine knowledge close to what is changeable; and Abū al-Barakāt's own, which admits that the changeable, both with regard to its generation and its corruption, can be fully known by God—this, according to Ibn Taymiyya, being in line with the view of several *mutakallimūn*, as well as with what is indicated in the Revelation and in the Sunna. This distinction is clearly based on a prima facie acceptance of what the two authors state. It does not take into account the unmistakably rhetorical nature of Ibn Rushd's *Mas'ala/Damīma*, or Abū al-Barakāt's idea that God's knowledge of the world depends on His ideas, which are the *'umm al-Kitāb*, the mother of the Book.<sup>34</sup>

The remaining part of chapter 3 of the *Kashf*, which investigates the other six of the usually recognized seven essential attributes of God—life, power, will, hearing, vision, and speech—is quoted in volume 10 (197–229). In a final note on the whole section (229–43), Ibn Taymiyya stresses *inter alia* that the philosophers, contrary to what they claim, have not offered any demonstrative proof for denying the divine attributes. As to Ibn Rushd, he presents the following interesting remark (242): “This man [i.e., Ibn Rushd] has sometimes taken the path instructed by the sense of Revelation [*shar'*], sometimes that instructed by the *mutakallimūn*, and sometimes he expresses what he thinks to be the doctrine [*qawl*] of the philosophers.” This gives the strong impression that Ibn Taymiyya regards Ibn Rushd as an eclectic thinker who, in spite of his considering himself a philosopher, has taken ideas from other paths of thought that do not necessarily agree with the view of the philosophers. Obviously, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, these “deviant” opinions brought Ibn Rushd closer to genuine Islam.

Immediately after the quotation of the remaining part of chapter 3 follows the quotation of the first part of chapter 4 of the *Kashf*, which deals with God's transcendence. In that first part, one finds a particular emphasis on the absence of any similarity between God and His creatures, as well as the denial of any corporeality to Him. Several passages receive more detailed comment, but they are all related to Ibn Rushd's discussion

of the attribute of corporeality, more specifically to the final part, which explains why God is called “light” and why Revelation does not mention this. Here, I want to pay special attention to one comment, Ibn Taymiyya’s claim (270) that Ibn Rushd has taken his exposition of God as “light” from al-Ghazālī’s *Mishkāt al-anwār* (The Niche of Lights). Indeed, both thinkers have in common the idea that the highest being deserves to be called “light.” But Ibn Rushd justifies this designation by stating that light is the noblest of all sensible things, noting, moreover, that the identification of God with something insensible would lead common people to deny God’s existence. For al-Ghazālī, on the contrary, the reason why God deserves to be called “Light” is that He is the source that enlightens all other things, which in themselves would be nothing without His enlightenment.<sup>35</sup> It is obvious that their interpretations are anything but identical. Even though there is no doubt that Ibn Rushd knew the work, al-Ghazālī’s *Mishkāt* can, at best, have functioned as a distant source of inspiration.<sup>36</sup>

As to the first part of chapter 4, it is, as I have mentioned, quoted in the sixth volume of the *Dar’*. It is included in aspect 43, which focuses on the notions of direction (*jihā*) and place (*makān*) with regard to God and offers a long, detailed rebuttal of the view of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.<sup>37</sup> As noted, the quotation of Ibn Rushd’s exposition on the notion of direction is natural, but the addition of that on vision receives almost no attention. When Ibn Taymiyya formulates critical remarks on Ibn Rushd’s objection to “seeing God,” he completely disregards the passage of the *Kashf*, but, without acknowledging it, refers to the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (see below).

If, generally speaking, the quoted fragments can well be placed in the context of Ibn Taymiyya’s own object of focus, there remain nonetheless a few more puzzling cases, such as the great distance separating the quotation of the last part of chapter 1 from that of its first part, or the attaching of the very beginning of chapter 3 to the end of chapter 2. They clearly deserve more detailed examination—as does, certainly, the omission of the complete fifth chapter on God’s attributes of action—but all this must wait for another occasion.

### **Ibn Taymiyya’s Use of Ibn Rushd’s *Mas’ala* (Ḍamīma)**

Ibn Rushd’s *Mas’ala*, commonly known as *Ḍamīma*,<sup>38</sup> which explicitly and uniquely focuses on the question of God’s knowledge of particulars, is quoted in its entirety in volume 9 of the *Dar’* (383.10–390.7). Ibn Taymiyya refers to it under the title *Maqāla fī al-’ilm* (Treatise on Knowledge) (9:382.16), within a comment on a quoted passage of the beginning of chapter 3 of the *Kashf* (9:382.6–383.9). There, Ibn Taymiyya reproaches Ibn Rushd with having incorrectly formulated the *mutakallimūns’* view on divine knowledge, so that it became easy for Ibn Rushd to reject it, although it is actually better than Ibn Rushd’s view. Also, this time, Ibn Taymiyya subdivides the text into different parts, each introduced by *qāla*.

Especially the last three of these subdivisions are far from self-evident and cannot be easily explained. Moreover, only a small part of the text receives a more detailed commentary. In this (9:390.8 ff.), Ibn Taymiyya stresses that Ibn Rushd offers no appropriate answer regarding the precise nature of divine knowledge. According to Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Rushd, in line with the “philosophers,” limits himself to distinguishing God’s knowledge, as being the cause of existence of the things, from the knowledge of creatures, as being dependent on their existence. Ibn Taymiyya (9:392.13–394.16) offers a detailed reply to five affirmations (quoted before, 9:388.3–389.2), which in Ibn Rushd’s original text closely succeed each other (*Ḍamīma*, B, 41.18–19, 21.22–24; 42.1–2, 3–5/Bu, 41.4, 7.8–10, 11–13, 13–15).<sup>39</sup> Since one finds the very crux of Ibn Rushd’s own opinion in those passages, it is quite normal that they receive particular attention. They are not just uncritically mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya. On the contrary, he expresses some serious reservations and criticisms. As to the other passages of the treatise, they are not completely ignored, but only vaguely referred to. This can be illustrated by the following two observations, for example: (1) Ibn Taymiyya’s defense (to a certain degree) of the *mutakallimūn* doctrine of God’s eternal knowledge of the particulars as they will come to be (see, e.g., 9:390.8–391.5)—Ibn Taymiyya particularly stresses that God’s knowledge alone does not explain the existence of these particular things, as Ibn Rushd suggests (near the beginning of the *Mas’ala/Ḍamīma*); and (2) Ibn Taymiyya’s allusion to and criticism of (see, e.g., 9:398.8–16 and 401.1–2—in the latter case with explicit reference to Ibn Rushd) to the fact that according to the (Peripatetic) philosophers, God knows particulars, as is evidenced by their acceptance of the phenomenon of premonition with respect to, *inter alia*, dreams (as indicated near the end of the *Mas’ala/Ḍamīma*).

It is perhaps worthwhile to note that Ibn Taymiyya, in his final conclusion to this chapter (9:434.3–6), claims that with regard to the explanation of God’s knowledge of particulars, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī is closer to the tradition and the truth than Ibn Rushd, but that Ibn Rushd’s view is itself better than Ibn Sīnā’s. As we shall see, he expresses the same judgment with regard to the explanation that each of these three thinkers gives of divine will, namely in a comment related to a fragment of Discussion 11 of the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (more will be said on this below). We have already seen that he declared both Ibn Rushd and Abū al-Barakāt superior to Ibn Sīnā in their conception of God’s “overness.” Regardless of whether his remark is justified or not, he clearly has good reasons to group them together in opposition to Ibn Sīnā, insofar as both were what Gutas has called “anti-Avicennist Peripatetics.”<sup>40</sup>

So there are objective grounds to point out the existence of a sharp divide within philosophy as it had developed in the Islamic world. In showing that the philosophers express different opinions concerning several important issues, Ibn Taymiyya, like al-Ghazālī before him, detects an

incoherence between their views, and at once dismisses the philosophers' claim to possess absolute, demonstrative knowledge as unjustified. Even inside the school of the "anti-Avicennist Peripatetics," and not just between them and Ibn Sīnā, one finds substantially different views on given topics, as illustrated by Ibn Rushd's and Abū al-Barakāt's view on God's will and being-above. For Ibn Taymiyya to know which is the better of the two, hence the closest to the truth, the only criterion is the rational truth of the Revelation and the doctrine of the Salaf. On this ground, he affirms that in both the latter is superior to the former, and both are superior to Ibn Sīnā's. However, this does not mean that Ibn Taymiyya distinguishes the different philosophers according to an absolute hierarchical order of preeminence. He judges case by case, and even if he often finds the views of the "Peripatetics" better than Ibn Sīnā's, this is not always the case, as we will see below.

### **Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-tahāfut***

Finally, Ibn Taymiyya also quotes a number of passages of the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*. They cover fragments of six of the discussions, 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, and 11, although none of them completely.

Regarding Discussion 1 of the *Tahāfut*, which al-Ghazālī entitles "On the past eternity of the world,"<sup>41</sup> Ibn Taymiyya quotes Ibn Rushd's objection to al-Ghazālī's way of presenting the philosophers' first proof (Ibn Rushd underlines the equivocal nature of the term "possible" and the need, or not, in what is possible for a determinant); part of Ibn Rushd's reply to al-Ghazālī's first objection to that first proof (Ibn Rushd points out that a genuine idea of "agent" impedes the Ash'arite idea of a creation in time, eternally willed by God); (a paraphrase of) Ibn Rushd's very first affirmation that immediately follows upon al-Ghazālī's articulation of the philosophers' fourth proof (it stresses that what becomes is possible before it becomes, hence needs a substratum to be received); and, finally, the first part of Ibn Rushd's criticism against al-Ghazālī's "second rational proposition" (Ibn Rushd insists once more that the possible needs a substratum, since in its state of non-being it is in potency, not "impossible"). The notion of "possible" is eminently present in three of the four fragments, all of which are quoted in volume 8 of the *Dar'*. They do not receive a proper detailed comment, but Ibn Taymiyya probably considers them additional evidence for Ibn Rushd's criticism against Ibn Sīnā's concept of "possible" as expressed in a fragment of Discussion 4 (see below). As to the fragment in which the idea of "agent" prevails, it is present in a chapter devoted to God's being an "agent" (and hence as possessing attributes) in the third volume of the *Dar'*. It is there embedded in a larger discussion that is more properly developed in Discussion 6, and therefore seems to have been used exclusively as an additional indication for Ibn Rushd's particular view on this issue.

From Ibn Rushd's remarks on al-Ghazālī's third Discussion, "On showing their obfuscation in saying that God is the world's enactor and maker, that the world is His handiwork and act; showing that this is with them a metaphor not reality," Ibn Taymiyya quotes mainly four passages. The first, although quoted as last in the *Dar'* (volume 8), concerns Ibn Rushd's extensive rejection of Ibn Sīnā's (and al-Fārābī's) theory of emanation and of the principle *ex uno non fit nisi unum*. The second, which is referred to in *Dar'*, volume 10, is rather brief and figures inside a long commentary on a passage in which al-Ghazālī asks whether or not God knows things outside Himself—in the quoted lines, Ibn Rushd rejects the Ash'arite doctrine of divine knowledge (and other attributes) and indicates that the philosophers' theory of the First Principle approaches that of the Mu'tazilites. The third consists in Ibn Rushd's final observation with regard to al-Ghazālī's second objection against the doctrine of the *ex uno*, in which Ibn Rushd stresses that Ibn Sīnā's concept of the "possible" is not that of the genuine philosophers, for whom nothing eternal is "possible." Finally, the last quotation offers the text of a complete comment by Ibn Rushd, in which the latter strongly argues against the *ex uno* idea of his major predecessors in the Arabic world. In the middle of the passages that express Ibn Rushd's third remark, Ibn Taymiyya (8:189.1–190.4) briefly highlights Ibn Rushd's rejection in name of the "Ancients" of Ibn Sīnā's concept of the possible and acceptance of the *ex uno* principle. He points as well to Ibn Rushd's criticism—once more, in name of the Ancients—of Ibn Sīnā's explanation of inspiration (*wahy*) and premonitory dreams (*manāmāt*) by an action of the celestial soul. Unless I am mistaken, this is a direct reference to a passage related to Discussion 16, more precisely to the comment following the second quoted passage of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* (SD, 751 ff., esp. 754.16–20; Bo, 495 ff., esp. 500.13–16). Noteworthy is also Ibn Taymiyya's observation that in these cases, the opinion of the "Ancients," and hence of Ibn Rushd, is much weaker than Ibn Sīnā's, which, however, is inferior to that of the *'Ahl al-Islām*, that is, the Salaf and their faithful followers (in fact, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the best part of Ibn Sīnā's doctrine only touches the very beginning of the view of the *'Ahl al-Islām*).

As to Ibn Rushd's rejection of Ibn Sīnā's (and al-Fārābī's) theory of emanation and of the principle *Ex uno non fit nisi unum*, Ibn Taymiyya (8:216.1–225.11) offers a general commentary. For him, Ibn Rushd remains fully in line with Aristotle, who proved the existence of God on basis of his being, as the desired object of love, First Mover—a theory which Ibn Taymiyya judges utterly wrong.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, Ibn Rushd, compared to Aristotle, adds a reference to the divine "Command," but he fails to establish—at least explicitly—that the servitude of the creatures to God is due to their being created by Him, that the "Commander" is necessarily incorporeal, or that the "Commander" is not only the final beloved goal but also the "agent creator" of the celestial sphere.

In the context of indicating these failures in Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyya quotes a second time a few lines of Ibn Rushd's rejection, i.e., 222.3–4, 222.14–15, and 223.8–11 (quoted before 214.8–9, 211.7–8, and 206.8–12 respectively), and furnishes them with a more detailed commentary. They concern Ibn Rushd's affirmations that the heavenly bodies possess an obedi-ent servitude to God in their very essence; that the Commander of the Universe, God, is necessarily incorporeal; and that God, as first ruler, bestows on all existents the characteristic through which they become existent through the mediation of those who are under His command. With regard to the first affirmation, Ibn Taymiyya observes that it is not mistaken as such, but only insofar as this obedience is understood in terms of an eternal motion, as Aristotle, and probably also Ibn Rushd, does. As to the second, Ibn Taymiyya characterizes it as a non-conclusive argument, while noting *inter alia* that a subjecting intellect or body is not necessarily part of all the subjected intellects or bodies. Against the third, he objects that it is not proven that the influences of the heavenly bodies on earthly events are uniquely and fully due to an act of obedience to God. He also notes that in beings living on Earth, the need for earthly things is greater than that for heavenly things. Note, however, that one looks in vain for similar detailed commentaries with respect to other fragments related to Discussion 3.

Out of Discussion 4, "On showing their inability to prove the existence of the maker of the world," Ibn Taymiyya has chosen those comments by Ibn Rushd in which he clarifies his understanding of the notions of agent and cause. They are quoted quite separately from each other, partly because of the formulation of some objections against Ibn Rushd's first comment (8:138.13–145.13), but mainly due to a very long intervening quotation of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* (8:146.1–155.8, with further general commentary at 155.9–163.19). One of the basic objections with respect to Ibn Rushd's first comment is that God is not the cause of the existence of the world, but only of one if its accidents, motion (8:440.3–4). In the framework of his reply, Ibn Taymiyya repeats two of Ibn Rushd's affirmations: (1) the distinction between two kinds of agents—one only related to its object during the object's becoming, the other convertible with its object (141.17–142.5, repeats 137.4–14 and 138.3–4, with minor modifications), but Ibn Taymiyya objects that we observe only the first kind of agent, and (2) the agent who both brings forth and conserves is a more noble agent than the one who only produces (144.11–13)—a saying approved by Ibn Taymiyya, who, however, remarks that it does not conform to the view of Ibn Rushd's "philosophical brothers."

With regard to Ibn Rushd's second comment, Ibn Taymiyya (8:165.7–14) stresses that the former's discussion (in which the distinction between four kinds of causes is emphasized) does not refute al-Ghazālī's point of view, since this clearly refers only to the efficient cause. In the third quoted fragment, Ibn Rushd rejects al-Ghazālī's claim that the philosophers must

admit that the First Principle which has no cause is the celestial bodies. It is striking that in the quotation itself (166.5–6), Ibn Taymiyya already introduces two specifications, namely, “the way of those who imitate philosophy” as “the way of Ibn Sīnā” and “the (proper) philosophers” as “the Ancients.” In a general response, Ibn Taymiyya (166.10–167.10) insists that Ibn Rushd rejects Ibn Sīnā’s way of combining elements of earlier *falsafa* and of *kalām*, more particularly the specific way it implies the denial of attributes and corporeality in God. In the fourth and last fragment, Ibn Rushd, after emphasizing that no philosopher has ever accepted the existence of an actual infinite, underlines that al-Ghazālī’s actual formulation of the proof that shows the impossibility of an infinite causal series, based on the distinction between necessary and possible, is strictly proper to Ibn Sīnā. This last discussion receives very detailed attention, as is evidenced by the many recurrences of passages (many times followed by a specific observation): 171.8–12 (repeats 169.9–13); 171.13–172.2 (repeats 169.13–170.1); 172.7–9 (repeats 169.14–170.1); 172.19 (repeats in a slightly modified form 172.7–8); 174.2–5 (repeats 169.15–170.4, somewhat reworded); 175.3–10 (repeats 170.4–11); 177.8–9 (repeats 170.6–7); 182 (repeats 170.6–11); 183.10–15 (repeats 170.11–171.2); 184.15–19 and, again, 185.5–8 (repeats 170.12–171.2); 198.14 (repeats 170.6); 199.1–2 (repeats 170.3–4); 199.3 and, again, 201.15 (repeats 170.4); 199.8–200.2 (repeats 170.6–171.2).

This whole area deserves a separate study, especially since several lines (and even passages) are repeated more than once. But generally speaking, Ibn Taymiyya pays great attention to what Ibn Rushd qualifies as Ibn Sīnā’s way. Among other things, he states that Ibn Sīnā’s way was inspired by Proclus, not Aristotle (172.11–15); that for Ibn Sīnā, the possible is what has a cause to it, but is further divided into the real possible (identical with what is temporally originated) and the necessary (identical with what is eternal) (174.6–175.2); that Ibn Sīnā deviates from the Peripatetic tradition (which sharply distinguishes between necessary [*wājib*] and possible) by using the notion of “necessary” (*darūrī*) with regard to things that are caused (175.3–177.7; see also 186.1–187.8, where Ibn Taymiyya notes that Ibn Rushd rightly wants to show that on this matter, Ibn Sīnā breaks with the Aristotelian philosophical tradition); that it is not the division of being into necessary and possible, but the idea of the possible as being in need of a maker that allows us to establish the existence of the Necessary Being (177.10–181.14); that Ibn Rushd (inspired by al-Ghazālī) correctly criticizes the weakness of Ibn Sīnā’s way insofar as it does not respect the proper notion of “possible,” which is coextensive with what is originated (200.3–203.1).

Of Discussion 6, “On the divine attributes,” Ibn Taymiyya quotes four fragments explicitly. In the first two of these, Ibn Rushd emphasizes that al-Ghazālī’s rejection of the philosophers’ claim—the fact that the Necessary Being is existent in itself implies the denial of attributes to



Him—concerns only Ibn Sīnā's doctrine. They receive no proper comment. As to the third fragment quoted (divided into two parts), it concentrates on the notion of "composition." Ibn Rushd, in sharp reaction against al-Ghazālī, underlines that "composition" is not like "existence" because it is a passive quality. Ibn Taymiyya remarks (3:402.7–10) that al-Ghazālī's refutation of the philosophers' view is sound and that Ibn Rushd's reply is mere quibbling over words and even more erroneous than Ibn Sīnā's, despite the latter's weakness. After explaining the correctness of al-Ghazālī's refutation (402.11–405.17), Ibn Taymiyya extensively criticizes Ibn Rushd's view (406.1–423.16). In this context, he repeats several affirmations: 406.1–2 (repeats 399.11–400.1);<sup>43</sup> 406.11–12 (repeats 400.1–2); 407.3–5 (repeats 400.3–5); 407.14–16 (repeats 400.6–8); 408.14–409.4 (repeats 400.6–9);<sup>44</sup> the lines 408.16–409.1 are quoted again on 409.15–16 and the lines 409.1–4 on 411.6–8; 419.1–3 (repeats 400.10–401.1, slightly modified); and 419.3–6 (repeats 401.2–4, lines 419.4–5 being repeated on 420.10).

Ibn Taymiyya points out that Ibn Rushd does not pay enough attention to the intellectual meaning of the terms involved (406.4–5; compare 408.2–4 and 419.7–420.10); that al-Ghazālī's formulation is inspired by the philosophers' definition (407.6–9); that Ibn Rushd's identification of composition with motion is mistaken (408.1–14); that potency is not the same as privation (410.3–11); that the existence of a first efficient cause cannot be proved from motion (411.9–418.19);<sup>45</sup> and that attributes are intrinsic to what they are said of and therefore do not imply composition (420.11–423.16).

In the last quoted fragment (divided into four parts), which in the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* precedes the other three, Ibn Rushd outlines the difficulties involved in the view that one must distinguish between essence and attributes; makes clear that Ibn Sīnā and the Ash'arites fail to show that God has no cause at all, or is not composed; and specifies that the quality which anything acquires from another thing is in itself more apt to possess the concept which is acquired. Again, one finds in the *Dar*' a repetition of lines: 427.6–9 (repeats 423.18–424.3); 428.12–14 (repeats 426.8–10); 428.16 and 429.13–14 (repeats 426.10–11); 430.6 (repeats 426.11–12); 430.17–431.2 (repeats 426.12–15); 432.16–17 (repeats 424.11–14, modified); 434.3–4 (repeats 424.14–15); 435.3–6 (repeats 425.2–4); and 437.1–2 (repeats 426.5–7, slightly modified). A specific comment is given on the occasion of each of these repetitions: Ibn Taymiyya mentions that Ibn Rushd must have said that the identification between essence and attributes is utterly sophisticated, not just problematic (427.9–428.14); that the identification between knower and known (discussed by Ibn Rushd in the last part of the quoted fragment) is also clearly sophisticated (428.15–430.5); that the philosophers are confronted with limitations in their knowledge of God (431.9–10); that to speak of a composition between God's essence and His attributes does not imply the necessity of an external factor for that composition



(433.2–434.2); that the Ash‘arites and their followers do not call the divine attributes “accidents,” unless in a very special sense (434.6–12); and that the philosophers cannot demonstrate the impossibility of something that is composed out of its essence (435.16–436.13).

With regard to Discussion 10, “On their inability to show that the world has a maker and a cause,” Ibn Taymiyya quotes the last two-thirds (subdivided into seven parts). In this quoted part, the focus is entirely on what is the correct philosophical proof for God’s existence. Ibn Rushd once again makes clear that Ibn Sīnā presented an innovative way that deviates from the proper traditional “philosophical” one, which is summarily presented at the very end. Ibn Taymiyya, in his reply, first (8:232.8–234.4) notes that Ibn Sīnā’s proof is much better than that of the Ancient philosophers.<sup>46</sup> He then (234.5–238.7) argues against Ibn Rushd’s wording of the proof, which in Ibn Taymiyya’s view is a very loose argument, especially insofar as it deduces the existence of God as the necessary existent in substance from the motion of the celestial spheres. In this context, a few lines are quoted a second time: 234.5–7 (232.9–10, but substantially modified in that the qualifications related to “possible” and “necessary” in the original text are omitted—in this way, Ibn Taymiyya can easily present Ibn Rushd’s affirmation as being in complete agreement with the common *kalām* view); 234.9–10 (=232.11–13, but omits part of lines 12–13); 234.12–13 (=232.13–233.1, modified); and 235.4–6 (=233.1–4, but omits almost completely lines 3–4 and reformulates the end). Finally, Ibn Taymiyya concludes (238.917) that the philosophical and *kalām* proofs for God’s existence always fail in one or another respect, and hence one has to admit that the prophets’ way of showing God’s existence is the best.

The last quoted fragments of the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* belong to Discussion 11, “On showing the impotence of those among them who perceive that the First knows other(s) and knows the genera and species in a universal way.” The first fragment (subdivided into three parts) consists in Ibn Rushd’s insistence that the philosophers do not deny God’s possession of a will, but that for them the divine will is not the same as the will in humans. Ibn Taymiyya does not discuss this topic in detail, but remarks in a general way that al-Ghazālī’s view, the reciprocal implication between knowledge and will, is the correct one (10:144.1–2, further developed at 144.2–149.3). Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, uses the notion of will in its “sectarian” philosophical sense, but his explanation of divine will is generally speaking better than Ibn Sīnā’s, although it is inferior to Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī’s (143.6–11). In the second fragment quoted by Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Rushd states that God must know everything since His knowledge is perfect. In reply to this, Ibn Taymiyya (149.9–10) suggests that to deny that all knowledge in God is implied in, or limited to, His self-knowledge is indeed the correct opinion. As far as I can see, he nonetheless pays no serious attention to Ibn Rushd’s defense of the view of the “philosophers” with regard to this issue.

## Conclusion

Ibn Taymiyya's quotations of Ibn Rushd present us with a rather negative judgment that Ibn Taymiyya seems to make of Ibn Rushd, especially when he explicitly sides with Aristotle. Only occasionally is Ibn Rushd said to come closer to the truth, but then he is, according to Ibn Taymiyya's understanding, *de facto* largely in agreement with what has been said in *kalām*, and at the same time closer to the ultimate truth as expressed by the prophet and Revelation. Up to a degree, one can detect here a kind of nuanced and critical approach.<sup>47</sup> But one cannot deny the overall negative tone in Ibn Taymiyya's final reception of Ibn Rushd. Moreover, most cases of more positive evaluations of Ibn Rushd, as I have shown, are accompanied with a remark that Ibn Rushd's opinion, even if it is better than Ibn Sīnā's, still remains inferior to the correct theological views.

This sounds "ideological" insofar as it denies any serious, independent contribution of philosophy in the acquisition of true, rational insights. For Ibn Taymiyya, philosophy is a largely mistaken, and therefore superfluous, tool in the search for truth.<sup>48</sup> Ibn Taymiyya's additional emphasis on the superiority of Ibn Rushd's opinions—and, in addition, those of other Peripatetics—in these cases over Ibn Sīnā's appears to be largely guided by his vehement opposition to the Ash'arite *kalām* of his time, which was mainly inspired by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. As Jon Hoover notes, Ibn Rushd provided Ibn Taymiyya with rational resources to resist and marginalize several of the Razian ideas and arguments that he estimated to be erroneous.<sup>49</sup> But such positive evaluations of Ibn Rushd as being superior to Ibn Sīnā are always isolated, and one also finds affirmations of the exact opposite.

Thus, Ibn Taymiyya's statements about Ibn Rushd (and every other philosopher or thinker) have to be examined cautiously in the context in which they are expressed. He is not so much interested in the complete system of Ibn Rushd's philosophy as in particular ideas. Furthermore, large parts of the quoted fragments of Ibn Rushd's texts receive almost no serious attention. As we have seen, they are often placed in a broader context of *prima facie* similar expressions in works belonging to quite other traditions than Ibn Rushd's philosophical one. Once these expressions are contextualized, they reveal themselves to be, at best, similar in meaning, and not without serious qualification. Finally, it is striking that in a work, the *Dar'*, that has as its overarching theme *ta'wīl*, the figurative interpretation of the Qur'ān, not a single reference is found to Ibn Rushd's *Faṣl*, which has the same theme at its core. As I have already indicated, it is unlikely that Ibn Taymiyya had no access to this work when he composed the *Dar'*, given its use in his *Bayān*—in all likelihood an earlier work.<sup>50</sup>

All in all, one has the impression that Ibn Taymiyya very much instrumentalizes Ibn Rushd (and at the same time all philosophers), insofar as his major goal remains to demonstrate the absolute superiority, also on

a purely rational level, of the prophetic Revelation. In that sense—and I am inclined to add: *only* in that sense—he finds many insights of the Cordoban scholar better than those circulating in the Avicennian tradition. But, and I have the impression that this has been largely overlooked in contemporary scholarship, he now and then reverses that evaluation. This means that the apparent hierarchy of excellence he articulates with regard to philosophers—and, most likely, to all kinds of thinkers, except the Salaf and their faithful followers—is never valid in absolute terms, but only in a given context. Even if, in such a perspective, he offers often very perceptive judgments, he nevertheless fails at times to give an in-depth justification for linking a particular philosophical idea with a doctrine in *kalām* that transcends a prima facie similarity. Certainly, this conclusion is based on a basic survey of one work by Ibn Taymiyya. A more detailed analysis of all materials referred to, as well as an examination of references to Ibn Rushd in other of Ibn Taymiyya's works, might bring to the fore some new nuances in evaluating his attitude to the Cordoban scholar, but I seriously doubt that they will fundamentally contradict the conclusion I present here.

*Table 7.1* Comparison between Ibn Rushd's and Ibn Taymiyya's works

<b>Ibn Rushd's <i>Kashf</i></b>	<b>Ibn Taymiyya's <i>Dar</i>'</b>
<i>Chapter 1</i> (divine existence)	
B. 45.17–47.2; Q. 134.4–135.12	7, 345.3–347.5
B. 47.3–4; Q. 135.12–14	7, 347.6–8
B. 47.5–9; Q. 135.14–19	9, 69.5–11
B. 47.10–17; Q. 135.20–136.7	9, 69.12–70.8
B. 47.17; Q. 136.7–8	9, 70.9
B. 47.18–48.13; 136.3–137.7	9, 70.10–72.2
B. 48.13–16; Q. 137.7–10	9, 73.3–6
B. 48.16–51.5; Q. 137.11–140.8	9, 73.7–78.6
B. 51.5–9; Q. 140.9–13	9, 79.1–5
B. 51.10–16; Q. 140.14–20	9, 80.3–10
B. 51.16–19; Q. 140.21–141.2	9, 81.3–6
B. 51.20–52.6; Q. 141.4–14	9, 81.7–82.7
B. 52.6–10; Q. 141.14–18	9, 82.8–12
B. 52.10–55.3; Q. 141.19–144.20	9, 84.3–89.10
(addition by IR in another version?)	9, 89.10–12
(addition by IR in another version?)	9, 90.15–91.4
B. 55.4–7; Q. 144.20–145.3	9, 93.1–4
B. 55.8–9; Q. 145.3–4	9, 93.5–6
ms. Taymūriyya, <i>ḥikma</i> 129 (see Sālim)	9, 93.7–97.10
ms. Taymūriyya, <i>ḥikma</i> 129 (see Sālim)	9, 97.11–13
B. 55.9–17; Q. 145.6–14	9, 107.7–108.7
B. 55.18; Q. 145.15–146.22	9, 108.8–110.9
B. 56.21–57.1; Q. 147.1–5	9, 112.5–9
B. 57.1–7; Q. 147.5–11	9, 112.10–113.2
B. 57.8–12; Q. 147.12–16	9, 122.16–123.5
B. 57.12–24; Q. 147.17–148.9	9, 124.16–125.12
B. 57.24–58.3; Q. 148.10–13	9, 126.1–4

B. 58.3–16; Q. 148.14–149.4	9, 127.1–13
B. 58.16–59.2; Q. 149.5–14	9, 127.14–128.10
B. 59.2–9; Q. 149.15–21	9, 129.1–130.1
B. 59.10–60.2; Q. 150.1–19	9, 130.2–131.9
B. 60.3–5; Q. 150.21–151.2	9, 132.1–3
B. 60.5–61.2; Q. 151.3–152.5	9, 321.4–323.6
B. 61.3–11; Q. 152.6–15	9, 323.7–324.2
B. 61.11–62.22; Q. 152.16–154.12	9, 326.6–329.10
B. 62.23–63.6; Q. 154.13–21	9, 329.11–330.10
B. 63.7–9; Q. 154.21–23	9, 330.11–13
B. 63.9–10; Q. 155.1–2	9, 331.4–5
B. 63.10–17; Q. 155.2–9	9, 331.6–13
B. 63.17–64.6; Q. 155.9–21	9, 332.1–333.1

*Chapter 2* (divine unity)

B. 65.2–66.4; Q. 156.2–157.2	9, 336.6–337.16
B. 66.4–8; Q. 157.3–6	9, 348.10–16
B. 66.8–19; Q. 157.7–17	9, 349.5–350.3
B. 66.19–67.1; Q. 157.17–158.5	9, 351.9–16
B. 67.1–13; Q. 158.6–17	9, 351.17–352.14
B. 67.13–68.5; Q. 158.18–159.11	9, 353.1–354.6
B. 68.5–7; Q. 159.11–13	9, 354.7–9
B. 68.7–69.1; Q. 159.14–160.9	9, 370.14–371.13
B. 69.1–7; Q. 160.10–16	9, 378.12–379.2

*Chapter 3* (divine attributes)

B. 70.1–71.16; Q. 161.1–162.13	9, 379.3–381.8
B. 71.16–19; Q. 162.13–16	9, 381.9–12
ms. Taymūriyya, ḥikma 129 (see Sālim)	9, 381.13–382.5
B. 71.20–72.7; Q. 163.1–10	10, 197.2–11
ms. Taymūriyya, ḥikma 129 (see Sālim)	10, 197.12–198.11
B. 72.7–11; Q. 163.12–16	10, 199.16–200.3
B. 72.11–13; Q. 163.16–18	10, 207.4–6
B. 72.14–73.6; Q. 163.18–164.14	10, 207.7–208.12
B. 73.6–7; Q. 164.14–15	10, 208.13–14
B. 73.6–8; Q. 164.14–16	10, 214.1–3
ms. Taymūriyya, ḥikma 129 (see Sālim)	10, 214.4–6
B. 73.8–9; Q. 164.17–18	10, 215.9–10
B. 73.9–12; Q. 164.18–21	10, 219.8–11
B. 73.15–17; Q. 165.2–4	10, 219.17–220.2
B. 73.18–74.10; Q. 165.5–21	10, 220.3–221.5
B. 74.10–22; Q. 166.1–12	10, 224.6–225.5
B. 74.23–75.22; Q. 166.14–167.15	10, 225.12–227.14
B. 75.23–76.18; 167.15–168.14 (but last two lines in ms. Taymūriyya, ḥikma 129 (see Sālim))	10, 228.1–229.11

*Chapter 4* (divine transcendence)

B. 77.2; Q. 169.1–2	10, 243.3
B. 77.3–12; Q. 169.3–12	10, 243.4–244.2
B. 77.13–78.3; Q. 169.13–170.3	10, 244.3–245.3
B. 78.3–6; Q. 170.3–6	10, 245.6–9
B. 78.6–7; Q. 170.6–7	10, 245.10–11
B. 78.8–11 (lacks 2 lines); Q. 170.8–12	10, 245.12–246.4
B. 78.11–24; Q. 170.13–171.4	10, 246.9–247.10
B. 78.25–79.6; Q. 171.4–11	10, 247.11–248.6
B. 79.6–15; Q. 171.13–172.2	10, 248.7–249.7

(Continued)

- ms. Taymūriyya, ḥikma 129 [Sālim] and ms. 10, 249.7–14  
 Koprülü 1601 [G. 887.13–19])<sup>51</sup>
- B. 79.16—80.5; Q. 172.3–17 10, 259.13–261.1  
 ms. Koprülü 1601 (G. 888.36–46) 10, 261.2–13  
 B. 80.5–11; Q. 172.18–173.4 10, 262.14–263.2  
 B. 80.12–81.17; Q. 173.5–174.13 10, 263.3–265.13  
 B. 80.18–82.22; Q. 174.14–176.2 10, 266.1–269.2  
 B. 82.22–83.3; Q. 176.3–7 10, 269.3–10  
 B. 83.3–6; Q. 176.7–11 10, 281.6–10  
 B. 83.6–11; Q. 176.11–15 10, 282.10–14  
 B. 83.11–12; Q. 176.16–17 10, 289.10–12  
 B. 83.12–18; Q. 176.17–177.1 10, 289.13–290.2  
 ms. Taymūriyya, ḥikma 129 (see Sālim) and ms. 10, 298.16–299.9  
 Koprülü 1601 (see G. 893.140–894.47)<sup>52</sup>
- ms. Taymūriyya, ḥikma 129 (see Sālim) and ms. 10, 299.10–300.3  
 Koprülü 1601 (see G. 894.147–52)
- B. 83.18–84.7; Q. 177.2–14 6, 212.10–214.1  
 B. 84.7–10; Q. 177.14–17 6, 214.2–5  
 B. 84.10–85.16; Q. 178.1–179.8 6, 214.6–216.8  
 B. 85.17–86.8; 179.9–180.5 6, 216.9–217.13  
 B. 86.9–87.4; Q. 180.6–181.6 6, 217.14–219.7  
 B. 87.5–17; Q. 181.7–19 6, 219.8–220.4  
 B. 87.17–88.21; Q. 181.21–183.6 6, 220.5–222.6  
 B. 88.21–90.20; Q. 183.6–185.17 6, 222.7–226.6  
 B. 90.20–25; Q. 185.17–186.2 6, 226.7–12  
 B. 91.1–12; Q. 186.4–15 6, 226.13–227.15  
 B. 91.12–92.18; Q. 186.16–188.2 6, 228.1–229.14  
 B. 92.19–23; Q. 188.3–7 6, 230.1–5  
 B. 92.23–93.9; Q. 188.7–17 6, 230.6–231.4  
 B. 93.9–94.4; Q. 188.17–189.19 6, 231.5–232.16  
 B. 94.4–11; Q. 189.19–190.3 6, 233.1–8  
 B. 94.11–20; Q. 190.3–13 6, 233.14–234.8  
 B. 94.20–22; Q. 190.14–15 6, 234.9–11  
 B. 94.22–96.8; Q. 190.16–192.4 6, 234.12–237.4  
 B. 96.9–11; Q. 192.5–7 6, 237.5–7

**Ibn Rushd's *Mas'ala/Ḍamīma***

- B. 39.4–40.24; MBu. 38.2–40.3<sup>53</sup>  
 B. 41.2–8; MBu. 40.6–13  
 B. 41.8–13; MBu. 40.13–18  
 B. 41.14–42.17; MBu. 40.19–42.8  
 B. 42.18–20; MBu. 42.9–11  
 B. 42.21–22; MBu. 42.12–13

**Ibn Rushd's *Tahāfut al-tahāfut****Discussion 1*

- SD. 64.1–65.23; Bo. 5.1–6.5<sup>54</sup>  
 SD. 65.24–66.12; Bo. 6.5–12  
 SD. 66.13–20; Bo. 6.12–16  
 SD. 66.22–67.3; Bo. 6.17–7.4  
 SD. 69.1–5; Bo. 8.5–8  
 SD. 69.6–70.4; Bo. 8.8–9.3  
 SD. 70.5–9; Bo. 9.3–7  
 SD. 189.13–16; Bo. 100.7–9 (paraphrase)  
 SD. 194.16–196.10; Bo. 104.10–105.13

**Ibn Taymiyya's *Dar'***

- 9, 383.10–386.6  
 9, 386.7–387.2  
 9, 387.3–9  
 9, 387.10–390.2  
 9, 390.3–5  
 9, 390.6–7

**Ibn Taymiyya's *Dar'***

- 8, 195.7–196.14  
 8, 197.1–8  
 8, 197.9–13  
 8, 198.1–5  
 3, 412.15–18  
 3, 415.10–416.8  
 3, 416.9–12  
 8, 192.9–10  
 8, 193.6–194.10

*Discussion 3*

SD. 310.6–313.3; Bo. 184.6–186.4	8, 203.6–205.13
SD. 313.5–314.14; Bo. 186.4–187.4	8, 205.14–206.15
SD. 314.16–18; Bo. 187.4–6	8, 207.1–3
SD. 314.20–315.2; Bo. 187.7–9	8, 207.5–7
SD. 315.3–11; Bo. 187.9–13	8, 207.8–12
SD. 315.12–320.5; Bo. 187.13–191.4	8, 207.13–212.2
SD. 320.7–323.8; Bo. 191.4–193.9	8, 212.3–215.6
SD. 323.10–16; Bo. 193.10–12	8, 215.7–9
SD. 323.17–21; Bo. 193.12–194.1	8, 215.10–13
SD. 371.1–372.5; Bo. 224.12–225.11	10, 251.8–252.7
SD. 372.6–7; Bo. 225.11–12	10, 252.8–9
SD. 387.16–22; Bo. 236.6–9	8, 188.2–5
SD. 388.1–2; Bo. 236.9–10	8, 188.6–7
SD. 388.5–9; Bo. 236.11–14	8, 188.8–11
SD. 400.9–401.3; Bo. 245.6–13	8, 190.6–191.2
SD. 401.5–15; Bo. 245.13–246.4	8, 191.3–8
SD. 401.16–402.2; Bo. 246.5–10	8, 191.9–192.3
SD. 402.4–13; Bo. 246.10–14	8, 192.4–8

*Discussion 4*

SD. 427.21–429.14; Bo. 264.1–265.2	8, 137.4–138.12
SD. 431.5–432.6; Bo. 266.1–13	8, 164.2–165.6
SD. 440.1–11; Bo. 272.5–9	8, 166.1–4
SD. 440.13–21; Bo. 272.9–13	8, 166.5–9
SD. 443.4–13; Bo. 274.9–14	8, 167.11–168.3
SD. 443.14–21; Bo. 274.15–275.4	8, 168.4–10
SD. 443.22–444.12; Bo. 275.5–11	8, 168.11–169.4
SD. 444.23–446.25; Bo. 276.1–277.11	8, 169.6–171.2

*Discussion 6*

SD. 494.2–15; Bo. 312.3–10	3, 423.17–424.7
SD. 494.16–495.5; Bo. 312.10–313.2	3, 424.8–16
SD. 495.7–496.19; Bo. 313.2–314.5	3, 425.1–426.7
SD. 496.21–497.8; Bo. 314.6–13	3, 426.8–16
SD. 504.1–8; Bo. 320.2–5	3, 397.6–11
SD. 504.16–505.14; Bo. 320.11–321.9	3, 398.2–13
SD. 516.17–517.11; Bo. 331.3–13	3, 399.11–400.9
SD. 517.20–519.18; Bo. 331.15–333.12	3, 400.10–402.6

*Discussion 10*

SD. 635.9–636.7; Bo. 417.13–418.10	8, 227.2–12
SD. 636.9–21; Bo. 418.10–15	8, 227.13–228.4
SD. 637.14–638.12; Bo. 419.8–420.3	8, 229.2–14
SD. 638.13–639.16; Bo. 420.4–421.3	8, 230.1–231.5
SD. 639.18–640.7; Bo. 421.4–10	8, 231.6–12
SD. 640.9–19; Bo. 421.11–422.1	8, 231.13–232.5
SD. 640.21–642.4; Bo. 422.1–423.5	8, 232.6–233.7

*Discussion 11*

SD. 662.23–663.7; Bo. 438.6–9	10, 141.6–10
SD. 663.8–664.10; Bo. 438.9–19	10, 141.11–142.8
SD. 664.12–665.12; Bo. 439.1–10	10, 142.9–143.5
SD. 666.11–20; Bo. 440.5–9	10, 149.4–9

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## Notes

- 1 See Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya *wa-jamā’atuhu*.” Very significant is Bori’s affirmation (41) that “for the majority of traditionalist scholars, Ḥanbalīs and Shāfi’īs alike, he [i.e., Ibn Taymiyya] appears to have been somewhat of an embarrassment.”
- 2 As far as I know, no serious study has been made of the reception of Ibn Taymiyya’s works immediately after his death and in the following centuries.
- 3 The city of Damascus at the time was culturally highly developed and had many libraries inside its walls. See Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*, esp. 1–16.
- 4 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar’ ta’arūd al-‘aql wa-l-naql*, ed. Sālim (hereafter *Dar’*). It is worth noting that Sālim, in the introduction to his edition (*Dar’* 1:1–73), observes that the work is referred to under different titles both by Ibn Taymiyya himself and in the manuscript tradition (which is complex insofar as none of the manuscripts offers the complete text). As will become evident in this paper, there is still a serious need to determine the exact nature of the *Dar’*. In all likelihood, this will require a new, in-depth examination of the manuscript tradition, for which Sālim has undoubtedly already laid a valuable foundation.
- 5 For references to Ibn Rushd (name index), see *Dar’* 11:77–78. As to the references to Ibn Rushd’s works, see for a first approach the index of book titles: 11:329–30 *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (unfortunately, the last four references to vol. 10 are mistaken); 11:238 *Ḍamīma fī mas’alat al-‘ilm al-qadīm*; 11:345–46 *Manāḥij al-‘adilla* (= *Kashf*). The reader will find the details, including the correspondences with Ibn Rushd’s texts, in Table 7.1 at the end of this chapter. For a first (rough) list of correspondences between *Dar’* and *Kashf*, see Geoffroy, “À propos de l’almohadisme d’Averroès,” 86,1 n. 32, where Geoffroy insists that Ibn Taymiyya quotes the *Kashf* according to its longer version (part of which Geoffroy publishes in an appendix—as far as I can see, this is the very first critical edition of a part of the *Kashf*’s longer version).
- 6 Regarding the characterization of these works as “dialectical, non-demonstrative,” see Taylor, “Introduction,” xvii, n. 7.
- 7 Beirut edition (hereafter *Kashf* B): Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb al-Kashf ‘an manāḥij al-‘adilla*, 45.8–14; Qāsim edition (hereafter *Kashf* Q): *Manāḥij al-‘adilla fī aqā’id al-milla*, 133.12–134.4.
- 8 Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs*, 1:235. It is perhaps worthwhile to note that Ibn Taymiyya quotes three passages of the *Faṣl*: one about the coming into existence of the world (Averroes, *Decisive Treatise*, 16.6–21 Ar., quoted by Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs*, 1:458–59); a second, immediately following this, mentioning two kinds of errors with regard to the Law (Averroes, *Decisive Treatise*, 17–18 Ar., quoted by Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs*, 2:80–84); and a third, divided into two parts, where Ibn Rushd distinguishes three kinds of verses and traditions with regard to their being open or not to interpretation (Averroes, *Decisive Treatise*, 19.11–20, 19.12 Ar., and 20.13–22.11, quoted by Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs*, 2:90–93 and 101–6).
- 9 See von Kügelgen, “Poison of Philosophy,” 286–87, and Tamer, “Curse of Philosophy,” 371–72, who stresses: “The Koran—not human reason—was the appropriate guide on this path; as such, scripture was the basis for all truth and took precedence if in conflict with reason. In this context, Ibn Taymiyya would consider it a curse to be called a philosopher.” Of course, this does not mean that Ibn Taymiyya completely dismisses reason. On the contrary, he insists that Revelation invites people to use their reason (see Ibn Taymiyya, *Lettre à Abū l-Fidā*, 17–18), but for Ibn Taymiyya reason can at best confirm insights already present in Revelation.
- 10 As noted by Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Use of Ibn Rushd,” 473, Ibn Taymiyya used what Geoffroy labeled the second version of the *Kashf*, while in his *Bayān talbīs*, he copies the first version, either because he had only that version or

- consciously for his personal purposes. According to Ben Ahmed, "Ibn Rushd in the Ḥanbalī Tradition," 572, Ibn Taymiyya uses still another version in his *Dar'*, given the lack of the quotation of a passage in which Ibn Rushd explicitly criticizes Ibn Tūmart's position on direction. Is this a sufficient indication, however? Can one exclude a conscious omission? Note that Ben Ahmed also more prudently adds: "it seems that the manuscript containing this text was not in his hands" (571).
- 11 I owe this translation to Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd," 477.
  - 12 The section on "direction" is also quoted by Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs*, 1:158–66, i.e., *Kashf* B, 83.18–87.17 / Q, 177.3–181.19; the passage *Kashf* B, 83.18–84.13 / Q, 177.3–178.2 is repeated at 248–49 and, once again, except the last two lines, 403–5 (but adding, at 405, two isolated sentences—once more referred to in *Bayān talbīs*, 2:93–94—and also providing a small comment where Ibn Taymiyya stresses that Ibn Rushd agrees with the ancient *mutakallimūn* that God and the angels are in heaven), almost without any comment. See Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd," 477–79, where, however, no mention is made of the repetition of a passage present at *Bayān talbīs*, 1:248–49.
  - 13 As already indicated, in what follows Ibn Taymiyya does not limit himself to quoting the section on direction. He also quotes the discussion on when and for whom the interpretation of Qur'ānic verses is allowed, and, moreover, the section on "vision."
  - 14 See Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, ed. Dunyā (hereafter *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* SD), 2:475–81; Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, ed. Bouyges (hereafter *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* Bo), 297–303; and al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 97–110, esp. 97–100.
  - 15 Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* SD, 2:476 / Bo, 299.
  - 16 See Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* SD, 2:495–96 / Bo, 313; and al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 97.
  - 17 Ibn Rushd, *Kashf* B, 75 / Q, 167. With regard to the view that the denial of a plurality of attributes in God is common to the philosophers and the *Mu'tazila*, see already al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 97.
  - 18 As far as I can see, the *Dar'* does not contain a single explicit reference to the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* related to Discussion 9. See Table 7.1.
  - 19 Ibn Rushd, *Kashf* B, 89 / Q, 183–84.
  - 20 In the subsequent chapter, with regard to the affirmation God is "above" the heavens, Ibn Taymiyya notes that the Salaf have understood "above" in the literal physical, directional sense. Because they adhered to this literal interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya qualifies every form of symbolic interpretation as illegitimate. See El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 205–6.
  - 21 Ibn Rushd, *Kashf* B, 84 / Q, 177.
  - 22 For a substantial outline of its basic ideas, as well as its significance for Ibn Taymiyya, see the seminal study by van Ess, "Ibn Kullāb und die Miḥna."
  - 23 Madelung and Walker, *Ismaili Heresiography*, 57.
  - 24 Van Ess, "Ibn Kullāb und die Miḥna," 124.
  - 25 Ibn Taymiyya does not mention this verse in this context, and neither does Abū Tammām, but al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-bad' wa-l-tārīkh*, 1:104.7–8, explicitly notes that Ibn Kullāb interprets the expression "on the throne" as "not in place." But even if Ibn Taymiyya's source did not mention this, it still remains obvious that for Ibn Kullāb the absence of place has nothing to do with Ibn Rushd's conception of the absence of place in the outermost sphere.
  - 26 See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Najāt*, 63–64. On Ibn Taymiyya's highly critical stance toward Ibn Sīnā's theory of estimative propositions, see Marcotte, "Ibn Taymiyya et sa critique."



- 27 On al-Karrām's affirmation of God as being "above," see al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-Nihal*, 1:347–48.
- 28 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-Nihal*, 1:180, stipulates that he includes the Karrāmiyya among the *ṣifāṭiyya* only because they affirm the divine attributes; at the same time, he emphasizes that in the final analysis, they adhered to corporealism and assimilationism in this matter, in other words to an anthropomorphic approach to God.
- 29 See al-Khayyāt, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār*, where one finds several explicit condemnations of Rāfiḍite theses. See esp. 5–6 (French) / 14 (Arabic), where al-Khayyāt stresses that the vast majority of the Rāfiḍites defended an anthropomorphic picture of God (including a change in His knowledge and will); a rare few among them renounced doing so, but they became Mu'tazilites. So far, I have not found any discussion by a Rafidite author on God's being in Heaven. One cannot therefore exclude that Ibn Taymiyya found a text ascribed to one of them in which God's being in Heaven is explained in a metaphorical sense, although this looks unlikely, given their doctrine on divine attributes.
- 30 The examples mentioned are all related to *Kashf*, ch. 1, but they are in my view perfectly illustrative for Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the rest of the work. I am therefore convinced that they suffice to give us at least a basic idea of how Ibn Taymiyya uses the *Kashf*.
- 31 In the rest of the chapter, Ibn Taymiyya explores passages mainly dealing with the origination of the world as showing the necessity of God's existence, especially in three authors: Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (a Mu'tazilite theologian, d. 436/1044)—this particular attention to him, and some other Mu'tazilite authors as well, can be considered a natural supplement of Ibn Rushd's brief remark on the Mu'tazilites (note, moreover, that Ibn Taymiyya pays special attention to the difference between the Mu'tazilite viewpoint and that of the eternalist philosophers [*al-falāsifa al-dahriyya*], especially Ibn Sīnā); al-Juwaynī, in his work *al-Irshād*; and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in his *al-Mabāḥiṭh al-Mashriqiyya*—mentioning these two last authors in all likelihood constitutes a further development related to the late Ash'arites.
- 32 For the critical edition of Ibn Qurra's text, see Reisman and Bertolacci, "Thābit Ibn Qurra's *Concise Exposition*." On the quotations from Ibn Qurra's *Concise Exposition* in the *Dar'*, Reisman and Bertolacci observe (729–30) that Ibn Taymiyya has often altered the text in order to make it more amenable to the grammatical and syntactical arrangement of his commentary; they also point out the possibility of mistaken editorial choices by the contemporary editor of the *Dar'*, Sālim.
- 33 An examination of these commentaries clearly exceeds the limits of this chapter.
- 34 Regarding Ibn Rushd's *Mas'ala/Damīma*, see Butterworth, "Translator's Introduction," xlii; as to Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, see his *Kitāb al-Mu'tabar fī 'l-hikma*, 3:88–93, esp. 93. Let me add that Ibn Taymiyya's placing them in line with the genuine Islamic thought, in sharp opposition with both Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, is questionable, even if he is critical of both views. Indeed, it is far from evident that Ibn Rushd and Abū al-Barakāt really explain or defend a divine knowledge of particulars as particulars, whereas Ibn Sīnā at least tries in an innovative way to offer a philosophically rational explanation, which is far away from Aristotle's view and undoubtedly the result of the will to elaborate a philosophical solution for a basic affirmation present in Islamic thought. That Ibn Taymiyya condemns Aristotle's view as *kufir* (unbelief) is easily understandable. However, that he qualifies Ibn Sīnā's view in the very same way, while excluding Ibn Rushd and Abū al-Barakāt from this harsh accusation, is less evident. Of course, Ibn Taymiyya (402) finds support for this view in

- al-Ghazālī's mention in the Conclusion to the *Tahāfut* that the philosophers are guilty of *kufṛ* because they deny that God's knowledge encompasses the temporal, individual particulars. At the same time, it becomes clear that he reads Ibn Sīnā largely through al-Ghazālī's lenses, just as Ibn Rushd, in my view, had done before him.
- 35 Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, 54. In addition, one can note that the Tradition relating that God's light is veiled is quoted by al-Ghazālī more according to the wording as given by Ibn Fūrak (seventy-thousand, or seventy veils), whereas Ibn Rushd accords more with the version in al-Harawī (one or seventy veils). See al-Ghazālī, *Die Nische der Lichten*, 85 n. 176.
  - 36 Regarding Ibn Rushd's familiarity with al-Ghazālī's work, see Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* SD, 2:495–96 / Bo, 313; and al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 97.
  - 37 In fact, Ibn Taymiyya mainly uses as his reference text the epitome of al-Rāzī's *al-Arbāʾīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* by Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 612/1283), entitled *Lubāb al-Arbāʾīn* (Quintessence of the Forty).
  - 38 According to Butterworth, "Translator's Introduction," xii, this *masʾala* has no title, but Ben Ahmed, "Ibn Rushd in the Ḥanbalī Tradition," 566, based on *Barnāmaj* list (ms. Escorial 884, f. 83<sup>v</sup>) gives as a title *Masʾala fī anna al-Lāh tabārak wa taʾālā yaʾlam al-juzʾ iyāt* (Quaesitum on God's knowledge of particulars). Whatever is the case, both agree that this *masʾala* does not constitute an appendix to the *Faṣl*, but was written before it. Hence, the title is clearly mistaken, but I still refer to it—although putting it in parentheses after *Masʾala*, which clearly was the whole or part of the original title—because it is widely known under that title.
  - 39 *Ḍamīma*, B refers to the Beirut edition; *Ḍamīma*, Bu to Müller's edition as reprinted in Butterworth.
  - 40 Gutas, "Heritage of Avicenna," 97.
  - 41 Here and in the following, I use Marmura's English translation of the titles as given in al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*.
  - 42 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar* 8:217.11–220.14, explicitly formulates six objections.
  - 43 The actual wording of 406.1–2 is awkward, and is probably due to a copyist's error.
  - 44 In fact, lines 409.1–4 are missing in the actual quotation of 400.6–9, but they correspond to the missing lines between the two parts of the quoted fragment, i.e., SD, 517.12–18 / Bo, 331.13–15, and are repeated at 411.6–8. It is therefore likely that their absence in the quotation on page 400 is accidental (due to a quasi-omission by homoioteleuton).
  - 45 This section, which includes quotations of Discussion 1, undoubtedly deserves a more in-depth analysis.
  - 46 It should be noted that instead of *al-fuqahāʾ* (233.11), one must in all likelihood read *al-qudamāʾ*.
  - 47 For a concrete case of such a critical handling, namely with respect to Ibn Rushd's view on divine corporeality, see von Kügelgen, "Dialogpartner im Widerspruch," esp. 462–70.
  - 48 In this sense, I agree with Tamer, "Curse of Philosophy," esp. 369–74, that Ibn Taymiyya cannot be qualified as a philosopher in the proper sense, since his philosophy would be an "Islamicized philosophy." However, as Tamer correctly observes, this means not that Ibn Taymiyya's works are devoid of any philosophical components, but that they are used only in support of his "theological" views, and that it would therefore be more appropriate to call Ibn Taymiyya a theologian. Let me add that in his paper, Tamer surveys the most important contemporary Arabic publications that discuss this topic.

- 49 Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd," 488. Even if Hoover—in my view, rightly—insists that Ibn Taymiyya is no Averroist philosopher, but did put Ibn Rushd to use for his own traditional ends, he presents him as the "foremost and perhaps only medieval *advocate* [emphasis added] of Ibn Rushd's ideas, or at least some of them." How can one be the advocate of someone's ideas when one rejects the very framework in which they are articulated?
- 50 Ibn Taymiyya, *Risāla fī 'ilm al-bāṭin wa-'l-zāhir*, 230–69, also does not mention Ibn Rushd's *Faṣl*. Michot, "Philosophical Exegesis in Context," says nothing about this absence, but judiciously notes (588) that Ibn Taymiyya's approach of philosophical exegesis in his *Epistle* (of which Michot offers an English translation) is problematic because it is too general. For example, it neglects the very fact that the philosophers address their interpretations only to an elite and insist that they should be kept apart from all those unworthy to understand them. Michot concludes with a question that seems rhetorical at first sight: Should Ibn Taymiyya be blamed for operating not just as a historian of ideas, but also as a theologian–mufti? The answer to this question, in Michot's formulation, is obviously No. However, in my view, Ibn Taymiyya is constructing too much a history of ideas in function of his own theological and legal agenda.
- 51 On the latter, see Geoffroy, "À propos de l'almohadisme d'Averroès."
- 52 Ibn Taymiyya seems to have consciously omitted the first lines of the added fragment (Geoffroy, "À propos de l'almohadisme d'Averroès," 883, lines 136–40), given that he replaces in the beginning of the quoted fragment *bi-dhālik* by *bi-nafy al-jismiyya*, to which *bi-dhālik* in the original text indeed refers.
- 53 B refers to the Beirut edition of *Kitāb al-Kaṣhf 'an manāḥij al-adilla*, in *Falsafat Ibn Rushd*; MBu refers to Müller's edition, as reproduced in Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, 38–42 (Arabic).
- 54 SD refers to the edition of *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* by Dunyā, Bo to Bouyges' edition.

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**Part II**

**Traditions Facing  
Forward**



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## 8 How Light Makes Color Visible

The Reception of Some Greco-Arabic Theories (Aristotle, Avicenna, Averroes) in Medieval Paris, 1240s–50s

*Therese Scarpelli Cory*

It is due in no small part to the efforts of Richard C. Taylor that recent years have seen an increasing appreciation, among scholars working on Aquinas and his contemporaries, of the central role played by Islamic philosophical sources in the development of Scholastic philosophy. In particular, Taylor has advocated a hermeneutic practice that he has called “source-based contextualism”: the strategy of reading an author in tandem with the sources with which he or she is in dialogue, in order to understand the conceptual frameworks operating in the background. This methodology is crucial for historians of medieval philosophy seeking to recover the significance of philosophical concepts that have been sedimented over, in the intervening eight centuries, with the detritus of countless seismic paradigm shifts.

In this study, I will examine a theme that is long overdue for elucidation through just such a contextualizing approach, namely, light and its role in making objects visible. The theories of light that were in circulation in the European universities of the thirteenth century are not well understood. Many questions arise: Which theories were known, how were they interpreted, and which of them were taken seriously? It is surprising that these questions have not received more scholarly attention,<sup>1</sup> given the crucial metaphysical questions surrounding the nature of light and the frequent use of light analogies as a leitmotif of thirteenth-century philosophical psychology. (One might think, for instance, of the light of the agent intellect, the light of the first principles of reason, the supernatural lights of faith and prophecy, the light of glory in the beatific vision of the saints, and, of course, doctrines of divine illumination.)

Due to constraints of space, I will here examine just one of the many questions that occupy light-theorists in the Greco-Arabic-Latin tradition: What is light’s role in making vision of colors possible? My particular interest is the period of the 1240s–50s, a pivotal moment in the Latin Scholastic reception of Islamic natural philosophy. Thinkers at that time were



familiar with a wide variety of theories addressing this problem, originating from a wide variety of sources—Christian theological sources such as Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Peter Lombard; and Greek or Arabic philosophical sources such as Democritus, Empedocles, Aristotle, Ibn Bājjah, Avicenna, and Averroes.<sup>2</sup> Two philosophical sources, however, appear to have acquired special credibility in accounting for light’s role in vision, namely Aristotle and Avicenna.

In the time period in question, both Aristotle and Avicenna are cited as proponents of what I will call a “color-actualizing role” for light. In its color-actualizing role, light makes the *objects of vision* actually colored (color itself being construed as a kind of luminosity inhering in surfaces in dependence on some illuminator). While Avicenna unambiguously defends light’s color-actualizing role, Aristotle’s commitments are not so clear. There is, however, a role that Aristotle *does* unambiguously attribute to light—I will call it the “receiver-disposing role”—according to which light makes the *patient or receiver of color’s agency* (whether the medium, such as air, or the viewer’s eye) susceptible to being acted upon by color. This role is extensively discussed by Aristotle’s Andalusian commentator Averroes (Ibn Rushd), who finds a way of reducing all claims about light’s actualizing color to a receiver-disposing role.

In examining mid-thirteenth-century Parisian theories of light against the background of this Greco-Arabic discussion of light, some interesting patterns emerge. The authors we will review—mainly Albert the Great, but also Bonaventure and the early Aquinas—uniformly defend light’s color-actualizing role. But they integrate it into a larger, tripartite theory of light as a bodily quality inhering in three different kinds of bodies differently: (1) in light-sources such as the sun, stars, and fire, light inheres as brilliant shining; (2) in the air, it inheres as a brightness; and (3) in solid opaque bodies, it inheres as color-radiance. Aristotle and Avicenna align with certain parts of this theory, but our Parisian authors take them to endorse the entire theory. And curiously, one of the key points of dispute in the Greco-Arabic tradition, the receiver-disposing role of light, gains almost no traction in the Latin Scholastic discussion at the time we are considering, although Albert makes some cautious concessions to it (Aquinas begins to endorse it only in the late 1260s). Instead, our Latin authors prefer to characterize light’s presence in air as something active: a brightness whereby light-sources actualize colors in solid surfaces.

By placing the Latin Scholastic treatments of light in conversation with the debates in their main Greco-Arabic sources, we can elucidate some of the puzzling terminology and theoretical choices that motivate our three Parisian authors. Indeed, this historical episode provides an interesting window on some of the dynamics at work in the Scholastic appropriation of Greco-Arabic natural philosophy.

My study unfolds in three parts. It begins with some puzzles in Aristotle’s remarks about light’s relationship to color and transparency and

examines how Averroes resolves these puzzles. It then considers Avicenna's highly influential account, before turning to the question of how these Greco-Arabic approaches to light were received in Paris in the 1240s–50s by Albert the Great, Bonaventure, and the early Aquinas.

## **The Aristotelian Light-Theory and Its Interpretation by Averroes**

Let us begin by examining Aristotle's own seminal remarks about light, with the textual and philosophical ambiguities that will set up divergent readings among Aristotle's Arabic and Latin readers.

### ***Aristotle on Light as "Actuality of the Diaphanous": A Quick Sketch***

In *De anima* 2.7, Aristotle famously describes light as the "actuality of the diaphanous":

Light is the actuality of this, the diaphanous, insofar as it is diaphanous. Where this is there is also, potentially, darkness. Light is a sort of color of the diaphanous, whenever it is made in actuality diaphanous by fire or something that is like the body above.<sup>3</sup>

"The diaphanous" (from the Greek *dia-phanein*) has a curious technical sense, which I wish to underscore by substituting the archaic term "diaphanous" for the common "transparent." In Aristotle, "the diaphanous" is a nature. Here in *De anima* 2.7, he ascribes the diaphanous to air, water, and the crystalline sphere of the outermost heaven, which gives the impression that he is referring to transparency (though in *De sensu et sensato* 5 he states that *all* bodies in varying degrees partake of the nature of the diaphanous).<sup>4</sup>

Light is the actuality of this mysterious nature—the "actuality of the diaphanous." More precisely, light seems to be "actual diaphaneity." Conversely, the "diaphanous nature" of certain (or all) bodies seems to be a potency or receptivity for light. Bodies with a diaphanous nature are not actually diaphanous yet; rather, they are naturally in potency to actual diaphaneity, or light. For Aristotle, then, diaphaneity is an *actuality* to which the air is in potency, and darkness is the privation of that actuality.<sup>5</sup> He further emphasizes that light is not itself a body but, rather, a "positive state" (*hexis*) of bodies. It is a corporeal accidental form to which the "nature of the diaphanous" is in potency and whose absence is darkness.<sup>6</sup> (These remarks are highly obscure, and scholars disagree on whether Aristotle thinks of light as *transparency* or as *brightness*,<sup>7</sup> and whether he is getting at anything more than a cumbersome way of describing "the state of the transparent in which one can see color through it," in a purely functionalist sense.<sup>8</sup>)

Aristotle observes also that “nothing is visible without light.”<sup>9</sup> So how does light—this “actuality” or “positive state” to which bodies are in potency in virtue of their diaphanous nature—enable us to see? Aristotle’s account seems to be that “colour is capable of setting in motion that which is actually diaphanous; and this is its nature.” The standard interpretation of this formulation today runs as follows: color, as an agent, is ordered toward the “actually diaphanous” as its proper patient.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the air and, ultimately, the eye can be acted upon by color only if they are actually diaphanous. Conversely, the darkness of the air and eye makes them unreceptive to color’s agency. Light’s role in vision is to serve as the disposition, inhering in air and the eye, that makes them susceptible to being acted upon by color.

We can call this account of light’s role in vision the “receiver-disposing” role. By way of illustration, suppose that Annie is standing in a pitch-dark room containing a green vase. The reason she cannot see the vase is that the air and her eyes are dark, i.e., they are unreceptive to the vase’s green color. But when sunlight is let into the room, the air and her eyes acquire a new disposition—light, i.e., actual diaphaneity—enabling the vase’s green color to act upon them. With the obstacle removed, color now acts on Annie’s eyes, causing her to see green.

### ***Colors in the Dark and Other Interpretive Obscurities***

Now, does Aristotle think light plays any additional role relative to color? Does anything change in the vase when sunlight streams into the room, or was it already green in the dark? These questions are not so easily answered.<sup>11</sup> In particular, his Arabic and Latin interpreters are confronted with four significant interpretive difficulties.

First, in *De anima* 3.5, Aristotle goes on to compare the “intellect that makes all things”—what would become known in the commentary tradition as the “active intellect”—to light, which he now describes as having a color-actualizing role: it is “as a kind of positive state, like light. For in a certain way, light makes colours which are in potentiality colours in actuality.”<sup>12</sup> This famous comparison sets up a long tradition of treating the active intellect as the intellectual analogate to light. But the analogy seems to depend on light’s having some sort of color-actualizing role, which the discussion of light in *De anima* 2.7 does not straightforwardly provide.<sup>13</sup>

A second difficulty lies in *De anima* 2.7’s ambiguous remarks about the relationship of light, color, and visibility. Aristotle states that “nothing is visible without light.”<sup>14</sup> Yet, he also says that color is “visible in itself (*per se*)”—at least according to the Arabic and Latin versions read by Averroes and by our three Scholastic authors. How does one reconcile the claims that “nothing is visible without light” and that “color is visible *per se*”?

In reality, although Aristotle’s original Greek does not help clarify the relation of color and visibility, the appearance of direct inconsistency is an artifact of the translation. In the Greek, Aristotle is apparently merely

listing two kinds of entities that are visible, namely colored things and things which shine by themselves, apparently referring to the phosphorescent creatures that are discussed a few lines later:

The visible is [a] color, and [b] that which is on the surface of [epi] what is visible in itself [*kath' auto*].<sup>15</sup>

In the Arabic and Latin versions, the preposition vanishes, and the distinction between “color” and the “visible in itself” collapses. Color itself becomes that which is *per se* visible (a claim that seems to be supported by Aristotle’s subsequent remark that it belongs to the nature of color to move sight).<sup>16</sup> So the lemma in Averroes’ *Long Commentary on the De anima* (hereafter *LCDA*) reads:

Color is visible, and this is visible per se.<sup>17</sup>

In the “old” Latin translation of *De anima* by James of Venice, the mid-twelfth-century translation that was mainly responsible for transmitting Aristotelian light-theory to Scholastic thinkers before Moerbeke’s revision in 1267, the passage reads:

Color is visible; and it is of [= numbered among] the visible-in-themselves.<sup>18</sup>

As we will see, this mistaken formulation that color is “*per se* visible” causes subsequent Arabic and Latin authors considerable grief in attempting to work out why light is necessary for vision.

Third, Aristotle’s term *horaton*, “visible,” is ambiguous: it is not clear whether he is equating visibility with the power to move the actually diaphanous air/eye or with actually moving the actually diaphanous air/eye.<sup>19</sup> The same goes for the claim that color is “motive of” (*kinētikon*) the diaphanous, which could refer either to the power to move or to actual moving.<sup>20</sup> With respect to the latter case, we will see that, again, two different translation decisions are responsible for diverging interpretations of this passage in Averroes and Albert.

Fourth, further complications are introduced by reading *De anima* 2.7 together with the more extensive discussion of color in *De sensu et sensato* 3, which was widely cited in Latin Scholastic treatments. There, Aristotle ascribes diaphaneity to all bodies and relates light and color to two kinds of bodies. Light “is a nature inhering in the diaphanous when the latter is without determinate boundary,”<sup>21</sup> meaning fluidly edged bodies such as air or water. Color, in turn, is “the limit of the diaphanous in determinately bounded body,”<sup>22</sup> meaning, apparently, the surface of solids. In other words, color is a property of something that has a fixed surface, a claim evoking the *De anima* remark that color “is motive of the actually diaphanous,” since it is likewise only at its surface that a body is in contact

with the illuminated air.<sup>23</sup> Yet Aristotle then adds that a body's color is due to the presence (or absence, or a mixture of both) in it of "that which when present in air produces light"—apparently, the "fiery element" in sun or fire.<sup>24</sup> So the two parts of this account seem to be in tension: does color exist only at surfaces, or are solid bodies colored all the way through, due to the presence of the fiery substance in them?

This accumulation of interpretive difficulties sets up a central question, which can be rendered precise with the following illustration. Suppose that within the vase, which is made of clay under its green glaze, there inheres a mixed fiery quality (call it *B*), corresponding to the color brown (though let us at this moment leave open whether *B* actually is a color or not). And now suppose that *B* is successively in the three following conditions:

- At  $t_1$ , *B* is not exposed at any surface of the vase.
- At  $t_2$ , the vase is broken, exposing *B* at a surface, but in a dark room.
- At  $t_3$ , the light is switched on in the room, illuminating the surrounding air or eye and hence placing *B* into contact with an appropriately disposed receiver; at that moment, *B* immediately "moves the actual diaphanous."

The question will be as follows. Let us assume that to be visible, on the Aristotelian account, is to be "motive of what is actually diaphanous" (in other words, the medium of air or water and, ultimately, the eye). Now at which of these times is *B* visible, i.e., "motive of what is actually diaphanous"? The answer depends on how one construes the "visibility/motivity" in question.

Suppose that "being motive of" means that the agent has internally the relevant causal power to move, regardless of any other conditions that might need to be satisfied in order for motion to occur. On that construal, there are three possible options for locating *B*'s visibility:

- Option 1: *B* has this causal power essentially (and thus is visible already at  $t_1$ ).<sup>25</sup>
- Option 2: *B* acquires this causal power only at a "limit" or surface, regardless of light conditions (and thus is visible at  $t_2$ ).
- Option 3: *B* acquires this causal power from light only at an illuminated surface (and thus is visible at  $t_3$ ).

Now suppose instead that "being motive of" is equated with satisfying all the conditions internal and external to the agent, i.e., actually moving. Then on that construal, we also have a fourth option:

- Option 4: *B* is visible only at  $t_3$ , when a properly disposed (actually diaphanous) patient is available. On this construal, being capable of moving sight would entail actually moving sight.

We shall see two medieval strategies for meeting this interpretive challenge. One is chosen by Averroes in his *Long Commentary on the De anima*, who defends Option 2 in order to protect the claim that color is *per se* visible without light. But he also allows for another sense of “visible” that legitimates Option 4 as well (among other reasons, to accommodate the claim that “nothing is visible without light”). The other strategy is that adopted by the three mid-thirteenth-century Scholastic writers. As we will see, they attribute to Aristotle Option 3, and hence put him in Avicenna’s color-actualizing camp.

### *Averroes’ Two Senses of Visibility*

In his *Long Commentary on the De anima*, Averroes is fully aware of these interpretive difficulties. His Andalusian predecessor, Ibn Bājjah, had read Aristotle as proposing a color-actualizing theory of light (Option 3). Averroes rejects this interpretation as forced (*expositio valde difficilis*). Instead, he sets out to show that Aristotle believed that “actual colors exist in the dark” and that light’s sole role in vision is “to make the potentially diaphanous actually diaphanous,” i.e., to dispose the receiver.<sup>26</sup>

Averroes’ strategy for reconciling the divergent texts and clarifying the relationship between color, visibility, and “moving the diaphanous” is to distinguish two senses of visibility: one according to which it is true that “color is *per se* visible,” and the other according to which it is true that “color is invisible without light.” (Keep in mind that Averroes’ version of *De anima* incorrectly has Aristotle saying that color is *per se* visible.) Averroes’ remarks are worth quoting and discussing at length.

In the first sense, to be visible is to have “the habit and form” for moving something actually diaphanous, i.e., the causal power for affecting sight (= visible<sub>1</sub>). This is the sense in which color is *per se* visible in the dark (*per* Option 2, above):<sup>27</sup>

When we keep [in mind] what Aristotle said at the beginning of that account (and he asserted it as self-evident), then it is clear that light must be necessary for the being of colors moving the diaphanous, only insofar as it gives the diaphanous some form whereby it receives motion from color, namely illumination. For Aristotle asserted that color is visible *per se*, and that saying that color is visible is like saying that a human being is risible. In other words, [such propositions belong to] the kind of essential proposition in which the subject is the cause of the predicate, not [the kind in which] the predicate [is] the cause of the subject, e.g., “Human being is rational.”<sup>28</sup> He meant this when he said: but insofar as *a cause is found in it for its being visible*, as we have expounded. And I concede that it is manifestly impossible to say that light accords to color a habit and form whereby it becomes visible. For if it were so, then color would not be related primarily to sight, but only accidentally and secondarily, through [acquiring] some habit.

For obviously sight is posterior to the visible. And obviously “visible” is related to “color,” not as “rational” is related to “man,” but as “capable of laughter” is related to “man.” And in this way color is visible in virtue of being color, not in virtue of some form that happens to accrue to it.<sup>29</sup>

Visibility<sub>1</sub> is the formality corresponding to sight; to be visible<sub>1</sub> is to have the causal power to affect what is actually diaphanous (including, ultimately, the eye). By asserting that color as such is visible<sub>1</sub>, then, Averroes is designating color as sufficient in itself *on the side of the agent* for causing vision. Hence he denies, *contra* Avicenna and Ibn Bājjah, that light contributes any additional formality on the side of the vision-causing agent. Merely to be colored is to have sufficient causal power for “moving what is actually diaphanous.” The *exercise* of that power, however, additionally hinges on the presence of a properly disposed receiver. (Similarly, when a metal pot is heated to 100°C, it is sufficient in itself for vaporizing water, although the exercise of this causal power requires that there actually be water in the pot to be vaporized.)

In another sense, however, something is visible (=visible<sub>2</sub>) when it is *actually exercising* its diaphanous-moving power. An object that is visible<sub>2</sub> is actually seen. It is in this secondary sense that light makes color visible (*per* Option 4, above):

Since [color is visible without the accrual of another form, e.g., light], light is not necessary for the being of actually-moving color, *except insofar as it gives the subject proper to it the ability to receive motion from [color]*. It seems that in asserting what he asserted, Aristotle only intended to provide a solution to that question. It is in this way that we should understand his statement that colors [only] potentially move the sense of sight in darkness. For light is that which makes them actually motive [*motivos in actu*], and hence he likens light to the agent intelligence and colors to universals. For what is introduced loosely by way of example is not like what is introduced by demonstration, and he does not intend the example as a verification, but merely as a clarification. And no one can say that color is found in act only when light is present. For color is the boundary of a determinate transparent; but light is not the boundary of a determinate transparent and for this reason it is not necessary for the being of color [*in essendo colorem*], but for its being visible [*in essendo visibilem*], as we determined. Let us return, then, and say that when [Aristotle] had explained that color, insofar as it is visible, moves the transparent in act and that this is its nature on account of being visible *per se*, and that it is impossible for there to be sight without light, he returned to recounting what should be considered first concerning those things. And he said: “But it is necessary that each color, etc.” In other words, because each color is

only visible in light, one must say first about light that it is one of the things that complete vision. [TSC: I take it that “first” in the previous sentences refers to what seems *prima facie* or pre-philosophically true of light’s role in vision, as opposed to precise philosophical claims about its causal role.]<sup>30</sup>

Light is necessary for the object to be visible<sub>2</sub>, i.e., *actually moving sight*—only because light constitutes the appropriate disposition in air and the eye, enabling them to be affected by color. With the patient properly disposed, color instantly unleashes its active power. Making color visible<sub>2</sub>, then, light functions as a *per accidens* cause of color’s activity on sight, in that it satisfies on the side of the patient a condition necessary for this activity to occur.

In short, on Averroes’ view, objects have the “being of color” and, hence, the causal power for moving the actual diaphanous, independently from light, so they are visible<sub>1</sub> independently from light. But they do not actually move the actual diaphanous unless light disposes air and the eye to receive their activity. Hence, light is required for them to be visible<sub>2</sub>.

Capitalizing on this distinction between visible<sub>1</sub> and visible<sub>2</sub>, Averroes goes on to take astonishing liberties in comparing the agent intellect to light. In those contexts, his remarks about visibility are hardly distinguishable from Avicenna’s, e.g., “Color is visible only in virtue of the sun” (presumably meaning visibility<sub>2</sub>).<sup>31</sup> Even the terms “color” and “actuality” are infected by this deliberate ambiguity on the having versus the exercising of a power. For instance, in *LCDA* 3.18, Averroes states that “sight is not moved by colors except when they are in act, which is not realized unless light is present since it is what draws them from potency into act.”<sup>32</sup> And in *LCDA* 3.36, he states: “Similar to this is the diaphanous which receives color and light at one and the same time; and light effects color [*lux est efficiens colorum*].”<sup>33</sup> These formulations are only consistent with the receiver-disposing view of light that he has defended in *LCDA* 2, if one assumes that there are two senses for both “actual” and “color,” for example, although the tree’s green color actually exists by itself (color<sub>1</sub> or actuality<sub>1</sub>, parallel to visibility<sub>1</sub>), the *exercise of its activity on a receiver* (color<sub>2</sub> or actuality<sub>2</sub>, parallel to visibility<sub>2</sub>) requires light’s properly disposing the receiver.

What Averroes is doing, in sum, is this: he is reducing claims about light’s color-actualizing role to claims about its receiver-disposing role. Thus, conveniently, even though the behavior of light cannot serve as a strict model for the behavior of the agent intellect as an actualizer of intelligibility, nevertheless, by equivocating, he can assert that light “makes colors visible” (i.e., visibility<sub>2</sub>) and even that it “effects colors” (i.e., color<sub>2</sub>), so as to serve as a loose analogue for intellectual light.<sup>34</sup>



## The Avicennian View of Light

### *A Few Light Errors*

Interestingly, Averroes was not alone among Islamic philosophers in interpreting Aristotle as assigning solely a receiver-disposing role to light in his account of vision. Roughly a century and a half earlier, the Persian philosopher Ibn Sīnā, known in Latin as Avicenna, had read Aristotle in much the same way. But in the lengthy third book of his *Liber de anima* (translated into Latin by Ibn Daud and Gundissalinus around 1152–66), Avicenna rejects that account and unfolds his own theory. Light, as Avicenna sees it, has two roles in vision:

- a to actualize color in nonluminous opaque bodies (= color-actualizing role)
- b to make the potentially translucent be actually translucent.<sup>35</sup>

This second role *sounds at first* like Aristotle's receiver-disposing role, but in reality, Avicenna understands it quite differently. We will discuss each role in turn below, focusing not on Avicenna's original Arabic text, but on "the Latin Avicenna," i.e., Avicenna as he appeared to Latin readers through the Latin translation.

Beforehand, however, a few remarks about Avicenna's terminology are in order. Avicenna's light-theory rests on a central distinction between two terms for light: *ḍaw'* and *nūr* in Arabic, or *lux* and *lumen* in the medieval Latin translation, which I will translate "luminous light" and "radiant light," respectively, following Jon McGinnis.<sup>36</sup> Luminous light (*lux*) is an essential quality that belongs to luminous bodies (*lucida*), such as the sun and fire, and that is independently visible; it is "seen by itself."<sup>37</sup> From luminous bodies, there "shines forth" or "descends" radiant light (*lumen*), i.e., "a splendor that falls upon bodies and uncovers in them whiteness or blackness or greenness."<sup>38</sup>

As Dag Nikolaus Hasse has shown, however, the medieval Latin translators of the *Liber de anima* were not consistent in rendering *ḍaw'* and *nūr*, respectively, as *lux* and *lumen*. Sometimes they reversed the terms, and they further obscured the definition of *lumen* by glossing it as a "splendor." As we will see later, they also misinterpreted Avicenna's second kind of light, *nūr* (*lumen*).<sup>39</sup>

### *Color-Actualizing, Visibility, and Self-Diffusion in Avicenna*

The key role of light in vision, for the Latin Avicenna, is to actualize colors. He writes that radiant light makes nonluminous opaque bodies, such as walls or a vase, actually colored and, hence, visible:

As a potentially colored body, [the wall] is not shining [*lucens*] from itself, for actual color [color *in effectu*] accrues to it only on account of

radiant light. For when radiant light [*lumen*] illuminates some body, there accrues to that body actual whiteness or blackness or greenness and others of this sort. But if it is not illuminated, it is black only in the sense of being dark, and it is potentially colored, if we want to call whiteness or blackness or redness or paleness or anything of the sort “actual color” [*color in effectu*].<sup>40</sup>

For example, a vase in a dark room has an “aptitude” to be green and becomes actually green when illuminated by radiant light—for example, when I turn on a lamp.

But how, exactly, is light responsible for the vase’s color? Avicenna considers and rejects several possibilities. Light is not itself the vase’s actual green, otherwise it could not actualize all colors.<sup>41</sup> Nor is it the sum of all colors—otherwise, it would harbor contraries within itself.<sup>42</sup> Nor is it the manifestness (*manifestatio, apparentia*) of greenness to a viewer, since it exists independently of viewers.<sup>43</sup> Rather, Avicenna explains, an actual color, such as green, is “composed” by the “mixing” of luminous light and the object’s disposition for green:

We say that luminous light [*lux*] is part of the composition of this visible thing that we call color. When it is mixed with potential color, from the two comes forth actual color on account of the intermingling; but if there is not such an aptitude [for color—namely, if the receiver of light is translucent], it will be radiant light [*lumen*] and splendor by itself alone; for luminous light [*lux*] is, as it were, a part of that which is color and a mixing of it, just as white and black have mixtures from which other middle colors result.<sup>44</sup>

The distribution of the terms *lux* and *lumen* here suggests that by means of radiant light, the sun causes luminous light to occur as a quality in the vase, which is not any actual color, but rather an ingredient necessary for the being of any actual color. “Mixed” together, luminous light and the vase’s disposition for green constitute actual green. Hence, luminous light “perfects color,”<sup>45</sup> granting the vase “the being of a certain property”—i.e., color.<sup>46</sup> We can call this the “color-actualizing” role of light. As Avicenna explains it, “Colors have being, and the being [of color] does not derive from the fact that they are luminous light, nor is luminous light their manifesting, although they are not actual apart from luminous light.”<sup>47</sup>

But why must light be “mixed in” in order for color to be perfected? The key lies in Avicenna’s construal of actual color as essentially visible: “There is no whiteness except as belonging to something to which it is proper to be seen.”<sup>48</sup> Now what is visible, for Avicenna, is light.<sup>49</sup> Actual color, then, is necessarily a lesser, derivative kind of luminosity, which the vase does not have in its own nature, but acquires through an “admixture” of light, in continuous dependence on a naturally luminous body. What luminous light thus contributes to our vase is the luminosity or visibility

that is essential to being green. The determinacy of a given color (e.g., greenness, not redness) is specified by the corporeal dispositions preexisting in the vase. Avicenna thus distinguishes two related luminosities: that of a naturally luminous body, which “is seen by its own essence and not by another,”<sup>50</sup> and that of color, which is seen by another. Actual color is what makes opaque bodies visible, just as luminous light is what makes the sun visible.

The notion of “visibility” operative here is one of dynamic self-display. For Avicenna, to be visible is to be luminous and, hence, capable of displaying oneself: “Light is visible, and that in which there is light is visible.”<sup>51</sup> What is actually visible, whether by natural brilliance or acquired color-luminosity, properly diffuses its likeness outward, contingent, of course, on the presence of a suitable receiver and translucent medium.<sup>52</sup>

The following is proper to the body that shines by itself [e.g., sun, fire] and the illuminated colored thing: namely, when there is a body opposite to them that is receptive of a likeness (for instance, in the way that sight is receptive), [shining and colored bodies] tend to perform upon [the receptive] body an action that is a form like their own form.<sup>53</sup>

For Avicenna, the receiver of this self-diffusive activity need not be an eye. The sun causes its likeness (visibility) in potentially colored objects by casting light on them. Similarly, but to a lesser degree, actually colored bodies are able to affect some kinds of nonperceptual recipients, as when the green vase causes its likeness in a mirror, from which, under the right light conditions, color can even (dimly) be reflected onto a wall.<sup>54</sup> The projecting of a likeness is simply what visible things automatically do, given the presence of a suitable receiver—indeed, the tendency to cause such likenesses is precisely what visibility is.

If the receiver is a properly disposed eye, however, then this effect of the visible object (whether the sun or the green vase) constitutes the object’s “appearance” or “manifestation.” A colored object “needs first to be illuminated by what we call radiant light so that it may appear.”<sup>55</sup> Avicenna explains: “Although we say that luminous light is not the manifestation of color, we do not deny that luminous light is the cause of color’s being manifest and the cause of [color’s] being effected in another.”<sup>56</sup>

Now this construal of visibility in terms of active self-diffusion raises an interesting puzzle: Is something visible when it is merely capable of causing vision, or does visibility (and hence actual color) imply actually causing vision? To put it another way: Given that visible or colored objects are naturally active self-diffusive, is the exercise of this activity essential to being visible or colored or not? Is the illuminated vase actually green, even if there is no one around to see it?

On this issue, the textual evidence seems inconclusive. On the one hand, Avicenna writes that “white is not white, nor is red red, except according as we see it; but it is not made such that we see it unless it is illuminated.”<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, this remark comes at the end of a passage in which he says that color is a “quality of [opaque, nonluminous] bodies” and that “when radiant light illuminates a body, there occurs in it actual whiteness or greenness or blackness.”<sup>58</sup> In reconciling these two remarks, a defender of viewer-dependent color might claim that, in attributing actual color to bodies, Avicenna means that these bodies are actually causing the sight of color. Conversely, a defender of viewer-independent color might claim that, when Avicenna says that actual red only exists “according as we see it,” he means, not that “it exists only at the moment when we see it” (i.e., there is no color except when seen), but rather that “the way in which red is when we see it—i.e., illuminated—is the only way that actual red can exist at all” (i.e., no color is seen that is not illuminated).

McGinnis defends a version of the former interpretation, according to which actual green is never in the vase for Avicenna, but exists only in the eye as the seeing of green, effected by the mixture of light and color-disposition in the vase.<sup>59</sup> On balance, however, I tend toward reading Avicenna as a defender of viewer-independent color, for a few reasons. One is that Avicenna typically triangulates the conditions for color’s actualization in terms of spatial relationships among a luminous body, a potentially colored body, and a translucent medium, without signaling that a viewer is necessary.<sup>60</sup> Another is that if actual color were viewer-dependent, then, correspondingly, so too should be the visibility of luminous bodies such as the sun—but Avicenna specifies that luminous bodies are visible *per se*. Another, finally, is that the viewer-dependent theory seems to collapse color into its manifestation, a move that Avicenna rejects.<sup>61</sup> A proponent of viewer-dependent color could explain away each bit of evidence, but it seems to me that, taken together, they provide a certain weight of plausibility on the side of viewer-independent color.

Before proceeding to the rest of Avicenna’s light-theory, it is worth pausing to underscore that the text is not free of ambiguity; indeed, the same sort of ambiguity as the one we saw in Aristotle. Does the claim that light perfects or actualizes color mean that light makes color exist, or that it makes color act on something, or both? (Alternatively, does it make color exist precisely by making it act on something, if the existence of color is contingent on its affecting some receiver?)

### *Making the Medium Translucent*

Now, on Avicenna’s view, the sun can actualize the vase’s greenness (and the greenness can further actualize the eye) only through a “penetrable” or “translucent” (*pervium, translucens*) medium. In fact, Avicenna defines a translucent body as one which, when placed as a medium between a

luminous body and its patient, does not prevent, but rather assists, the former in acting on the latter.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Avicenna says that in addition to actualizing color, light makes the medium “actually translucent.”<sup>63</sup>

Now some modern readers have equated Avicenna’s “making the medium translucent” with Aristotle’s receiver-disposing role of light. But as Hasse has pointed out, one should not be misled by Avicenna’s language.<sup>64</sup> Unlike Aristotle, Avicenna does not think the actualizing of translucence is a real change (*permutatio*) in the air itself. Rather, to say that the air has become translucent is merely to say that a luminous body has moved into the air (e.g., the sun has risen) and is actualizing the color of some object.<sup>65</sup> In other words, the actual “trans-lucence” of air is not some new quality added to air. It is merely the name for the situation that obtains when the sun is actualizing color in an opaque body (or the colored body is causing sight in the eye) through the intervening air. Nor is darkness (*obscuritas*) a real quality of the air that blocks the reception of light, as though dark air were *resistant* to receiving light. Rather, air’s darkness merely refers to the fact that there is nothing to see in it (i.e., no luminous or actually colored bodies).<sup>66</sup> So “becoming actually transparent” on Avicenna’s view is what contemporary metaphysicians call a “mere Cambridge change,” as when one might describe a water-pipe becoming “actually aquiferous,” although there is no real change in the *pipe*, but only in the *water*, which changes from potentially flowing to actually flowing.

Our Latin medieval authors are also misled by Avicenna’s description of light as “making the medium transparent,” which they take as agreeing with Aristotle. But since they also simultaneously misread Aristotle, this confluence of misreadings creates an interesting effect, as we will now see.

### **Avicenna Revivified: The After-Image of Islamic Accounts of Light at Paris, 1240s–50s**

Let us summarize the key distinctions so far. In characterizing the role of light in vision, we have seen two possibilities: a color-actualizing and a receiving-disposing view. It seems reasonably certain that Aristotle views light as a corporeal quality in the air, in which capacity it plays the role of disposing the receiver to be affected by color. But due to misleading or incorrect formulations in the Arabic and Latin translations, as well as simply to fundamental ambiguities in his position that continue to generate competing interpretations today, it was possible to disagree about whether Aristotle thinks light *also* has a color-actualizing role.

Avicenna and Averroes, however, do not disagree in that respect: both are convinced that Aristotle accords light *only* a receiver-disposing role. But they respond in exactly opposite ways. Rejecting Aristotle’s receiver-disposing role (as he understands it), Avicenna argues that light is properly a color-actualizer. Although he nominally states that light makes the medium translucent, translucence is not a real quality inhering

in the air, but is merely a way of describing sunlight's travel through air in order to reach the potentially green surface. In contrast, Averroes accepts Aristotle's receiver-disposing role (as he understands it), arguing that light is properly the disposition of transparency that makes its subjective receptive to be acted on by color. Although he nominally states that light actualizes color, the claim turns craftily on distinguishing color<sub>1</sub> as what has the power to cause sight, from color<sub>2</sub> as what is actually causing sight.

In other words, for Avicenna, the real change that light effects is *on the side of the color-agent*, giving it the form whereby it acts on sight—while the medium is affected only in the incidental sense that light and color are now acting through it. Conversely, for Averroes, the real change is *on the side of color's patient*, which acquires light as the disposition of actual transparency—while the color-agent is affected only in the incidental sense that with the receiver now properly disposed, the activity of color immediately follows.

At the same time, there is some important common ground underneath the structural differences. As far as I can tell, all three thinkers understand color as a radiance or luminosity: green, yellow, and red are ways in which a body *shines* or *glows* at its opaque surfaces. The theoretical disagreements concern whether this luminosity is a dependent participation in the luminosity of naturally shining bodies, e.g., the sun and fire, or whether it is attributable to the colored object's *material constituents*, which are like those found in those naturally shining bodies (or both).

So, how were these Greek and Arabic theories of light received in Scholasticism? Let us fast-forward now to mid-thirteenth-century Paris.

### ***Color as the Radiance of Surfaces***

Remarkably little has been written about medieval Scholastic theories of light. Without attempting to fill that lacuna, which would require an entire history in its own right, I focus on the works, written during the 1240s–50s, of just three thinkers: Albert, Bonaventure, and Aquinas.<sup>67</sup> These works display an almost entirely uniform account of how light makes objects visible. On that shared account, naturally luminous sources (e.g., sun or fire) cause light in two different kinds of receivers. Light is received in air as the “act of the diaphanous.”<sup>68</sup> And by means of the illuminated air, light comes to exist in opaque surfaces as the missing ingredient that constitutes color in solid bodies.

The picture painted in these works, then, is one in which luminosity cascades outward in a tripartite hierarchy: (1) an essentially luminous cause causes (2) brightness in the air which, in coming into contact with certain rightly disposed surfaces, causes in them (3) color, itself a kind of luminosity. Let us first examine light's color-actualizing role before considering the nature of light in the air.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these theories of light is their agreement that light's role in vision is precisely to actualize color. The most detailed treatment is that of Albert the Great, who significantly influences Aquinas' and Bonaventure's theories. In explaining light's color-actualizing role, Albert sometimes uses the hylomorphic language of matter and form to differentiate within color a material component (the body's physical make-up) and a formal component (consisting in light):

The being of color is twofold, namely material and formal. I call "material" what [color] has in the matter in which it is, not that it is from some matter. The matter in which it is, is a determinate body—that is, not transparent [*pervium*], and color has this material being from the first active and passive qualities, namely hot, cold, moist, and dry. But the formal being of color is the being of color, whereby it is actually in an active potency for actually immuting vision, and color has that [formal being] from light.<sup>69</sup>

He also describes light as "mixing" with color at the boundary between illuminated air and solid bodies. For instance, interpreting Aristotle's *De sensu* 3 maxim that "color is the limit of the diaphanous," he explains:

Concerning the second definition [viz., "color is the edge of the diaphanous (here: *perspicui*) in a determinate body"], it must be understood such that "extremity of the transparent" means the edge of the transparent that is touching the colored thing, and of the actual light [in the diaphanous medium] mixing itself with [the colored body's] surface and conferring on it the formal being of color. And consequently, when it is said that "color is the edge of the diaphanous," this should not be understood in reference to just any diaphanous, but in reference to that part which mixes itself with the surface of the colored thing. And that is what he adds: "the edge of the diaphanous in a determinate body," implying that the light mixed with the diaphanous is supposed to be the being of color existing in the surface of a determinate body. For color always exists in a surface, which is why the Pythagoreans called it an epiphany, that is, something appearing-over [*superapparentem*]. Nor should we understand this definition as referring to just any being of color, but the being according to which color alters sense, not the being whereby it alters bodies.<sup>70</sup>

Interestingly, in interpreting Aristotle, Albert introduces the Avicennian language of light's "mixing" with a body's natural properties to colorize it. We can also see why the *De sensu* 3 maxim is so often cited by Scholastic authors in order to attribute to Aristotle a color-actualizing view. After

all, supposing that a ball is made of the same clay all the way through, why should it be said to be red *only at its surface* (limit), unless something happens to it at the surface—which is precisely where it meets the illuminated air?

Albert thus allows that the term “color” can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, if by “color” one merely means a certain elemental composition, then bodies are certainly colored in the dark. But if “color” means *the object of sight*, properly speaking—the “visible *per se*,” or “the being according to which color alters sense,” i.e., color qua sensible—there is no color without light. Rather, sensible color is composed or mixed of an elemental composition as its matter and light as its form.<sup>71</sup> In this way, Albert is able to meet the challenge of reconciling two claims in the Latin Aristotle: namely, that color is “*per se* visible,” and that nothing is visible without light. The solution, for Albert, is that *light is what makes something be colored in the proper sense, i.e., visible, in the first place.*

Bonaventure similarly gives light a color-actualizing role, but he formulates the light-color relationship differently than Albert does. Light, he explains, “does not belong to the composition of color as an intrinsic principle, but as an effective principle.”<sup>72</sup> Rather, light (*lumen*) and illuminated color (*color illuminata*) are distinct forms, such that color is “ordered to” light and

completed through its presence. [...] Color is a quality of a determinate body, which is beautified and completed by the presence of light, so that it can move sight [...] [The light illuminating the air conjoined to the determinate body] makes color luminous.<sup>73</sup>

Here, color is something that a body already naturally has imperfectly, but which is *completed or perfected by becoming visible*, i.e., able to move sight. Light exists in the air, and efficiently causes color to be perfected, i.e., making it visible. It does not enter into the composition of perfect color. Still, the view is roughly equivalent to Albert’s, since, as we just saw, Albert had already allowed that the term “color” can be understood in two ways: either as “the form that immutes sight,” i.e., “the visible” (in which case light is a formal constituent) or as a property that bodies naturally have in virtue of their elemental makeup (in which case, light is not a constituent, but an additional form).

Formulations echoing both Albert and Bonaventure appear in the early Thomas Aquinas, who defends light’s color-actualizing role at least until the mid-1260s (see below for a description of the shift). Sometimes, in a more Albertist strain, Aquinas describes light as a formal constituent of color. For instance, he says that “light belongs to the composition of color,”<sup>74</sup> that “color is none other than an embodied light,”<sup>75</sup> or even that “all colors are founded in the nature of light,” just as “substance is the



foundation and basis for all beings.”<sup>76</sup> But sometimes, in a more Bonaventuran strain, he treats light and color as *two distinct forms related as matter and form*, the former perfecting the latter to constitute “the visible,” i.e., the object of sight. On this construal, light does not make color colored, but rather it makes it “bright” (*clarus*).<sup>77</sup>

To summarize: writing in the 1240s–50s, Albert, Aquinas, and Bonaventure share the same underlying conception of color and light’s color-actualizing role in vision:

- 1 Color (or at least perfect color) is a kind of radiance or luminosity whereby a body with opaque surfaces acts on sight.
- 2 In the dark, a body with opaque surfaces naturally has certain color-relevant properties in virtue of its material composition; what it lacks in order to be visible is some kind of luminosity.
- 3 Light’s role in vision is to actualize potential objects of sight by granting them color-luminosity.
- 4 Luminous sources are the agents of this color-actualization, acting on bodies through illuminated air.

Where Albert and Bonaventure disagree, the divergences turn out to be insignificant. For instance, Albert is unwilling to call anything “color” unless it is actually visible (i.e., luminous and hence able to move sight), whereas Bonaventure is willing to describe the material constituents of color as “imperfect color,” which is “completed” by being made visible. But they both agree on the underlying substantive claim: namely, that perfect color is *luminous*, and that actual visibility consists in a kind of radiance that is capable of moving sight.

Again, in explaining *how precisely* the light of the air makes a body’s surface color-luminous, Albert describes the air’s light as “mixing” with an opaque body’s natural properties at their shared boundary and, thereby, constituting the form of the color that is “the visible.” Bonaventure, in contrast, treats the air’s light as *extrinsically effecting* some lesser luminosity in the body’s surface. As a result, they draw up their taxonomy of luminosities differently. Albert seems to say that light is, in some sense, the very nature of color,<sup>78</sup> whereas Bonaventure denies that light and color are “one in essence”;<sup>79</sup> rather, perfected color is merely like *lumen* in its luminosity. Nevertheless, whether or not they think that a *univocally same kind of light* is in the air and in color, all three thinkers consider perfected color to be *some* kind of luminosity acquired in contact with illuminated air—a luminosity that is active relative to sight.

Our three Latin Parisian thinkers (correctly) credit Avicenna as a supporter of the view that light actualizes color. But interestingly, they also adopt an “Avicennizing” reading of Aristotle on this point, taking it as obvious that Aristotle likewise held that light makes color be what it is.<sup>80</sup>

### *What about Light in the Air?*

Between the luminous source and the vase being made actually green, however, there is a body of air (or sometimes water), and in our Latin authors, as we just saw, the illumination of the air plays an important role in explaining how color comes to be actualized. How, then, do they construe light's presence in the intervening air? We saw two theoretical options in the Greco-Arabic sources above: (a) Aristotle's and Averroes' "receiver-disposing" construal of light as a quality in the air which disposes air to be affected by color; (b) Avicenna's reductive construal of light as merely passing through air without changing it.

In Albert, Bonaventure, and the early Aquinas, a third option emerges: Light inheres in air as a quality that makes air "transparent" (*lucidum*). But where a modern reader might automatically construe "transparency" as *colorlessness*, our Latin Scholastic authors seem to have taken the term more in the sense of *brightness*. Indeed, the primary sense of *lucidum* is "bright" or "shining"; it means "transparent" only secondarily by extension. The ambiguity goes back to Aristotle's Greek. In discussing Aristotle's labeling of light as an "act of the diaphanous," Katerina Ierodiakonou notes that the term *diaphanēs* in Greek means not only "transparent," but also "manifest" or "apparent." That, she suggests, explains why Aristotle holds that the more diaphaneity a body has, the more color it has (exactly the opposite of what one might expect).<sup>81</sup> And in the "old" Latin translation of *De anima* by James of Venice—the mid-twelfth-century translation that was mainly responsible for transmitting Aristotelian light-theory to Scholastic thinkers of the 1240s–50s—the ambiguity is perpetuated by translating *diaphanēs* as *lucidum*.<sup>82</sup> Subsequent Latin translations (the Latin-from-Arabic translation included in the Latin translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary*, which was already available by the 1240s, and Moerbeke's *nova translatio* of 1267) more cautiously substituted a transliteration of the Greek, *diaphanum* or *dyafanum*. In Avicenna Latinus, incidentally, the bright (*lucidum*) is equated with the light source and explicitly distinguished from the transparent (*pervium*).<sup>83</sup>

Now, it seems to me that there is a significant theoretical difference between construing light as the "act of the transparent" (the *transparency* of a nature that is of itself only potentially transparent) versus as "the act of the shining" (the *brightness* of a nature that is only potentially bright). If light is actual transparency in the sense of *colorlessness*, then one can make sense of light as a (passive) disposition for receiving color. But if light (*lumen*) is a *brightness* to which Aristotle's "diaphanous nature" is in potency, as Albert explicitly states,<sup>84</sup> then it can be construed as an active power that *causes brightness (and hence actual color) in in other things*.

The latter is precisely the sense, I contend, in which Albert, Bonaventure, and the early Aquinas construe the illumination of air. In air, light is not a disposition making air receptive to color, but precisely the opposite:

it is an active quality that communicates the sun's brightness to potentially colored surfaces. The result, for our Latin authors, is that light is a brightness *wherever it inheres*, though what it means to be "bright" differs in different kinds of bodies. In luminous light-sources, light inheres *per se*, e.g., as the brilliance in the surface of the sun. In nonluminous opaque (determinate) surfaces, it inheres as color. Between the two, light inheres in air as the "brightness" that enables air to mediate the sun's causation on the potentially-colored object. The sun causes the quality of light instantaneously through the entire indeterminate body of air, making air bright. And the air's brightness crystallizes into color at the air-body's determinate "edges," i.e., in the surfaces of vases and trees and cats, and rocks. Illuminated air thus plays an important role in the "color-actualizing" theory of light that our three Latin authors have in common, as the "medium" whereby light-sources actualize colors in our world, and whereby colors act on other receivers. At the same time, air can function as such a medium precisely because its indeterminacy prevents it from being visible in itself. (An assumption that seems to operate in the background is that luminosity must be determinate, i.e., instantiated in some opaque surface, in order to be visible, i.e., exercise agency upon sight. Hence, lacking determinate edges of its own, air can be bright or illuminated without being visible, and hence facilitate the activity of other things on vision.)

Now, this view of light's presence in air thus reflects none of the Greco-Arabic theories that we have seen—neither Aristotle's and Averroes' receiver-disposing view nor Avicenna's reductive view of air as a conduit for light. Interestingly, however, our Latin authors once again take *both* Aristotle and Avicenna to be on their side, holding that light is a quality in air. As evidence, they point to Aristotle's remark (often routed explicitly through Averroes), that light is a "positive state" of bodies (Gk: *hexis*, rendered *habitus* or *dispositio* in Latin). While not unreasonably construing Aristotle's light as a corporeal quality in the air, they apparently take for granted that this quality is active in causing color, rather than passive in disposing for color's action.<sup>85</sup> Avicenna is ranged alongside the view, and even quoted as stating that "light is a quality affecting a diaphanous body." (He makes, of course, no such statement.<sup>86</sup>)

### ***Albert's Criticisms of Averroes: A Development?***

Our Scholastic authors, then, are reproducing a tune that they believe Avicenna and Averroes—not to mention numerous other authorities—are singing with one voice. The one off-key note in this harmonious story is sounded by Averroes' *Long Commentary on the De anima*, which unequivocally insists that light plays *only* a receiver-disposing role in vision because colors already have visibility in the dark independently of light.<sup>87</sup>

The only one of our authors who addresses this divergence is Albert. Indeed, in *De homine* he dispatches Averroes' position so vigorously and

dismissively that it is perhaps no surprise to find no mention of it at all in Bonaventure and the early Aquinas. Incidentally, although Thomas Aquinas does not acknowledge the existence of the receiver-disposing account of light at all in his early works, he must have been aware of it, since his own doctrine of the *lumen gloriae* appears to be modeled on precisely a receiver-disposing notion of light.<sup>88</sup> In the mid-1260s, however, in his *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* 4, ad 4, he has a change of heart, perhaps as the result of having read Averroes' *Long Commentary* more carefully in preparing his own commentary on the *De anima*, and endorses the receiver-disposing view from that point on as the scientifically correct and authentically Aristotelian view of light.<sup>89</sup>

In any case, in the 1240s–50s, only Albert, of our three Parisian thinkers, addresses Averroes' light-theory, focusing on the claim that colors exist independently of light. Against this claim, Albert marshals three very interesting and revealing arguments in *De homine*.

One argument appeals to experience: "When something colored is placed in the light—its own light or one foreign to it—and the intervening air is dark beyond the place of contact [between the object and the air], and the eye is likewise in the dark, the eye nonetheless sees it." For instance, someone standing in a dark cave can see the green grass outside the cave (we saw this example in Avicenna). Albert points out that "in contrast, when the eye and air are in the light, and the colored object is in the dark, the eye does not see it."<sup>90</sup> For instance, when standing in a lamplit room, one cannot see objects in the dark yard outside. While Albert's main goal here is to demonstrate empirically that light's role in vision is to actualize color, these cases seem to be intended also as counterevidence against the receiver-disposing view. If so intended, however, they are successful only in showing that the illumination of air and eye is not *sufficient* for vision. They do not show that it is *unnecessary*, since in the first case, one might plausibly argue that the intervening air is not, in fact, completely dark.

Another argument, targeting Averroes by name, is that a philosophically indefensible construal of the object of sight results from the claim that colors are *per se* visible. No one in their right mind, Albert thinks, could deny that the light inhering in the sun or fire is visible. So if, as Averroes claims, color is *per se* visible apart from light, then the power of sight would have two objects—color and light—in contradiction to the long-held view that the objects of a single cognitive power must be unified under a single formality according to which they are able to affect that power.<sup>91</sup>

A third argument of Albert's, again targeting Averroes by name, is textual, and this argument is perhaps the most interesting of the three. Albert accuses Averroes of misreading Aristotle's remark concerning the nature of color at *De anima* 418a30–b1: "All color is motive [*kinētikos*] of the diaphanous in actuality [*kat' energeian*]."<sup>92</sup> In James of Venice's *vetus translatio* of *De anima*, the phrase is translated into Latin: "*Color motivus est secundum actum lucidi.*"<sup>93</sup> The Latin translation is correct but ambiguous, and Albert

emphasizes the ambiguity. On the one hand, *secundum actum lucidi* might be taken as a complete prepositional phrase modifying the verb *motivus est*, giving the sentence the following sense (which Albert endorses as the correct interpretation): “Color has its power to move in virtue of the act of the diaphanous.” Since Aristotle identifies light as the “act of the diaphanous,” Albert concludes that this sentence expresses a commitment to the color-actualizing theory of light, whereby color has its “being and species” in virtue of light (through contact with the illuminated air).<sup>94</sup> Of course, on this reading, the sentence is left without a direct object: of what is color motive? But Albert is happy to supply one conducive to his interpretation, making Aristotle say that “color is motive *of sight* [*motivum visus*] in virtue of the act of the diaphanous.”<sup>95</sup>

Averroes, however (says Albert), incorrectly divided up and mismatched the modifiers in the sentence. This alternate reading treats *secundum actum* as a technical phrase, designating “actual” as opposed to “potential” possession of a form,<sup>96</sup> and makes it modify *lucidi*, which is, in turn, read as the object of *motivus est*. On this reading, then, the sentence identifies “what is actually diaphanous” as the object of color’s motive power, consistent with the receiver-disposing view: “Color [in and of in itself] is motive of what is actually diaphanous.”<sup>97</sup>

Here in *De homine*, Albert singles out for criticism Averroes’ thesis about *the nature of color*, namely, that color is visible (motive of sight) even in the dark. Albert does not directly address the companion thesis that light disposes the receiver. Perhaps he thinks that light in the air cannot *both* actively induce color *and* dispose the air to receive color’s action.

Interestingly, however, roughly twelve to fifteen years later, in his commentary on the *De anima*, Albert seems to allow for just such a possibility. After laying out arguments from Avicenna, Avempace, and Aristotle’s *De sensu* in support of light’s color-actualizing role and arguments from Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes in support of a receiver-disposing role, Albert concedes cautiously that “as far as we can understand, we ought to judge that both views are true in some respect.”<sup>98</sup> The truth of the color-actualizing view consists in the claim that light adds the formal being of color to the color-matter of bodies (as we saw him argue in *De homine*).<sup>99</sup> With respect to light’s receiver-disposing role, he concedes that “if the medium is totally dark, then color is not seen; indeed, it is necessary that [the medium] be illuminated next to color at least enough for [color] to generate its intention [*intentio*] in the medium.” The reason, he suggests, is that color is a “light bound to matter.” Hence, it can act on air only if air is “disposed” by light “to receive the likeness of color, which is why the illuminated diaphanous is the proper medium for sight.”<sup>100</sup> (Notice that, consistent with the tendency to think of light’s role as “actuality of the diaphanous,” in terms of brightness rather than transparency, the obstacle to the agency of color is formulated in terms of air’s lack of *illumination*.) In contrast, luminous bodies, such as the sun, fire, and stars, have a light that

is not bound to matter (*lumen calcatum et non obligatum materiae*), so they can diffuse their likeness in a darkened medium.

Now Albert seems, here, to be trying to accommodate the receiver-disposing view in such a way as to avoid the difficulty I suggested above, in which illuminated air both actively causes and is passively disposed to one and the same color. Although describing light as “disposing” air to receive color, he conspicuously avoids identifying any obstacle or natural indisposition *in the air* that makes it unreceptive to color. Instead, he places the obstacle in *color itself*. As a matter-bound and weak luminosity, color cannot diffuse its similitude (*intentio*) outside itself unless the receiver is already illuminated.

How Albert thinks air’s illumination helps color diffuse its likeness—and hence how close he really is to Averroes—is unclear. One possibility is that Albert construes the air’s illumination as properly receiver-disposing, in the sense that since color is also a light, the medium’s illumination quasi-quantitatively reducing the dissimilarity that a weakly luminous color must “overcome” in order to induce its likeness in the air (somewhat like boiling some water in a kettle before adding it to a pot, to reduce the amount of heating that the stove must contribute). But there is another more plausible possibility, i.e., that despite the language of disposition, Albert thinks of illuminated air as placing some *active causal* role in color’s diffusing of its likeness. Indeed, a few chapters later, he says that color can only cause sight through a medium by a “formal and spiritual action,” and indicates that light “abstracts” color, giving it intentional being in the medium and ultimately in the eye.<sup>101</sup> The motivating idea, perhaps, is that of distinguishing color as it inheres in a body’s surface from color in sight, where it has “intentional being.” Color in the surface cannot “move sight” because it lacks the power to generate *intentional color*; the illuminated medium (inasmuch as light has an unrestricted character there) somehow provides the necessary causal assistance to “make color move sight.” If this latter reading is the right one, then Albert would be according illuminated air two roles: on the one hand, light *from* the medium mixes with the surface dispositions of the vase, constituting actual green, and, on the other hand, light *remaining in the medium* abstracts this newly constituted color from its material conditions by granting to color the self-diffusive action that is proper to light in its unrestricted state, but that color-light cannot have on its own due to its enmattered condition. Thus Albert is able not only to hold with Avicenna that illuminated air causes green to exist in the vase’s bodily surface in the first place *but also* to hold with Averroes that illuminated air plays a further role in “making color move sight.”

Interestingly, a similar solution attributing color’s impotence to its being a “light bound to body [*lux alligata corpori*],” and more strongly emphasizing the illuminated air’s role in making it active, occurs in an early *De anima* commentary which has been attributed variously to Petrus Hispanus and recently to Richard Rufus (and in the latter case dated to roughly

1236–37). This earlier work considers the same Latin Aristotelian passage that Albert’s *De homine* had found ambiguous: *Color est motivum lucidi secundum actum*, but construes the interpretive options differently: Aristotle means either that an illuminated medium *enables color to act*, or that air must be disposed by light in order to receive the act of color. The commentator endorses the former reading:

The need [for an illuminated medium] is not on the part of the receiving air, but on the part of color. For incorporated light is the cause of color. And because it is a light of this sort, bound to body [*alligata corpori*], color cannot make itself outside itself. And therefore it is not in itself sufficient to move the medium, but needs the presence of light that is not incorporated in this way. And since the light of this sort that makes color move the air cannot be in the colored body itself—otherwise it would be bound and could not free itself—that light must be contiguous with color in the air outside, where it cannot be bound or terminated.<sup>102</sup>

Here there is a clearer resonance with Averroes’ claim that color does not become a *mover* (color<sub>2</sub>, visibility<sub>2</sub>) except in the presence of illuminated air. And more explicitly than Albert, the commentator rejects receiver-disposing language, explicitly granting illuminated air an *active* role in making color move.<sup>103</sup> The notion clearly goes back to Grosseteste, who writes, e.g., “Color is an embodied light [*lux incorporata*], which on account of its embodiment does not move itself toward sight except when light is poured out upon it.”<sup>104</sup>

In this way, it turns out that even though Averroes’ receiver-disposing analysis of light’s role in vision does not “catch on” in the mid-thirteenth-century Latin tradition, Averroes nonetheless does have some influence—tellingly, where his remarks seem to align with an existing view in Grosseteste. We have seen the acknowledgment in at least two sources of Averroes’ distinction between color in itself (color<sub>1</sub>, visibility<sub>1</sub>), and color as *actually* moving air and the eye (color<sub>2</sub>, visibility<sub>2</sub>). And thus light in the air thus comes to take on not only the role of generating color in the first sense (*lux incorporata*) but also the role of making color be a mover in the second sense. Hence light becomes part of a discussion of how forms come to exist in *sensible, intentional, or spiritual being*, i.e., the being that color has in vision.

### ***Procrustean, Misinformed, or Just Oblivious?***

With all this in mind, we can now consider some interesting features of the reception of Greco-Arabic theories of light in our three Latin Parisian authors in the 1240s–50s. All three Latin authors unfold a tripartite hierarchy of brightness. At the top there are the lights *per se* that are the



sun, moon, stars, and fire, then the illumination in the air, and finally the color-luminosity of opaque sublunary bodies. The top rung of luminous bodies (e.g., sun or fire) are preeminent lights, in dependence on which other things have their brightness. A central pillar of their account is the claim that color is a *luminosity or radiance* in things that must be actualized by the sun through the illuminated air as intermediate cause. Light's role in vision, then, is (largely) one of *color-actualizing*.

In developing this tripartite account of the transference of luminosity to colored surfaces by means of an illuminated body of air, our authors professed themselves to be following both Avicenna and Aristotle. This philosophical unanimity was secured by an Avicennizing reading of Aristotle, who becomes a straightforward proponent of light's color-actualizing role (despite a mistranslation that appeared to commit him to the existence of colors in the dark!), and an Aristotelianizing reading of Avicenna, who is said to hold that light exists in the air as a corporeal quality.

Why did they read their sources this way? The case is particularly interesting, I think, because none of the usual explanations offers a fully satisfactory explanation. For instance, it is not unusual for textual ambiguities or translation errors to prevent the innocent reader from detecting an authority's true position. Similarly, it is not unusual for Scholastic authors to exercise Procrustean pressure upon a text to force it into line with another, preferred position. Again, Katja Krause has also identified patterns of "dissociated transformation," in which a concept is detached from its context and reworked in service of a new theoretical goal, often without mentioning the source at all.<sup>105</sup>

In this case, however, none of the usual proposals satisfactorily explain the evidence. On the one hand, the Latin translations in question are, for the most part, not corrupted and ambiguous enough to warrant concluding that they *could not have communicated* the source's true view to Latin readers. On the other hand, there are enough ambiguities and errors in the translated source texts that the case is not a clear-cut instance of deliberate misrepresentation. We saw, for instance, the repeated inversion of *lux* and *lumen* in the Latin Avicenna and the seeming echoes of Aristotle in describing light's effecting of actual translucence, as well as Aristotle's ambiguities about the relationship of color and visibility in Aristotle, exacerbated in crisis-inducing ways by mistranslations.

I contend that the force primarily at work in this case is one that is perhaps more often operative in the transmission of ideas than we usually admit, namely, that of confirmation bias, the ordinary human tendency to notice those details that fit prior expectations and fail to see those that do not. Consider a reader who has a strong attachment to a certain philosophical idea *P* and great respect for the intelligence of the author encountering a set of extremely dense and technical texts. It is not surprising that formulations that seem to support *P*, and hence fulfill the reader's set of expectations, would stand out and that, conversely, more problematic



formulations simply may not appear as disruptive at all, but are automatically read in a way that preserves expectations. One need not suspect readers of deliberately sweeping counterevidence under the carpet.<sup>106</sup> They may well have simply read past the counterevidence, failing to see it at all, much as one still does today when encountering a difficult new text and implicitly interpreting it in light of what is already familiar.

The tripartite hierarchy of luminosity that Albert, Bonaventure, and Aquinas outline could easily have generated precisely such a blindingly strong attachment. The hierarchy of cascading participants in a first, *per se* cause is one that is compellingly familiar from all sorts of other metaphysical contexts. And there was already circulating a strong precedent for just such a tripartite hierarchy. Hasse has pointed out that earlier Latin theories of extromissive sight had deployed a similar threefold division with similar names before the psychology of Avicenna, Aristotle, and Averroes was introduced to Latin European thinkers:

There already existed an indigenous tradition of differentiating between the entities involved in vision, the theory of the *tria necessaria*: Calcidius, Macrobius, William of Conches, the Sigtuna commentary on the *Timaeus* and other writers discuss the necessary conditions for vision, usually naming interior light, an illuminated medium and an illuminated object. This discussion, based on the theory of extramission, already operated with the terms *lux*, *lumen* and *splendor*.<sup>107</sup>

What Albert, Bonaventure, and the early Aquinas sketch, then, is precisely the correlate to that older tripartite extromissive hierarchy—but for an *intromissive* theory of sight. In an intromissive account, it is crucial for color to be radiant—a kind of luminosity in its own right—so that it can serve as an active principle of sight. Strengthening this impulse, prior to the 1240s, there was already a strong Latin Scholastic tradition of viewing color as a kind of light. In formulations that were already used as maxims by our Parisian authors, Nicolaus Peripateticus described light as the “hypostasis of color,”<sup>108</sup> and Robert Grosseteste described color as “embodied light.”<sup>109</sup> Indeed, although Grosseteste is, of course, not cited by name, his influence is pervasive on our authors, and clearly provided some of the interpretive framework that made this account so compelling.<sup>110</sup>

Internally, too, this tripartite hierarchy of luminosity is extremely compelling. Once one holds (a) that color is an active radiance (as an intromissive theory demands) and that (b) colors do not exist in the dark, then one is committed to holding that the existence of color depends on something that is *per se* visible: the “luminous lights” that are the sun, stars, and fire. And since none of our authors subscribe to a theory of action at a distance, it would be natural to suppose that luminosity cannot be induced in potentially colored surfaces, unless it is first present in the body of air between.

My suggestion is that the strange interpretive patterns in our Latin Scholastic authors illustrate the ways in which confirmation bias can shape the transmission of philosophical ideas (perhaps, in this case, largely originating in Albert's irenicizing, eclectic tendencies). On the assumption that Aristotle and Avicenna are trustworthy authorities, it would have been easy for a reader to fit their remarks unconsciously to a framework that already carried its own extrinsic plausibility. The account has such strong precedents, and such internal cohesion, that one might easily leap to the conclusion that any serious defender of intromission, especially one who explicitly defends *some parts* of the account, holds the *entire* account. This expectation, which could almost acquire support from ambiguous formulations in both Avicenna and Aristotle, leads both sources to be read quite innocently in the 1240s–50s as defenders of the entire account.

There is a further methodological lesson to be learned from this episode: namely, the extreme variable potential within even the most straightforward formulations as they become maxims passed on from thinker to thinker. As we saw, even a claim as simple as “light makes colors visible” turns out to be fundamentally ambiguous on multiple levels, open to theory-altering differences in construing “making,” “color,” and “visibility.” In general, I would suggest interrogating medieval theories of light's color-actualizing as follows, in order to avoid being led astray by potential ambiguities:

- *Terminology of “color,” “visibile,” “movens visum”*: Is the term “color” used exclusively for color-as-empowered-to-move-sight, or could it also refer to the material properties of an unilluminated body, or both? Similarly, do “visibility” and “sight-moving” refer to the possession of an active power or to the actual exercise of that power?
- *Ontology of light*: Is light in the sun, in illuminated air, and in color, all in the same way? That is, do they have the same “being of light,” belonging to univocally the same genus, or are the illuminated air and color merely lesser participations in the sun's preeminent light?
- *The mechanics of color-actualizing*: Does light “mix with,” “inform,” or extrinsically cause color-luminosity in an opaque body's surface?
- *The contribution(s) of light to vision*: Is light's role in actualizing color sufficient for color to exercise agency on the eye? As we saw, Albert seems to have thought that the illuminated air plays two roles: one actualizing color, and another enabling actualized color to exercise agency on the eye.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, the newly translated Avicennian and Aristotelian traditions of natural philosophy offered Latin readers two main ways of accounting for light's necessity in vision, either as the actualizer of color (which

instantly moves the air once actualized) or as the disposition enabling for air and the eye to be affected by actual color. It is the *color-actualizing theory* that carries the field in the Scholastic thinkers we surveyed during the 1240s–50s, while the receiver–disposing view is treated as an Averroist idiosyncrasy scarcely worth mentioning.<sup>111</sup>

Interestingly, this color-actualizing role of light has a strongly meta-physical cast. In discussing it, the authors we examined stress the *transference of the corporeal form of luminosity* from one body to another, rather than the optical imagery of *rays traveling and reflecting*. Luminosity is an active quality whereby one body acts on a neighboring body, rendering it bright in whatever mode the recipient body can naturally be bright: the dazzling sun instantaneously illuminating the whole air, and the illuminated air instantaneously generating color at its opaque boundaries. And thus color, too, as a kind of diminished luminosity or “embodied light,” has an active role in causing sight.

This account gives us a provocative picture of visibility, which is here not a disposition in the object to be related to sight, but rather an active causal power that the object exercises on the eye. To be visible is to be luminous, to press in upon sight. Indeed, luminosity is teleologically coordinated with the eye: it is a luminosity *for* causing sight. Perhaps the active character of the visible, together with light’s active role in generating visibility, must be kept in mind in interpreting cases in which light-language is applied to intellectual cognition, and should make us reconsider what it means to be “intelligible” and how objects get intelligibility.<sup>112</sup>

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## Notes

- 1 The main scholarly works in this area are more focused on optics (the behavior of light) than the nature and causal role of light. See Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*; Tachau, *Vision and Certitude*; and most recently, Smith, *From Sight to Light*.
- 2 A remarkably comprehensive list can be gleaned from the array of arguments that Albert considers in the article titled “De visu ex parte obiecti et medii,” in Albertus Magnus, *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 153–63.
- 3 Aristotle, *De anima* 2. 7, 418b9–12, trans. Shields, 36; I have changed the English “transparent” to “diaphanous” throughout.
- 4 Aristotle, *De anima* 2. 7, 418a5–9, trans. Shields, 35–36: “Of this sort [i.e., diaphanous] are air, water, and many solids; these are not diaphanous insofar as they are air or water, but because there is an indwelling nature which is the same in them both, as well as in the everlasting body above”; and *De*

- sensu 5, 439a21–24, trans. Beare, 1:697: “But what we call diaphanous is not something peculiar to air, or water, or any other of the bodies usually called diaphanous, but is a common nature and power, capable of no separate existence of its own, but residing in these, and subsisting likewise in all other bodies in a greater or less degree.” For illuminating discussions of Aristotle’s diaphanous, see Ierodiakonou, “Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias”; Vasiliu, *Du diaphane*; Kalderon, *Form without Matter*, 40–60.
- 5 Darkness is a privation rather than a contrary quality. See *De anima* 2. 7, 418b18–20; *De sensu et sensato* 3, 439a19; and Polansky, *Aristotle’s De anima*, 271.
  - 6 See *De anima* 2. 7, 418b14–20, trans. Shields, 36.
  - 7 For the latter view, see Ierodiakonou, “Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias.”
  - 8 Sorabji, “Aristotle on Color, Light, and Imperceptibles,” 132; see also Kalderon, *Form without Matter*, 52–56. Kalderon, “Aristotle on Transparency,” equates brightness and transparency as a disposition of air that enables color to act on sight “through” it (but not such that anything new is received in the air when it is illuminated).
  - 9 *De anima* 2. 7, 418b1, trans. Shields, 35.
  - 10 *Ibid.*, 418b1–2, trans. Shields, 35. For an example, see Sorabji, “Aristotle on Color, Light, and Imperceptibles,” 129.
  - 11 The answer is not obvious to contemporary Aristotle scholars either. The case for reading Aristotle as a color-realist seems to me persuasive. See Silverman, “Color and Color-Perception”; Kalderon, *Form without Matter*, 74–91; Polansky, *Aristotle’s De anima*, 263–84; and the treatment of color-agency in Bynum, “A New Look,” 165–68. For a contrasting view of color in Aristotle as merely phenomenological (existing only in the seeing eye), see Modrak, *Aristotle*, 58.
  - 12 *De anima* 3. 5, 430a16–19, trans. Shields, 61.
  - 13 In fact, Miles Burnyeat appeals to this passage to show that, for Aristotle, light is “the condition for the colour itself to be present in actuality.” Burnyeat, “How Much Happens,” 424.
  - 14 *De anima* 2. 7, 418b1, trans. Shields, 35.
  - 15 *Ibid.*; I have inserted [a]/[b] for clarity. Some other Aristotle scholars alternatively read the sentence as asserting simply that *color* is on the surface of everything that is *per se* visible (e.g., trans. Smith, 567; trans. Hicks, 77)—a claim which, however, is still not equivalent to the claim that *color* is *per se* visible.
  - 16 *De anima* 2. 7, 418b1–2.
  - 17 Lemma of 418b28–30 in Averroes, *Commentarium magnum* (hereafter *LCDA*) 2. 66, ed. Crawford, 229: “Quoniam visibile est color, et hoc est visibile per se. Et est dicere per se non secundum intentionem, sed in eo invenitur causa in hoc quod est visibile.” Today, the text exists only in its Latin translation.
  - 18 *Iacobus Veneticus translator Aristotelis, De anima*, ed. Decorte, 418b28–20: “Visibile enim est color. Hoc autem est secundum se visibilium; secundum se ipsum autem non ratione, sed quoniam in se ipso habet causam esse visibile.” Moerbeke’s *nova translatio* revision of the text recovers the missing preposition, but not really in such a way as to make things clearer: “Visibile enim est color, hoc autem est in eo quod secundum se visibile; secundum se autem non ratione, set quoniam in se ipso habet causam essendi uisibile.” William of Moerbeke, *De anima*, ed. Gauthier, 114.
  - 19 See Shields, “Commentary,” 230. If one agreed with Averroes that Aristotle’s colors are already visible in the dark, then one might think *horaton* denotes actual vision-causing, in order to account for statements such as

- “nothing is visible without light.” On the other side, Silverman, “Color and Color-Perception,” 272–73, argues that *horaton* is something that objects must be independently of vision, in order for Aristotle to avoid a circular definition of sensible and sense; see also Kalderon, *Form without Matter*, 85.
- 20 *De anima* 2. 7, 418a28–b3, 419a7–10, trans. Shields, 35–36. See Kelsey, “Color, Transparency, and Light,” arguing that this must be taken in the sense of actual moving.
- 21 *De sensu* 3, 439a26–27, trans. Beare, 1:697.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 439b12–13, trans. Beare, 1:698.
- 23 I here follow the suggestion of Polansky, *Aristotle’s De anima*, 266, that Aristotle’s accounts of color in *De anima* and *De sensu* are not incompatible, but should be combined for a complete account.
- 24 *De sensu* 3, 439b15–16, trans. Beare, 1:698, and see 439a19, 1:697. The view is that the privation of such element causes blackness in its subject; its presence without privation causes whiteness, and the mixing of whiteness and blackness produces all the intermediate colors. For an extensive treatment of the generation of hues in Aristotle, see Kalderon, *Form without Matter*, 109–36.
- 25 In support of which one might argue that *B*’s causal powers should derive from what *B* is in itself, not depend on extrinsic factors such as whether *B* happens to be located at a surface or not. But Aristotle’s medieval readers were too impressed by his association of color and surface in *De sensu* 3 to take this option seriously.
- 26 Averroes, *LCDA* 2. 67, ed. Crawford, 231.14–17, as part of a set of alternatives, describing the one that Averroes thinks is correct: “Ipse opinatur quod colores existunt in obscuro in actu, et si lux sit necessaria in videndo colorem, non est nisi secundum quod facit diaffonum in potentia diaffonum in actu.”
- 27 Not Option 1, since Averroes also stresses in *LCDA* 2. 67, ed. Crawford, 234, that color is “ultimum diaffoni terminati,” i.e., the surface of a determinate body’s diaphaneity.
- 28 In other words, all and only visible things are colored, and the causal dependence runs from color to visibility, i.e., a tree is not colored in virtue of being visible, but rather visible in virtue of being colored.
- 29 *LCDA* 2. 67, ed. Crawford, 232.68–233.92: “Et est manifestum quod, quando conservaverimus quod dicit Aristoteles in principio istius sermonis (et posuit ipsum positione quasi manifesta per se), tunc necesse erit ut lux non sit necessaria in essendo colores moventes diaffonum nisi secundum quod dat diaffono formam aliquam qua recipit motum a colore, scilicet illuminationem. Aristoteles enim posuit principium quod color est visibilis per se, et quod simile est dicere colorem visibilem et hominem risibilem, scilicet de genere propositionis essentialis in qua subiectum est causa predicati, non predicatum causa subiecti ut cum dicitur: homo est rationalis. Et hoc intendebat cum dixit: *sed secundum quod in eo invenitur causa in hoc quod est visibile, secundum quod exposuimus. Et hoc concesso, manifestum est quod impossibile est dicere quod lux est illud quod largitur colori habitum et formam qua fit visibilis. Quoniam, si ita esset, tunc comparatio visionis ad colorem esset accidentalis et secunda, non prima, scilicet mediante isto habitu. Visio enim manifestum est quod est aliquid posterius visibili, et quod proportio eius ad colorem non est sicut proportio rationalis ad hominem. Manifestum est igitur quod proportio eius est sicut proportio risibilis ad hominem; et sic color, secundum quod est color, est visibilis non mediante alia forma sibi contingente.” For the English translation of *LCDA*, I rely on Richard Taylor’s translation, *Long Commentary*, 182–83, with some modifications of my own.*

- 30 LCDA 2. 67, ed. Crawford, 233.92–234.117 (original emphasis): “Et cum ita sit, lux non est necessaria in essendo colorem moventem in actu, nisi secundum quod dat subiecto sibi proprio receptionem motus a se. Et Aristoteles videtur quod non posuit hoc quod posuit nisi intendendo dissolutionem istius questionis. Et secundum hoc intelligendus est sermo eius quod colores movent visum in obscuro in potentia; lux enim est illud quod facit eos motivos in actu; unde assimilatur lucem intelligentie agenti, et colores universalibus. Quod enim inducitur secundum exemplum et large non est simile ei quod inducitur secundum demonstrationem; de exemplo autem non intenditur nisi manifestatio, non verificatio. Et non potest aliquis dicere quod color non invenitur in actu nisi luce presente. Color enim est ultimum diaffoni terminati; lux autem non est ultimum diaffoni terminati, et ideo necessaria non est in essendo colorem, sed in essendo visibilem, ut determinavimus. Revertamur igitur et dicamus quod, cum declaravit quod color, secundum quo est visibilis, movet diaffonum in actu, et quod ista est natura eius propter hoc quod est visibilis per se, et quod impossibile est ut visio sit sine luce, reversus est ad narrandum illud quod considerandum est de istis rebus prius. Et dixit: *sed necessarium est ut unusquisque color*, etc. Idest, sed quia unusquisque color non est visibilis nisi in luce, dicendum est prius de luce; lux enim est unum eorum quibus completur visio.”
- 31 LCDA 3. 36, ed. Crawford, 488.248; Taylor, *Long Commentary*, 389: “color non est visibilis nisi per solem.”
- 32 LCDA 3. 18, ed. Crawford, 439.66–68; Taylor, *Long Commentary*, 351: “Quemadmodum enim visus non movetur a coloribus nisi quando fuerint in actu, quod non completur nisi luce presente, cum ipsa sit extrahens eos de potentia in actum.” See also LCDA 3. 5 (Crawford, 401.402–8): “Quemadmodum enim subiectum visus movens ipsum, quod est color, non movet ipsum nisi quando per presentiam lucis efficitur color in actu postquam erat in potentia, ita intentiones ymagine non movent intellectum materiale nisi quando efficiuntur intellectu in actu postquam erant in potentia.”
- 33 LCDA 3. 36, ed. Crawford, 499.565–66: “Et simile huic est diaffonum, quod recipit colorem et lucem insimul; et lux est efficiens colorum.”
- 34 LCDA 2. 67, ed. Crawford, 233.98–234.105: “Lux enim est illud quod facit eos motivos in actu; unde assimilatur lucem intelligentie agenti et colores universalibus. Quod enim inducitur secundum exemplum et large non est simile ei quod inducitur secundum demonstrationem; de exemplo autem non intenditur nisi manifestatio, non verificatio. Et non potest aliquis dicere quod color non invenitur in actu nisi luce presente.”
- 35 Since we are concerned here with the Avicenna that was read in Latin translation in the thirteenth century (the so-called “Avicenna Latinus”), I here present the doctrine of light and color as it stands in the Latin translation of the *Kitāb al-Nafs*, i.e., the *Liber de anima seu sextus De naturalibus*, ed. Van Riet (hereafter *LdA*). The view is nicely summarized in *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:194.49–59: “Iam ergo cognovimus dispositionem lucis et dispositionem luminis et dispositionem coloris et dispositionem translucens. Lux enim est qualitas quae ex sua essentia est perfectio translucens secundum quod est translucens, et est etiam aliqua qualitas in eo quod est visibile ex sua essentia et non per aliud, et sine dubio visibile ex sua essentia prohibet videri id quod est post ipsum. Lumen vero est qualitas quam mutuat corpus non translucens a lucido, et translucens efficitur per eam translucens in effectum. Color autem est qualitas quae perficitur ex luce, et solet ponere corpus prohibens affectionem lucentis ab eo inter quod et luens fuerit ipsum medium. Ergo corpora sunt lucida et colorata et pervia.” The Arabic text is published in Avicenna, *Avicenna’s De anima*, ed. Rahman. For studies of Avicenna

on physical light, see Gätje, “Zur Farbenlehre”; Hasse, *Avicenna’s De anima*, 107–27, which addresses also the Latin medieval reception of this doctrine; and McGinnis, “New Light on Avicenna.” A useful treatment of an earlier Islamic attempt to deal with Greek light and color theories appears in Adamson, “Vision, Light and Color,” esp. 225–36. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, 49, misleadingly characterizes Avicenna as subscribing to an Aristotelian view, which is also ambiguously characterized: it is true in the most general sense that both thinkers hold that color acts on the eye through the medium (they are both intromissivists), but it is not at all clear that they agree in other respects.

- 36 McGinnis, “New Light on Avicenna,” 45–46.
- 37 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:170.11–13: “[Lux] est qualitas quam apprehendit visus in sole et igne, ita ut non discernatur esse albedo vel nigredo vel rubor aut aliquis aliorum”; 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:194.52–53: “[Lux] est aliqua qualitas in eo quod est visibile ex sua essentia et non per aliud”; 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:171.23–24: “Hoc autem quod vocamus lucem, sicut id quod habet sol et luna, est id quod videtur per seipsum.”
- 38 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:170–71.13–15: “[Lumen] est id quod resplendet ex his, scilicet splendor qui videtur cadere super corpora et detegitur in eis albedo aut nigredo aut viriditas.” In 3. 2 (1.177–83), he extensively refutes the view that radiant light consists in a stream of minuscule particles detached from luminous bodies and traveling through the air; Van Riet suggests that he has Democritus in mind.
- 39 Hasse, *Avicenna’s De anima*, 114–19, tracing the mistake to “a story of misleading translations, of a partially corrupt textual transmission, of careless citation, and of the readers’ tendency to conflate Aristotle or Grosseteste with Avicenna” (117). I would add that the usage patterns of *lux* and *lumen* throughout *LdA* 3. 2–4 strongly (though not without exception) associate *lux* with opaque bodies—whether these are innately luminous, such as the sun, or merely colored—and *lumen* with “the transparent.” So it would be interesting to investigate whether the mistaken interpretation may have preceded the translation, causing the translators to attempt (incorrectly) to regularize the terminology in service of that interpretation. Note that Hasse is here overturning an earlier interpretation (e.g., Lindberg’s) on which Avicenna accepts Aristotle’s theory of light and color.
- 40 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:173.48–174.64: “Nec est [paries] ex seipso lucens, qui est corpus coloratum in potentia; color enim in effectu non accidit nisi ex causa luminis. Lumen enim cum illustrat aliquod corpus, accidit in eo albedo in effectu aut nigredo aut viriditas et cetera huiusmodi; si vero non illustrat, est nigrum tantum fuscum, sed in potentia est coloratum, si voluerimus dicere colorem in effectu hoc quod est albedo aut nigredo aut rubor aut pallor aut his similis. Non putes autem quod albedo quae non est hoc modo ut eam videamus aut rubedo aut cetera huiusmodi, habeat esse in corporibus in effectu, unde cum aer obscurus prohibet nos a videndo, ipse aer non est obscuratus: non est enim obscuratum nisi quod erat illuminatum; aer autem quamvis non est in eo aliquid lucidum, tamen non prohibet apprehendi luminatum nec obtegat colorem qui est in effectu in aliquo.” The last sentence is a rejection of Aristotle’s receiver-disposing role for light (see above). See also 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:175.86–176.89: “Si autem homo appellat colores aptitudines diversas quae sunt in corporibus quae, cum illuminantur, una earum est albedo et alia rubedo, hoc potest esse, sed fiet propter aequivocationem nominis: albedo etenim certissime non est nisi cuius est proprium videri.”



- 41 *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:188.61–66, and 3. 4, against identifying light with the color white.
- 42 *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:188.66–189.73.: “Si autem lux non fuerit solummodo albedo, sed omnis color, tunc aliquid quod est lux erit contrarium alii quod est lux; sed luci non est opposita nisi tenebra; ergo illud est impossibile. Item intentio qua nigrum est lucidum, est praeter nigredinem eius sine dubio, et ob hoc etiam est praeter albedinem. Color autem, scilicet natura generis eius quod est in nigredine, est nigredo, et color quae sit in albedine, est ipsa albedo, non accidens illi. Ergo color absolutus generalis non est ipsa lux.”
- 43 See *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:186.39–187.46.
- 44 *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:192.26–32: “Dicemus igitur quod lux est pars compositionis huius visibilis quod vocamus colorem et est quiddam quod, cum admixtum fuerit colori qui est in potentia, ex utroque proveniet id quod est color in effectu propter commiscibilitatem; si autem non fuerit haec aptitudo, erit lumen et splendor per se tantum; lux enim est sicut pars eius quod est color et commixtio eius, sicut albedo et nigredo habent commixtiones ex quibus accidunt alii colores medii.”
- 45 *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:194.56–57: “Color autem est qualitas quae perficitur ex luce.”
- 46 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:172.43–173.45: “Et quiddam eorum [corporum, viz. coloratum] est quod eget ut sit ibi aliud quod faciat illud esse alicuius proprietatis, et hoc est coloratum.”
- 47 *LdA* 3. 4, ed. Van Riet, 1:212.23–25: “Ergo colores habent esse, et non est esse eorum ex hoc quod sunt lux, nec lux est apparentia eorum, quamvis id quod sunt in effectu, non sunt sine luce.”
- 48 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:176, quoted in note 40 above.
- 49 See *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:175.78–79.
- 50 *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:194.52–53, quoted in note 37 above.
- 51 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:175.78–79: “Lumen enim visibile est, et id in quo est lumen est visibile.”
- 52 This likeness may, but need not be, of the same “genus” or exist in the same way and under the same conditions as the form in the visible object. See *LdA* 3. 7, ed. Van Riet, 1:262–63: “Modus autem ad quem accedimus, hic est scilicet quod non oportet ut omne imprimens imprimat in aliud similitudinem sui, quia, sicut est possibile imprimere in aliud similitudinem sui, sic etiam est possibile ut non imprimat in aliud similitudinem sui; possibile est autem ut lucens imprimat aeri aliquam impressionem quae non est ex hoc quod formetur forma simili formae lucentis et illuminati, sed ut imprimat aeri tale quid quod non apprehenditur sensu visibili nec ullo aliorum sensuum [and he then goes on to describe at length how the same is true of a mirror]”; and the comparison drawn to intellectual understanding later in 5. 5, ed. Van Riet, 2:128.: “Cum autem accidit animae rationali comparari ad hanc formam nudam mediante luce intelligentiae agentis, contingit in anima ex forma quiddam quod secundum aliquid est sui generis, et secundum aliud non est sui generis, sicut cum lux cadit super colorata, et fit in visu ex illa operatio quae non est similis ei ex omni parte. [. . .] immo sicut operatio quae apparet ex formis sensibilibus, mediante luce, non est ipsae formae sed aliud quod habet comparisonem ad illas, quod fit mediante luce in receptibili recte opposito.”
- 53 *LdA* 3. 7, ed. Van Riet, 1:261.13–18: “[D]icemus ergo quod corpus lucens ex seipso et illuminatum coloratum solet agere in corpus sibi oppositum, cum fuerit receptibile simulacri sicut visus est receptibilis, et fuerit inter ea



corpus quod non habet colorem, actionem quae est forma qualis eius forma, ita ut nihil agat in id quod est medium, quia est non receptibile eo quod est translucens”; and 3.6, ed. Van Riet, 1:246.77–79: “Illuminatum solet reddere formam suam sibi opposito, nisi fuerit inter ea aliquid interpositum quod est coloratum, sed si medium fuerit translucens.” Avicenna occasionally also describes color’s transmission of its likeness as the “dislodging” of the likeness from a colored surface that is “struck” by light; see 3. 7, ed. Van Riet, 1:254.100–9: “Sunt enim quaedam rerum quae non patiuntur nisi offendendo et sunt quaedam quae, cum offenderint, discedit ab eis aliquid quod est necessarium ad hoc ut afficiat eorum affectio. Et hoc est in hoc loco radius, quem necesse est continuari cum forma visibili ad hoc ut habens formam iactet ex sua forma simulacrum in aliud, quod est similitudo eius quod videtur iactare suum simulacrum debile, cum intenditur super illud lux, ita ut inficiat suo colore id quod est illi oppositum et transferat in illud certissime, cum id quod est ei oppositum fuerit receptibile huius.” Compare Albert’s remarks about the abstraction of color by light, discussed later in the present essay.

- 54 *LdA* 3. 7, ed. Van Riet, 1:264.62–66: “Contingit autem videre reverberari a speculo formam et colorem in pariete, tamquam sita sint in pariete, quae non moventur secundum situm videntis nec suet sita aliquo modo in speculo, sed sciuntur venire a speculo ad parietem; quae, etsi videantur in speculo, non tamen videntur sita in eo.”
- 55 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:172.28–32: “[. . .] sed eget ut id quod vocamus lumen prius illustraverit illud ad hoc ut appareat tunc, et hoc lumen erit in eo affectio corporis habentis lucem, cum oppositum fuerit illi et fuerit inter ea corpus quod non solet obtegere affectionem lucidi et receptibilis lumen, sicut aer et aqua, quae adiuvant et non impediunt.”
- 56 *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:192.23–25: “Nos enim, quamvis dicimus quod lux non est manifestatio coloris, non negamus tamen lucem esse causam manifestandi colorem et causam resultandi in alio.”
- 57 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:173.55–57: “Non enim albedo est albedo nec rubedo est rubedo, nisi secundum hoc quod videmus; non autem fit hoc ut videamus, nisi fuerit illustratum.”
- 58 See the text quoted in note 40.
- 59 See McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 106–7, 110, 135 (drawing an analogy between the generation of actual color in the eye, and the generation of intelligibles in the material intellect).
- 60 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:171.24–172.32 and again 176.91–177.2; 3.3, ed. Van Riet, 1:194.56–58.
- 61 *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:192.23–25.
- 62 *LdA* 3. 7, ed. Van Riet, 1:261.13–18: “[D]icemus ergo quod corpus lucens ex seipso et illuminatum coloratum solet agere in corpus sibi oppositum, cum fuerit receptibile simulacri sicut visus est receptibilis, et fuerit inter ea corpus quod non habet colorem, actionem quae est forma qualis eius forma, ita ut nihil agat in id quod est medium, quia est non receptibile eo quod est translucens”; 3. 1 (171.24–172.32): “Corpus enim quod gerit hanc qualitatem [viz., lux], cum fuerit inter ipsum et visum aliquid sicut aer aut aqua, videbitur necessario, ita ut non eget, sicut eget id cui non sufficit ad hoc ut sit esse eius visibile sicut est, esse aerem aut aquam aut similia eorum inter ipsum et visum, sed eget ut id quod vocamus lumen prius illustraverit illud ad hoc ut appareat tunc, et hoc lumen erit in eo affectio corporis habentis lucem, cum oppositum fuerit et fuerit inter ea corpus quod non solet tegere affectionem lucidi et receptibilis lumen [here instead of “et receptibilis lumen,” the Arabic has the equivalent of “in receptibili luminis”], sicut aer et aqua, quae

- adiuvant et non impediunt.” As I understand it, the latter part of the sentence characterizes translucent bodies as “not blocking the shining body’s effect in the opaque body that is receptive to radiant light.”
- 63 *LdA* 3. 3, ed. Van Riet, 1:194.49–59, cited in note 35 above.
- 64 See the discussion in note 39 above.
- 65 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:176.91–177.102: “Pervium autem aliquando est pervium in effectu, aliquando in potentia. Sed ad hoc ut sit in potentia pervium, non est necesse ipsum permutari in se, sed permutari aliud et moveri in aliud, et hoc est commeabile et pervium; ad hoc autem ut sit in effectu, non eget in se aliquo, sed ad existendum commeatorem et perviatorem in effectu. Permutatio vero qua eget pervium in potentia ad hoc ut sit pervium in effectu, est permutatio corporis colorati ad hoc ut illuminetur et ut color eius habeatur in effectu; motus vero est ut corpus lucidum moveatur ad illud sine permutatione illius (iam autem in praemissis cognovisti certitudinem huius). Cum autem acquiritur unum istorum, redditur visibile et fit hoc pervium in effectu propter esse alterius ab ipso.” See also the remark that light “nihil agat in id quod est medium, quia est non receptibile eo quod est translucens,” in 3. 7, note 62 above.
- 66 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:174.60–72: “Cum aer obscurus prohibet nos a videndo, ipse aer non est obscuratus: non est enim obscuratum nisi quod erat illuminatum; aer autem quamvis non est in eo aliquid lucidum, tamen non prohibet apprehendi luminum nec obtegit colorem qui est in effectu in aliquo. [. . .] Ergo obscuritas non est nisi dispositio nihil videndi, scilicet quia qualitates quae sunt in corporibus non translucuntibus nondum sunt illuminatae, sed sunt tenebrosae, in potentia autem visibiles, sed non videntur nec videtur aer.” Avicenna appeals to empirical evidence: Someone in a dark cave (the Latin has instead “deep water,” which renders the example unintelligible, though Albert seems to have understood it nonetheless) cannot see anything that is inside the cave, yet she can see colored objects in the illuminated air outside the cave. If her inability to see objects in the cave were due to the obscuring quality of “darkness” clogging up the air inside the cave, then that darkness should also block her from seeing objects in the illuminated air outside the cave. Albert refers to this case in *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 158.5–19.
- 67 The works discussed here, in chronological order, are: Albert’s *De homine* (1241–42, also known as Part II of the *Summa de creaturis*), where he comprehensively reviews every theory of light that was known to him and attempts to synthesize all the intromissive theories into a single account; Albert’s *Sentences* commentary (1243–49); Bonaventure’s *Sentences* commentary (written 1250–52 and revised 1254–57); Aquinas’ *Sentences* commentary (1252–56); and Albert’s *De anima* commentary (written between 1254 and 1257). Remarkably little has been written about their theories of light, color, and visibility (scholarly interest has tended to focus on Grosseteste; see below), but see Hedwig, *Sphaera lucis*; Panti, “I sensi nella luce dell’anima.” For very thorough considerations of Aquinas’ use of light imagery throughout his corpus, see Whidden, *Christ the Light*, focusing on Aquinas’ revised doctrine after the mid-1260s; Kieninger, *Das Sein als Licht*, which unfortunately does not attend to the mid-1260s doctrinal development (see 32); and LaZella, “As Light Belongs to Air.” See also Long and Noone, “Fishacre and Rufus.”
- 68 See Albertus, *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 160.41–44: “Unde et ille habitus [viz., lumen] communis est organo et medio et obiecto visus; oculus enim habet aliquod lumen innatum, et lumen est actus diaphani, ut dicit Philosophus, et actus coloris, per quem movet visum”; Aquinas, *Sent.* 2. 13. 1. 3, ad 10, ed. Mandonnet, 2:337: “[S]icut dicit Dionysius, lumen

solis recipitur in diversis corporibus diversimode secundum diversam capacitatem eorum; et ideo aliqua sunt quae illuminantur in superficie tantum, ut corpora opaca; aliqua vero sunt quae illuminantur etiam in profundo, sicut diaphana, quae tamen lucem non retinent, quia imperfecte lumen recipiunt, unde oportet quod lumen in eis cesset absente illuminante.”

- 69 *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 161.41–50: “[N]otandum quod duplex est esse coloris, scilicet materiale et formale. Dico autem materiale quod habet in materia in qua est, non quod sit ex materia aliqua. Materia autem eius in qua est, est corpus determinatum, idest non pervium, et hoc esse materiale habet color a qualitatibus primis activis et passivis, scilicet calido, frigido, humido et sicco. Esse autem formale coloris est esse coloris, quo est actui in potentia activa immutandi visum secundum actum, et hoc esse color habet a luce.”
- 70 *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 166.82–167.15: “De secunda vero diffinitione dicendum quod sic intelligitur quod perspicui extremitas’ dicitur ultimum perspicui tangens rem coloratam, et in actu luminis immiscens se sua superficiei, et per hoc conferens esse formale colori. Et propter hoc, quando dicitur quod ‘color est extremitas perspicui,’ non intelligitur de quocumque perspicuo, sed de perspicuo, quod est secundum actum per lumen, quod est in ipso; nec intelligitur de quacumque parte perspicui, sed de illa parte, quae immiscet se superficiei rei coloratae. Et hoc est quod adiungit: ‘perspicui extremitas in corpore determinato,’ innuens quod lumen perspicui immixtum debet esse colori existenti in superficie corporis determinati. Color enim semper est in superficie, et ideo Pythagorici vocaverunt eum epiphanem, hoc est superapparentem. Nec etiam intelligitur diffinitio de quocumque esse coloris, sed de illo esse secundum quod color alterat sensum, non secundum quod alterat corpora.”
- 71 *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 166.43–52: “Dicamus igitur quod est considerare colorem secundum relationem ad primas qualitates, quae causant ipsum in corpore determinato. Et hoc est esse ipsius quod habet in materia, hoc est in corpore determinato; et sic color bene est in tenebris, et sic non diffinitur in aliqua dictarum diffinitionum, quia sic non infert passionem in potentia visiva. Est etiam considerare colorem secundum relationem ad agens illud quod dat ei esse formale, quo possit immutare visum et medium visus. Et sic color habet esse in lumine et non in tenebris, et sic diffinitur in supra dictis diffinitionibus.”
- 72 Bonaventure, *Sent.* 2. 13. 2. 2, ad 1, ed. Quaracchi, 2:321: “Lux non dicitur esse de compositione coloris tanquam principium *intrinsicum*, sed tanquam principium *effectivum*, cum accidentia simplicia sint; forma autem substantialis bene potest esse principium effectivum accidentis.”
- 73 Bonaventure, *Sent.* 2. 27. 1. 2, ed. Quaracchi, 2:657–58: “Et ideo est tertius modus dicendi, quod quemadmodum, cum dico *lumen* et *colorem illuminatum*, dico aliam et aliam formam, licet una sit ordinata ad aliam, et quodam modo altera compleatur ex alterius praesentia; similiter intelligendum est de gratia et virtute gratuita. Quemadmodum enim ‘color qualitas est corporis determinati,’ quae a praesentia luminis influxi venustatur et completur, ut possit movere visum; sic *virtus*, quae est habitatio potentiae, absque gratia gratum faciente informis est, sicut color sine lumine; sed ea adveniente, ex qua tota anima in se et in suis potentiis decoratur, *formari* et *vivificari* dicuntur habitus virtutum et effici Deo accepti. Et quemadmodum ex lumine infuso et colore non fit unum per *essentiam*, sed per *ordinem*; et iterum, lumen, in quantum illuminat aërem coniunctum corpori terminato, et in quantum colorem reddit luminosum, non est aliud et aliud per *essentiam*, sed *sola comparatione* differens et secundum *esse*; et sicut unum lumen diversos colores ad actum reducere

- sine sui multiplicatione: sic in influenza gratiae et habitu virtutis intelligendum est esse, scilicet quod gratia superveniens cum habitu virtutis, quem *formare* dicitur, non facit *unum per essentiam*, sed ideo format, quia ad *finem suum ordinat*.”
- 74 Aquinas, *Sent.* 2. 26. 1. 4, ed. Mandonnet, 2:677: “Quia cum dicitur, quod ex lumine et colore efficitur unum, aut accipitur lumen quod est de compositione coloris, cum hypostasis coloris sit lux.”
- 75 Aquinas, *Sent.* 1. 17. 1. 1, ed. Mandonnet, 1:394: “Ad cujus explanationem, quidam dixerunt, quod sicut lux dupliciter potest considerari, vel prout est in se, et sic dicitur lux; vel prout est in extremitate diaphani terminati, et sic lux dicitur color (quia hypostasis coloris est lux, et color nihil aliud est quam lux incorporata).”
- 76 Aquinas, *Sent.* 3. 23. 2. 1, ad 1, ed. Mandonnet, 3:719–20: “[S]icut enim substantia est fundamentum et basis omnium aliorum entium, ita fides est fundamentum totius spiritualis aedificii. Et per hunc modum dicitur etiam quod lux est hypostasis coloris, quia in natura lucis omnes colores fundantur.”
- 77 Aquinas, *Sent.* 2. 27. 1. 2, ad 1, ed. Mandonnet, 2:699: “Forma enim specialis quae informat subjectum aliquod, non informatur alia forma ejusdem rationis; sicut color non informatur colore, sed forte luce; unde non potest dici color coloratus, sed forte clarus; et similiter nec albedo colorata. Contingit autem quod illud quod est perfectio unius secundum unam rationem, sit perfectum ab alio secundum rationem aliam; sicut lux perficit colorem, et color perficit superficiem, et superficies corpus, cujus terminus est”; and 3. 24. 1. 1, ed. Mandonnet, 3:762: “Formale in [obieto viso] est lumen, quod facit colorem visibilem actu; materiale vero ipse color, qui est potentia visibilis”; *De veritate* 23. 7, ed. Leonina, 671.190–92: “In obieto visus color est quasi materiale, lux vero quasi formale, quia per eam efficitur color visibilis in actu.”
- 78 See Albertus, *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 166.61–63, glossing Aristotle: “Actus enim lucidi lumen est, et hoc nequaquam diceret esse coloris naturam, nisi aliquo modo daret ei esse et speciem.”
- 79 Bonaventure, *Sent.* 2. 27. 1. 2, ed. Quaracchi, 2:657–58, cited in note 73 above.
- 80 At the beginning of his treatment of the nature of color in *De homine*, Albert cites three definitions which he first problematizes individually and then harmonizes so that they amount to the same thing: Aristotle’s *De anima* 2 claim that “Color est motivum secundum actum lucidi, et hoc est ipsius natura,” his *De sensu* 3 claim that “Color utique erit perspicui extremitas in determinato corpore, et ipsorum perspicuorum,” and Avicenna’s *Liber de anima* 3 claim that “Color est qualitas, quae perficitur ex luce” (ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 164.75–165.6).
- 81 See Ierodiakonou, “Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias” (I am grateful to her for sharing a preprint version); she points particularly to *De sensu* 439b14–18 and 442a25–26.
- 82 See note 93 below.
- 83 *LdA* 3. 1, ed. Van Riet, 1:176.91–99, and 3.2, 1:178.22–23.
- 84 Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 2. 3. 8, ed. Stroick, 110.30–34: “Dicimus igitur, quod id quod est *lucidum*, est *aliquid*; corpus enim est et corpus transparentis sive pervium, quod Graeci diaphanum vocant; et hoc *diaphanum est visibile*, quando est actu lucidum. Videmus enim lumen non secundum se, sed in aliquo subiecto, et hoc est diaphanum; diaphanum enim *secundum se non est visibile*, eo quod nullum habeat colorem; et quia nullum habet, ideo omnes potest recipere, et sic medium potest esse in visu.” See also Aquinas, *Sent.* 2. 13. 1. 3, ad 9, ed. Mandonnet 2:336: “[S]uccessio quae est in alteratione aliarum

- qualitatum, contingit ex hoc quod in patiente est qualitas contraria, quae resistit actioni alterantis, quam oportet successive expelli. Sed cum lux non habeat contrarium, sicut nec forma substantialis, diaphanum ad praesentiam illuminantis statim lumen recipit”; *De veritate* 8. 6, ed. Leonina, 238.143–46: “Nihil prohibet esse aliquid actu unum et in potentia alterum, sicut corpus diaphanum est actu quidem corpus, sed potentia tantum coloratum.”
- 85 In *De homine*, addressing the question of “whether light, which descends from luminous bodies, is a substance or an accident,” Albert recapitulates five groups of theories, and allies himself with the fifth: “Sunt autem alii iterum dicentes quod lumen sit accidens, innitentes verbo Philosophi, qui dicit in secundo *De anima* capitulo de visu: ‘Lumen neque ignis est neque omnino corpus neque defluxus corporis ullius; esset enim aliquid corpus, et sic aut ignis aut alicuius huiusmodi praesentia in lucido. Neque enim duo corpora possibile est esse in eodem. Videtur autem tenebrae contrarium esse; est autem tenebra privatio huiusmodi habitus ex lucido’. Et super illud dicit Averroes: ‘Ex hoc’ patet quod ‘lux est habitus diaphani,’ et ‘quod colores non acquirunt habitum ex luce.’ Hoc etiam videntur dicere omnes philosophi naturales” (ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 160.2–14). Subsequently, treating the same problem in *Commentarii in II Sententiarum* 2. 13. C. 2, ed. Borgnet, 246, Albert refers the reader with evident pride back to *De homine* (“our treatise on the soul”—see the introduction of *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder), where he had “labored greatly” to find a comprehensive reconciliation for nearly everything that his authorities say about light.
- 86 In Albertus, *De homine* (ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 156.28–29), an argument reads: “Item, Avicenna: ‘Lux est qualitas, quae est perfectio translucens secundum quod est translucens’”; Aquinas, *Sent.* 2. 13. 1. 3, arg 2 s.c., ed. Mandonnet, 2:332: “Item, Avicenna dicit, quod lux est qualitas corporis lucidi inquantum huiusmodi, et quod lumen est qualitas quam mutuatur corpus diaphanum a corpore lucido.” Hasse, *Avicenna’s De anima*, 114–19 (see note 39 above), points out that this is a common error among early Scholastic readers of Avicenna, with the exception of Albert. (In reality, the phrase in Avicenna Latinus is that light is a quality of *opaque bodies*; see the texts in note 37 above. As Hasse argues, Avicenna’s term *nūr* [lumen] refers to the *luminosity of a colored object*, not a quality in the air.) In examining the Albertist texts he cites, however, I am skeptical that Albert can be exonerated from this misinterpreting trend; see *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 160.2–14, where Albert even says that “all natural philosophers” agree with Aristotle and Averroes on the status of light as a corporeal habit of the diaphanous.
- 87 Recall that a mistranslation has Aristotle saying that “color is *per se* visible.”
- 88 See, e.g., Aquinas, *Sent.* 4. 49. 2. 6 and *Summa contra gentiles* 3. 53. I thank Katja Krause for pointing this out.
- 89 See, e.g., Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1a. 79. 3, ad 2, and for extensive presentation of his new position, Whidden, *Christ the Light*, 47–67.
- 90 Albertus, *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 161.57–63: “Et hoc patet ex hoc quod solum coloratum existens vel positum in lumine proprio vel alieno, et aëre medio tenebroso existente (praeterquam in loco contactus), similiter et oculo existente in tenebris, accidit videre. Oculo vero existente in lumine et aëre et colorato in tenebris posito non contingit videre.” See also arg. sed contra 6 in the same article (158.5–10).
- 91 Albertus, *De homine*, ad 13–14, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 168.20–43: “Quod autem obicit Averroes quod ‘color est per se visibile,’ ut dicit Aristoteles, et sic non est visibilis per actum lucidi, dicendum quod hoc non sequitur. Cum enim dicit Aristoteles quod ‘color per se visibile est,’ intelligitur de colore secundum esse suum, quod habet ab illo activo, quod agit in

visum; hoc autem est lumen. Cuius demonstratio est quod si lumen separat-um est ab esse huius visibilis, quod est color, tunc erunt duo visibilia, quae non reducuntur in genus unum; et hoc est contra hoc quod dicit Aristoteles, quod ‘omnis sensus est unius contrarietatis’ praeter tactum, quae contrarietas est in uno genere. Si vero diceretur quod lumen non esset visibile, hoc est contra sensum. Cum enim lumen sit qualitas sive forma rei lucentis, ut dicit Philosophus, patet quod nos illam percipimus in tenebris. Si forte diceretur quod utrumque quidem est visibile, sed unum per alterum, aut ergo lumen videtur per colorem, aut color per lumen. Si primo modo, tunc color erit lumini causa visibilitatis, et sic nullum lucens videbitur nisi sibi adveniat color, qui faciat lumen eius in actu, quod expresse falsum est et contra sensum. Si vero secundo modo, tunc habebitur propositum, scilicet quod lumen est coloris causa visibilitatis, sicut dicunt Avempece et Avicenna et Alfarabius.” (Confusingly, earlier in the same article Albert denies that light is visible [160:39], but there he means the light in air or color.) Presumably, Averroes could circumvent the objection, however, by claiming luminous bodies are visible only in virtue of having a color, as he explicitly states in the case of fire. See Averroes, *LCDA* 2. 74, ed. Crawford, 244.62–64: “Idest, et ignis videtur in obscuro et luce ambobus quia congregatum est in eo utrumque, scilicet quia facit medium diaffonum in actu secundum quod est lucidus, et movet ipsum secundum quod est color in corpore.”

92 Aristotle, *De anima* 2. 7, 418a30–b1.

93 *Iacobus Veneticus translator Aristotelis, De anima*, ed. Decorte.

94 See the discussion in *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 166.54–63, and the parsing of the grammar of *De anima* 418a30–b1 in note 97 below.

95 *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 161.50–52.

96 Equivalent to the technical sense of *kat’ energieian* in Aristotle’s original Greek.

97 See *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 168:1–19: “(12) Ad id quod obicitur de Averroee super librum De anima dicente quod colores simpliciter sunt in tenebris, dicendum quod ipse erravit deceptus per fallaciam divisionis. Haec enim est duplex: ‘Color est motivum secundum actum lucidi,’ ex eo quod haec determinatio ‘secundum actum lucidi’ in toto potest esse determinatio eius quod dico ‘est motivum’; et sic vera est, et sic explanatur ab Avicenna et ab Avempece, et sic concordat cum sequenti verbo, quod dicit: ‘et hoc est ipsius natura,’ et concordat cum diffinitione posita in libro De sensu et sensato, quae est quod ‘color est extremitas perspicui in corpore determinato’. Si autem determinatio dividatur in se, et dividatur etiam a verbo ‘est,’ quod praecedit, ut sit sensus: ‘Color est motivum secundum se et secundum actum lucidi,’ hoc est lucidi existentis secundum actum, ut scilicet hoc ipsum quod dico: ‘secundum actum’ determinatio sit eius quod dico ‘lucidi’ grati participii subintellecti, tunc est falsa. Et in hoc sensu explanatur ab Averroee.” In Albert’s formulation of Averroes’ imagined reading, “Color est motivum secundum se et secundum actum lucidi,” some manuscripts omit the *et*. This omission, I think, better reflects the preceding grammatical parsing. The formulation as it stands in the critical edition lends itself to treating *secundum se* and *secundum actum lucidi* as parallel prepositional phrases modifying the verb, as though identifying two causes of the motivity of color. In reality, Albert’s point is precisely that on Averroes’ reading, (1) *secundum actum lucidi* is not read as a single prepositional phrase modifying the verb—instead, it is “divided” internally so that the shorter phrase *secundum actum* is read as modifying *lucidi*—and (2) the verb is left unmodified, i.e., “divided” from the prepositional phrase. As far as I can tell, Albert additionally inserts *secundum se* to underscore that with the verb having no



modifications, the implied meaning would be that color's motivity is something it has from itself, as Averroes does, in fact hold. All this would be suitably captured by omitting the *et* and punctuating as follows: "Color est motivum (secundum se) secundum actum lucidi [=Color secundum se est motivum lucidi existens secundum actum]." Note that the text of Aristotle's *De anima* in the Arabic-to-Latin translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary* has a different formulation, placing "diaphanous" into the accusative and hence eliminating the ambiguity: "*Omnis color est movens diaffonum in actu*" (lemma at *LCDA* 2. 67, ed. Crawford, 230.1–2). Incidentally, the Moerbeke *nova translatio* of *De anima* (late 1267) is likewise formulated in such a way as to suggest that the actual diaphanous is that of which color is motive: "Omnis enim color motiuus est eius quod secundum actum dyafani" (ed. Gauthier, 123). This divergence significantly affects the sense of the text, but there is no room here to evaluate any of the many reasons why Albert might have cited a different version.

- 98 Albertus, *De anima* 2. 3. 7, ed. Stroick, 109.46–47: "Nos autem quantum intelligere possumus, utrosque secundum aliquam partem verum dicere arbitramur."
- 99 *Ibid.*, ed. Stroick, 109.84–90: "Et ideo quando dicitur, 'color esse motivus visus secundum actum lucidi,' et hoc esse substantiam eius, erit hoc intellectum de eo quod est vera substantia coloris secundum esse formale; et secundum hoc esse non est actu color nisi in lumine, et ideo etiam non videtur nisi in lumine, sicut dictum est."
- 100 *Ibid.*, ed. Stroick, 110.1–18: "Quod autem dicitur de eo quod videtur color medio tenebroso existente, videtur dicendum, quod si medium sit omnino tenebrosum, tunc non videbitur color, sed oportet, quod sit illuminatum iuxta colorem ad minus ad hoc quod generet intentionem suam in medio. Et huius quidem causa est, quia color lumen est ligatum materiae, et ideo movere non potest medium, nisi sit in actu illuminatum, quia per hoc magis ad coloris similitudinem recipendam disponitur, et ideo proprium medium coloris est diaphanum illuminatum; et ideo actus lucidi in visu exigitur propter medium, et color per suam substantiam movet. Per substantiam dico, quae est in eo formalis et essentialis; secundum illam enim non est in tenebris nisi in potentia tantum. Lucentia autem, quae habent lumen calcatum et non obligatum materiae, movent diaphanum tenebrosum, et ideo videntur in tenebra, sicut ignis et stellae et huiusmodi."
- 101 See Albertus, *De anima* 2. 3. 14, ed. Stroick, 119.35–46: "Coloratum secundum tactum non agit in aliquid nisi actone physica, quae est per prinipia materialia ipsius. Color autem non fit in visu per actionem physicam, sed per actionem formalem et spiiualem, sicut diximus superius, et ideo indiget corpore, in quo prius efficiatur spiritualis, antequam in oculo generetur; et haec est necessitas, quare oportet medium esse in sensu visus. Oportet igitur, quod color secundu actum *moveat* primo *lucidum*, quod actu lucidum est, et *hoc* [ . . . ] *movetur* oculus." In response to a worry about colored surfaces' agency on the eye, he adds (69–70), "lux abstrahit colores et facit eos fieri in lucido secundum rectas lineas." Interestingly, light's abstractive role had been mentioned in *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 183.38–184.9.
- 102 Richard Rufus of Cornwall, *Sententia* 2. 6, q. 1, ed. Ottman et al., 353.418–354.433.
- 103 For further discussion, see the introduction to Richard Rufus of Cornwall, *Sententia*, 141–55.
- 104 Robert Grosseteste, *De operationibus solis* 6, in McEvoy, "The Sun as *res* and *signum*," 69.10–11: "Color sit lux incorporata, quae propter incorporationem non movet se ad visum nisi cum lux superfunditur"; citing parallel passages

- in *De colore*, *Commentary on Posterior Analytics*, and *De veritate*. See also Panti, “I sensi nella luce dell’anima”; Panti, “L’incorporazione della luce.”
- 105 Krause, “Transforming Aristotelian Philosophy.”
- 106 When a passage *does* pose an unmistakable challenge to the expected picture—the Aristotelian dictum that “colors are *per se* visible,” ironically a mistranslation—Albert addresses it head on.
- 107 Hasse, *Avicenna’s De anima*, 115; and see Ricklin, “Vue et vision,” esp. 28.
- 108 Wielgus, *Quaestiones Nicolai Peripatetici*, 136.
- 109 Robert Grosseteste, *De colore*, ed. Baur, 78: “Color est lux incorporate perspicuo.” On Grosseteste, see, e.g., Panti, “L’incorporazione della luce” and “I sensi nella luce dell’anima”; Oliver, “Robert Grosseteste,” 155–63. The main interest in the literature, though, lies with Grosseteste’s doctrine of light as “first corporeal form”; see, for instance, McEvoy, “Metaphysics of Light”; Speer, “Lux et prima forma corporalis”; and Speer, “Licht und Raum.”
- 110 Similarities to formulations we have been discussing are abundantly evident in Grosseteste’s *Hexaëmeron*, *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, *De colore*, and *De operationibus solis*. See, e.g., McEvoy, “Sun as *res* and *signum*”; Panti, “L’incorporazione della luce”; and Panti, “I sensi nella luce dell’anima.” Grosseteste’s own relation to Greco-Arabic sources of light-theory needs further study.
- 111 Indeed, what we have seen of Albert’s preference for harmonizing Aristotle with Avicenna and his dismissiveness of Averroes continue to confirm what Hasse (“Early Albertus Magnus,” 249) has observed: that in the 1240s, Albert did not perceive Averroes “as a philosopher of the same rank as Aristotle and Avicenna.” See also De Boer, *Science of the Soul*, 15–18.
- 112 As I have tried to argue in more detail in relation to Aquinas. Cory, “Re-thinking Abstractionism”; Cory, “Knowing as Being?”

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## 9 *Anniyya faqat* Again

Reading *Liber de causis* 8[9]  
with Richard C. Taylor

*Cristina D'Ancona*

In 1979, Richard C. Taylor published a seminal article on Thomas Aquinas as a reader of the *Liber de causis*.<sup>1</sup> He focused on proposition 8[9] of this short theological text,<sup>2</sup> which was erroneously attributed to Aristotle from its production in ninth-century Baghdad until Thomas' discovery of its true origin as an Arabic compilation of lemmata based on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.<sup>3</sup>

In his 1979 article, Taylor convincingly argues that Thomas' argument exceeds the explicit text of the passage,<sup>4</sup> where the enigmatic word *hlyiatim* (or variants),<sup>5</sup> i.e., the Latin transliteration of the Arabic term *ḥilya* left untranslated by Gerard of Cremona,<sup>6</sup> creates a false friend with the Greek *hylē*.<sup>7</sup> As this passage states that everything apart from the First Cause possesses *hlyiatim*, the *Liber de causis* translation *prima facie* endorses universal hylomorphism for its Latin readers, meaning that even the separate substances are endowed with matter, even if only a "spiritual" one (a doctrine that Thomas repeatedly criticizes).<sup>8</sup> In reality, *ḥilya* has nothing to do with matter, and means almost the contrary: form, with special emphasis on the "quality, or the aggregate of the attributes, or qualities," as Lane's Arabic-English lexicon suggests.<sup>9</sup> An analysis of the meaning of *ḥilya* in the *Liber de causis* and of Thomas' commentary on it leads Taylor to conclude:

Nowhere in the Arabic text of the *De causis* is there any indication that the separate substances are composed of matter and form. In fact the author makes it quite clear that the intelligences are eternal beings existing above time, not subject to generation or corruption or motion. Thus, for the author of the *De causis* separate substances are not hylomorphically composed. What then of St. Thomas' interpretation? While St. Thomas was clearly wrong in believing that *hlyiatim* is derived from the Greek ὕλη, he was quite correct in maintaining that in the *De causis* the intelligences do not have matter. St. Thomas here demonstrated the practiced dexterity of a skillful interpreter: he was not deceived by a unique passage which at first reading appears to be totally at odds with the rest of the treatise. He refused to take at face value an ambiguous text which would appear to render the doctrines expressed in the *De causis* contradictory. [ . . . ] [I]t is clear

that he imposed his own teachings on act and potency and existence and essence onto the metaphysics of the *De causis* in his interpretation. However, on the question of the hylomorphic composition of separate substances and, as well, on the question of the nature of the First Cause, St. Thomas correctly perceives that he and the author of the *De causis* are in agreement: there is no hylomorphic composition in separate substances and the First Cause alone is Pure Being and “only Being” (*esse tantum, annīyah faqat*), devoid of limiting form.<sup>10</sup>

As the end of this excerpt shows, Thomas argues that one need not attribute some sort of matter to everything in the cosmos in order to isolate the First Cause in its transcendence, as “Avicbron” (that is, Ibn Gabirol) had done and Bonaventure was doing in Thomas’ time.<sup>11</sup> What makes the First Cause unique, according to Thomas, is that everything other than it is composed of form (*hyliatim*) and being, while it alone is pure Being: *anniyya faqat/esse tantum*. The following contribution, dedicated to Richard C. Taylor, comprises a rereading of proposition 8[9] of the *Liber de causis*, where this doctrine is expounded, adding some new developments to Taylor’s 1979 article.

### ***Anniyya faqat* in Context**

Prop. 8[9] of the *Liber de causis* starts from a thesis introduced in an earlier lemma, namely, prop. 5[6], whose main topic is negative theology.<sup>12</sup> Even though the transcendence of the First Cause prevents any description of it, there is a way to get an indication of its nature: by looking at its first effect, the Intellect. This is stated in the final sentence of prop. 5[6]:

وإنما يُستدلُّ عليها من العلة الثانية وهي العقل. وإنما تسمّى باسم معلولها الأول بنوع أرفع وأفضل، لأنّ الذي للمعلول هو للعلة أيضًا إلا أنّه بنوع أرفع وأفضل وأكرم، كما بيّنا

Et ipsa quidem non significatur nisi ex causa secunda quae est intelligentia et non nominatur per modum causati sui primi nisi per modum altiore et meliorem, quoniam quod est causati est causae iterum, verumtamen per modum sublimiorem et meliorem et nobiliorem, sicut ostendimus.<sup>13</sup>

The First Cause is signified only from a second cause, which is an intelligence and is referred to by the name of its first effect, but only in a higher and better way because the effect has, further, what belongs to the cause, but in a more sublime, better and nobler way, as we have shown.<sup>14</sup>

The main text of this proposition is taken from Proclus’ prop. 123,<sup>15</sup> but the conclusion, the passage quoted above, is distinct from and inconsistent

with Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, specifically the idea that Intellect follows immediately upon the One, to which Proclus would hardly have subscribed.<sup>16</sup> Unknowable in itself, the First Cause can be conceptualized in human minds only by taking into account the nature of the Intellect.

In this context, "Intellect" does not reference a faculty in the human soul, but rather, a separate substance. Intellect, denoted here with a capital "I," is the forerunner of Avicenna's First Intelligence, described in an earlier proposition of the *Liber de causis* as the first and highest of God's creatures.<sup>17</sup> Above eternity, God—the First Cause—creates, first and foremost, a level of reality commensurate with eternity:<sup>18</sup> the Intellect, which coincides with intelligible being in its changeless perfection.<sup>19</sup> To conceptualize any approximation of First, the author of the *Liber de causis* claims that one must look, instead, to Intellect; more precisely, one must look at Intellect's immobile perfection. This echoes both the *Timaeus*, in which soul and time revolve around an unmoved intellectual god, and Book Λ of the *Metaphysics*, in which the divine Intellect exists as eternal self-intellection.

With this in mind, readers of the *Liber de causis* who adopt the *via eminentiae* propounded in the passage above can acquire an idea of that principle which is located beyond even Intellect, in the absolute isolation of its hyper-perfection. Indeed, perfection is the landmark of the intelligible realm. Hence, the principle from which intelligibility arises should be placed even above perfection. This claim points to the status of the One-Good, out of which the intelligible Forms spring, according to the *Liber de causis* as well as in its Neoplatonic sources. Perfection does not delimit the One-Good. Operating as the source of perfection, this principle cannot be said to be "perfect," insofar as it is the logico-ontological cause of the perfection that characterizes intelligible reality, which itself provides the criterion for each participant in Form to instantiate said Form. The One-Good has to be placed beyond, or above, perfection itself. The author of the *Liber de causis* proves to be at ease with this typically Neoplatonic model and states that the unknowable First Cause is "indicated" (*yustadallu, significatur*) through the derivative principle of Intellect, suggesting to the reader that this indication does not entail an adequate description of what the First Cause is in its reality.

The final sentence of prop. 5[6], quoted above, opens a section in the *Liber de causis* that begins to describe the nature and activity of the Intellect. Through the *via eminentiae*, the *Liber de causis* states in the two propositions subsequent to 5[6] that: (i) the Intellect is a simple, self-subsistent, and unchangeable substance;<sup>20</sup> and (ii) every separate intellectual substance knows what is above it and what is below it.<sup>21</sup> Read in the light of the *via eminentiae*, this paves the way for the claim that the First Cause is simple (a feature that rules out any anthropomorphic description of God) and is knowing (a feature that, on the contrary, allows it to reward human

deeds), but *per modum altiozem et sublimiozem* with respect to the simplicity and intellectual activity of the separate substances. As will be seen below, this is stated at the end of prop. 8[9]. To account for the preeminence of God's mode of being and knowing, the *Liber de causis* isolates the First Cause by means of the notion of "pure Being." The First Cause is a simple, separate substance—not, however, like the separate substances that move the heavens, but rather *per modum altiozem et sublimiozem*. It is true that the First Cause knows that which is below it, given that, by definition, it cannot know anything "above" it. But it does not know as other knowing substances know, rather *per modum altiozem et sublimiozem*. The author of the *Liber de causis* then provides the rationale for the *via eminentiae* through a distinction between the absolute purity of the *anniyya* of the First Cause and every other degree of reality. The First Cause alone is purely and solely Being, *anniyya faqat/esse tantum*; everything else is *anniyya* but endowed with a specific *hilya*. This point is made at the conclusion of a passage about the hierarchy of causes and the universal mediation of Intellect, the main topic of prop. 8[9].

Prop. 8[9] is, as Taylor has noted, the only proposition in the *Liber de causis* that does not depend upon any proposition of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.<sup>22</sup> Rather, it is based essentially on the Arabic Plotinus. In a nutshell, it assesses the universal mediation of the Intellect as the first and most excellent offspring of the First Cause. Created without any mediation, the Intellect is the channel which conveys God's causative power to the lower levels of reality. The immediate derivation of the Intellect from the First Cause is expressed in the lemma of prop. 8[9] by the formula that its hypostatic subsistence—*thabāt wa-qiwām, fixio et essentia*—depends only upon the First Cause itself.

كَلَّ عَقْلٌ إِذْمَا ثَبَاتُهُ وَقَوَامُهُ بِالْخَيْرِ الْمُحَضِّ، وَهِيَ الْعَلَّةُ الْأُولَى

Omnis intelligentiae fixio et essentia est per bonitatem puram quae est causa prima.<sup>23</sup>

The persistence and subsistence of every intellect is through the Pure Good, which is the First Cause.<sup>24</sup>

At variance with Intellect, whose subsistence depends only upon the First Cause, the subsistence of every other level of being depends upon the One-Good indirectly, through the mediation of Intellect. The philosophical import of this tenet will not escape anyone familiar with the Neoplatonic doctrine of causality: "to be" means "to be something," that is, to participate in an intelligible Form that allows an individual to be what it is. Thus, if anything is, it participates in one of these Forms that have their seat in the divine Intellect, a doctrine developed from a multisecular

process of exegesis of Plato's dialogues in combination with doctrines from other schools. But to be this kind of cause, a Form requires a principle of unity "above" it: nothing can participate in Form without possessing a unity and self-consistency which is prerequisite for being "this" or "that." Such a prerequisite is, in itself, a property required of every participant thing; no participant thing, in fact, possesses "unity" on its own. A fundamental rule for Platonic causality is that what a thing possesses as a property comes from something that *is* the given property. Hence, unity—the most universal prerequisite for being—comes from that principle that *is* "unity" in and by itself. Expounding upon Platonic causality, generations of thinkers influenced by Plato and his successors combined this notion with ideas from other philosophical allegiances (chiefly Aristotelian, but also Stoic), and eventually postulated the principle that the more universal a property, the higher its cause. Thus, the One must be beyond and above Being, i.e., the intelligible realm. This foundational principle for the causal role of the One resonates even in Arabic adaptations of Proclus and Plotinus. The causality of the One reaches everything that is "one" via the causality of the intelligible Forms, because everything that "is," "is" insofar as it participates in a rational structure which renders it, such that it is what it is. This principle for the causal role of the intelligible realm remains throughout Arabic adaptations of Proclus and Plotinus, in the form of the doctrine of the creation *mediante intelligentia* (*bi-tawassuṭ al-'aql*).

The following passage, which comes immediately after the lemma just quoted, shows how two distinct sources—the Arabic Plotinus and the Arabic Proclus—combine in prop. 8[9] of the *Liber de causis*:

وقوة العقل أشدّ وحدانية من الأشياء الثواني التي بعده لأنها لا تنال معرفته. وإنما صار كذلك لأنه علّة لما تحته والدليل على ذلك ما نحن ذاكرون أنّ العقل مدبّر لجميع الأشياء التي تحته بالقوة الإلهية التي فيه، وبها يمسك الأشياء لأنه بها كان علّة الأشياء. وهو يمسك الأشياء التي تحته ويحيط بها، وذلك أنّ كلّ ما كان أولاً للأشياء وعلّة لها فهو ماسك لتلك الأشياء ومدبّر لها ولا يفوته منها شيء من أجل قوته العالوية. فالعقل إذاً رئيس جميع الأشياء التي تحته وممسكها ومدبّرها، كما أنّ الطبيعة تدبّر الأشياء التي تحتها بقوة النفس، كذلك النفس تدبّر الأشياء التي تحتها بالقوة العقل؛ وكذلك العقل يدبّر الطبيعة بالقوة الإلهية. وإنما صار العقل يمسك الأشياء التي بعده ويدبّر لها وتعلو قوته عليها لأنها قوة عقلية ليست بقوة نفسانية ولا طبيعية لأنها ليست جوهرية له، بل هي قوة القوى الجوهرية لأنه علّة لها بقوة والعقل يحيط بالأكوان والطبيعية وأفق الطبيعة أعني النفس فإنّها فوق الطبيعة

Et virtus quidem intelligentiae est vehementioris unitatis quam res secundae quae sunt post eam, quoniam ipsae non accipiunt cognitionem eius, et non est facta ita nisi quia causa est ei quod est sub ea. Et significatio illius est id cuius rememoramur: intelligentia est regens omnes res quae sunt sub ea per virtutem divinam quae est in ea et per eam retinet res, quoniam per eam est causa rerum, et ipsa retinet omnes res quae



sunt sub ea et comprehendit eas. Quod est quoniam omne quod est primum rebus et causa eis est retinens illas res et regens eas et non evadit ab eo ex ipsis aliquid propter virtutem suam altam. Ergo intelligentia est princeps rerum quae sunt sub ea et retinens eas et regens eas, sicut natura regit res quae sunt sub ea per virtutem intelligentiae, et similiter intelligentia regit naturam per virtutem divinam. Et intelligentia quidem non facta est retinens res quae sunt post eam et regens eas et suspendens virtutem suam super eas nisi quoniam ipsae non sunt virtus substantialis ei, immo ipsa est virtus virtutum substantialium quoniam est causa eis. Et intelligentia quidem comprehendit generata et naturam et horizontem naturae, scilicet animam, nam ipsa est supra naturam.<sup>25</sup>

The power of the intellect has stronger unity than the secondary things which are after it, because they do not attain to its knowledge. This has come to be so only because it is cause of what is below it. The proof of that is what we state: the intellect exercises providence over all the things below it through the divine power which is present in it. And by [that power] it keeps hold on the things because through [that power] it is the cause of the things, and it keeps hold on and contains all the things below it. For everything which is first for the things and a cause of them keeps hold on those things and exercises providence over them and none of them eludes it owing to its exalted power.

The intellect, then, is the ruler of all the things below it, keeping hold on them and exercising providence over them, just as nature exercises providence over the things which are below it through the power of the intellect. And likewise the intellect exercises providence over nature through divine power. The intellect came to keep hold on the things after it and to exercise providence over them and to exalt its power over them only because they are not a substantial power for it, but rather it is the power of substantial powers because it is cause of them.

The intellect contains comings-into-beings and nature and the horizon of nature, namely soul, for it is above nature.<sup>26</sup>

The offspring of the One, namely the Intellect, “rules” the lower levels of being. The three Plotinian principles, One, Intellect, and Soul, a hierarchy of rulers, are included one under the other, with (1) the Intellect acting as the *mudabbir/regens* of all of reality because of the power received directly from the First Cause; (2) the universal soul ruling over nature through power received from the First Cause through Intellect; and (3) nature, ruling over sublunar things with the power received from all the principles above it.

This hierarchy provides a link between the Plotinian triad, as found in *Ennead* 5.1,<sup>27</sup> and Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover, featured in both Book Λ of the *Metaphysics* and in Alexander of Aphrodisias’ cosmological writings.<sup>28</sup> All these texts, translated into Arabic by the circle

of al-Kindī,<sup>29</sup> are adapted so as to propound one and the same view of the cosmos, its origins, and its structure. Comprised under the universal causality of the One-Good—the unique Creator—two further universal principles are at work: the Intellect and the cosmic soul. The fact that in prop. 8[9] of the *Liber de causis*, the cosmic soul is described as the *ufuq/horizon* between the realm of eternal intelligible being and that of changeable beings shows that this passage from the *Liber de causis* depends upon the Arabic Plotinus, where one finds the description of the soul as located “on the boundary” between the intelligible and the visible worlds.<sup>30</sup>

If the ultimate model posits a hierarchy of causes in succession, with the sublunar world ruled by nature, nature by Soul, and Soul by the Intellect (with the Intellect “containing” the entire cosmic system), then the author of the *Liber de causis* must also specify that the Intellect does not act independently:

وذلك أن الطبيعة تحيط بالكون والنفس تحيط بالطبيعة، والعقل يحيط بالنفس، فالعقل إذاً يحيط بجميع الأشياء، وإنما صار العقل كذلك من أجل العلة الأولى التي تعلق الأشياء كلها لأنها علة العقل والنفس والطبيعة وسائر الأشياء

Quod est quia natura continet generationem et anima continet naturam et intelligentia continet animam. Ergo intelligentia continet omnes res, et non est facta intelligentia ita nisi propter causam primam quae supereminet omnibus rebus, quoniam est causa intelligentiae et animae et naturae et reliquis rebus.<sup>31</sup>

For nature contains coming-into-being and soul contains nature and intellect contains soul. The intellect, therefore, contains all things. And the intellect has come to be so only owing to the First Cause which is exalted over all things because It is the cause of intellect, soul, nature and all other things.<sup>32</sup>

The second clause in the Arabic sentence contains a carefully worded caveat. The claim that *al-‘aql yuḥīṭu bi-jamī‘ al-ashyā’* (*intelligentia continet omnes res*) suggests competition between the Intellect and the First Cause, a dangerous claim in the context of both monotheism and arguments searching for the First Cause. Both seem to be appropriately labeled as the universal principle, and the more one stresses that the Intellect is the ruler (*mudabbir*) or the prince (*rā’is*) of the entire cosmos (*ergo intelligentia est princeps rerum quae sunt sub ea et retinens eas et regens eas*), the more one risks incurring a sort of duplication at the peak of the cosmic hierarchy. This risk, deeply rooted in the main project of combining the Unmoved Mover of *Metaphysics* Λ and the Neoplatonic One, is made evident at the beginning of the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*, where “Aristotle” himself, after having claimed to be the author both of the *Metaphysics* and the *Theology*, credits the One with the features of the divine Intellect of Λ, namely, the

Unmoved Mover that, as he says, generates the movement of everything as the object of “longing and desire.”<sup>33</sup> In order to avoid such an unwelcome diarchy, the author of the *Liber de causis* hastens to specify that the Intellect is entitled to perform its universal causality only because of the power received from the transcendent First Cause.<sup>34</sup> Through this caveat, he ensures that only the First Cause inherits the function of the One-Good from the Neoplatonic tradition. As a result, the First Cause is cast as the principle that allows the intelligible Forms to be principles of the visible things. If this analysis is correct, this serves as the philosophical core for creation through Intellect (*mediante intelligentia*):

والعلّة الأولى ليست بعقل ولا نفس ولا طبيعة، بل هي فوق العقل والنفس والطبيعة لأنها مبدعة لجميع الأشياء، إلا أنها مبدعة للعقل بلا توسُّط، ومبدعة للنفس والطبيعة وسائر الأشياء بتوسط العقل. والعلم الإلهي ليس كالعلم العقلي ولا كعلم النفس، بل هو فوق علم العقل وعلم النفس، لأنه مبدع العلوم. والقوة الإلهية فوق كلّ قوة عقلية ونفسانية وطبيعية لأنها علّة لكلّ قوة؛ والعقل ذو حلية لأنه أتية وصورة، وكذلك النفس ذات حلية والطبيعة ذات حلية وليس للعلّة الأولى حلية، لأنها أتية فقط، فإن قال قائل لا بدّ من أن تكون لها حلية، قلنا حليتها لا نهاية لها، وشخصها الخير المحض المفيض على العقل جميع الخيرات، وعلى سائر الأشياء بتوسُّط العقل

Et causa quidem prima non est intelligentia neque anima neque natura, immo est supra intelligentiam et animam et naturam, quoniam est creans omnes res. Verumtamen est creans intelligentiam absque medio et creans animam et naturam et reliquas res mediante intelligentia. Et scientia quidem divina non est sicut scientia intellectibilis neque sicut scientia animalis, immo est supra scientiam intelligentiae et scientiam animae quoniam est creans scientias. Et virtus quidem divina est supra omnem virtutem intellectibilem et animaleam et naturalem quoniam est causa omni virtuti. Et intelligentia est habens yliathim quoniam est esse et forma, et similiter anima est habens yliathim et natura est habens yliathim. Et causae quidem primae non est yliathim quoniam ipsa est esse tantum. Quod si dixerit aliquis: necesse est ut sit ei yliathim, dicemus: yliathim suum est infinitum et individuum suum est bonitas pura, influens super intelligentiam omnes bonitates et super reliquas res mediante intelligentia.<sup>35</sup>

The First Cause [, however,] is not intellect nor soul nor nature, but rather It is above intellect, soul and nature because It is creator of all things. However, It is creator of intellect without mediation and creator of soul, nature and the all other things through the mediation of intellect. [Moreover,] Divine Knowledge is not like intellectual knowledge nor like the knowledge of the soul, but rather it is above the knowledge of intellect and the knowledge of soul because it is creator of all types of knowledge. And Divine Power is above every intellectual, psychic and natural power because It is the cause of every power.

The intellect possesses shape [*ḥilya*] because it is being [*annīyah*] and form [*ṣūrah*], and likewise soul possesses shape and nature possesses shape. But for the First Cause, there is no shape because It is only being [*annīyah faqaṭ*]. Thus, if someone says: it is necessary that It have shape, we say: Its shape is infinite and Its Essential Nature [*shakhṣ*] is the Pure Good which pours forth all goods upon the intellect and upon all other things through the mediation of the intellect.<sup>36</sup>

As a consequence, an ontological gap—one that cannot be bridged—has to be posited between the First Cause and its derivatives, even the highest among them. In order to formulate this unbridgeable gap, the *Liber de causis* relies once again upon a Platonic principle of causality, *auto kath' auto*, which undergirds prop. 8[9]. The First Cause is the *auto kath' auto* of Being; its form (*ḥilya*) and individual nature (*shakhṣ*), which cannot be shared with anything else, consist in its being the sole principle that is not defined by any specific *ḥilya*. A fictive respondent might object to the claim that the First Cause has no *ḥilya*. Prima facie this is absurd: How on earth is it possible that the First Principle lacks a specific nature distinguishing it from the other things? The response to this rhetorical question (*fa-in qāla qā'ilun/quod si dixerit aliquis*) consists in establishing that what makes the First Cause unique is exactly *this*. At variance with all the other things, whose being always consists in a given *ḥilya* and a given *shakhṣ*, the being of the First Cause is the *auto kath' auto* of Being and nothing more. For this reason, it is not-finite (*lā niḥāya lahā*).<sup>37</sup>

The final clause of prop. 8[9] shows that interpreting *anniyya* as “existence,” for example, the way the term is used by Avicenna, does not completely match the initial notion in the *Liber de causis*. What the Intellect is, namely its *anniyya*, expresses itself in terms of its *ḥilya*, namely, its form, which is different from the *ḥilya* of the soul and of the other degrees of being. To this *ḥilya* corresponds a specific kind of science (the *scientia intelligentiae*) and a specific kind of causal power (the *virtus intellectibilis*). The same is true in the case of soul: its *anniyya* expresses itself as a specific *ḥilya*, to which corresponds a specific kind of science (the *scientia animalis*) and a specific kind of power (the *virtus animalis*). All these are *khayrāt/bonitates*. In other words, they are formal perfections whose transcendent cause is not in itself a formal perfection, rather, it is the *auto kath' auto* of the power to be a formal perfection: *al-khayr al-mahd/bonitas pura*.

Within the history of the multifarious transformations of the basic Platonic principle recalled above, there is room for a version in which this function or power is labeled not only as “the One,” but also as “pure Being,” or “Being itself.” It would go beyond the limits of this paper to discuss this topic as it deserves.<sup>38</sup> But one point is particularly relevant to my purposes here: in the *Liber de causis*, “pure Being” is established as being on equal footing with the “pure Good”

and that “good” (and thus “being”) means formal perfection in this context.

To confirm this point, the author of the *Liber de causis* adds that each formal perfection whose transcendent principle is the First Cause is poured forth upon successive levels through the mediation of Intellect. Once again, he follows in the footsteps of Neoplatonic doctrines concerning the causal role of the One, whose power gives rise to the many and operates via the “origination” of the intelligible Forms (irrespective of whether this happens directly, as in Plotinus, or indirectly, as in Proclus). In the Greek and its medieval Arabic adaptations, the Neoplatonic interpretation of Platonic causality entails that the unique, transcendent principle of every formal perfection lies beyond all of them. This is the Plotinian reading of the Good *epekeina ousias* in the *Republic*. By way of consequence, the One–Good is not–limited: what makes it unique (its *shakhṣ/individuum*) is that it is the *auto kath’ auto* of the criterion that rules intelligible causality, a criterion that is not restricted to this or that kind, but allows each and every Form to be the “one” for its participants, namely the principle by virtue of which they are what they are, and their “good,” namely the axiological principle of their different capacities to instantiate the Form.

### ***Anniyya faqaṭ: The Source***

Whereas the *Liber de causis* endorses the Neoplatonic theory of causality faithfully, a substantial modification occurs in its description of the First Cause. As we have just seen, the First Cause of the *Liber de causis* operates exactly like the Neoplatonic One, granting causal power to intelligible principles while at the same time transcending them. However, unlike the Neoplatonic One beyond Being, the First Cause of the *Liber de causis* is described as pure Being. This change does not originate in the *Liber de causis*. On the contrary, the Arabic Plotinus features this evident modification in several passages. The two most evident examples come from one of the three Arabic adaptations of *Enneads* 4–6, specifically the series of extracts attributed to the “Greek Sage” in a cento of Greek and Arabic philosophical doctrines that its editor Elvira Wakelnig entitles *The Philosophy Reader*.<sup>39</sup>

In order to ascertain the literal dependence on Plotinus, the modification imparted to the Plotinian passage, and the close relationship with prop. 8[9] of the *Liber de causis*, let us first read Plotinus. In the treatise, *On the Three Hypostases That Are Principles*, 5.1[10], he accounts for the derivation of the intelligible forms from the First Principle above being and intelligibility as follows:

ταύτη γὰρ πάντα ἐξ ἐκείνου, ὅτι μὴ τι μορφῆ κατείχετο ἐκείνος· μόνον γὰρ ἐν ἐκείνω. (*Enn.* 5.1[10], 7.19–20)

[F]or this is how all things come from him, because he is not confined by any shape; that One is one alone.<sup>40</sup>

The Arabic rendering of this passage is especially interesting on two counts. First, it provides the source for both the topic and terminology of the transcendence of the First Cause with respect to *ḥilya*. Second, it contains an explanation for why the Arabic Neoplatonica typically diverges from its Greek sources, whether Plotinus or Proclus: according to the “Greek Sage,” the First Cause is pure Being. Instead of saying, as Plotinus actually does, that all Forms proceed from the One while the One has no *morphē* whatsoever, a tenet which suggests the transcendence of the One with respect to Being,<sup>41</sup> the Arabic cento claims that the First Creator has no *ḥilya* because it is pure Being, *anniyya faqaṭ*:

وقال إنّ العقل إنّما صار هو الأشياء كلّها لأنّ مبدعه ليس كشيء من الأشياء وإنّما صار المبدع الأول لا يشبه شيئا من الأشياء لأنّ الأشياء كلّها منه ولأنّه لا حلية له ولا صورة له خاصة لازمة وذلك أن المبدع الأول واحد وحده أعني أنّه أنّية فقط ليس لها صفة تليق بها لأنّ الصفات كلّها منبثّة منها

He says that the intellect only became all things, because its creator is not like any of them. The First Creator never comes to resemble any of them, because all things are from Him and because He has neither shape nor form specific and inherent to Him. For the First Creator is One alone, that is, He is only Being [and this being] has no fitting attribute, because all attributes spread from it.<sup>42</sup>

Another excerpt from the “Greek Sage” is even more important for understanding the background of prop. 8[9] of the *Liber de causis*. In the treatise *On the One, or the Good*, 6.6[9], Plotinus says:

Μέγιστον μὲν ἀπάντων οὐ μεγέθει, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει, ὥστε καὶ τὸ ἀμέγεθες δυνάμει ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ μετ’ αὐτὸ ὄντα ταῖς δυνάμεισιν ἀμέριστα καὶ ἀμερῆ οὐ τοῖς ὄγκοις. λεπτόν δὲ καὶ ἄπειρον αὐτὸν οὐ τῷ ἀδιεξιτήτῳ ἢ τοῦ μεγέθους ἢ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀπεριλήπτῳ τῆς δυνάμεως. ὅταν γὰρ αὐτὸν νοήσης οἷον ἢ νοῦν ἢ θεόν, πλέον ἐστί· καὶ αὖ ὅταν αὐτὸν ἐνίσῃς τῇ διανοίᾳ, καὶ ἐνταῦθα πλέον ἐστὶν ἢ ὅσον ἂν αὐτὸν ἐφαντάσθῃς εἰς τὸ ἐνικώτερον τῆς σῆς νοήσεως εἶναι· ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ γὰρ ἐστὶν οὐδενὸς αὐτῷ συμβεβηκότος.

(*Enn.* 6.9[9], 6.7–16)

[F]or it is the greatest of all things, not [F] in size but in power, so that its sizelessness also is a matter of power; since the things after it also are indivisible and undivided in their powers, not in their bulks. And it must be understood as infinite not because its size

and number cannot be measured or counted but because its power cannot be comprehended. For when you think of him as Intellect or God, he is more; and when you unify him in your thought, here also the degree of unity by which he transcends your thought is more than you imagined to be; for he is by himself without any incidental attributes.

(Trans. Armstrong)<sup>43</sup>

This passage features in the Arabic *Philosophy Reader* as follows:

ويقول إنّه واحد عظيم أعظم الأشياء لا بالجثة لكن بالقوة وكذلك إذا قلنا إنّه لا نهاية له لا يعني أنه لا نهاية له بأنه جثة أو عدد لكننا نعني أنه لا يحيط بقوته شيء وذلك أنه فوق وهم المتوهم ثابت قائم بذاته ليس فيه شيء من الصفات وهو خير ليس لذاته لأن ذاته هي الخير المحض الحق لكنه خير لسائر الأشياء التي تقوى على قبول الخير الذي يفيضه عليها وليس له حركة لأنه قبل الحركة وقبل الفكرة وقبل العلم وليس فيه شيء يريد أن يعلمه كما يعلم العالم بل هو العلم الذي لا يحتاج إلى أن يعلم بعلم آخر لأنه هو العلم المحض الأقصى المحيط بكلّ علم وعلّة العلوم

He says that He is one, great, the greatest of things, not in mass, but in power. Thus whenever we say that He is infinite, it does not mean that He is infinite in mass or in number, but we mean that nothing encompasses His power. That He is above imagination of anyone who imagines, lasting, self-subsisting and not having any attribute in Him. He is good not for Himself, as His essence is the pure, true good, but He is the good for all other things which are able to receive the good which he pours over them. He has no motion, as He is prior to motion, prior to thinking and prior to knowledge. In Him there is nothing he wants to know in the way in which a knower knows. Rather He is the knowledge which does not need to be known by another knowledge. For He is the pure, ultimate knowledge comprising every knowledge and the cause of all [branches of] knowledge.<sup>44</sup>

The transcendence of the First Cause with respect to all attributes (*ṣifāt*) here, as in the *Liber de causis*, is clearly reminiscent of the theological debates typical of the milieu where all these texts originated: the Baghdad circles at the time of the rise of the Mu'tazilites, who typically denied that divine attributes (*ṣifāt*) are distinct from the pure unity of God's essence. Adding anything more to the scholarship on this issue here would be redundant;<sup>45</sup> still, I would like to pause a moment on the issue of divine knowledge.

It is clearly evident that the passage from the "Greek Sage," quoted above, is germane to prop. 8[9] of the *Liber de causis*. One may even infer that the "Greek Sage," or rather the source of the passage, is the source of

prop. 8[9], given the *Liber de causis* seems to rely upon the Arabic Plotinus, whereas there are no clear indications of the reverse occurring.

The issue of God's knowledge is especially interesting, not only from the viewpoint of the relationship between the coeval theological and philosophical discussions of the *ṣifāt* of God, but also with respect to the standard view of the Arabic "Aristotle" that such adaptations are meant to propound. Any attempt at presenting Greek *falsafa* as a consistent whole would have been doomed to failure without a consistent account of the First Principle, and the philosopher or philosophers at work on such an attempt did not miss the obvious fact that the One transcending knowledge would hardly have been in harmony with the divine Intellect of *Metaphysics* Λ. The adaptations of Plotinus and Proclus that aim to credit the One with a form of knowledge, transcendent of and incomparable to our kind of knowledge as it may be, are too repeated and too clever to have been randomly generated by the context of the Plotinian or Proclean passages at hand. In this respect, one may confidently say that al-Fārābī is only following the lead of the texts issued from the circle of al-Kindī when he credits the First Cause with all the features of the Neoplatonic One, plus knowledge.<sup>46</sup> As Taylor has it:

In general the *Plotiniana Arabica* texts can be characterized as texts foundational for a large part of Islamic philosophy, as well as important for mystical and religious thought in Islam. They function as a kind of doxastic source of a philosophical character of considerable authority for nearly all Islamic philosophical thinkers. Of the major philosophical thinkers, we can say with certainty that al-Kindī was familiar with some, perhaps even all, of these materials as was al-Farabi who drew on the *Theology of Aristotle* explicitly in his book on the *Harmony of the Opinions of the Two Sages*. Also, al-Farabi's fundamental theory of emanation of all beings from the First Being is clearly dependent on the inspiration of the *Plotiniana Arabica* texts. The chief inspiration for the notion of the First Cause as pure being and of the theory of emanation in the thought of Avicenna is certainly the work of al-Farabi. Moreover, we know that Avicenna read the *Theology of Aristotle* itself, for he has left glosses on the *Theology*. In view of this it is not difficult to see that the doctrine of the First as the Necessary Being in the thought of Avicenna had as an important source the *Theology of Aristotle*.<sup>47</sup>

Combining the features of the Neoplatonic One with those of the divine Intellect of the *Metaphysics* was the key for the success of this naturalization of Late Antique philosophy in the Arabic Middle Ages. The understanding of this momentous phase in the history of the philosophical ideas owes much to Richard C. Taylor, to whom this note is gratefully presented.



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## Notes

- 1 Taylor, "St. Thomas."
- 2 The double number of the proposition is due to the fact that many manuscripts of the Latin version split the long Proposition 4 into two, thus creating a different numbering with respect to the Arabic original. While the latter is subdivided into thirty-one propositions, the majority of the Latin manuscripts contain thirty-two propositions. For easy reference, when dealing with the Latin version of the *De causis* the propositions after the fourth are indicated by the double number. For more details, see D'Ancona and Taylor, "*Liber de causis*," 606.
- 3 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Librum de causis expositio*, ed. Saffrey, 3.1–10: "Invenitur igitur quaedam de primis principiis conscripta, per diversas propositiones distincta, quasi per modum sigillatim considerantium aliquas veritates. Et in graeco quidem invenitur sic traditus liber Procli Platonici, continens cxxi propositiones, qui intitulatur *Elementatio theologica*; in arabico vero invenitur hic liber qui apud Latinos *De causis* dicitur, quem constat de arabico esse translatum et in graeco penitus non haberi; unde videtur ab aliquo philosophorum arabum ex praedicto libro Procli excerptus, praesertim quia omnia quae in hoc libro continentur, multo plenius et diffusius continentur in illo."
 

The English translation runs: "Thus we find a collection of writings on first principles that are divided into different propositions, in a way similar to the procedure of those examining certain truths one at a time. And in Greek we find handed down a book of this type by the Platonist Proclus, which contains 211 propositions and is entitled *The Elements of Theology*. And in Arabic we find the present book which is called *On Causes* among Latin readers, [a work] known to have been translated from Arabic and not [known] to be extant at all in Greek. Thus, it seems that one of the Arab philosophers excerpted it from this book by Proclus, especially since everything in it is contained much more fully and more diffusely in that of Proclus." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, trans. Guagliardo, Hess, and Taylor, 4.
- 4 Bardenhewer, in Pseudo-Aristotle, *Die pseudo-aristotelische Schrift*, 78.8, and Badawī, in *al-Aflāḥiniyya al-muḥḍaṭa*, 12.14, read here *kulliyya* (universality or totality) instead of *ḥilya*, whereas the Latin version reads correctly *ylīatim* (or *ylīathim*, *helyatim*, *heilatin*, etc.). See *Liber de causis*, ed. Pattin, 157.98.
- 5 Taylor, "St. Thomas," 510–11 n. 21–22, provides a lexical analysis of the term *ḥilya* and lists its Latin renderings; he also accounts for the variant reading *kulliyya* for *ḥilya* in the Arabic text.
- 6 On Gerard of Cremona and his translation of the *Liber de causis*, see the studies listed in D'Ancona and Taylor, "*Liber de causis*," 610–17. Further editions of and studies on Gerard's translations published after 2003 include Lo Bello, *Commentary of al-Nayrizi*; D'Ancona, "Nota sulla traduzione latina"; Burnett, "Arabo-Latin Aristotle."
- 7 As remarked by Taylor, "St. Thomas," 508 n. 10, Aquinas wrongly derived *ylīatim* from ὕλη, as follows: "Nam *intelligentia habet yliatim*, idest aliquid materiale vel ad modum materiae se habens; dicitur enim *ylīatim* ab *yle*, quod est materia." See Thomas Aquinas, *Super Librum de causis expositio*, ed. Saffrey, 64.6–8.

- 8 Thomas discusses the issue in questions 75–89 of the 1<sup>a</sup> *Pars* of the *Summa theologiae* and in the coeval *De spiritualibus creaturis*, both dating from his teaching in Rome (1265–68), as well as in the *De substantiis separatis*, which dates from his second and last stay in Paris (1268–72), as detailed by Jean-Baptiste Brenet in his introduction to the French translation of Aquinas’ *De spiritualibus creaturis*, *Les créatures spirituelles*.
- 9 The definition given in Edward W. Lane’s classic dictionary is quoted by Taylor, “St. Thomas,” 511 n. 24; he also adds the reference to the relevant entry in the *Lisān al-‘Arab* by the lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr (d. ca. 1312), who explains *ḥilya* by means of the two terms *ṣīfa* (description, attribute) and *ṣūra* (form). See note 4 above.
- 10 Taylor, “St. Thomas,” 512–13.
- 11 Ibn Gabirol, *Fons vitae* 4. 1, ed. Baeumker, 212.2–8: “substantiae spirituales communes sunt in materia, sed diversae in forma, hoc est, quia, postquam effectus earum diversi sunt, nulli dubium est quin formae earum diversae sint; et non est ei possibile quod materiae harum substantiarum sint diversae, eo quod omnes simplices sunt et spirituales, et diversitas non est nisi ex forma, et materia simplex non habet in se formam”; Bonaventure, *In quatuor Sententiarum* 2. 17. 1, q. 2 concl., ed. Quaracchi, 2:414b–415a: “Anima rationalis, non autem brutalis, habet materiam, quae vocatur spiritualis. Respondeo: Ad praedictorum intelligentiam est notandum, quod circa hoc diversi opinati sunt. Quidam enim dixerunt, nullam animam, nec rationalem nec brutalem, habere materiam, quia spiritus sunt simplices; animam tamen rationalem dixerunt habere compositionem ex quo est et quod est, quia ipsa est hoc aliquid et nata est per se et in se subsistere. — Sed cum planum sit, animam rationalem posse pati et agere et mutari ab una proprietate in aliam et in se ipsa subsistere; non videtur quod illud sufficiat dicere, quod in ea sit tantum compositio ex quo est et quod est, nisi addatur esse in ea compositio materiae et formae. Ideo fuerunt et alii, qui dixerunt, non solum animam rationalem, sed etiam brutalem ex materia et forma compositam esse, cum utraque sit motor corporis sufficiens. — Sed quia anima brutalis propriam operationem non habet nec est nata per se subsistere, non videtur, quod habeat materiam intra se. Et ideo est tertius modus dicendi, tenens medium inter utrumque, scilicet quod anima rationalis, cum sit hoc aliquid et per se nata subsistere et agere et pati, movere et moveri, quod habet intra se fundamentum suae existentiae et principium materiale, a quo habet existere, et formale, a quo habet esse. De brutali autem non oportet illud dicere, cum ipsa fundetur in corpore. Cum igitur principium, a quo est fixa existentia creaturae in se, sit principium materiale; concedendum est, animam humanam materiam habere. Illa autem materia sublevata est supra esse extensionis, et supra esse privationis et corruptionis, et ideo dicitur materia spiritualis. — Et propterea illi qui locuti sunt de materiali principio quantum ad esse extensionis, et prout habet esse sub privatione, dixerunt, animam rationalem non habere materiam, non intendentes de materia in sua generalitate, sed prout ad eam stat resolutio physica, sicut dictum est de simplicitate angeli.”
- 12 The lemma is *إِنَّ الْعِلَّةَ الْأُولَى أَعْلَى مِنَ الصَّفَةِ*. *Liber de causis*, prop. 5[6], ed. Bardenhewer, 69.8 = ed. Badawī, 8.11; “Causa prima superior est omni narratione,” ed. Pattin, 147.22.
- 13 *Liber de causis*, prop. 5[6], ed. Bardenhewer, 71.7–9 = ed. Badawī, 9.12–14; Latin text ed. Pattin, 149.59–64.
- 14 The English translation of the *Liber de causis* is taken from Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, trans. Guagliardo, Hess, and Taylor, 46.
- 15 Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. Dodds, 108.25–28. The lemma of prop. 123 runs: Πάν τὸ θεῖον αὐτὸ μὲν διὰ τὴν ὑπερουσίον ἕνωσιν ἄρρητὸν ἐστὶ καὶ ἄγνωστον πᾶσι τοῖς δευτέροις, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν μετεχόντων ληπτὸν ἐστὶ καὶ

- γνωστόν· διὸ μόνον τὸ πρῶτον παντελῶς ἄγνωστον, ἅτε ἀμέθεκτον ὄν. “All that is divine is itself ineffable and unknowable by any secondary being because of its supra-existential unity, but it may be apprehended and known from the existents which participate in it: wherefore only the First Principle is completely unknowable, as being unparticipated,” trans. Dodds, *ibid.*, 109.
- 16 For Proclus, the first derivative level after the One consists of a number of metaphysical entities named Henads (“unities”), followed by other derivative levels that include the intelligible world (in its turn articulated into hierarchical levels) until one reaches the level of the intellectual principles, with the hypostatic Intellect at its peak. Examining the point in detail would go beyond the scope of this chapter; for a discussion of the difference between the *Liber de causis* and Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* on this count, see D’Ancona, “La doctrine de la création.”
- 17 The lemma is والأئنيّة المبتدعة الأولى عقلٌ كلّها *Liber de causis*, prop. 4, ed. Bardenhewer, 66.5 = ed. Badawī, 7.1; “Et esse quidem creatum primum est intelligentia totum,” ed. Pattin, 143.64–65.
- 18 *Liber de causis*, prop. 2, ed. Bardenhewer, 61.10–63.3 = ed. Badawī, 4.16–5.8 = ed. Pattin, 138.71–139.97. See, in part, ed. Bardenhewer, 62.1–2 = ed. Badawī, 5.1–2: والعقل الأئنيّة التي مع الدهر فهي العقل: 5.1–2; ed. Pattin, 138.76: “Sed esse quod est cum aeternitate est intelligentia.”
- 19 Here is the beginning of prop. 4 of the *Liber de causis*, in the translation of Guagliardo, Hess, and Taylor: “The first of created things is being, and there is nothing else created before it. This is because being is above sense, above soul, and above intelligence, and after the first cause there is no effect more extensive or prior to it. As a result, then, it came to be higher than all [other] created things and to be more powerfully united. It came to be so only because of its nearness to the pure being and the true one, in which there is no multiplicity of any sort. Although created being is one, nevertheless it comes to be multiple because it receives multiplicity.” Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, trans. Guagliardo, Hess, and Taylor, 28.
- 20 والعقل جوهر لا يتجزأ *Liber de causis*, prop. 6[7], ed. Bardenhewer, 72.1 = ed. Badawī, 9.16; “Intelligentia est substantia quae non dividitur,” ed. Pattin, 149.65. The source is prop. 171 of Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. Dodds, 150.1–14, whose lemma runs: Πᾶς νοῦς ἀμέριστός ἐστὶν οὐσία (“Every intelligence is an indivisible existence,” trans. Dodds, 151).
- 21 Namely, the first Intellect as well as all the other separate intellects: the existence of other separate intellects is stated in the first part of prop. 4 of the *Liber de causis* (see note 19 above) and the second part, circulating as prop. “5” in the Latin version (see note 2 above), elaborates more on the hierarchy among intelligences. The lemma is كلّ عقل يعلم ما فوقه وما تحته *Liber de causis*, prop. 7[8], ed. Bardenhewer, 74.1 = ed. Badawī, 10.15; “Omnis intelligentia scit quod est supra se et quod est sub se,” ed. Pattin, 152.6–7. The source is prop. 173 of Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, ed. Dodds, 150.22–152.7, whose lemma begins: Πᾶς νοῦς νοερώς ἐστὶ καὶ τὰ πρὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ μετ’ αὐτόν (“Every intelligence is intellectually identical both with its priors and with its consequents,” trans. Dodds, 151).
- 22 Taylor, “*Kalām fī maḥḍ al-khair*,” 39.
- 23 *Liber de causis*, prop. 8[9], ed. Bardenhewer, 76.2 = ed. Badawī, 11.14; ed. Pattin, 154.47–48.
- 24 Translated in Taylor, “Aquinas,” 231.
- 25 *Liber de causis*, prop. 8[9], ed. Bardenhewer, 76.3–77.7 = ed. Badawī, 11.14–12.7; ed. Pattin, 154.49–156.76.
- 26 Translated in Taylor, “Aquinas,” 231, slightly modified.

- 27 Plotinus' doctrine of the three principles One, Intellect, and Soul is stated chiefly in treatise 5. 1[10], translated almost in its entirety in Arabic and transmitted in the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle*. For an overview of this text, see D'Ancona, "Theology Attributed to Aristotle."
- 28 The topic of the divine government (*tadbīr*) occurs both in texts of Neoplatonic allegiance such as the ps.-*Theology of Aristotle* and in the adaptations of Alexander of Aphrodisias issuing from the "circle of al-Kindī" (see next note) such as the Arabic version of Q. 2. 19. For instances of *tadbīr* in the ps.-*Theology of Aristotle* as a rendering of πρόνοια, ἐπινοια, or of the verb κοσμεῖν, see *Aflūṭīn 'ind al- Arab*, ed. Badawī, 66.11, 91.11, 120.5, 127.15; for instances of *mudabbir*, see 66.9, 67.3.5, 105.3, 120.6. For the same topic and terminology in the Arabic version of Alexander's Q. 2. 19, see Wiesner, "Cosmology of al-Kindī," 65–66; Fazzo and Wiesner, "Alexander of Aphrodisias." On the interactions of the two traditions of thought in the circle of al-Kindī, see also Zimmermann, "Proclus Arabus."
- 29 See *Proclus Arabus*, ed. Endress; Endress, "Circle of al-Kindī."
- 30 On the Plotinian sources of the topic of the soul in *horizonte aeternitatis et temporis*, see D'Ancona, "Esse quod est supra eternitatem." The topic and terminology of the "horizon," *ufuq*, feature twice in the *Liber de causis*: first in prop. 2, ed. Bardenhewer, 62.4 = ed. Badawī, 5.3, and then here in prop. 8[9], provided that one follows the Latin, which I deem to convey the right reading. Both ed. Bardenhewer, 77.7, and ed. Badawī, 12.6, read here وما فوق الطبيعة, but the Latin has *et horizontem nature*, ed. Pattin, 156.75. Since the text goes on to explain why it is so, and says *nam ipsa est supra naturam*, if one reads with Bardenhewer and Badawī one has the blatant redundancy "the soul is above nature because it is above nature." Thus, the Arabic text of the extant manuscripts reproduced in both editions should be emended here وأفق الطبيعة on the basis of the Latin attestation, allowing us to reconstruct the reading of the Arabic manuscript available to Gerard of Cremona.
- 31 *Liber de causis*, prop. 8[9], ed. Bardenhewer, 77.8–78.2 = ed. Badawī, 12.7–10; ed. Pattin, 156.76–84.
- 32 Translated in Taylor, "Aquinas," 231.
- 33 "Now our aim in this book is the discourse on the Divine Sovereignty, and the explanation of it, and how it is the first cause, eternity and time being beneath it, and that it is the cause and originator of causes, in a certain way, and how the luminous force steals from it over mind and, through the medium of mind, over the universal celestial soul, and from mind, through the medium of soul, over nature, and from soul, through the medium of nature, over the things that come to be and pass away. This action arises from it without motion; the motion of all things comes from it and is caused by it, and things move towards it by a kind of longing and desire." In *Plotiniana Arabica*, trans. Lewis, 487, corresponding to *Aflūṭīn 'ind al- Arab*, ed. Badawī, 6.7–12.
- 34 Cf. Taylor, "Primary Causality," esp. 131: "If we are to allow this notion of *ibdā'* (*creatio*)—up to this point called 'origination' in this article—to be called creation, let us call it for the present *creation<sub>2</sub>* as emanative origination and let it be specified that it entails the negation of will, choice, the necessity of nature characteristic of things having nature or form (which is *necessity<sub>2</sub>*), and also external compulsion (which is *necessity<sub>3</sub>*). The act that follows immediately upon the being of the First is the emanation of all reality from it as the Good. This emanative causality founded on the First as the Good is common to Plotinus, Proclus, the *PA*, the *LDC*, al-Farabi, and Avicenna. For each of these it involves the causing by the primary cause of the existence of something after nothing as well as a continuous ontological activity of causing

- upon which all reality after itself depends.” (In this quotation, *PA* stands for the whole of the various texts of the Arabic Plotinus).
- 35 *Liber de causis*, prop. 8[9], ed. Bardenhewer, 78.2–79.4 = ed. Badawī, 12.10–17; ed. Pattin, 156.85–158.7.
- 36 Translated in Taylor, “Aquinas,” 232.
- 37 Taylor, “Primary Causality,” 130 n. 36, describes this formula as “oxymoronic and intentionally so.”
- 38 Suffice it to think of *The Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite, where we read in 5. 4: “Ἐπειδὴ καὶ περὶ τούτων εἶπομεν, φέρε, τὰγαθὸν ὡς ὄντως ὄν καὶ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων οὐσιοποιὸν ἀνυμνήσωμεν. ὁ ὢν ὅλου τοῦ εἶναι κατὰ δύναμιν ὑπερούσιός ἐστιν ὑποστάτις αἰτία καὶ δημιουργὸς ὄντος, ὑπάρξεως, ὑποστάσεως, οὐσίας, φύσεως, ἀρχῆ καὶ μέτρον αἰῶνων καὶ χρόνων, ὄντοτης καὶ αἰὼν τῶν ὄντων, χρόνος τῶν γιγνομένων, τὸ εἶναι τοῖς ὅπως οὐσι, γένεσις τῶν ὅπως οὐσῶν γιγνομένοις. ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος αἰὼν καὶ οὐσία καὶ ὄν καὶ χρόνος καὶ γένεσις καὶ γινόμενον, τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐσῶν ὄντα καὶ τὰ ὅπως οὐσῶν ὑπάρχοντα καὶ ὑφεστῶτα. καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς οὐ πῶς ἐστιν ὢν, ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶς καὶ ἀπεριορίστως ὅλον ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ εἶναι συνειληφῶς καὶ προειληφῶς” (ed. Suchla, 182.17–183.5). See Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, trans. Jones, 164–65: “Since we are discussing these matters, let us celebrate the good as really being, and as producing being for all beings together. In a power beyond being the being of the whole being is support, cause and creator of being, constitution, being, and nature, source and measure of what is eternal and temporal, beingness and eternity of what is, time of what comes to be, the being of whatsoever is, genesis of whatsoever comes to be. From out of being: eternity, being, be-ing, time, genesis, becoming, what is in beings, whatsoever is constituted and subsisting. God is not somehow being, but simply and unlimited being, comprehending and anticipating the whole being in itself” (translation slightly modified).
- 39 In her introduction to the *Philosophy Reader*, ed. Wakelnig, 1–3, the editor presents the context and purpose of the anonymous author as follows: “The text is a compilation of philosophical material taken from various Greek and Arabic authorities quoted either by name or anonymously. The exact sources are indicated only in a few cases. The subjects dealt with are metaphysics, psychology, natural sciences in the guise of physiology, ethics and politics, in other words most of the Late Antique branches of philosophy. Thus the compilation may be described as a philosophy reader and this description provides an appropriate term with which to refer to the text from now on, namely as *Philosophy Reader* (*PR*). However, what purpose the *PR* served for its readers is hard to tell with any certainty. It may have been used as a manual or textbook for studies or as an anthology of the common philosophical knowledge of its time. [ . . . ] It is highly plausible that the compiler of *PR* was part of Miskawayh’s circle, and maybe his student or a student of one of his students.”
- 40 Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Armstrong, 5:37.
- 41 Unless otherwise specified by expressions pointing to the world of coming-to-be and passing away, “being” stands for “intelligible being” in all the metaphysical texts of Neoplatonic allegiance.
- 42 *Philosophy Reader*, ed. and trans. Wakelnig, 94.17–96.2 (Arabic), 95 (Wakelnig’s English translation).
- 43 Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Armstrong, 7:323.
- 44 *Philosophy Reader*, ed. and trans. Wakelnig, 98.7–14 (Arabic), 99 (Wakelnig’s English translation).
- 45 The starting point of the classical scholarship on this crucial topic of early Islamic theology is typified by Pretzl, “Die frühislamische Attributenlehre”; Wolfson, “Muslim Attributes”; Wolfson, “Philosophical Implications,” 73–80;

- Allard, *Le problème des attributs divins*; Frank, “Divine Attributes”; Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*; Frank, “Attribute, Attribution, and Being”; and van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:431–78. More recent studies include D’Ancona, “*Causa prima superior est omni narratione*”; Adamson, “Al-Kindī and the Muʿtazila”; Schöck, “Jahm b. Ṣafwān”; and Bennett, “Muʿtazilite Movement.”
- 46 Al-Fārābī, *Mabādīʾ ārāʾ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, 70.1–76.8 (Arabic), 71–77 (Wakelnig’s English translation); see also Martini Bonadeo, “‘Abd al-Laṭīf.”
- 47 Taylor, “Aquinas,” 227–28.

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# 10 Ontology and Logic in Avicenna's Concept of Truth

## A Commentary on *Ilāhiyyāt* 1.8

Olga L. Lizzini

The investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another easy. [. . .] Perhaps, too, as difficulties are of two kinds, the cause of the present difficulty is not in the facts but in us. For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all. [. . .] It is right also that philosophy should be called knowledge of the truth. For the end of theoretical knowledge is truth, while that of practical knowledge is action (for even if they consider how things are, practical men do not study the eternal, but what is relative and in the present). Now we do not know a truth without its cause; and a thing has a quality in a higher degree than other things if in virtue of it the similar quality belongs to the other things as well [. . .] so that that causes derivative truths to be true is most true. Hence the principles of eternal things must be always most true (for they are not merely sometimes true, nor is there any cause of their being, but they themselves are the cause of the being of other things), *so that as each thing is in respect of being, so is it in respect of truth.*

(Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A 1, 993a30–993b30, trans. W. D. Ross, emphasis added)

In this contribution, I intend to dwell on Avicenna's definition of truth or, more precisely, on some aspects of it that are related to the issue of analysis (or *resolutio*).<sup>1</sup> Avicenna tends to rework elements from both of the traditions that constitute the history of analysis (and more generally the alphabet of Arabic philosophy)—namely, in a very broad sense, the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions. The doctrine of truth, in which logic and metaphysics are closely intertwined, clearly demonstrates this.

### The Issue of Truth

A good starting point, if not the most obvious, for an examination of Avicenna's conception of truth is the definition of truth (*al-ḥaqq*) that Avicenna himself proposes in his *Metaphysics* of the *Book of the Healing* (or, according to another possible translation in English, *of the Cure*) in the

eighth section—or chapter—of the first treatise (the *Ilāhiyyāt min Kitāb al-Shifā'* 1.8).<sup>2</sup>

In a very general sense, the aim of the first treatise is to establish the foundations of metaphysical inquiry. Consequently, Avicenna's main concern here is to discover the basis of the incontrovertibility of philosophy. Following Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Γ,<sup>3</sup> he therefore shows the necessity of the principle of non-contradiction (expressed here in terms of the excluded middle<sup>4</sup>) and explodes the (pseudo-)arguments of both skeptics and sophists.<sup>5</sup> Yet it is by degrees that Avicenna works his way up to the subject of the truth of philosophy,<sup>6</sup> and the very first step of his development is to define truth itself (*al-ḥaqq*) and its relationship with the truth of discourse: truthfulness (*al-ṣidq*). In fact, Avicenna indicates two senses of *al-ḥaqq*:

As regards *truth* [*al-ḥaqq*], one understands by it *existence in individuals absolutely* [*muṭlaq<sup>am</sup>*] and one understands by it *permanent existence* [*al-dā'im*], and one understands by it the state of the verbal statement or the link [or the combination] indicating the state of the external thing, if it corresponds with it, such that we would say, "This is a true statement" and "This is a true belief."<sup>7</sup>

Avicenna's own starting point is terminology, and it is, first of all, terminologically that truth is presented as both reality and truthfulness. In fact, in these first lines of the chapter, Avicenna pinpoints an ontological sense of the true (one might call it *veritas essendi*), separating it from the logical sense (both *veritas cognoscendi* and *veritas dicendi*), but he does so by identifying the different meanings contained in one Arabic term: *al-ḥaqq*, which applies to both "true" and "real" and refers to the same root from which are derived words like "right" (or "merit": *istihqāq*, sometimes even *ḥaqq*)—and "reality" (*al-ḥaqq*, *al-ḥaqīqa*).<sup>8</sup>

In the ontological sense of the word (*al-ḥaqq* as "real"), Avicenna then indicates an absolute or indeterminate mode (*muṭlaq<sup>am</sup>*) of being real and a more specific or substantial one. The first covers existence in an absolute sense, and hence being or existence in general and therefore (also) the existence of individuals<sup>9</sup>—the term *ḥaqīqa*, which indicates the "reality" of the thing, is often used as a synonym of *māhiyya* especially in concrete things;<sup>10</sup> the second corresponds specifically to eternal or permanent or continuous (*dā'im*) existence. It is on the basis of this ontological distinction between truth in an indeterminate sense, which corresponds to simple existence, and a truth that is really true *because it always is as it is*—a distinction which is already Aristotelian but also heavily indebted to the Platonic and Neoplatonic interpretation of reality—that Avicenna then presents the logical-linguistic sense of truth, i.e., truthfulness, according to which *al-ḥaqq* is defined in relationship to the proposition (*al-qawl*) and to logical predication, which establishes a link (*'aqd*) between things and is expressed by the proposition itself.<sup>11</sup> In his *De interpretatione*, too, Avicenna

defines truth in terms of the correspondence to existence: “truth [*al-ḥaqq*] is what corresponds to existence [*al-wujūd*].”<sup>12</sup>

Avicenna then defines both the ontological truth and the logical sense of truth. He insists on the two concepts of *permanence* and *primacy*: the Necessary Principle, which is first in the order of being, is always; the principle of non-contradiction, introduced (in terms of the excluded middle) as the fundamental principle that can be predicated of all that exists (of any “thing”), is the principle which is always truthful (*al-ṣādiq*) and its truthfulness is primary:

As regards *truth* [*al-ḥaqq*], one understands by it *existence in individuals absolutely* [*muṭlaq<sup>am</sup>*], and one understands by it permanent existence [*al-dā'im*], and one understands by it the state of the verbal statement or the link [or the combination]<sup>13</sup> indicating the state of the external thing, if it corresponds with it, such that we would say, “This is a true statement” and “This is a true belief.” *The Necessary Existent is thus permanently true* in itself, while the possible existent is *true through another and false in itself*. Hence, all things other than the One Necessary Existent are, in themselves, false. As for the truth by way of correspondence, it is similar to the truthful [*al-ṣādiq*], except that, as I reckon, it is “truthful” when considered in terms of its relation to the fact and “true” when the relation to the fact to it is considered.

The statements most deserving of being [called] true are those whose truth is *permanent*; and, of these, the most deserving are those whose truth is *primary, requiring no cause*. And the most primary of all true statements, to which everything in *analysis* [*al-taḥlīl*] reduces (so that it is predicated either potentially or actually of all things demonstrated or made evident through it), is—as we have shown in the *Book of Demonstration* [i.e., *Posterior Analytics*]<sup>14</sup>—[as follows]: “There is no intermediary between affirmation and negation.” This property is not an occurrence to one [particular] thing but is one of the occurrences to the *existent inasmuch as it exists*, because of its pervasiveness in all existing [things].<sup>15</sup>

Avicenna therefore defines ontological truth as *existence in individuals absolutely* (*muṭlaq<sup>am</sup>*) and as permanent existence (*al-dā'im*), whereas logical truth is reality or the correspondence to existence, i.e., “the state of the verbal statement or the link which indicates the state of the external thing, if it corresponds with it” (and this can be on a linguistic, propositional level—“This is a true statement”—or merely on a logical, conceptual level—“This is a true belief”). What is first both on the ontological and on the logical-linguistic level is what is permanent, primary, requiring no cause. First on the ontological level is therefore the *First Principle, Necessary Existent*, while the first truth as correspondence (which corresponds to the

truthful, *al-ṣādiq*, when considered in terms of its relation to the fact) is the statement which expresses existent inasmuch as it exists: this is the principle predicated either potentially or actually of all things, i.e., that to which everything in *analysis* (*al-taḥlīl*) reduces and the fundamental rule of predication: "There is no intermediary between affirmation and negation."

I shall first examine truth in the sense of logic (which refers primarily to the role of discursive reasoning and therefore *dianoia*) and then analyze the ontological or metaphysical sense of truth. If, at least in a sense, the latter (which might be said to correspond to the act of the intellect as *'aql/nous*) is simple, in another sense—as we shall see—it is also compound or, more precisely, interrelated to other simple elements and therefore complex.<sup>16</sup>

## Two Premises

However, before going into detail, two premises seem to be necessary.

The first premise concerns the so-called first intentions or primary notions. In fact, one must point out that Avicenna does not ascribe absolute primacy or priority only to the rule of predication. If in *Ilāhiyyāt* 1.8, the final result of the analysis (*al-taḥlīl*) is the principle of non-contradiction (but only the excluded middle is cited), a famous passage of the first book of the *Metaphysics* (*Ilāhiyyāt* 1.5) poses—along with the primacy or absolute priority of the principles—the primacy of the first conceptual representations (*taṣawwūrāt*).<sup>17</sup> These are not the rules of thought, but, so to speak, their formal, fundamental elements. Moreover, as primary, transcategorial and necessary, the first conceptual representations—which are, essentially, the existent (or existence),<sup>18</sup> the thing,<sup>19</sup> the necessary,<sup>20</sup> and the one<sup>21</sup>—can be approached, as we know, as the medieval idea of transcendentals.<sup>22</sup> Avicenna in fact refers to the principles of representations at the end of the section (1.8), insisting that the principles are the necessary conditions of analysis: "the investigation [*al-baḥṭ*] of the principles of conception and definition is not itself a definition or a conception; nor is the investigation of the principles of demonstration itself a demonstration."<sup>23</sup> Any (analytical) demonstration is ultimately based on something which cannot be analyzed in its turn.

There are therefore two levels of primacy, at once irreducible to one another and inseparable from each other: one is that of intentionality or conceivability, the other that of the rule of predication.

The second premise concerns precisely this first level of primacy, that of the so-called first intentions. In fact, if we put aside the question of the different shades of meaning that one should attribute to each of the primary notions presented by Avicenna (Robert Wisnovsky, Thérèse-Anne Druart, and Amos Bertolacci insist on different connotations of "existent" and "thing," depending on the extension or intension attributed to the two notions<sup>24</sup>), it should be noted that on the ontological level (which is in a sense also logical), we are obliged to consider a further distinction,

which is fundamental to the articulation of the whole Avicennian system: on the one hand, one has existence (oneness) and necessity (developing this theory, Avicenna adds to these “the established existence” or the existence which establishes the thing as such: *al-wujūd al-ithbātī*); on the other, there is the “thing”: with its “thingness” (*al-shay’iyya*), its proper existence (*al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ*), its “reality” (*al-ḥaqīqa*).<sup>25</sup> The thing, by virtue of its thingness, refers to quiddity and can therefore, in the specific sense in which Avicenna constructs his metaphysics, refer to possibility.<sup>26</sup>

What constitutes both the world and our knowledge of it is Existence, Being, as exemplified by both the existent and the principle of non-contradiction. However, in it, one must include an inevitable distinction: everything that exists (everything that is an existent thing, and is not the First Principle) implies a composition of a possible determination (the quiddity, which to a certain extent corresponds to the “reality” of the thing) and an actual or realized existence.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, although essence and existence are to be understood as “distinct”—so that they might be said to introduce compositeness in existent things—they prove to be inseparable from each other and hence resistant to any attempt to consider them independent.<sup>28</sup> And, as one must notice, the duality and distinction/composition we find in the essence-existence distinction is reflected in the dual or double primacy of the logical principles. This cannot be dissolved either in favor of the principle of non-contradiction, which can be predicated of any existent thing, or in favor of the intentions, as each concept implicitly but immediately refers to a judgment.

### **Truth of the Discourse**

Now, in what respect can one recognize this articulation in the definition of the logical truth (truthfulness, more precisely)? In other words, what does it mean to tell the truth in respect to this distinction?

The definition of truth in a logical sense necessarily implies the articulation of thought in “conception” (concept) or “conceptual representation” and “assent.” This is a very well-known aspect of Avicenna’s logic. A concept is the representation or “vision” that one constructs of things (*taṣawwur* means, properly, to receive or elaborate a form, *ṣūra*); assent expresses the psychological (and, in a sense, finally the subjective) fact that we are convinced of this vision and that we believe in it (*taṣdīq* means that we give consent to judgments that affect our conceptions; the operation of denying consent is fundamentally the same and is called *takdhīb*).<sup>29</sup> The form of knowledge which is reached by virtue of conceptual representation—analogue to the Aristotelian idea of signification—concerns a represented thing and implies mental existence (it answers the question about the nature, essence, or quiddity of a thing: *mā huwa? quid sit*—“what is it?”). The knowledge realized by assent depends on the links that the quiddity establishes with other things and can therefore inform about external reality;

it can inform us of the existence of the thing (and therefore answers the question *hal huwa? an sit*—"is there?"). A representation corresponds to the meaning (*ma'nā*) of the word or sentence that expresses it; it is transmitted by a definition (*ḥadd*) and is in fact an intention (*ma'nā*). Assent, instead, is a verification of the existence of a thing (and the modes or states that are proper to it); as such, it implies existence as something external to the quiddity or essence and verifiable by judgment (eminently on the basis of external reality). While it is not the composition itself, assent does not exist without the composition: it is the act by which the soul recognizes the composition of predication as true, i.e., as corresponding to reality and existence.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, the two terms of this distinction constitute knowledge (and determine the ways of truth or, conversely, of error), as they represent reality and the possibility of thinking of reality and existence in their complementarity: on the one hand, the individual elements (reflected by representation, in the estimative faculty or in the intellect; sometimes, more generally, Avicenna speaks of the mind<sup>31</sup>); on the other, the links that these very same elements establish between themselves (and with external reality) and which are recognized by assent. The distinction between representation and assent, which one is tempted to reduce to that between *nous* and *dianoia*, reflects the distinction between quiddity and existence (and existence is also in the mind<sup>32</sup>).

Now, although it is in terms of distinction—if not opposition—that Avicenna presents the two elements of conceptual representation and assent or verification,<sup>33</sup> they clearly cannot be conceived as two fundamentals on the same level: conceptions form judgment and provide the elements that constitute the matter of assent; at the same time, they are not *parts* of it, for judgment is in fact not the sum of the representations that form it, but the result of the relations that conceptual representations establish with each other.<sup>34</sup> Considered in themselves, conceptual representations are unitary (and seem to reflect a noetic act); nevertheless, placed within the judgment that leads to assent, they make possible the dianoetic operation that consists in actualizing or bringing to light the relations that representations themselves imply. In other words, no matter how unitary they may be, representations always involve relations, and relations relate to the conceivability of existent reality. The concept of "animal" is itself unitary, but when subjected to analysis, it involves relations with other representations (and entities: body, life, soul, etc.). These relations can be explained only on the basis of other concepts, such as the subject, the predicate, the universal, etc., that is, on the basis of those intelligible intentions that belong to the quiddity of a thing (or to the quiddity as it is conceived), but also on the basis of those intentions that establish its existence (and that are in a sense always causal relations).<sup>35</sup>

This is the sense of hierarchy between representations and assent (or verification) that the analysis (in fact, in a quite aporetical way) states:

representations are anterior or prior to judgment because they are the extremes of the relations that form a judgment, but this, in turn, always gives rise to a representation.<sup>36</sup>

One might therefore affirm that a unitary (and in that sense noetic) act of the intellect can grasp reality, but in order to describe or narrate it as such, *dianoia* is necessary. *Dianoia* recognizes the articulations that belong to reality. *Dianoia* knows and expresses the predicative composition that refers to reality, or, more precisely, to the intellection of reality. The unitary character of representations (the *nous*) does not—at least not necessarily—refer to the intellection derived from reality, but to intellection itself,<sup>37</sup> which is why, incidentally, God’s thought can be only noetic. An image in the *Kitāb al-Ta’līqāt*, referring to the knowledge of the Principle, can be taken as an illustration of this point:

And the image that illustrates it [*al-mithāl*] is this: you read a book and someone asks you a question about what you know of its contents. “Do you know”—he asks—“what is in the book?” You’ll certainly say “Yes,” because you’re sure you know it and you’re sure you’ll be able to report its [content] in detail. The simple intelligence is that which has representation in this way [*al-‘aql al-basīṭ huwa al-muṣawwir bi-hādhihi l-ṣūra*]. Among the human intellects there is no intellect of this kind [*‘alā hādihā al-mithāl*], [no intellect] which is able to have representation of the forms of the intelligibles in one set and immediately [ . . . ]. The First has intellection of things and forms in the sense that It is the principle of [these] forms [which are] existent and intellected, and in the sense that they flow from It [*anna-hā fā’ida ‘an-hu*], abstract, at the purest level of abstraction: [and] in It there is no differentiation of different forms, as ordered in ranks. Indeed, It has intellection [of them] in a simple way and at the same time [It has intellection] of the differentiation in [their] order and It has not intellection of them from the outside.<sup>38</sup>

Now, as is known, if conceptions refer to intellection, instead of or prior to (external, existent) reality, conceptions have been granted a fundamental autonomy from existent reality itself (and from the opposition between truth and falsehood that is derived from it).

This can be seen in terms of language. If judgment is a proposition, which is, as such, necessarily subject to the alternatives of truth and falsity (i.e., assent or denial: “man is existent,” “the horse races,” “the horse is white”), conceptual representations can instead be traced back to words, which are in themselves neutral as regards truth (“horse,” “man,” “white,” “unicorn”), or to propositions which are not connected to truth value (“do this!”),<sup>39</sup> or, finally, to propositions which are not subject to the alternative of truth and falsity (propositions to which one cannot give any assent, such as “there will be a sea battle tomorrow,” as is already to be

found in Aristotle's *De interpretatione*<sup>40</sup>), and which correspond to things that are possible (as in the case of essences considered in themselves but in relation to existence; cf. *Ilāhiyyāt* 5.1). For this reason, that is, precisely because representations as such do not imply either truth or falsity, they make it possible to conceive of the (relative) non-existent, provide an insight of possibilities, and refer to judgment as a necessary complement to the activity of conception.

On the one hand, judgment makes it possible to verify concepts, establishing whether the relation between the quiddity expressed by a concept and its existence takes place only in the mental sphere (as is the case with the void, the chimera, and the unicorn) or in the realm of external reality. On the other, since judgment itself gives rise to a representation (and the inference derived from a syllogism is a representation as well), each conception is always open, so to speak, to verification and then to assent, thus making it possible to generate knowledge as a causal chain that corresponds perfectly to what reality is. Indeed, acquiring knowledge reflects the hierarchy expressed by emanation, but by retracing its path in reverse: every conceptual representation ends with an assent and leads to another representation. In analogy with emanation, every gnoseological process needs both a starting point and a final cause which is also an end.<sup>41</sup>

So assent, which is defined according to relations, establishes a clear relationship with existence and therefore with truth (and, conversely, with falsehood), while conceptions, since they do not exhibit existential relations, do not seem to establish any relationship with truth (in themselves they are neither true nor false<sup>42</sup>).

The neutrality or indifference of conceptions with respect to existence might appear to be a problem, but—as we have emphasized—it allows us to proceed from the known to the unknown and hence is functional from a logical point of view; moreover, it guarantees creativity. In fact, precisely because they can relate to things that are (relatively) not existent (or to things whose existence one does not take into account, since one ignores it), conceptual representations allow knowledge to proceed. In Avicenna's interpretation of the *Meno* paradox, for example, research is a process by means of which one seeks to learn the truth of a predicate that concerns a conceptual representation, and thus the validity of assent—which, before the cognitive process is concluded, is still, in a sense, “non-existent” or “not true.”<sup>43</sup>

Knowledge—which is itself conceived as a relation<sup>44</sup>—is hence developed on the basis of relations, just as existence itself develops on the basis of relations. Relations constitute judgment (subject and predicate are in relation to each other), and truth is defined in relational terms. Avicenna—we can look once again at the definition of truth from which we started—refers, as regards language, to propositions (he specifically mentions the statement or what is said: *al-qawl*), and, as regards thought, to the conceptual link (*al-'aqd*) that it expresses. The idea of truth as



correspondence regards, in fact, not simply what one thinks, but what one thinks (and expresses) as related by a logical link to something else (“man is an animal,” “a man is sitting”), even if that something else is existence (“man is existent”). Relations build existence (and external reality).

Hence, we can better understand the meaning of the passage in which Avicenna defines truth (truthfulness). The “conceptual link” or “combination” Avicenna discusses indicates the logical concatenation which is recognized as true in the assent; the term that Avicenna uses here—*‘aqd*, a term occasionally rendered as “belief”—refers to assent; it is derived from the same root as *i’tiqād*, “belief,” which is sometimes used by Avicenna in place of the technical terminology of assent.<sup>45</sup> Certainly, the relations that thought and language establish with existence are not identical: thought has an immediate, although not exclusive, relation with the external world, while the relation of language to the external world and to reality in general is always mediated by thought.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, both relate to the truth only to the extent that they imply a combination and therefore provide for a relation.

In short, what Avicenna expresses here through the notions of the link (*‘aqd*) and the statement (*qawl*) is that truth concerns only reason (thought, speech) as far as it composes and divides—establishing relations—and not the intellect as such.<sup>47</sup> For Avicenna, truth is not established by the simplicity of the intellect, but by its articulation or connecting ability (which is reason). As we have already seen, Avicenna does not defend the idea (which was impossible for Aristotle as well) of truth as a correspondence between what is thought and reality (*intellectus et rei*), but instead promotes the notions of truth as a correspondence between what one thinks (and expresses) as related by a logical link to something else and of reality as the guarantee of this link.

Thus, if truth is propositional, this is precisely because existence is relational or, more exactly, because what can be grasped about existent reality is relational: “all that exists has a relation or a link with the other existing [things].”<sup>48</sup> In other words, relations—which point to reality but lie only in intellection (as we read in both *Ilāhiyyāt* 3.10 and the *Categories*)—allow us to think of things in respect to both their quiddity and their existence.<sup>49</sup>

Conceiving a thing *as existent*—either in the mind or in external reality—always means thinking of it in relation to other existent “things.” For this reason, although conceptual representations (which are in the soul) always correspond to an entity (in the soul or even in external reality), it is only the combination of representations that provides knowledge of reality and expresses conceived things within the framework of truth and falsehood. In other words, the true intellection of the world never comprises things considered “atomically” (in their quiddity). Logical truth is syntactic: it always concerns things recognized as part of a whole; it

always concerns the relationships that things establish among themselves (regardless of whether they are related to the quiddity of the thing, to mental existence, or to external existence).

In brief, then: as for Aristotle, so also for Avicenna, existence (being) is a guarantee of the truth that is always expressed only propositionally. However, when Aristotle speaks of truth as a possible predicate of a proposition, the basis of what he says is an analysis of being that envisages substance (i.e., the individually existing substance, the *to de ti*, *al-mushār ilay-hi*) and its predication. When Avicenna speaks of truth (or truthfulness) in the sense of correspondence, his background is totally different: the foundation of Avicenna's ontology is no longer to be found in the substance and unity of being, but instead in its internal and inescapable division and the consequent composition which recognizes in things an essence or quiddity and an existence. It is in this sense that the ontological background of Avicenna's theory of truth lies in relations, logical and ontological.

### **Truth as Reality: The Principle (Truth as Permanent and Primary)**

Thus, we understand how Avicenna considers the traditional predicative conception of (discursive) truth: truth is nothing but the correspondence with existence—both external and mental—and its relations. But how should one then define the truth that corresponds to the being of the First Principle?

In the case of the Necessarily Existent, the distinction between quiddity and existence, which substantiates representation and assent, fades, so that the conceptual representation (which theoretically corresponds to the essence) implies (or should imply) assent and existence. In the case of the Necessarily Existent, truth is, in fact, expressed through what resembles a tautology or what one might define (in anachronistic terms) as an analytical proposition: the first attribute of the Necessarily Existent, is—Avicenna declares—that It is and that It exists.<sup>50</sup> In the case of the Necessarily Existent, affirmation of existence is not added to, but included in the conceptual representation of It.

Therefore, in the case of the Necessarily Existent, and only in Its case, truth is expressed as what it really is: an ontological independence, an absolute primacy, not derived from any other (exactly as in the case of the principle of non-contradiction), and therefore a stability, a permanence (and consequently, a pre-eternity). For this reason, as Avicenna states in conclusion—making use, in fact, of a locution which goes back to al-Kindī and even before him to the Arabic Plotinus (the pseudo-*Theology* of Aristotle)—the Necessarily Existent is exactly *al-awwal al-ḥaqq*, the First Reality, or that which is in Itself the First Truth: reality itself.<sup>51</sup> When truth is exactly what it is (eternal existence that is not dependent on anything<sup>52</sup>), the distinction between the two spheres of logic and ontology

fades: to be true or real means conceiving the Necessarily Existent as existing beyond any relation.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the First Necessary Principle leads to resolving the distinction that the two levels (that of essence and that of existence, which may correspond to the noetic and the dianoetic) suggest. In the case of the Principle, in fact, the affirmation of truth is no longer possible only by virtue of relations: the Necessarily Existent Principle has no quiddity as distinct from existence;<sup>54</sup> our very thought in itself of the Principle, in Its necessity, is not indifferent to truth, no longer neutral as regards truth.

And clearly, once the Necessarily Existent is Itself defined as true (or real)<sup>55</sup>—in the *Risāla fī aqṣām al-‘ulūm al-‘aqliyya* (Epistle on the Divisions of the Rational Sciences), one of the divisions of *Metaphysics* (the third) demonstrates the existence (*ithbāt*) of the First Reality (or Truth: *al-ḥaqq*) and Its attributes<sup>56</sup>—anything that is not the Necessarily Existent must unavoidably be defined in itself as false (or vain or inconsistent or non-existent).

In terms of the logical truth, this analysis leads to isolating a realm—existence—that is necessary (in itself or by virtue of another) and therefore true, and a realm or sphere—that of the possibility of an essence (the possible)—of which, as such, truth cannot be predicated (this realm is neutral as regards truth). On the level of ontological truth, though, things are different and there is no symmetry: if the realm of existence and necessity is also the realm of reality (absolutely, i.e., indefinitely, as it applies to everything that is, but properly and truly as it is said of what is continuous or eternal and independent), possibility is no longer neutral as regards reality, but vain or false (*bāṭil*) or unreal and untrue.

The Aristotelian correspondence between non-being and being false (*Metaphysics* Δ 7; E 2, 4; Θ 10; cf. Γ)—which, at the logical level, functions only as regards assent—is thus reacquired on the ontological level: representations are neither true nor false, but “essences” (or “quiddities” or “realities”) are, so to speak, either true, as in the case of the Necessary Existent, or false, as in the case of everything else (or, if we assume that the Necessary Existent has no quiddity, quiddities are always false). In several passages, in fact, Avicenna asserts a clear correspondence between the possible and non-being.<sup>57</sup> Certainly, one might say, there is also a way of understanding the possible, and therefore the quiddity, as neutral concerning both existence and non-existence; and yet precisely because of this neutrality, the possible cannot exist and is therefore ontologically “false.”<sup>58</sup> The equation between *Being* and *Being true*, *non-Being*, and *Being false* is restored and is applied to being together with a modal determination: existence is always necessary (by itself or by virtue of some other), and the Necessarily Existent is eternally and permanently true; conversely, the world of possible existent entities is false (*bāṭil*) (for necessity may be necessary either by virtue of a relation with some other or independently of any relation: this is ultimately the meaning of the formulas of the possibly and the necessarily existent).

The modal determination is also what explains why—even on the propositional level—the Necessary Principle is always true: the Necessarily Existent possesses in Itself the conditions of the truth of the proposition that asserts Its existence, whereas the conditions that account for the truth of the propositions that affirm the existence of possibly existing things always depend on one another and ultimately on the Necessarily Existent Itself.<sup>59</sup> The necessary is indeed, as Avicenna says in *Ilāhiyyāt* 1.5, “assuredness of existence” (which is what also explains why the necessary is one of the primary notions).<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, if what is in itself possible does not exist as such (and is not true), clearly, once it is considered as existing (i.e., as something which is necessary by virtue of the relation *nisba*, *‘alāqa* to its cause), it must be less true than what is always and unconditionally true.<sup>61</sup>

In terms of ontology, truth (reality) is, in fact, primarily attributed to the Necessarily Existent. This is clearly seen in the context of the discussion of the divine attributes. In a passage of *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.6, the terms truthfulness or veracity are evoked with reference to assent (or verification); here, too, Avicenna uses the term that indicates the conviction or belief (*i‘tiqād*), which can be seen as a substitute for *taṣḍīq* (so we read in *Ilāhiyyāt* 8.6<sup>62</sup>), and truth is ascribed primarily to the Necessarily Existent (which is the Truth and the Reality).<sup>63</sup>

As noted, the attribution of the eminent sense of truth to the Necessarily Existent also allows us to regain the split between Being as it is expressed by essence (neither true nor false), and Being as it is expressed by existence (either true or false). Yet, again, it is crucial to point out that this splitting applies only to the extent that the distinction between representation and assent is under consideration: the essence that is conceived in itself is neither true nor false (see also *Ilāhiyyāt* 5.1); it is false (because it can exist and then be non-existent) only in relation to assent (i.e., in relation to the affirmation of the existence of the thing, which cannot be affirmed beyond a relation to the cause of the thing). Moreover, if truth is independence and primacy, quiddities, which exist in the things by virtue of their cause (and are neither independent nor primary as regards existence), are false.

### **Truth as Reality: The Essences**

Nevertheless, from another point of view, quiddities are true and real. In fact, Avicenna ascribes an ontological sense of truth even to essence: in the fifth section of the first book—the same section we already referred to when evoking the conception of the first intelligible notions—Avicenna indicates the “what is” of the thing as its reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*) and equates it to quiddity (and to “proper existence,” which must be distinguished from the established or affirmed existence):

The thing, or its equivalent, may be used in all languages to indicate some other meaning. For, to everything there is a reality by virtue

of which it is what it is. Thus, the triangle has a reality in that it is a triangle, and whiteness has a reality in that it is whiteness. It is that which we should perhaps call “proper existence,” not intending by this the meaning given to affirmative [or established] existence; for the expression “existence” is also used to denote many meanings, one of which is the reality a thing happens to have. Thus, [the reality] a thing happens to have is, as it were, its proper existence. To resume, we say: it is evident that each thing has a reality proper to it—namely its quiddity. It is known that the reality proper to each thing is something other than the existence that corresponds to what is affirmed [or established].<sup>64</sup>

Avicenna offers two examples: the triangle and whiteness. The triangle has a *reality* in that it is a triangle, and whiteness also has a *reality* in that it is whiteness.<sup>65</sup> In *Metaphysics* Θ 10, 1052a5ff., Aristotle gives the example of the triangle, which does not change (it is immutable, it is one of the *akineta*) in so far as it (always) has angles which are equal to two right angles.<sup>66</sup>

Thus Avicenna adds to the ontological sense of truth that is expressed by existence, an ontological sense of truth that is expressed by quiddity (and remains at the level of quiddity and of proper existence). If, in terms of logic, quiddity corresponds to a conception and is therefore indifferent regarding truth, and if on the ontological level, which is related to existence (which reflects the existential link between things), quiddity is neither existent nor non-existent and is therefore non-existent and false, at the ontological quidditative level, quiddity is instead an instantiation of truth or reality: quiddity itself is reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*) or the reality of a thing.<sup>67</sup>

This obviously plays a role from a gnoseological perspective as well. In discussing the meaning of correspondence (*muṭābaqa*), Avicenna also introduces the concept of form. The quidditative reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*) of the thing must be found in the form, which ultimately corresponds to (perceived) reality itself.<sup>68</sup> The reference to Aristotle clearly illustrates the meaning of the distinction in Avicenna: quiddity is reality because, to the extent that it is quiddity, it is always and necessarily as it is (as Aristotle pointed out in *Metaphysics* Θ 10<sup>69</sup>). In other words, in the case of quiddity, too, Avicenna bases the concept of truth/reality on what we have already mentioned: independence, ontological primacy, and permanence. The essence of a thing, as such, is always first, identical to itself, indivisible, eternal, necessary, and therefore true. It is only in respect to existence that essence is either possible (false) or necessary (true).

### Concluding Remarks

Clearly, in *Ilāhiyyāt* 1.8, Avicenna reminds us of the three areas (and therefore the three senses) of the term *al-ḥaqq*: first, that of reality, second, that of divine reality (*al-ḥaqq* is one of the names of God<sup>70</sup>), and last, that of

truthfulness or veracity. The first consequence, on the ontological level, of this triple meaning or intention (*ma'nā*) of what is true is the affirmation of eternal or continuous and primary, independent truth with regard to the Necessarily Existent Principle: to exist independently and eternally—that is, to be always as one—is one of the meanings of “being true,” and it is indeed the first of them, since only that which *is* continuously, regardless of the relationships it has with other things, is properly true. Here Avicenna is very close to the sense of truth one finds in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* α, 1 as to the meaning of truth to be found in al-Kindī and in the Arabic Plotinus: the real truth—what is really true—is that which exists always.<sup>71</sup> This first meaning of truth reveals a sort of remnant of Platonism: eternal being (the eternal being of eternal forms, which properly *are*) is here opposed to the pseudo-being (not entirely true) of all “created” entities, which *become* (or in Avicenna's terms, which pass from possibility to necessity).

It is on the basis of the same Platonic or Neoplatonic principles that Avicenna ascribes reality to quiddity. Truth is quidditative because quiddity in itself is necessary, first and eternal; it is only in relation to existence, not in itself, that quiddity is always indeterminate and therefore neither true nor false (and hence ultimately false): considered as such, the *ḥaqīqa* of *vacuum* is as “real” as that of man or angel. However, once the relations that it implies are expressed, quiddity always refers to a kind of existence, because—as Avicenna declares in the famous and difficult passage that discusses universality—quiddity, if it exists (see the sense of existence which lies in relations), is always either mental (and universal) or concrete and individual.<sup>72</sup>

This brings us to the other side of ontological truth: the truth of existence, which always (except in the case of the Principle) depends on a relation. It is in relation that a quiddity finds its necessity (as regards existence, by virtue of some other), and it is in relation that truth and truthfulness lie. Only the Necessarily Existent is independent of analysis, of relation, and of the distinction between existence and quiddity; the Necessarily Existent is the only entity in which the existentially true, the truthful, and (so to speak) the “quidditative” reality appear in the first and same way.

Thus, the last element of the analysis of existence is what Avicenna defines existence *not at the condition of*.<sup>73</sup> This is Being in a universal or common sense: the existence of which we speak when we consider everything that exists, the subject matter of *Metaphysics*, which is subjected to analysis and hence divided into possibility and necessity, or, more precisely, divided into necessity by itself and necessity by virtue of some other thing. This existence is the expression of the incontrovertibility of the principle of non-contradiction (being *is* because the negation of it would be absolute non-being, which is not). This existence corresponds to the first sense of truth: the indeterminate or absolute sense of existence Avicenna refers to in *Ilāhiyyāt* 1.8. Nevertheless, the First Necessary Principle, which is said at *the condition of non*, in that It is absolutely non-composite, is also

(although in a different sense) the guarantee of the analysis.<sup>74</sup> Since the Principle is something to which analysis cannot be applied, Its existence is actually analytical:<sup>75</sup> the Principle is the truth in an absolute sense and the very source of every truth at both the existential and the quidditative levels.<sup>76</sup>

One might therefore sum up the fundamental elements of Avicenna's doctrine of truth as follows: (1) as a foundation, truth is the truth of being, and it coincides with reality and, more precisely, with the reality that cannot be further analyzed. On this level, the being which is true in the first sense: (1a) is a reality (the Necessarily Existent), which is the foundation of existence (and ultimately of knowledge, which is constructed as a chain exactly as reality is); (1b) the proposition that expresses the existence of necessity; this is also absolutely true, i.e., outside of any relation (insofar as it is not reducible to any other proposition, this statement is a tautology); the being that is true at this level is also: (1c) a truth (the principle of non-contradiction) that is the foundation of all truths; (1d) the quiddity as such. (2) Everything else is true because it derives from some other thing, and thus it is demonstrated to be true (truthful) but in itself it is false (it corresponds to the possible), and it is true only in virtue of its relation with some other thing. This last statement is valid both (2a) at the level of truth or truthfulness (every statement is true with regard to the fundamental principle of truth) and (2b) at the level of existent reality (things that exist, and are therefore true in an absolute sense—which also means before analysis—are in themselves false and acquire truth or reality only by virtue of their relation to some other thing; every proposition is true only if it is viewed in relation to the proposition that affirms the existence of the Necessary Principle).

In short, if being true at the ontological level means—in a Parmenidean sense—being eternal and independent, we must ascribe truth to (1) the principle of non-contradiction and therefore: (2) being as such, and the so-called primary notions, which are, in fact, necessarily true; (3) the reality (the quiddity) of a thing in an indeterminate sense; (4) the Necessarily Existent. All these elements cannot be demonstrated by a proper demonstration but are grasped by virtue of an immediate, noetic act of intellection (Avicenna proposes a demonstration of the existence of the Necessarily Existent, but every argument intended as an explanation of Its existence uses either relations or tautologies<sup>77</sup>). In fact, all existent things (which are existent and therefore true only by virtue of their relation to their cause) are true in a derivative sense; so are all the propositions that refer to them: they are supported by assent and ultimately demonstrated by the Necessarily Existent.

In other words, there is an original (authentic or “true”) truth, which is reality, and a derivative truth (or reality). The former consists of analytical elements (on which analysis is based); the latter belongs to the world of synthesis, the world of individuals and propositions (which are



necessary by virtue of other). The differences they reveal depend on the different modulations of the two logico-ontological elements that constitute Avicenna's ontology: essence and existence. What remains at the dianoetic level is the logical truth, which concerns the derived propositions of everything that constitutes the world of the things that are not the Necessary Existent Principle (and therefore the relations between existent things which are necessary by virtue of other, not in themselves).

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## Notes

- 1 On analysis, see Beaney, "Analysis"; for a historical approach, Chase, "*Quod est primum in compositione*," and Chase's bibliography. A very general overview, especially as regards modern and contemporary thought, is given by Engfer and Essler, "Analyse"; a thorough study in Hintikka and Remes, *Method of Analysis*; a critical and historical approach (on mental, existential, and semantic analysis) in Emanuele, *Il mito dell'analisi*. For analysis as regards the mathematics in Avicenna, see Rashed, "Avicenne."
- 2 Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Shifā': Al-Ilāhiyyāt* 1. 8, ed. Anawati and Zāyid (hereafter *Ilāh.*), 48.5–16. See Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics of "The Healing"* 38–39. For the revision of the text, see the two recent Italian translations: Avicenna, *Metafisica*, trans. Lizzini; Avicenna, *Libro della guarigione*, trans. Bertolacci (see also the project for the new edition: [www.avicennaproject.eu/#/project/intro](http://www.avicennaproject.eu/#/project/intro)). For the edition of the Latin text, see Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia*, ed. Van Riet.
- 3 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Books Γ, Δ, and E*, trans. Kirwan; Cassin and Narcy, *La décision du sens*; Aristote, *Métaphysique livre IV*, trans. Cachia; Wedin, "Scope of Non-Contradiction." A partial analysis of the use of the principle in medieval philosophy is to be found in Goris, "Foundation of the Principle." Avicenna's quotations from *Metaphysics Γ* are listed and contextualized in Bertolacci, "La ricezione del libro Γ"; see also Bertolacci, *Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics*.
- 4 See Aristotle, *Metaph.* I 7, 1057a33, Γ 3–4, 7. Avicenna clearly uses the principle as equivalent to that of non-contradiction. On this, see Houser, "Place of the First Principle"; Houser, "Let Them Suffer." The use of the principle of the excluded middle might be related to the *kalām* discussion on the meaning of the "thing," which according to the Mu'tazilite is both existent and non-existent. I do not intend to discuss this topic in depth here; for some references, see Jolivet, "Aux origines de l'ontologie"; Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics*, 150–52; Druart, "Shay' or res"; Lizzini, "Il nulla (*al-'adam*).” See also Benevich, "Reality of the Non-Existent Object."
- 5 See Houser, "Let Them Suffer."



- 6 In some cases one finds a general, indeterminate sense of truth-reality; see, e.g., *Ilāh.* 2. 4, 82.16; 3.6, 128.8; *ḥaqīq* in 3. 1, 93.10 on the reality of accidents; in 3. 7, 137.2 *ḥaqīq* is the passage to reality of the essence (cf. 5. 9, 252.9); for truth as authenticity, see, e.g., 3. 2, 98.14. Among the senses of what is continuous, there is one which is real; see 3. 2, 99.11: *bi-l-ḥaqīqa*; 7. 3, 322.8 on the reality of things and essences, which is also an Aristotelian topic, see below. On these occurrences and their meanings, see also De Haan, “Avicenna’s *Healing*.” De Haan’s thorough analysis of the text intends to show the epistemological, ontological, aetiological, and theological dimensions of Avicenna’s doctrine of truth.
- 7 *Ilāh.* 1. 8, 48.5–7, trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics of “The Healing,”* 38 (slightly modified; cf. Bertolacci’s translation in the project for the new edition: [www.avicennaproject.eu/#/edition/ibn-sina-ilahiyyat\\_02\\_tr1/text](http://www.avicennaproject.eu/#/edition/ibn-sina-ilahiyyat_02_tr1/text)); Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia*, ed. Van Riet, 3:55.59–61: “veritas [. . .] intelligitur dispositio dictionis vel intellectus qui significat dispositionem in re exteriori cum est ei aequalis. Dicimus enim: ‘haec dictio est vera’ et ‘haec sententia est vera.’”
- 8 For a first terminological survey, see Goichon, *Lexique*. Jolivet already highlighted the importance of the term: Jolivet, *L’intellect selon Kindi*, 90, note: “*ḥaqīqa*, état réel d’une chose; *ḥaqq*, vérité en un sens universel, jusqu’au point où coïncident la réalité et la vérité la plus universelle, c’est-à-dire jusqu’à la source de la vérité et de la réalité, Dieu [. . .]; *ḥaqq*, dans le Coran, est un nom divin.”
- 9 For the locution *fī l’a’yān*, see Goichon, *Lexique*, 257–58. Avicenna seems to refer here to external or concrete existence in opposition to mental existence. The question of mental existence is crucial: for Avicenna existence can be either concrete (*fī l’a’yān*) or mental (*‘aqlī* or *dihnī*).
- 10 See Goichon, *Lexique*, 82–84. The meanings according to Goichon’s presentation are: (1) *ḥaqīqa* as being as it is proper to something (*khuṣūṣiyya wujūd*: cf. *Ilāh.* 8. 6, 356.10 et seq.: “the reality of each thing is the proper being that is established for it”; cf. *al-wujūd al-khāṣṣ* in 1. 5); (2) as essence or quiddity or the meaning of the definition of a given thing; (3) as the exact conception or representation of a given thing (see below as regards the essence). For “reality” in relation to the inquiry about the subject matter of metaphysics, see *Ilāh.* 1. 1, 5.5 (*ḥaqq*); the reality of a subject matter (*ma’nā muḥaqqaq*) also in 1. 2, 12.14; for the reality of the thing (*tahaqquq*), see 1. 2, 16.4; in relation to definition (*ta’rif wa-tahqīq*), see 2. 1, 61.6 and 62.9 (*tahaqquq*); reality as a synonymous of nature, see 3. 1, 95.14; establishing the reality of something: 2. 1, 66.15, 7. 3, 322.8; for reality as essence or reality or form, see 2. 1, 68.6 et seq.; in 2. 3 the notion of “reality” (*ḥaqīqa*) is associated to that of “subsistence” (*qiwām*); for reality as quiddity, see 3. 8, 141.8 and 11; 3. 10, 156.6; see also 3. 3, 104–10: the whole section is about the “reality of the one and the multiple”; as the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of potency and act, i.e., as the meaning of potency and act, see 4. 2. 184.2 et seq.; as the reality of existence (*ḥaqīqat al-wujūd*), i.e. as the meaning of existence, see 4. 3. 188.5; as meaning and quiddity (*ḥaqīqa*), see 5. 1. 2, 202.2 et seq.; as the reality of the form, see 5. 4, 224.7; as the quiddity or reality or nature of the soul (*ḥaqīqa*), see 5. 7, 237.3; as reality as opposed to consequents, see 3. 5, 122.8; 5. 7, 237.16; as reality in the sense of entity or thing, see 5. 7, 241.16; individual as the reality of species, see 5. 8, 247.1; as realization and mental realization, see 5. 9, 252.14 et seq.; as nature (and existence of the essence), see 6. 1, 259.17; as essence (*ḥaqīqa*) in correlation to existence, 6. 3, 268.14–15 and 278.5 et seq.; as related to quiddity, definition and “whatness” (or quiddity: *māhiyya*) or “thingness” (*shay’iyya*), see 6. 5,

- 292.5 et seq.; cf. 7. 2, 315. 3 et seq., 8, 348.17 et seq., 9. 4, 409.6 et seq.; 9. 7, 424.2 et seq.; as a nature and existent nature or existence corresponding to an intention or mental existence, see 8. 4, 345.6 et seq.; as nature and existent nature in relation to the First principle, see 8. 5, 349.11 et seq.; cf. 8. 5, 350.10 et seq.; in this respect, see 8. 6, 356.10 et seq.; cf. *Ilāh*. 1. 5 and 8. 7, 363.1 et seq.; cf. 10. 2, 442.19; as truth or reality in general (*al-ḥaqq*), see 2. 4, 82.16, 3. 6, 128.8, 9. 7, 424.4 and 429.3; cf. 10. 1, 439.1, 10. 2, 443.8 (*al-ḥaqq*); or as the real meaning of a given position (3. 6, 128.1); in opposition to falsity or vanity, 9. 3, 396.3; the intelligible reality, see *Ilāh*. 9. 4, 403.9.
- 11 On truth in general, see Berti, *La ricerca della verità*, which offers a general investigation. See also Austin, "Truth"; Kaluza, "Veritas"; Brague, O'Meara, and Schüssler, "Vérité"; Aenishanslin et al., *La vérité*. On Aristotle and Ancient philosophy, see Crivelli, *Aristotle on Truth*, which analyzes in depth Aristotle's conception of truth on the basis of the main texts, namely, the *Categories* (4, 5, 10, and 12), *De interpretatione* (1–9), *Sophistici Elenchi* (25), *De anima* (3.6), and the *Metaphysics* (Γ 7, Δ 7, Δ 29, E 4, Θ 10). Other references include Galluzzo, "Il tema della verità"; Enders and Szaif, "Geschichte des Wahrheitsbegriffs"; Woleński, "Aletheia in Greek Thought." On the conception of truth in the Middle Ages, Aertsen, "Fröhliche Wissenschaft"; Aertsen, "Truth in the Middle Ages"; Kann, "Wahrheit als *adaequatio*"; Kobusch, "*Adaequatio rei et intellectus*"; in general, see Cesalli and Goubier, "La notion de vérité." The questions of knowledge and certitude are implicit here; see Black, "Certitude"; Strobino, "Avicenna on Knowledge"; Strobino, "*Per se*." On Avicenna, see De Haan, "Avicenna's *Healing*"; Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*.
  - 12 Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-'Ibāna*, ed. El-Khodeira, 72.15–16 and compare the whole passage. Existence is both mental and concrete.
  - 13 See *Ilāh*. 1. 8, 48.6–7, also 5–9.
  - 14 See Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Burhān* 1. 5, ed. Affī, 69.14–17.
  - 15 *Ilāh*. 1. 8, 48.5–16. On the *Posterior Analytics*, see Strobino, "Avicenna's Use of the Arabic Translations"; Strobino, "Avicenna on the Indemonstrability" (with an appendix containing the English translation of Avicenna's *Book of Demonstration* 4. 2).
  - 16 In a very general sense, the corresponding terms for *nous* and *dianoia* are 'aql and *fikr* (e.g., Goichon, *Lexique*); 'aql can also—occasionally—refer to the activity of *dianoia*.
  - 17 *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 29.5–8, 30.3–5, 31.2–9, 36.4–6.
  - 18 The edited Arabic text has both *mawjūd* and *wujūd*, but *wujūd* is suggested as the correct reading in more than one case by Bertolacci, "Distinction."
  - 19 For the literature, see the contributions cited in note 24 below.
  - 20 See Bertolacci, "'Necessary' as Primary Concept." Avicenna uses both *ḍarūrī* and *wājib* (see *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 29.5 and 35.7 for the first; 35.3 and 36.4 for the second). The first term normally appears with "obligatory," although that adjective often indicates an ethical sense, and the second, which some interpreters read in fact as "that is necessary in existence," is more frequent and enters in the metaphysical terminology to indicate the Necessarily Existent Principle: *al-wājib al-wujūd*. For *wājib* in theology, see Gardet, *Dieu et la destinée*, 83–84; *ḍarūrī* should mean "obligatory" and therefore "inevitable" but the translation given here is the usual one: *wājib* is "nécessaire" also for Goichon and Anawati. Inati distinguishes the two terms as "necessary in existence" and "necessary" (Avicenna, *Remarks and Admonitions*, 91 n. 4). On the distinction between the two, see also Avicenna, *La logique du fils de Sina* (see the "remarques" at 52.20); the distinction is highlighted also by Michot in his edition of Avicenna, *Livre de la genèse*, 5–6 n. 8.

- 21 Cf. *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 30.4: “The ideas [*mā‘ānī* = meanings, intentions, notions] of the ‘existent’ [or: ‘existence’], the ‘thing,’ and the ‘necessary’ are impressed in the soul in a primary way [. . .]. The things that have the highest claim to be conceived in themselves are those common to all matters—as, for example, ‘the existent’ (existence) the ‘one,’ the ‘thing’” (trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics of “The Healing,”* 22–23, modified).
- 22 Cf. *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 30.4; on the one, see *Ilāh*. 3. 2, 3. 3, 3. 6. On primary notions and the subject of transcendentals, see Aertsen, “Avicenna’s Doctrine”; de Libera, “D’Avicenne à Averroès”; Koutzarova, *Das Transzendente*. On the Latin tradition, see Aertsen, “Gibt es eine mittelalterliche Philosophie?”; Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*; Goris, *Transzendente Einheit*.
- 23 *Ilāh*. 1. 8, 54.16–17; trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics of “The Healing,”* 44 (slightly modified).
- 24 Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics*; Wisnovsky, “Notes on Avicenna’s Concept of Thingness”; Druart, “*Shay*’ or *res*”; Bertolacci, “Distinction,” which also offers a survey of the various interpretations, 260–61 and footnotes. According to the dominant reading, “thing” and “existent” have the same extension but not the same intension; some interpreters, however, refer to the different extension of the terms (for some of the occurrences, see Wisnovsky, *Avicenna’s Metaphysics*, 158–60). God is not a *thing* (a thing is in fact always what exists, as it has an essence or quiddity). The issue is also discussed in Janos, *Avicenna*. For another reading, see De Haan, “*Avicenna’s Healing.*”
- 25 Reality means here literally what refers to the *res* aspect of a thing; in Avicenna’s terms it implies possibility, it is related to quiddity (and “proper existence”; see *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 31.2–9) and can refer to mental existence; in that sense “reality” is opposed to “established existence” or—as Marmura translates it—“affirmative existence.” Sometimes *itbāt* is taken as a synonym of “reality,” but in order to avoid confusion, I prefer to speak about established existence, “existent reality,” or “realized existence.”
- 26 *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 31.1–32.5; but see *Ilāh*. 8. 5, 349.17, where one finds the *ḥaqīqat wājib al-wujūd* and cf. 350.3; therefore *ḥaqīqa* seems to be not a simple synonym of quiddity (*māhiyya*): the quiddity of the First Principle coincides with Its existence, which clearly is not synonymous with general or absolute existence; nonetheless, the First has a reality and is even the most real of all realities (see below). This element comes up also in al-Ghazālī; see *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, the Eighth discussion. A thoughtful analysis of this issue (together with a revolutionary interpretation of quiddity) is provided by Janos, *Avicenna*, for example in his analysis of Text 29.
- 27 This same conclusion is drawn from the division (*inqisām*) of the concept of existence—according to its relationship to necessity—on which Avicenna focuses in the sixth section of the first book of his *Metaphysics*, *Ilāh*. 1. 6, 37.6–10: “The things that enter existence bear a [possible] twofold division in the intellect: there will be that whose existence, when considered in itself, would be not necessary: it is clear that its existence would also not be impossible, since otherwise it would not enter existence. This thing is within the bounds of possibility. There will also be among them that whose existence, when considered in itself, would be necessary” (trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics of “The Healing,”* 29–30, slightly modified). This brings up the question of the nuanced univocacy that rules both Avicenna’s ontology and his theology; I have provided some references in Lizzini, “Ibn Sina’s Metaphysics.”
- 28 See also de Libera, *L’art des généralités*, 598. A question remains, and is that of the sense of the distinction between essence and existence: is it logical or real? On this, see Janos, *Avicenna*, and among others, Bertolacci, “Distinction”; De Haan, “Mereological Construal”; Lizzini, “*Wuḡūd-Mawḡūd.*”

- 29 Another possible translation for the term *taṣḍīq* is “verification” (see, e.g., McGinnis, *Avicenna*). On the concept, see Madkour, *L'Organon d'Aristote*, 53–56; Wolfson, “Terms *taṣawwur* and *taṣḍīq*”; van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre*, 95–113, esp. 101; Jadaane, *L'influence du stoïcisme* (see Rosenthal, Review of Jadaane, *L'influence*); Sabra, “Avicenna”; Black, *Logic*, 75–76; Maróth, “*Taṣawwur* and *Taṣḍīq*”; Lameer, *Conception and Belief*, esp. 3–35.
- 30 In this sense, predication and assent concern what exists in the soul and accidentally what is in external reality; see *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 34.8–9. The conception of something seems therefore to be based on the possibility of the link with external reality. This is clearly explained by the conception of mental existence: what is possible exists in the mind and has a possible link to reality; see *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 33.12–15: “We say only that we have knowledge of the nonexistent, because when the meaning occurs only in the soul and no reference to [what is] external to the soul is made by it, then what is known would be only that very thing in the soul. The assent, occurring in terms of the two parts of what is conceived, consists in [affirming] that it is possible that, in the nature of the thing known, an intellectually apprehended relation to what is external should occur (there being no [such] relation, however, at the present time. Nothing other than this is known” (trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics* of “*The Healing*,” 26). For the relation between predication and truth, see *De interpretatione* 1. 1, 16a9–19; *De anima* 3. 6, 430a26–28 and 3. 8, 432a10–14; *Anal. Post.* 1. 1, 71a1–2, 11–13. The *logos apophantikos* is the only one that can be true or false; *De int.* 4, 17a1–8; cf. *De anima* 430a26–28, 432a14; *Metaph.* Γ and Θ 10. Calogero, *I fondamenti della logica aristotelica*, is still interesting.
- 31 See Lizzini, “*Intellectus, intelligentia, mens*”; see also Lizzini, “Human Knowledge and Separate Intellect.”
- 32 Here the difficulty clearly appears: on the one hand, the conception of the thing corresponds to mental existence; on the other, existence (and also mental existence) depends on the judgment.
- 33 *Kitāb al-Madhal* [= *Isagoge*] 1. 3, ed. Bāshā et al., 17.7–17: “Something is scientifically understood [yu'lamu: known] in two respects: one of them is that it is conceptualized only, such that if it has a name and [the name] is uttered, then what [the name] means is exemplified in the mind [*dihm*], and this despite the fact that there is here neither truth [*ṣidq*] nor falsehood [*kadb*], such as when ‘man’ or ‘do such and such’ is said, for when you attend to the meaning of that which you are discussing, then you have conceptualized it. The second is verification [assent: *taṣḍīq*] together with the conceptualization, and so, for example, when you are told that ‘all white is an accident,’ then from this not only do you conceptualize the meaning [*ma'nā*] of this statement, but also you verify that it is such. As for when you have doubts whether or not it is such, you still have conceptualized what is said (for you do not have doubts about what you have neither conceptualized nor understood); however, you have not verified it yet. All verification [assent], then, is together with a conceptualization, but not conversely. In the case of what this [statement] means, the conceptualization informs you that [both] the form of this composite [statement] and that from which it is composed (like ‘white’ and ‘accident’) occur in the mind, whereas [in] verification, this form’s relation to the things themselves occurs in the mind, that is, [the form in the mind] maps unto (*muṭābiqa*) [the things themselves].” Trans. McGinnis (slightly modified and emphasis added), *Avicenna*, 29.
- 34 In this sense, they are not analytical parts of the whole (the judgment): nevertheless, analysis should lead to the component parts of the whole. See Chase, “*Quod est primum in compositione*.”
- 35 Each conception, which in itself is simple and therefore implies the act of *noesis*, is both the result and the origin of an assent (*taṣḍīq*) to a judgment,

- and refers to a dianoetic act. I elaborate this point in Lizzini, “Pleasure of Knowledge.”
- 36 And these relations, those that give rise to a judgment, take place only in intellection and are based on what Avicenna calls “second intelligible intentions,” namely, on those intentions that, since they refer not to reality but to the concepts that were derived from it, are the subject-matter of logic. See, among others, Sabra, “Avicenna.”
- 37 And this should confirm the fact that intellectual knowledge is primarily the result of the donation/reception of intellectual forms from the Giver of the intellect.
- 38 Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Ta‘līqāt*, ed. Badawī, 120.28–121.10. See Adamson, “Non-Discursive Thought.”
- 39 Concepts are unitary but not simple: “horse” is in fact a species belonging to the genus “animal” and thus might be expressed by a definition, i.e., a composite; other concepts are the propositions that modern philosophy calls performative (“Do this!” or “Shall we go?”). This last kind of proposition (orders and invitations, etc.) is also part of the language of Revelation.
- 40 An analysis of the sea battle and the related questions in al-Fārābī is provided by Adamson, “Arabic Sea Battle.”
- 41 See Lizzini, “Pleasure of Knowledge.”
- 42 In *De interpretatione* (16a16), Aristotle refers to the non-existent animal in order to confirm the idea, which is already in Plato’s *Sophist*, that the single name in itself has no truth value.
- 43 Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Burhān*, 72–77; cf. Marmura, “Avicenna on Meno’s Paradox.” Autonomy from external reality also means that, as regards conceptions, the soul remains within itself, so to speak: it can conceive or even simply imagine objects that might (also) exist in external reality, but that exist first of all in the soul and are so considered. In this sense, it could be said that it is only in assent that the soul comes out, so to speak, of itself and encounters external reality. However, one must keep in mind that for Avicenna, reality or existence does not indicate only external existence, but also simple mental existence: even sentences like “man (i.e., a human being) is rational” or “the chimera is an imaginary animal” require assent, despite the fact that their significance as a whole is—one might say—enclosed within the limits of thought (and quiddity; quiddity and universality do not coincide according to Avicenna; see, e.g., *Ilāh*. 5. 1–2). Thus a sentence like “the chimera is an imaginary animal” establishes the mental existence of an intelligible—the chimera—and does so by means of the possibility of a link or an implicit comparison with external reality; see note 31. Imagination and the question of “vain intelligible forms” are related to this; see Michot, “Avicenna’s ‘Letter’”; Sebti, “L’imagination”; Sebti, “Le statut ontologique de l’image.”
- 44 See *Ilāh*. 3. 10; *Maqūlāt* 4. 3.
- 45 See the passage in *Ilāh*. 1. 8; cf. 1. 1, 4: in defining both the theoretical and the practical sciences, Avicenna uses “vision” and “belief” in place of “representation” and “assent.”
- 46 See *Ibāra* 1. 1, 2.15–3.5.
- 47 One should, incidentally, also note that this passage from the Latin version of Avicenna’s text has been partially misunderstood. The text of Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive Scientia divina*, contains *intellectus*, probably because instead of the term ‘*aqd*, the Latin translator read or thought he was reading the term ‘*aql* “intellect” (which looks, in Arabic script, very similar to ‘*aqd*). The Latin translation of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics*—as generally indicated by studies—can therefore be considered the source, or one of the sources, of the

- Scholastic doctrine of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* or *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia*, ed. Van Riet, 1:55.59–61: “veritas [. . .] intelligitur dispositio dictionis vel intellectus qui significat dispositionem in re exteriori cum est ei aequalis. Dicimus enim: ‘haec dictio est vera’ et ‘haec sententia est vera.’” On truth as *adaequatio*, see Pöltner, “Veritas”; Aertsen, *Medieval Reflections on Truth*; Wippel, “Truth in Thomas Aquinas”; Aertsen, “Truth and Transcendentals”; Schulz, *Veritas*; Woleński, “Contributions.”
- 48 *Ilāh*. 8. 4, 343.16–344.5: “in the case of every existent, certain modes of existence, varied and multiple, are negated of it. And every existent has a species of relation and reference toward [the other] existents [or: all that exists has some sort of relation to (*idāfa*) and connection with (*nisba*) the other existing things]”; the passage concerns the First Principle: “and especially the one from which flows every existence. But [what] we mean by our statement that It is one in essence and does not become multiple is that It is as such in Itself [Marmura: ‘in His essence’]. If, thereafter, many positive and negative relations become attendant on It, these are necessary concomitants of the essence that are caused by the essence; they exist after the existence of the essence, do not render the essence subsistent, and are not parts of it” (trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics of “The Healing,”* 273, slightly modified and emphasis added). In his theory of relation, Avicenna identifies both relations that depend on the quiddity or suchness of a thing (which are relations in the proper sense), and relations that depend on existence. On Avicenna’s conception of relation, see Zghal, “La relation chez Avicenne”; Marmura, “Avicenna’s Chapter on the Relative.” I devoted some remarks to this question in Lizzini, “Causality as Relation.”
- 49 Even the idea of what is possible in itself, which is necessary by virtue of some other thing, can be explained by relation. See Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, 547–48.
- 50 *Ilāh*. 8. 7, 367.12–15 and 368.11–12: “If [further] ascertained, [it would be shown that] the primary attribute of the Necessary Existent consists in His being a that [It is] and It exists. Then [respecting] the other attributes, some will include the meaning of this existence with a relation, [and] some [will include the meaning] of this existence with a negation. Not one of [the attributes] necessitates at all either multiplicity or difference in It [Marmura: ‘in His essence’: *fī dhātī-hī*]. [. . .] If the attributes of the First, the Real [the Truth, the True one], are apprehended intellectually in this manner, nothing will be found in them that would necessitate parts or multiplicity for It [Marmura: ‘for His essence’: *li-dhātīhī*] in any manner whatsoever.” (Trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics of “The Healing,”* 296–97, slightly modified and emphasis added).
- 51 Permanence leads to truth or is truth: if something is permanent, it is always true to say that it is. In that sense, the relationship between the ontological and the logical sense of truth is very strong (see, e.g., in Parmenides); *Ilāh*. 8. 4, 343.16–344.5; *Ilāh*. 8. 6, 356.8–15. The locution is found in al-Kindī, *al-Falsafa al-ūlā* 41.3–45.15; 45.16–53.5; cf. Abū Rīda, *Rasā’il al-Kindī al-falsafiyya*; Ivry, *Al-Kindī’s Metaphysics*; see Adamson, “Al Kindī,” 38; Bertolacci, “‘Necessary’ as Primary Concept,” 34. For the ps.-*Theology of Aristotle*, see, e.g., *Aflūṭīn ‘inda al-‘Arab*, ed. Badawī, 27.5–6, where one finds the First real [true] being (*al-anniyya al-ūlā al-ḥaqq*); for “the real one,” see also the Arabic Proclus.
- 52 Avicenna’s idea of eternal creation (directly inspired by Proclus) does not allow eternity to be conceived as the same as non-createdness. But here Avicenna deals with what is *per se* eternal or permanent, while the separate substances are eternal (or permanent and existent) because of something else. On the identity between truth and eternity in Neoplatonism (and in Greco-Arabic Neoplatonism), see D’Ancona, “Platonic and Neoplatonic Terminology.”



- Avicenna uses *dā'im*, which is literally “continuous,” “constant”; for al-Kindī, the world is not eternal but *dā'im*; on the term, see again Goichon, *Lexique*.
- 53 Once it is subjected to our knowledge of it, the Principle shows Itself as a cause; at the same time, relations depend on the fact that the Principle is conceived; relations are additions, consequents, and effects of the Principle Itself (*Ilāh*. 8. 4, 343.16–344.5).
- 54 See the famous passage *Ilāh*. 8. 4, 347.10, and Macierowski, “Does God have a Quiddity?” Nevertheless, Avicenna explicitly speaks about reality (*ḥaqīqa*), essence (*dhāt*), and, in a sense, even about “thing” (see above and *Ilāh*. 8. 6, 356.8–15). On God as a quiddity, see Janos, *Avicenna*, 415 ff.
- 55 *Ilāh*. 8. 6, 356.8–15; cf. 8. 4, 343.17.
- 56 *Aqsām*, 112.17–113.9. On divine attributes, cf. *Ilāh*. 8. 6–7.
- 57 See, e.g., *Ilāh*. 8. 3, 342.8–14; cf. *Ta'līqāt*, 83.8.
- 58 See remarks on this point in Lizzini, *Fluxus (fayd)*, 116–38.
- 59 See Street, “An Outline of Avicenna’s Syllogistic,” esp. 132; also McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 44–47.
- 60 *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 36; cf. Bertolacci, “‘Necessary’ as Primary Concept.” Bertolacci provides tables to indicate the correspondence between existence and necessity (necessity is intensionally dependent on existence but logically prior to possibility and impossibility); on the relationship between existence and necessity see also Lizzini, *Fluxus (fayd)*, esp. 121–24.
- 61 See, e.g., *Ilāh*. 6. 3, 277.7–278.8. The cause that is necessary is more worthy of existence and therefore of reality than the existence of the effect, that is, than the existence of the possible; this is precisely because the essence of the cause is necessary not in relation to the effect, while the essence of the effect is necessary only in relation to the cause. Existence as such has no gradation, but has modes or status. See *Ilāh*. 6. 3, 276.12–14.
- 62 *Ilāh*. 8. 6, 356.8–15.
- 63 See the passages quoted above: *Ilāh*. 8. 6, 356.8–15; cf. 8. 4, 343.17; cf. *Ilāh*. 9. 7, 423.12, and *Kitāb al-Ishārāt* 4. 9–15. Beauty and splendor always consist in the fact that a given thing is exactly what it should be: the Principle is Reality or Truth and Beauty and Splendor (*Ilāh*. 8. 4–7).
- 64 The existence that corresponds to what is affirmed clearly refers to the assent. For the text, see *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 31.2–9 and 36.4–6; cf. 29.5–8, 30.3–5. Trans. Marmura, *Metaphysics of “The Healing,”* 24; and see the translation by Bertolacci in the project for the new edition (Bertolacci uses both “reality” and “essential truth”): [www.avicennaproject.eu/#/edition/ibn-sina-ilahiyyat\\_02\\_tr1/text](http://www.avicennaproject.eu/#/edition/ibn-sina-ilahiyyat_02_tr1/text).
- 65 *Ilāh*. 1. 5, 29.5–8, 30.3–5, 31.2–9, 36.4–6.
- 66 On this, see also Benevich, “Die ‘göttliche Existenz.’” Benevich notes that Avicenna adds the accident “whiteness” to the substance “triangle” as regards quiddity. Nonetheless, Aristotle too establishes a clear connection between whiteness and truth: in *De anima* 3. 3 one reads that sight “is not mistaken that there is whiteness” (428b2). See also Aristotle, *Anal. Post.* 1. 1, 4–5.
- 67 But see notes 27 and 54: every quiddity is a reality, but is every reality a quiddity? Avicenna seems to reject the idea of the quiddity of the Principle, yet he ascribes a reality to It (or at least, the quiddity of the Principle is not like the other quiddities because it coincides with existence).
- 68 *Ilāh*. 5. 2, 210.8–10.
- 69 See Crivelli, *Aristotle on Truth*.
- 70 On the names of God, see Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, 138–42 (141 on Avicenna); among the divine names that refer to the same conceptual area, see *mawjūd*, *dhāt*, *shay'*.
- 71 On *Metaph. α*, see Bertolacci, “Doctrine”; Bertolacci, *Reception of Aristotle’s Metaphysics*.

- 72 See *Ilāh.* 5. 1–2.
- 73 On the theoretical problem of distinguishing between being in general and the being of the Principle (this is the meaning of *not at a condition* and of *at the condition of not*), see *Ilāh.* 1. 1, 2.10–13; cf. *Ilāh.* 8. 4, 347.10 et seq.; see Porro, “Immateriality and Separation”; Bertolacci, “‘Necessary’ as Primary Concept.” The distinction is applied also to the quiddity; see *Ilāh.* 5. 1–2 (and therefore not to existence): quiddities as such have no relations to other.
- 74 Here the question of the relationship between metaphysics and theology arises. Metaphysics is a theology insofar as the object of research is concerned: *Ilāh.* 1. 1, 5.13–7; 2. 9.6–10; 3. 19.5–8, 21.1–8, 23.1–9.
- 75 The principle of non-contradiction also demonstrates the necessity of the Necessary Existent: the negation of the existence of the Principle is (also) the negation of Its necessity and is therefore impossible. The first principle of logic is the first truth in the logical sense, while the First Principle is the first truth in the ontological sense. Both senses indicate an ascent: the path towards existence in general is abstraction (to what is more primary, as logic is a primary science, not a servant); the path towards the Necessary Existent is a real ascent to what is primary in a strongly ontological sense (since metaphysics too is a primary science, not a servant).
- 76 In a sense even quiddities as such find their guarantee in the Necessary Principle, because the First is the ultimate cause of everything. Avicenna is well aware of the aporia that an essence existing independently of existence represents: essences “before” creation should not exist (but see Janos, *Avicenna*, and, for a sort of ethical necessity of the essences, Lizzini, “A Mysterious Object”).
- 77 See the section on divine attributes in *Ilāh.* 8.

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# 11 Al-Fārābī on What Is Known Prior to the Syllogistic Arts in His Introductory Letter, the *Five Aphorisms*, and the *Book of Dialectic*

Terence J. Kleven

Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Tarkhān ibn Awzalagh al-Fārābī, a ninth- to tenth-century CE Arabic philosopher (AH 256/870 CE–AH 339/950 CE), wrote a series of twelve logical treatises that have been preserved in two manuscripts from the early seventeenth century, MS Bratislava 231 TE 41 and MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Hamidiye 812. In these twelve treatises, al-Fārābī presents his account of the syllogistic arts and of their uses in all the sciences. He enumerates five syllogistic arts: rhetoric, dialectic, sophistry, demonstration, and poetry. The introductory treatises to this collection not only introduce these five syllogistic arts, but give an account of the starting points or beginnings for the selection of terms, for the composition of premises, and for the formulation of syllogisms of the arts.

In examining these starting points, al-Fārābī identifies the ways in which we know the things that can be known. Pertaining to the things that can be known, he says some are known by syllogistic art and demonstration and some are known without syllogistic art and demonstration—that is, this second group of things known are known prior to the learning and use of the syllogistic arts. According to al-Fārābī, knowledge that is prior to the syllogistic arts exists and is known prior to human will, effort, and intellection, whereas knowledge that is gained through the syllogistic arts requires human will, effort, and intellection. The syllogistic arts, even the one possessing the highest degree of certainty, the art of demonstration, derive from this knowledge that is known prior to its use in the syllogistic arts. To say that the arts “derive from” this knowledge does not mean that this knowledge constitutes a permanently definable set of terms and premises. It consists, rather, in starting points and beginnings that may themselves need to be reformulated or refined in the course of an inquiry. The purpose of this chapter is to show how al-Fārābī introduces and distinguishes types of knowledge, what he calls *ma'lūmāt*, which are prior to the syllogistic arts, and how these types of knowledge are used in at least one of the syllogistic arts, the art of dialectic.



My inquiry entails a study of selected passages from three of al-Fārābī's logical treatises from this collection of twelve treatises. In the first treatise, the *Letter with which the Book Begins*, al-Fārābī initially distinguishes the syllogistic arts from the manual or practical arts, whose actions and ends are the performance of a work, whereas for the logical arts, the end is exclusively the attainment of knowledge. Once he has made this distinction between the practical and the syllogistic arts and it is evident what the syllogistic arts are, he proceeds in the second introductory treatise, the *Five Aphorisms*, to identify the types of knowledge that are known prior to the learning of the syllogistic arts. Following a study of passages in these two introductory treatises, we will examine one passage in a later treatise in the collection, the *Book of Dialectic*, which provides an example of how the various types of presyllogistic or prescientific knowledge function in the inquiries pertinent to the syllogistic art of dialectic. The conclusions of our examination of the selected passages from these three treatises are necessarily protreptic because this study does not engage in an exposition of the entirety of the three treatises nor of the entire logical corpus of twelve books of which they are a part. Nonetheless, these passages introduce al-Fārābī's account of knowledge—especially knowledge that exists and is known prior to art—in his understanding of logic, and these texts raise central questions for further inquiry regarding al-Fārābī's account of philosophy.

The significance of the three treatises is best appreciated if we are aware of their context in the collection to which they belong. This collection of twelve of al-Fārābī's logical treatises is found together in two seventeenth-century manuscripts, MS Bratislava 231 TE 41 and MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Hamidiye 812.<sup>1</sup> The treatises in these collections form a sequence and constitute one of his most extensive accounts of logic. The list of the treatises is as follows:

- 1 *Letter with which the Book Begins*
- 2 *Five Aphorisms*
- 3 *Book of the Eisagoge or The Introduction*
- 4 *Book of the Qāṭāghūriyās or The Categories*
- 5 *Book Concerning Irminias or The Interpretation*
- 6 *Book of Syllogism*
- 7 *Book of Resolution*
- 8 *Book of Sophistical Places*
- 9 *Book of Demonstration*
- 10 *Book of Dialectic*
- 11 *Book of Rhetoric*
- 12 *Book of Poetry*

We recognize from the names of the treatises that many are commentaries on the books of Aristotle's *Organon*. Yet they are not line-by-line nor



passage-by-passage commentaries. Al-Fārābī refers to Aristotle occasionally in his treatises, but seldom quotes him by introducing a passage with “he said” (*qāla*) or “he says” (*yaqūlu*); also, al-Fārābī often adds material that is absent from Aristotle’s treatises or passes over material that is present in them. The divergences of al-Fārābī from Aristotle’s presentation of logic are also evident in that he adds other treatises to this sequence which have no obvious Aristotelian equivalent. For example, the two introductory treatises in the sequence, which we will examine here, have no parallels in Aristotle’s oeuvre, even if it is apparent that the content is gleaned from various treatises of Aristotle. Al-Fārābī includes the *Book of the Eisagoge*, whose presence near the beginning of logic is not unusual in Syriac- and Arabic-speaking philosophy. But there are also other insertions and changes to Aristotle’s collection. Two books are inserted after the *Book of Syllogism*. The first, the *Book of Resolution*, has no immediate parallel to Aristotle’s treatises, and the second, the *Book of Sophistical Places*, is a study of the subject of Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations*, but in contrast to Aristotle’s placement of the book after the *Posterior Analytics*, al-Fārābī inserts his treatise on it before his treatise the *Book of Demonstration*.<sup>2</sup> The reasons for these changes would require a lengthier account of the entire collection of al-Fārābī’s logic than is possible here. Nonetheless, on the basis of this sketch, we can begin to explore his account of the syllogistic arts.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the themes that emerge in the passages I examine here reveal a ubiquitous emphasis on language in al-Fārābī’s logic. He is concerned in particular with the opinions and judgments present in the common language of a people. The logical arts, including demonstrative science, will depend upon, and need to examine and refine, our sense of language. They must investigate how words, expressions, and judgments shape the arguments used in all of the arts.

### **The Letter on Logic**

Al-Fārābī begins the first treatise by explaining that logic is an art.<sup>4</sup> It is, however, a particular kind of art—a syllogistic or rational one. There are five species of such syllogistic arts: dialectic, sophistry, demonstration, rhetoric, and poetry. They are characterized primarily by their use of syllogisms,<sup>5</sup> and they are distinguished from practical arts, such as medicine, farming, or the construction of buildings, because as syllogistic arts their action and end is exclusively the use of a syllogism rather than the performing of a particular action and work. The aim of medicine is health; the aim of agriculture is the growth of crops; the aim of carpentry is the construction of furniture or buildings. The practical arts may use the syllogistic arts but, in contrast to the syllogistic arts, their purpose is not solely the discovery and use of a syllogism.

In his delineation of the five logical arts, al-Fārābī distinguishes them by the types of syllogisms they use. Since these syllogisms are made with language, he calls each of the arts by the term that is used for “rhetoric” (*mukhāṭaba*), which he employs as a genus for the five species of arts. Philosophical rhetoric (*al-mukhāṭaba al-falsafiyya*) seeks knowledge of what is true about things that are certain. It is the standard and even an ideal for all science, even if it is not achieved as often as supposed; its premises must be certain if the syllogism is to produce certain knowledge. Dialectical rhetoric (*al-mukhāṭaba al-jadaliyya*) seeks victory in argument through things that are known and generally accepted (*al-ma’rūfa al-mashhūra*); its premises are taken from generally accepted opinion. Sophistical rhetoric (*al-mukhāṭaba al-sūfistā’iyya*) seeks a supposed victory over the speaker through things that are opined to be apparent and generally accepted (*ghalabatan maẓnūnatan bi-l-’ashyā’ allatī yuẓannu bihā fī-l-ẓāhir ’annahā mashhūra*); this art uses premises in syllogisms that are false but that might be supposed to be true. Rhetorical rhetoric (*al-mukhāṭaba al-khiṭābiyya*) seeks to please the listener with a particular type of pleasure even though the speaker does not produce certainty in the listener; this art uses a premise or premises that please the hearers but leaves out a premise that would not be pleasing even if the premise may be necessary if a more certain conclusion is sought. Poetical rhetoric (*al-mukhāṭaba al-shi’riyya*) uses the imagination to represent things in speech; through the imagination, this art in fact uses things that are false, but that illustrate through comparison the meaning of one thing with the meaning of another.

In summary, according to these five arts, logic is the study of the terms—initially two terms, a subject and a predicate—which are combined to make a statement or judgment. Then a second statement is added and, provided it repeats one of the terms in the first statement, is called a middle term. It adds a third term. Then the combination of three terms in two statements or judgments makes it possible to discover knowledge. This dynamic will be present in any argument, whether this syllogistic form is recognized or not. In any given argument about a certain problem, logic identifies the types of syllogism present and through this identification is able to apprehend the measure of certainty or knowledge contained in the syllogism. The remaining eleven treatises in the collection focus on the rules of these five syllogistic arts. The aim of the group of treatises is to delineate both the common and specific rules of these arts.

Logic, for al-Fārābī, is a study of the use of words and their meanings as they are composed into judgments, which in turn have a connection with other judgments, some of which lead to the discovery of knowledge. Despite the differences in the degree of certainty of knowledge of the syllogisms, they are all syllogistic arts, and not one of them, not even demonstration, is set off as independent from the others and capable of

functioning without the others. These five arts constitute five types of argument, and with respect to any problem, it is necessary to determine which art is most appropriate. In al-Fārābī's first introduction of the five arts, he says: "There are five syllogistic [arts]: philosophy, the art of dialectic, the art of sophistry, the art of rhetoric, and the art of poetry." He individually calls each one of them an art, with the exception of philosophy, *falsafa*. In this instance, the omission of the term "art" as the first member of the construct state before the word "philosophy" ought to cause us to wonder whether philosophy is an art like the other arts. Is it the only true science, and, therefore, not an art?

Yet, although this omission may hint at just such a question, al-Fārābī does not continue to assert the distinction. Not only, as we have just noted, does he show the continuity between the arts by indicating that all five of them are species of "rhetoric"; several lines later, he also speaks of "the art of philosophy" (*ṣinā'a al-falsafa*). The logical art, which is composed of five species of arts, is the art necessary for all science—it is the scientific art, manifested variously but always an art whose purpose and end is scientific knowledge. In order for knowledge to be obtained and recognized, it will be necessary to learn the rules of each of the syllogistic arts and to be able to recognize different types of premises and syllogisms and the degree of certainty belonging to each.

In al-Fārābī's formulation, we do not find the widespread modern distinction between arts and sciences because all logic is an art leading to *scientia* (*'ilm*) or knowledge. Science is not possible without the logical arts. "Art" rather constitutes all that needs to be learned through human will and endeavor and that is not known prior to this endeavor. In the first paragraph, al-Fārābī states that logic directs the intellect toward what is right only in the things in which it is possible to err, thus indicating that there exists knowledge that is not subject to human will. Yet, in respect to knowledge obtained from the arts, he says in this treatise that "logic" is both a "standard" (*'ayār*) and an "instrument" (*'āla*) for the discovery of knowledge by the intellect. As such, logic is necessary for all knowledge in any of the species of natural science. Knowledge is not obtained by learning only a particular art, or even several arts, but in learning to recognize each kind of syllogistic art and the arguments each one produces and to know which one is useful for what end.

Al-Fārābī concludes this first treatise by explaining that the terms in sentences are called by logicians "subjects" and "predicates." There are five types of such predicates—genus, differentia, species, property, and accident—as each has a different relation to the thing in question. Three of them, species, genus, and differentia, go into the making of a definition of a thing; a definition is what entails a recognition of the resemblance of one thing with another, and the same predicates can be attributed to the two things. Two predicates, property and accident, can be said to be a description of a thing but do not contribute to the definition of it. These five

he calls the simple universal predicates. When they are combined, they make statements or judgments.

In introducing these five arts in the *Letter*, al-Fārābī presents the subject of the rest of the logical treatises. What matters in these five arts are the terms and their combinations, which will be used to make premises and, in turn, will be combined with other premises to make syllogisms—some useful in the discovery of knowledge, some not.

But who are the practitioners of art of logic, and what is al-Fārābī's relation to his predecessors and to his contemporary practitioners of other arts, such as the art of grammar? Although the treatise takes its starting point for logic in the presentation of Aristotle's notion of syllogism, Aristotle's name is not mentioned in this first treatise. At one point, al-Fārābī refers to "the people of the art of logic" (*'ahl šinā' a al-manṭiq*), among whom he appears to include himself. At another point, he says "according to the ancients" (*'inda al-qudamā*). These "ancients," he says, use the word "reason" (*nuṭq*), from which "logic," *manṭiq*, is derived, according to three meanings: (1) the faculty by which man intellects the intelligibles, acquires the arts and sciences, and distinguishes between good and bad in actions; (2) the intelligibles in the soul, called "interior speech"; and (3) expressions in language of what is in the mind, called "external speech." He appears to agree with the ancients, despite their antiquity, that these three senses are all appropriate to "logic."

Al-Fārābī refers twice in this treatise to the art of the grammarian (*šinā' a al-naḥw*), but asserts that grammar is for the language of a particular people and is not universal as logic is. He also regularly uses the first-person plural verbal subject pronoun, "we," and the first person plural possessive pronoun, "our," especially in the context of the examples of the uses of the five predicates and their combinations. He says: "for example, our expression [*qawl nā*] 'Zaid is a rational animal' is a combination of genus and difference"; and "our expression [*qawl nā*] 'a laughing animal and an animal capable of buying and selling' is a combination of genus and property." And so on. He also says: "we see" (*ra'aynā*) and "we say" (*qalnā*) and "we perceive it" (*naḥassahu*), and so on, and also uses at least once the passive "it is said" (*qīl*). We are left to ask: Who are the subjects, or, in the case of the passive verb, the hidden subject of these personal and possessive pronouns? Is it a stylistic feature of al-Fārābī's rhetoric, a *pluralis modestiae* or *maiestatis*?

In fact, it appears that it is not al-Fārābī's own judgment to which he is referring, but rather the observation that in common usage the expressions are shared by the people who use the language. Are the subjects the logicians, then? Perhaps, since these pronominal prefixes and suffixes occur primarily in sections after he has introduced the phrase "the people of the art of logic." He does not insist on this connection, however, and at the very least, these personal pronouns are ambiguous. The ambiguity suggests that it may not simply be "we logicians" who use language in certain ways, but that logicians discover language already in use and seek to give

an account of distinctions already in existence in the language that they share with others.

By introducing this ambiguity at this point, al-Fārābī requires us to consider alternate explanations, and we will need to continue our examination to see whether and when he resolves the ambiguity. As we read through the treatises, we will need to keep asking who constitutes this common group to which he refers. If we have not already wondered what the starting points of these arts are—that is, where, for example, we obtain the terms and the premises for syllogisms, especially those leading to certainty—we have hints already in this introductory treatise that, although the arts require learning by human will and endeavor, we will have to reflect further on whether all distinctions are created by the syllogistic arts or whether at least some of the distinctions used in logic are already present in the language shared among the community. At the very least, al-Fārābī makes us ponder where these distinctions come from; we do not know exactly the answer to this inquiry from his exposition here, but he does say “we” speak this way.

The learned art of logic will proceed to name the five universal predicates, use them to identify and distinguish predicates with precision, and show their respective significance for the understanding of things. However, it is not at all definite that al-Fārābī teaches that logic creates from nothing these various relations of predicates to things. The arts, and the sciences that are discovered from the predicates established in the arts, may be not simply abstractions from the community but intrinsically linked to it through language. We will need to see whether al-Fārābī resolves this impasse, what he has presented here as an *aporia*, in other treatises in the collection.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Five Aphorisms**

The title of the second treatise, *Five Aphorisms*, is rightly translated with the term “aphorism” because of the density of its style.<sup>7</sup> “Aphorism” is a translation of *faṣl*, which can also mean more generally “section” or “chapter” (similar to *bāb*), but the chapters here are like aphorisms because of the brevity of their discourse. Al-Fārābī introduces five subjects with minimal reference to previous authors or treatises and without explicit mention of the significance these subjects have to the remainder of the treatises. These subjects are (1) the use of terms in the art of logic, some of which are in common usage, others not; (2) the four ways in which we know things prior to deliberation, thought, and demonstration; (3) when we can speak of things as being either “in” or “of” a thing; (4) five meanings of the term “prior”; and (5) the use of the terms “verb,” “noun,” and “instrument” pertaining to logic. The first two aphorisms, in particular, continue the themes that have already been introduced in the first treatise. Here, I will focus on only the first two aphorisms.

The First Aphorism addresses the use of words in the arts, both the logical and practical arts, and their relation to the common usage by the public. Al-Fārābī says there are three ways in which utterances are used in the arts. First, the art may use words that are not generally known (*mash-hūrāt*) by the public. He uses an example of two words, *al-'andhīdhaj*,<sup>8</sup> “record,” and *al-'awāraj*, “account-book,” which are used in the art of the clerk, probably in the context of accounting. Both are unusually formed Arabic words and are likely loan-words from Persian or one of the Altaic languages. They can be used by the practitioners of the art even though the public does not understand their meaning. Second, words can be used by the practitioners of an art in which the public uses one meaning of the term, and the artisans use another meaning. Al-Fārābī says the meanings that these terms have for the public are transferred to the art due to some connection or similarity of the generally known meaning to the meaning in the art. The example he uses is *zimām*, “bridle,” which is used by the public for a horse or camel but by the scribe as indicating a type of restraint, specifically in the auditing of books. The recognition of a second usage leads to what is usually known as an “equivocal” term, although al-Fārābī does not use that designation here. Third, words can be used in the same way in the art as they are commonly understood by the public.

Al-Fārābī is particularly concerned with the second type of usage. He asserts that the practitioners of the art do not err in using the term in a way that is necessary for right understanding in the art. The art needs precision in its use of terms for it even to exist. If the only and correct usage were the one used by the public, there could be no art. Along with the use of *zimām* in bookkeeping, he offers an example from grammar. The Arab grammarians (*naḥawiyyūw al-'arab*) use *raf'*, “raising,” to indicate the use of *ḍamma* for the nominative case, the term *naṣb*, “elevation,” to indicate the use of *fatha* for the accusative case, and the term *khafḍ*, “depression,” to indicate the *kasra* for the genitive case. Although *raf'*, *naṣb*, and *khafḍ* are used by the public in a variety of ways, the grammarians are not mistaken to use them to describe aspects of grammar. The syllogistic arts, and all of the sciences derived from them, need to be aware of how the terms that are needed for the art both rely upon and distinguish themselves from meanings generally accepted by the public. As we saw in the first treatise, the relation of art to generally accepted meaning will be essential to the selection of terms in the premises of a syllogism; this aphorism is more precise in the exposition of the theme than the *Letter* was. A confusion of meaning of the same term would prevent the use of the art to discover what is unknown. It is no happenstance that Aristotle placed the chapter on equivocal, univocal, and derivative terms as the first of his chapters in the *Categories*. Al-Fārābī, too, places this topic as the first of the aphorisms in this treatise for the one who is beginning the study of logic.

The Second Aphorism addresses more directly the question of the starting points of the syllogistic arts.<sup>9</sup> The aphorism begins as follows:

الأشياء التي تُعلم منها ما تُعلم لا بإستدلال ولا بفكر ولا بروية ولا بإستنباط، منها ما يُعلم بفكر وروية وإستنباط، والتي تُعلم أو توجد لا بفكر ولا بإستدلال أصلاً أربعة أصناف: مقبولات، ومشورات، ومحسوسات، ومعقولات أول

Of the things that are known, some of them are known without argumentation or thought or deliberation or induction, and some of them are known by thought and deliberation and induction. Of the things which are known and exist without thought or argumentation in any way, there are four types: received tradition, generally accepted opinions, perceptions, and first intelligibles.

Al-Fārābī begins the first sentence of the aphorism by referring to “things” and divides the knowledge we have of these things into two types. There is knowledge that is prior to the intellectual arts and knowledge that results because of the intellectual arts. He does not say that the knowledge prior to the intellectual arts is either superior or inferior to the intellectual arts; he simply describes both these sources are causes of our knowledge. In a phrase in a subsequent line, he reinforces the reality of these “things” which are known prior to art by adding the verb “exist” (توجد, *tawjidu*). In the first treatise, the *Letter with which the Book Begins*, al-Fārābī introduced us to the arts; now he is introducing us to knowledge that exists prior to the arts. This knowledge is necessary for our understanding of the rules and practices of the arts.

In the rest of the aphorism, he explains each of these four types of knowledge that exist and are known prior to the arts. The first type is “received tradition” (مقبولات, *maqbulāt*). Such knowledge is received from one who is a *murtaḍayan*,<sup>10</sup> “a delightful one,” or the word may refer to the knowledge, that is, the tradition that confirms one who is a *murtaḍayan*. The word *murtaḍayan* is from the verb *raḍiya*, used here as a passive participle to make a substantive. This usage alludes to the Qurʾān in 101:7, in reference to one whose life is “delightful” or “pleasant” because his good deeds are heavy on the scale.<sup>11</sup> To be precise, in this Qurʾānic passage there is an active participle of the verb used, *rāḍiyatin*, where we might expect a passive participle as we have it in al-Fārābī’s text. In regard to this active participle in the Qurʾān, Devin J. Stewart cites Michael Sells’ explanation that in this *sūra*, the active participle is chosen because of the rhyme and rhythm of the *sūra* even if the passive participle is more to be expected.<sup>12</sup> The Qurʾānic passage is a reference to the Prophet or to those who follow closely in the Prophet’s tradition. In Qurʾān 5:119 and 9:100, the perfect form of the verb *raḍiya* is used in the same way to affirm of the truthful that “God delights in them and they delight in him” and that God “has prepared gardens under which rivers flow” for them to dwell in. Al-Fārābī’s



reliance on the Qur'ānic allusion links this type of knowledge to those who are the blessed of God because of their right actions. Moreover, the imperfect verb used here, *taqirru*,<sup>13</sup> means “to determine a thing” or “to install someone.” The term has a legal sense, which is used here.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the translation of al-Fārābī's statement is: “The received tradition is what is received from the delightful one or that which approves a delightful one.” The phrase alludes to the Prophet, but also to those who follow in the tradition of the Prophet and at once both confirm and are confirmed by the tradition. The Prophet and the best followers of the Prophet are a delight to God. Al-Fārābī presents this type of knowledge, “the received opinions,” as real and commendable—and they are religious.

The second type of knowledge is “generally accepted opinions” (مشهورات, *mashhūrāt*). They are the “widespread opinions” (*al-'ārā' al-dhā'i'a*) which are known, as al-Fārābī says, by “all of the people or by many of them or by the learned and intellectuals or most of them without any of them, not even one of them, opposing them.” The manner of description is sufficiently similar to Aristotle's that we know these opinions are the *endoxa* of Aristotle's *Topics*.<sup>15</sup> The examples al-Fārābī gives here are that kindness to parents is a duty, that gratitude to a benefactor is good and ingratitude an evil, and what is known (*al-mashhūrīna*) as skillful among the practitioners of the arts or at least of those who are “generally accepted” (*al-mashhūra*) as skillful in them. These generally accepted opinions, forceful yet often unacknowledged, are used in the syllogisms of the art of dialectic.

The third type of knowledge is that which is apprehended through “sense perception” (المحسوسات, *al-mahsūsāt*), that is, the five senses. At this point, al-Fārābī simply gives two examples of this type of knowledge: we apprehend through the senses that “Zaid is this one sitting and this time is daylight.”

The fourth type of knowledge is the “first intelligibles” (المعقولات الأول, *al-mā'qūlāt al-'awwalu*). Of these, he says:

These are what we find ourselves created to be cognizant of from the beginning and formed to be certain of, and to know that it may not and cannot be otherwise than it is, and we do not know how they came to us and from where they came.

The examples he gives are from mathematics: every three is an odd number and every four is an even number; a part is always smaller than a whole; and two quantities which are equal to a third are also equal to one another. He ends this aphorism by saying that apart from these four types of knowledge (المعلومات, *al-mā'lūmāt*), what we know is by way of syllogism and induction, that is, by way of the intellectual arts. Thus, these four types of knowledge are prior to the arts. Although we will not examine the Fourth Aphorism here, in it al-Fārābī identifies five meanings of



the word “prior”; the four types of knowledge are prior, perhaps in time or in rank or in excellence, to knowledge derived from syllogistic art. This Second Aphorism is therefore the introduction to the monumental question in philosophy of the origin of the first principles of all of the logical arts and the sciences. Al-Fārābī provides his first enumeration of them here, albeit aphoristically. It will not be his last reference to these types of knowledge.

Al-Fārābī does not evaluate or rank the four types of knowledge in this Second Aphorism, nor does he say that some types of knowledge are more appropriate to some people than others. Moreover, it is possible that in any problem which arises, knowledge from one of the four is more germane than knowledge from the others or that some combination may be necessary and appropriate. As we will see in the examination of a passage from the *Book of Dialectic*, perception is essential in the study of entities in nature, but our perceptions may be shaped by generally accepted opinions passed on to us by an authoritative person, perhaps the perception of a renowned biologist, so that we see only what we have been formed to see.

### An Example of the Use of Prior Knowledge in the Art of Dialectic

These initial themes we have identified are necessary for the exposition of the five syllogistic arts in the remaining logical treatises. A complete inquiry would need to study those themes in all of the treatises, but for now, let us look at only one example, from the *Book of Dialectic*, in which al-Fārābī gives an account of perception.<sup>16</sup>

وكما أنّ في المحسوسات أشياء نحسّها نحن كما يحسّها غيرنا، وأشياء نتكلّ فيها على ما أحسّه غيرنا منها ونجتزئ بما أخبروا به من غير أنّ نكون قد شاهدنا نحن ذلك وأحسساناه، فنستعملها على مثال ما نستعمل ما نحسّه ونشاهده نحن. كذلك يُشبهه أن يكون في المعقولات أشياء نعلمها نحن بأنفسنا ونقبلها ببصائرنا ونصدّق بها من جهة علمنا [ب 190 ظ] بأنفسنا، وأشياء نتكلّ فيها على ما علمه غيرنا منها ورآه فيها ونجتزئ بذلك ونستعملها على مثال ما نستعمل الأشياء التي علمناها نحن، ونعمل على أنّ الحال فيها هو على ما أخبرنا أنّه رآه فيها وعلمه منها من غير أن نعلم منها نحن شيئاً أكثر من ذلك. والرأي الذي نتكلّ عليه في المعقولات ربّما كان رأي إنسان واحد فقط أو طائفة فقط وهو الرأي المقبول وربّما كان رأي جميع الناس وهو الرأي المشهور. وبالجملة فإنّ المقدّمات المشهورة التي هي مبادئ صناعة الجدل هي التي موضوعاتها معان كلّية مهملة، وهي كلّية يُوثّق بها وتُقبّل وتُعتقد فيها أنّها كذلك وتُستعمل من غير أن يُعلم منها شيء آخر أكثر من ذلك.

And similarly in regard to perceptions, there are things we ourselves perceive in the same way as someone other than us perceives them, and things we rely upon what someone other than us perceives of them, and we are content with what others report of them without ourselves having witnessed and sensed them; thus, we use them in

the manner in which we use what we ourselves perceive and witness. Likewise, it is similar in regard to the intelligibles: there are things that we know in ourselves, and receive by our own discernment, and assent to in respect to our knowledge in ourselves, and things for which we rely upon what someone other than us knows of them and what he opines about them, and we are content with this; and we use them in the same manner we use things which we ourselves know, and we use them according to the condition of what he informs us and what he opines about them and knows of them without ourselves knowing them in any way other than this. And the opinion we rely on regarding the intelligibles is perhaps the opinion of one person only or a group only, and it is received opinion. Perhaps it is the opinion of all the people, and it is generally accepted opinion. In general, the generally accepted premises which are the principles of the art of dialectic are those whose subjects are universal, unspecified meanings; and they are universals that are trusted and received and believed that it is like this, and they are used without one's knowing anything more about them other than this.<sup>17</sup>

In this exposition, both perception and first intelligibles may be derived from someone else even if we receive and assent to them as if we had individually perceived or intellected them directly. Thus, the kinds of knowledge that are prior to logical argumentation can be confused with each other, and premises thought to be derived from one type of prior knowledge may, in fact, be from another type. Nonetheless, we use this knowledge as if we have perceived the premises directly or intellected them in ourselves. Toward the end of the passage, al-Fārābī calls these types of knowledge “opinions” and says that these opinions will either be “received opinion,” if it is received from an individual or one group only, or “generally accepted opinion,” if it is the opinion of a whole people. The fact that these are recognized or treated as opinions does not make them wrong—they may be accurate perceptions or true beliefs or first intelligibles. But he says “we assent” (نُصَدِّقُ, *nuṣaddiqu*) to them and do not have knowledge, at least not full knowledge, of them. The word that he does not use, but that is implied in the use of *nuṣaddiqu*, is *taṣawwur*, “conception”; we do not have a conception of them.

Thus, one of the purposes of the logical arts is to identify the type of prior knowledge that is being used for each particular problem, and from this to discern what types of premises emerge from each of the types of knowledge which are pertinent to that problem. It will be the particular task of the syllogistic art of dialectic to evaluate universal, though indefinite, opinions that are, in the description near the end of the passage, “trusted and received and believed.” A fuller study of all the five syllogistic arts in all the twelve treatises of the collection would be needed in order to determine the types of prior knowledge that are utilized in each term

and each premise that make up the argument of a syllogism. Yet we can begin to apprehend the consequences of these types of knowledge and how they will be important to the syllogistic arts. The art of dialectic is what discovers and evaluates the knowledge that is known before the syllogistic arts are used, and dialectic is needed to discover the terms used in all syllogisms.

Finally, just as there are indications in the *Letter* and in the *Five Aphorisms* that the study of language and rhetoric is essential to the exposition of the rules for the five syllogistic arts, there is further evidence for that account in this quotation from the *Book of Dialectic*. For example, the generally accepted opinions may be transmitted to us by a recognized authority or by reports about an authority or authorities, or we may consent to these opinions even without necessarily knowing their initial source or the type and degree of their certainty. We may have learned these opinions unawares through our learning of the language of a people, that is, through the standards of judgment embedded in language. The terms and premises in the syllogistic arts will be taken from language, even if the logical arts will need to make distinctions between common usage and the usage needed for the syllogisms of science.

## Conclusions

The passages examined here provide an introduction to al-Fārābī's account of the nature of logic and its five syllogistic species. Because these passages were selected from the contexts of longer treatises and from a collection of twelve treatises, our inquiry is necessarily protreptic and tentative (*peirastikē*),<sup>18</sup> and it will need to be supplemented by sustained study of all the treatises in relation to each other. We have already seen that the first two treatises introduce themes which are also present in another treatise, the *Book of Dialectic*. With an awareness of the essential question of the origin and nature of the starting points and beginnings of the syllogistic arts, al-Fārābī identifies in the *Five Aphorisms* the four types of knowledge that are prior to and necessary for the discovery of the terms and the formulation of the premises for each of the syllogisms to be used in each of the five arts. In doing so, he identifies the primary premises for each species of science.

Even in the passages from the treatises we have examined, it is apparent that al-Fārābī's account of philosophy avoids, on the one hand, the dogmatism of both conventionalism and skepticism inasmuch as he recognizes types of knowledge that are prior to human will and art. On the other hand, this account of philosophy also avoids the dogmatism of premature certainty inasmuch as he recognizes that these types of knowledge do not exist as once-for-all definitions. In the Second Aphorism of the *Five Aphorisms*, he gives examples of and allusions to this knowledge, but does not provide definitions that require genera and species. Al-Fārābī ends the passage from the *Book of Dialectic* with the statement that the subjects have

“universal” and “unspecified” (*muhmala*) meanings, and thus, when made particular, each universal will not lead to a one, single definition. In this way, he also avoids the dogmatism of a science that claims completeness, certainty, and finality of definition where these do not exist, or at least do not exist yet, and he allows true and certain knowledge to be a goal even if he recognizes that we do not possess the perfected ideal. Nevertheless, as knowledge prior to art, these types of knowledge provide starting points either to knowledge we perceive or know in ourselves or to knowledge gained from the generally accepted opinions we receive from political, social, and religious life.

In the selected passage from the treatise on the art of dialectic, al-Fārābī explains how the four types of knowledge which are known prior to the syllogistic arts can be used in that art. He elucidates how both perception and intelligibles may be generally accepted opinions even if we assent to them as if they are direct sources of knowledge of terms and premises to be used in valid syllogisms. It is the task of the art of dialectic, as it will be the task of each of the arts, to evaluate the origin and measure of certainty in these four sources of knowledge in relation to each problem being addressed. Science will always need to return to beginnings, to starting points, and evaluate the measure of their certainty. Premature and unfounded certainties are irrational, or at least only partially rational, and true philosophic science needs to be able to identify, acknowledge, and inquire into what it does not know. The example from the art of dialectic shows that in recognition of the link between the philosophic arts and the community, especially the opinions from authoritative sources embedded in and transmitted through the language of the community, philosophy or science is not achieved simply and primarily through separation and abstraction from the human and the political things. The syllogistic arts need to recognize and evaluate prescientific kinds of knowledge which are prior in some way—perhaps prior in time and perhaps prior in excellence—to knowledge that is produced by the syllogistic arts.

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## Notes

- 1 MS Bratislava 231 TE 41 has a colophon on its final page (fol. 274<sup>r1-8</sup>) which says that this copy was completed in Constantinople in AH 1116/1704 CE by a scribe named Afqar al-Urī (his full name is illegible). MS Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Hamidiye 812 has a colophon on its penultimate page (fol. 123<sup>r20-27</sup>) which says that it was completed in Constantinople in AH 1133/1721 CE by a scribe named Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Uškübī for his teacher Asʿad ibn ʿAli ibn ʿUthmān al-Yanyawī. MS Bratislava appears to be known to the scribe who copied Hamidiye 812, because the table of contents on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> of Bratislava and all the *marginalia* throughout the manuscript seem to be by the same scribe who copied Hamidiye 812, that is, by al-Uškübī. Also, the names of the books in the table of contents of Bratislava and Hamidiye are sufficiently similar to confirm that they are written by the same scribe even though the titles introducing each treatise in the manuscripts are not identical to the titles in the tables of contents. The book titles in both of al-Uškübī's lists speak of eight treatises in the collection, besides the two introductory treatises. The number eight is consistent with the number of books typically understood to constitute Aristotle's *Organon* in the Syriac and Arabic traditions. I have taken the titles of the treatises from MSS Bratislava and Hamidiye themselves rather than from the appended tables of contents. For research on the scribal school of Asʿad al-Yanyawī and his student Aḥmad al-Uškübī, see Di Vincenzo, "Reading Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Šifāʾ*"; Aslan, "Asʿad [sic] Afandi of Yanya"; Küçük, "Natural Philosophy"; Morel, "Asʿad al-Yanyawī."
- 2 On the consequences of these differences, see Mallet, "Le *Kitāb al-Taḥlīl* d'Alfarabi."
- 3 Al-Fārābī's influence on the delineation of the books needed for logic is attested in later writers. See, for example, Ibn Ṭumlūs, *Le Livre de la Rhétorique*.
- 4 Al-Fārābī, "Al-Fārābī's Introductory *Risālah* on Logic," ed. Dunlop. In the following analysis, I quote primarily from Dunlop's edition and English translation.
- 5 I say "primarily" because induction is included as a legitimate argument for a syllogistic art, but induction alone is not adequate to make any of the arts syllogistic.
- 6 See Sachs' comments in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Sachs, lv.
- 7 Apart from the copies of this treatise in MSS Bratislava and Hamidiye, there is a copy of the *Five Aphorisms* in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Heb 1008. This manuscript is in Judeo-Arabic script and is a collection of Ibn Rushd's short treatises on logic as well as two of Al-Fārābī's logical treatises, including the *Five Aphorisms*. For a description of the manuscript, see Butterworth, "Introduction," 15–17. The manuscript is dated to AH 621/1356 CE, which is earlier than the two eighteenth-century manuscripts from Istanbul. The treatise was edited and translated by D. M. Dunlop as "Al-Fārābī's Introductory Sections on Logic." Dunlop uses Hamidiye and MS Heb. 1008 but makes no reference to MS Bratislava. He also uses the *lemmata* from Ibn Bājjā's *Comments (Taʿālīq)* on al-Fārābī's logic, MS Derenbourg Escorial 612.
- 8 الأندیدج—thus the reading of MS Bratislava, MS Heb 1008, and the *lemma* in MS Escorial 612, but MS Hamidiye has الأندیدج.
- 9 See Kleven, "Alfarabi's Introduction."
- 10 MS Bratislava adds *tanwīn* to both participles used in the passage.
- 11 Lane, *English-Arabic Lexicon*. The first volume of Lane's multivolume lexicon was first published by Williams and Norgate in 1863. *Ibid.*, 1099–1100.
- 12 Stewart, "Pit," 103a–b.

- 13 There is ambiguity in the manuscripts as to what letters are present: Bratislava has بفر, without further marks, but probably it is تفر in parallel with تقبل. Hamidiye has يقر, which is likely incorrect, and Heb 1008 has the unusual بقد. This reading in Heb 1008 is an indication that even though the manuscript is older than Bratislava and Hamidiye, it does not necessarily preserve better readings. I have chosen Bratislava's reading because it makes sense and requires the least amount of alteration to the script.
- 14 See Mahdi, "Averroës on Divine Law," esp. 130 n. 26; Averroës, *Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory*, trans. Butterworth, esp. xix.
- 15 Aristotle, *Top.* 100b22–24, trans. Forster. See also 101a11–16, 104a8–15.
- 16 Bratislava fols. 190<sup>r14–19</sup>–190<sup>v1–10</sup> (see also Hamidiye fol. 85<sup>v19–28</sup>). The entire treatise has been published twice. The passage quoted here can be found in al-Fārābī, *Al-Jadal*, ed. Rafiq al-'Ajam, 17–18, and al-Fārābī, *Al-Jadal*, ed. Dānishpazūh, 362.
- 17 Hamidiye rightly corrects Bratislava in the first غير in the line because it is not necessarily plural; the subject of the second verb is not "we." Dānishpazūh makes five errors in the transcription of this passage. In each case MSS Bratislava and Hamidiye agree with each other and I have preserved their readings. Dānishpazūh transcribes the last word in the first line as فيها instead of منها; he has أخبروها به for أخبروا به; he omits نحن following شاهدنا; and he has وأحسسناه for وأحسسناه. There is also a printer's error, with فيها ونجترئ instead of فيها ونجترئ. My translation differs only slightly from the commendable recent English translation of the *Book of Dialectic* by DiPasquale, *Alfarabi's Book of Dialectic*, 16–17.
- 18 Aristotle says dialectic is *peirastikē* in *Metaphysics* 1004b 25, trans. Sachs, 56–57. In *Top.* 101b 3, Aristotle also says dialectic is *exetastikē*, "probative."

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## 12 **Dominicus Gundissalinus'** *On Unity and the One*

*Nicola Polloni*

The works of Dominicus Gundissalinus (or Gundisalvi; ca. 1115–post-1190) form a turning point in the history of European medieval philosophy, marking a fundamental step toward the integration of Islamicate philosophy into the Latin tradition. Gundissalinus was not a master in a medieval university, nor was philosophizing his main occupation; he was mostly a translator from Arabic to Latin and an archdeacon of the cathedral of Toledo. This does not, however, diminish the role or the scope of Gundissalinus' reflections on metaphysics, gnoseology, and psychology.

One of the characteristic traits of twelfth-century Iberia was the movement of an unprecedented number of people and books from the Islamic south toward Castile and Aragon.<sup>1</sup> Fleeing from the Almohad invasion of al-Andalus, these refugees brought to the Christian north their cultural heritage, both material and immaterial: books and people, skills and expertise. This flow fueled the famous “translation movement” that had started in Iberia at the beginning of the twelfth century and whose main center was by then Toledo. The pioneering translators of Toledo took up the task of making available to Latin readers some of this dazzling collection of new books, which promised to present novel solutions to long-debated problems, theories and practices capable of advancing Latinate science, and even new disciplines that Latin people had never yet heard of.<sup>2</sup>

To be correctly understood, Gundissalinus' contribution to the history of philosophy must be contextualized within that intellectual framework. Aside from his ecclesiastical duties, Gundissalinus was primarily a translator, very often working with other translators (especially Abraham ibn Daud and Johannes Hispanus).<sup>3</sup> Gundissalinus' philosophy is structurally bound to his work as translator: he appears to have felt compelled to philosophize upon the works he translated, connecting their doctrines to theories and problems debated in the Latin tradition. His reasons for writing philosophy in this way are unknown. It might be that someone requested Gundissalinus to write the works, or that he was teaching at the cathedral school, like his colleague Gerard of Cremona.<sup>4</sup> Or it might be that Gundissalinus wrote in order to understand what he was translating, or even that he did so simply out of a passionate interest in philosophical matters. Almost nothing can be established in this regard, at least currently.



What we can say is that his appreciation of the substantive (albeit incomplete) compatibility between the Islamicate and the Latinate traditions opened up opportunities to engage with abiding philosophical problems from a groundbreaking new angle.

The story of his works' circulation in the later Middle Ages is rather intricate,<sup>5</sup> and Gundissalinus' influence is often underestimated as a result. Yet traces of his thinking can be found in many medieval authors, including John Blund, Thomas of York, Bonaventure, Albert the Great, Roger Bacon, John Peckham, Geoffrey of Aspill, and Thomas Aquinas.<sup>6</sup> Gundissalinus also impacted the Jewish tradition thanks to Hebrew translations of his works in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with Jewish authors such as Gerson ben Solomon and Hillel ben Samuel using his material in their writing.<sup>7</sup>

As regards authorship, *De unitate et uno* presents a peculiar case. The work circulated with a pseudo-epigraphical attribution for centuries, and after Gundissalinus' death, it was attributed to Boethius, of which more later in this chapter. An examination of Gundissalinus' philosophical oeuvre, of which *De unitate et uno* appears to be the first treatise, suggests that he had increasing access to Arabic sources over the course of his career; this was probably due to the translation projects he was pursuing in Toledo. The direct influence of the works that Gundissalinus was translating serves as a valuable indicator in establishing a chronology of his original writings, and the translation of Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae* marks a new point of departure for Gundissalinus. Translated by Gundissalinus and John of Spain, *Fons vitae* provides Gundissalinus with the cornerstone of his own speculation. This does not entail a mere adherence to Ibn Gabirol's perspective—quite the contrary: Gundissalinus would progressively detach himself from some doctrinal aspects of Ibn Gabirol's thought that were no longer in line with his own scrutiny of reality. Avicenna takes up the opposing pole of Gundissalinus' bifurcated attraction.<sup>8</sup>

*De unitate et uno* is a crucial witness to Gundissalinus' eager, and perhaps disingenuous, enthusiasm concerning the *Fons vitae*. Ibn Gabirol's text is the main source for the short treatise. Its textual presence is pervasive, almost oppressive. Yet notwithstanding the textual and doctrinal closeness to *Fons vitae*, reducing Gundissalinus' *De unitate* to a summary or a collection of themes from Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae* would be rather simplistic. Instead, Gundissalinus weaves a web of tacit references to assertions by Latinate authors with which Ibn Gabirol's doctrines are compatible and by which they are justified. The golden thread of the treatise is a quotation from Boethius' first *Commentary on Isagoge*: “quicquid est, ideo est, quia unum est” (“whatever exists, therefore, exists because it is one”).<sup>9</sup> From the beginning, *De unitate* suggests a rather peculiar continuity with Boethius' thought. Quite probably, the pseudo-epigraphical attribution of the treatise to Boethius originated from these redundant textual proximities.

In its short span, *De unitate et uno* has a remarkably coherent and organic structure. It engages with a single problem. It has a unified focus. And it examines its main ontological, cosmological, and physical insight with almost no digression.<sup>10</sup> In this respect, the text evidently has a precise aim grounded on one fundamental question: What does it mean to be “one”? A preliminary answer is given at the very beginning of the treatise: “Unity is that by which each thing is said to be one.”<sup>11</sup> Yet this claim needs to be explained, refined, and applied to the world we see. A thing is said to be “one”—that is, a single and individual entity in its existence—only on account of unity. Therefore, unity has a principal ontological value, since every existing thing is “one” in itself. However, unity is not just a common predicable; it is a predicable only by relation to the crucial and fundamental function it performs ontologically. Unity, indeed, brings everything forth into existence, as stated by Boethius in his claim that “whatever exists, therefore, exists because it is one.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Gundissalinus, the ontological value of unity can be understood only in its structural relation to universal hylomorphism. God, the Creator, is the true and absolute One, the simple and complete origin of existence. Following the Neoplatonic principle by which the effect must be at the same time different and similar to its cause, the created universe cannot be simple nor one, but is made one by unity, the existential power infused by God into the effect of His creation.<sup>13</sup>

Unity (*unitas*), though, is different from union (*unitio*), which is the kind of unity that makes every single creature one and constitutes a union of two different and opposite entities, matter and form.<sup>14</sup> The hylomorphic duality is resolved through the *unitio* of matter and form, by which they are made one thing. Things, single and particular in their existence, only exist in “singularity” and “particularity.” This fact does not imply that universals do not exist. Yet it follows the acknowledgment that unity and being are correlatives by nature. *Unitas* and *esse* are characteristics of God and are reflected in His creatures, which, nonetheless, cannot be except through a specific form of causation, namely the union of their hylomorphic components.

Creatures are *one* while God is *the One*.<sup>15</sup> Creatures are similar to God, for the effect receives something of its cause. However, they are also fundamentally different. God’s oneness is utterly perfect and simple, whereas creaturely oneness always has the trait of composition. It is a *composed* one, made of the *addition* of two entities. Indeed, creatures always result from a union of matter and form. As a consequence, being and unity are inseparable partners by nature and, for this same reason, every existing thing desires unity. In fact, existence can be received only by unity.<sup>16</sup>

This metaphysical notion of unity allows Gundissalinus to find a balance between, on the one hand, his strong interpretation of hylomorphism as expressing an ontological duality and, on the other, the acknowledgment

that a thing—a substance, in Aristotelian terms—is fundamentally “one” in its individuality.

The bond between matter and form—their *union*—is the intrinsic cause of the existence of any thing under consideration. When they are made “one” by unity, the thing is brought into existence. But as soon as the unifying bond is removed, the thing disappears; that is to say, the form is separated from matter, and corruption occurs.<sup>17</sup> In fact, matter tends toward multiplicity and dispersion: “Matter [ . . . ] is contrary to unity. It is so because matter, by itself, flows away and its own nature is to be multiplied, divided, and dispersed, whereas unity holds, unites, and keeps it together.”<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, unity’s function is to hold together matter and form, and consequently the hylomorphic compound, countering the tendency of matter toward dispersion.

Unity and matter are opposite entities: the former unifies, the latter multiplies. Their powers must be balanced. However, perfect equality is achieved only in the highest creatures, such as the celestial bodies. The lowest degree of existence lacks balance, which is why multiplicity and corruption occur. Although the causative power of unity does not weaken, the effect of its causation does so because of the substrate upon which it acts. As matter becomes thicker in the lower levels of the hypostatic universe, the efficacy of unity also becomes feebler. As a consequence, composite beings become susceptible to generation and corruption.<sup>19</sup> This dynamic is explained by the difference between unity and union, the former being the cause of the latter. That which changes is not unity, but union. Different unions are given by the only admissible variable of this equation, which is matter. It is because the matter is progressively thicker, denser, and more bodily that union is not perfectly realized everywhere and that, consequently, the being of lower things is less complete.

Gundissalinus offers four fascinating examples of this dynamic. The first compares the flowing of matter to a river whose water is clear at the source, but dark when it flows into marshes, on account of the earth and mud accompanying it through its course.<sup>20</sup> In a similar fashion, matter has, in itself, some aspect of brightness (such as spiritual matter) and some aspect of darkness (such as corporeal matter), a differentiation that, following Ibn Gabirol, is brought about by the form of quantity joining the last layer of matter.

In other examples, Gundissalinus associates unity and light. The flowing of unity from God is like the radiation of sunlight. Our perception of the light changes when it meets brighter or darker air. This difference is due not to different lights, but to different states of the medium. The same dynamic can also be understood by analogy with a thin white cloth. Worn by a black body, that cloth would be perceived as less white than if worn by a white body. Its transparency reveals some blackness (or whiteness) of what is below. In both cases, though, the cloth remains the same.

The third example is the most intriguing. Almost certainly relying on a third source, Gundissalinus describes a sort of experiment with glass and light. When three or more glass windows are positioned perpendicular to the sunlight, the first window receives more light than the second, and the second more than the third, and so on, in a progressive weakening of the light. This is not a characteristic intrinsic to light, but characterizes light conditioned by passing through layers of glass. Likewise, unity becomes weaker and weaker while descending through each of the different layers of matter, down to the final layer. In this progression, unity itself, like the unconditioned light, remains unaltered, whereas the refracted light and the composed union, together with the receiving glass and matter, will differ in their effect.<sup>21</sup> In both cases, unity and sunlight are not affected in themselves, but their effects change because of their different substrates.

According to Gundissalinus, unity is a constant factor. It flows from God and brings everything into existence. Matter, to the contrary, is the variable of the ontological equation—paradoxically so, if Gundissalinus were adhering to the Aristotelian perspective that would mark philosophical speculation just a few decades after his death. In its progressive detachment from the Creator, matter changes and becomes gradually thicker and denser, until corporeity arises in the last layer of this hypostatic universe. As a consequence of this intrinsic differentiation of matter, different species of creatures come into existence. Each one of them is characterized by a different ontological status as determined by the proper union appropriate to each species.

Like his ontology, Gundissalinus' hypostatic cosmology, too, is based on Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*. The first entity created by God is the Intellect, whose unity is simple and whose matter is purer than that which is in any other degree of existence.<sup>22</sup> Following its descent, matter is informed by the forms of the Rational, Sensible, and Vegetative Souls, respectively; then, below them, by the form of Nature; and finally by the corporeal forms.<sup>23</sup> This last degree of existence corresponds to the substance to which the nine categories inhere.<sup>24</sup> In this cosmological progression, every layer is different from the others. If unity is considered, that difference can only be caused by the process of multiplication of matter, which intrinsically differentiates matter. However, it is evident that this process would be much more complicated if we were to provide a complete ontological description of each hypostasis, each having its proper form. In *De unitate et uno*, Gundissalinus does not engage in such an analysis, as he would in his later *De processione mundi*.<sup>25</sup> Even there, he would avoid discussing further crucial problems arising from the cosmological process, and one in particular: How can matter differentiate itself without interacting with a form? In this case, too, Gundissalinus' framework seems to be far away from thirteenth-century Aristotelianism and its refined hylomorphism, although some aspects of his consideration of matter would resonate in, for instance, Roger Bacon's thought.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, *De unitate et uno* discusses two central corollaries of Gundissalinus' theory. Metaphysical unity is the primary meaning of the term "unity." However, there are other kinds of unity to which the term can refer, all of them grounded on the metaphysical meaning of unity.<sup>27</sup> Beings can be said to be one by essence (God), one by hylomorphic composition (angels and souls), one by continuity (a tree or a rock), one by composition (the planks making one ark), one by aggregation (a people or a flock), and one by analogy (the helmsman and the governor holding one office).<sup>28</sup> Other things are said to be one by sharing an accidental characteristic (snow and swan in their whiteness), one by number, one by a common possession (intellect, thing, and its word), one by a sacrament (spirit, water, and blood), one by nature (species), one by nation (tribe), and one by agreement concerning virtue or vice.<sup>29</sup>

Having clarified the richness of senses in which unity can be said, Gundissalinus turns to one final problem: How are continuous and discrete quantities related to the metaphysical priority of unity? Curiously, Gundissalinus reduces continuity to discrete quantity. He claims that every continuous quantity is composed of discrete unities that, scattered, are said to be discrete and, gathered, are said to be continuous. Unities, therefore, are the basic constituents of quantity and, through this, of physical corporeality. Accordingly, these unities are the "root" (*radix*) of both discrete and continuous quantities.

This doctrine, which appears akin to atomism, is presented only briefly, and Gundissalinus does not address (or even seem aware of) the ramifications of his position—or if he is, he does not seem concerned about them. The unities composing physical substances function as his main explanation of the differences in weight, density, and mass of substances, since

the more connected and compacted the parts of a body are, the thicker and more "quantum" that body will be, such as in the case of a stone. Whereas to the opposite, the more dispersed and scattered the parts of a body are, the subtler, lighter, and less "quantum" it will be, such as in the case of the air.<sup>30</sup>

Consistently, Gundissalinus summarizes his position by claiming that "continuous quantity comes into substance only on account of unity joining and flowing in it."<sup>31</sup>

From its first hypostasis to the very structure of corporeal reality, oneness, union, and unity are the main traits through which God structured his creation, making it similar to Himself and yet intrinsically and necessarily "other."

The success of Gundissalinus' *De unitate* was largely due to its pseudo-epigraphical attribution to Boethius. Such attribution is probably a consequence of the opening quotation from Boethius' commentary on *Isagoge* and the expositional nature of the text in relation to Boethius' assertion.

From a doctrinal point of view, however, attributing the treatise to Boethius was anything but straightforward. While *De unitate*'s themes of creaturely dependence upon God fit neatly with the Neoplatonic themes of Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae* and his *De hebdomadibus*, Boethius' ontology is grounded on a limited hylomorphism and entirely privileges the preeminence of form over matter. Boethius and Gundissalinus thus contradict one another in their ontological doctrines. Consequently, the works authored by Boethius, including the misascribed *De unitate et uno*, exhibited a consistency problem within his thought.

The scholarship agrees that Thomas Aquinas was the first Latin thinker to realize that the treatise could not have been authored by Boethius: Aquinas dismissed Boethius' authorship of *De unitate* at least twice in his philosophical production.<sup>32</sup> But even as an anonymous work, *De unitate et uno* continued to be read and used by Latin and Renaissance thinkers, including Nicholas of Cusa. The text was translated into Hebrew (as "Boethian") by Judah ben Moshe Romano in the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Around the same time, Conrad of Prussia wrote a commentary on it.<sup>34</sup>

The actual authorship of the treatise was finally recognized and acknowledged by the first critical editor of *De unitate*, Paul Correns.<sup>35</sup> After his 1891 edition, *De unitate et uno* was critically edited again in 1956 by Manuel Alonso Alonso,<sup>36</sup> and a new critical edition of the work was completed by María Jesús Soto-Bruna and Concepción Alonso del Real in 2015, the most reliable version yet of this important text. I have used this edition for the following English translation of Gundissalinus' *De unitate et uno*.

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## ***On Unity and the One* by Dominicus Gundissalinus**

### **Translated by Nicola Polloni**

Unity is that by which each thing is said to be one. Whether it is simple or composite, spiritual or corporeal, a thing is one by unity. It can be one only by unity, just as it can be white only by whiteness, or be so much only by quantity. Besides, [a thing] is not only one by unity, but as long as it is something, it is what it is as long as unity is in it. And when it ceases to be one, it ceases to be what it is. For this reason, it has been said that "whatever exists, therefore, exists because it is one," which is demonstrated as follows.

Undoubtedly, in created things, all existence comes from the form. However, existence comes from the form only when the form is made one with matter. In fact, there is existence only by the joining together of the

form with matter. For this reason, the philosophers describe [matter] by saying that “existence is the presence of form in matter.”

However, when the form is made one with matter, something which is “one” necessarily comes to be from their joining together. And that thing, in its coming to be, only persists as long as unity holds the form together with matter. As a consequence, the destruction of a thing is nothing else but the separation of [its] form from matter. Separation and union are contraries, though. Therefore, if something is destroyed by the separation [of form and matter], that thing is surely preserved in its existence by [their] union.

Union [*unitio*], however, only exists by unity [*unitas*]. When unity is separated from something united, its union, by which that thing was one, is dissolved. And when the union is dissolved, the essence of that thing—which stemmed from the union [of matter and form]—is destroyed, because it becomes something which is not one. For this reason, not only is a thing brought to existence by unity but existence is also maintained in that thing by unity. Therefore, existence and one inseparably accompany each other and appear to exist together in nature.

Since the Creator is the true One, the things he established—each of them—received [its] existence one as a gift from Him. As a consequence, anything which receives its existence from Him is one. Accordingly, every substance moves toward and through the One, and none of the existing things desires to be many. To the contrary, desiring to exist, all of them desire to be one, since everything desires by nature to exist, and it can exist only by being one. Therefore, everything tends to [be] one. Unity, indeed, is what makes everything one and holds everything together, for it is diffused into every existing thing.

On this account, considering that matter has existence only by the union with its form and that only unity can keep the form united to matter, matter requires unity in order to become one in itself and acquire existence. Matter, indeed, is contrary to unity. It is so because matter, by itself, flows away and its own nature is to be multiplied, divided, and dispersed, whereas unity holds, unites, and keeps it together. For this reason, matter must be held together by unity in order not to divide or disperse itself. In fact, anything requiring something else to become one cannot become one by itself. Nonetheless, what cannot become one by itself certainly is dispersed by itself. Indeed, anything that is able to make something contrary to a [considered] agent makes it contrary to what [that agent] has made. In fact, contraries are the effects of what is contrary. Since unity causes [something to be] one; therefore, matter will cause division. Accordingly, unity by itself holds matter together. And whatever holds [something] together by itself cannot be the cause of [its] separation. Therefore, the form existing in matter, which completes and holds together the essence of everything, is the unity descending from the first Unity that created it.



In fact, the first and true Unity, which is in itself Unity, created another unity, which lies below it. Yet since every created thing must be completely different from what has created it, the created unity must be completely different from and almost opposite to the creating Unity. Because the creating Unity has neither beginning nor end, neither change nor diversity; therefore, multiplicity, diversity, and mutability accrue to the created unity. In some matter, then, [unity] has a beginning and an end, while in another [matter] it has a beginning, but not an end, because in some it is subject to change and corruption. And in others, [unity is subject to] change, but not to corruption. In those things [in which] matter is subtle, simple, far from contrariety and separation, unity is indeed proportionate to it, and [is] made one with it in such a way that both become [something which is] one, indivisible in act. This is the case for the celestial bodies, in which unity is inseparable from matter. Accordingly, they have no end, for they are perpetual. However, in those things [in which] matter is thick [and] weak, unity cannot be proportionate to it. Indeed, its unifying power and [its capacity to] hold their essence together is weakened. As a consequence, their essence is dissolved because they are not held together by unity. This is the case of generated things, which have a beginning and an end. For the closer any unity is to the first and true Unity, the more one and the simpler will be the matter it informs. And to the opposite, the further unity is from the first Unity, the more multiplied and composed [its matter will be].

Accordingly, the unity that brings the matter of the Intellect to existence is more “one” and simpler, not multiplied or divisible by essence. And if it is divisible, it will be so by accident. This unity is more “one” and simpler than any other unity that brings the other substances to existence, for it is joined without mediation to the first Unity that created it.

However, since the unity subsisting in the matter of the Intellect is the unity of simplicity, the unity subsisting in the matter of the Soul, which is below it, necessarily grows and multiplies [itself]. As a consequence, change and diversity happen to it. Unity, then, is expanded and multiplied little by little while descending from what is superior through every degree of the inferior matter, until it reaches the substance which bears quantity, that is, the substance of this world. Being furthest from the first Unity, [this matter] is thick, bodily, and compact, and due to its thickness and largeness, it is opposed to the superior substance, which is subtle and simple. In fact, the latter is the subject of the onset and the beginning of unity, while the former is the subject of the end and the extremity of unity.

The end, however, is very far from the beginning, since it is only called “end” insofar as it is a failure of power and a limit. The degradation of simplicity and the diminution of its power happen through the descent of the unity from the higher to the lower. This is similar to the water that is subtle and clear in its source but, flowing down little by little, becomes thick and dark in marshes and ponds. In a similar fashion, unity varies



little by little through the varieties of the matter bearing it. In fact, since something of matter is spiritual while something else is corporeal, [in it] something is pure and bright, while something else is thick and dark. And this happens because of quantity, whose parts are more dispersed in some things, such as the air, and more compact in other things, such as a stone.

Following the degrees of its distance from the first Unity at the origin, each and every part of matter receives unity, which is nobler [than matter] in reason of its property. Accordingly, we see the parts of fire as “one” in every way, simple and equal, so that its shape appears to be one, having no diversity in itself. To the contrary, we find the parts of air and water to be more diverse and separate, so that it is possible to distinguish among their parts and unities. In hard and thick things, however, diversity and darkness are already greater [than that].

In the highest things, matter is informed by the form of the Intellect, and further on, by the form of the Rational Soul, while afterward by the form of the Sensible Soul. Then, below that, [it is informed] by the form of the Vegetative Soul, and after that, by the form of Nature. And finally, in the lowest things, [matter is joined] to the form of the body. All this does not happen because of the diversity of the power of the agent, but because of the property of the matter receiving it.

Form, indeed, is like light. For just as a thing is seen on account of light, so too cognition and knowledge of things are provided by form, and not by matter. This light, however, is brighter in some things and darker in others, depending on whether the matter in which it is infused comes to be brighter or darker. The more sublime matter is, the subtler it will be, and completely permeated by light. Consequently, that substance will be wiser and more perfect, such as the Intelligence and the Rational Soul. And on the contrary, the lower matter is, the thicker and darker it will be, not completely permeated by light. As has been said already, the more matter descends, [the more] it is made compact, thick, and bodily, and its middle parts block the last ones from being perfectly permeated by light. In fact, it is impossible for light to permeate the second part as much as [it does] the first, nor does as much light reach the third part as reaches the second part, and so on, little by little, down to the lowest part, in which the light is weakened. For it is furthest away from the source of light.

Nonetheless, as it has been said, this does not happen on account of the light in itself, but on account of the great density and obscurity of matter in itself. Similarly, when the sunlight is mixed with the dark air, it lacks the power [that it has] when is mixed with bright air. And similarly, the whiteness of a very thin white cloth is occluded by the abundance of blackness when it is worn by a black body. And similarly, if three or more glass windows are set up in order one after another perpendicularly to the sunlight, it is surely ascertained that the second [window] receives less light than the first, and the third less than the second. And up to the last one, there is a diminution of light which is due not to the light itself,

but to the distance of the glass windows from the light. In the same way, the light of the form of unity which is infused into matter becomes weak and dark while descending, as [when] the light which passes through the first of these [windows] is different from [that passing through] the second one, and [that passing through] the second [is different] from [that passing through] the last one.

Because of this difference in the form of unity, something is said to be one by unity, not in one, but in many ways. For there is something that is [said to be] one by the simplicity of essence, namely God. And another is [said to be] one by the conjunction of simples, namely, angels and souls, each of which is one by the conjunction of matter and form. And another is [said to be] one by continuity, such as a tree or a rock. And another is [said to be] one by composition, as one ark [is made] of many planks or a house of many spaces. And other things are said to be one by aggregation, such as a people or a flock, a jumble of stones, or a heap of wheat. Others are said [to be] one by analogy, such as when the helmsman of a ship and the governor of a town are said [to be] one by the similarity of their office.

Other things are said to be one by accident, as different subjects of the same quality are said [to be] one in that [quality], such as that the snow and the swan are one in their whiteness. Others are said [to be] one by number, as different accidents inhering in the same subject are said to be one by number—that is, by counting, such as [when we say that] this [is] sweet and this [is] cerulean, or this [is] long and this [is] wide. Other things are said [to be] one by reason, but [they are] so in two ways: by reason of a common possession, as the intellect, the [intellected] thing, and [its] word are one in genus; and by reason of one sacrament, as spirit, water, and blood are said [to be] one. Other things are said to be one by nature, as many humans are one by their participation in the species. Others are said [to be] one in virtue of [their] nation or language, as many humans are said [to be] one people or one tribe. Other things are said [to be] one by habit, yet in two ways. Indeed, [many humans are so] by the agreement of virtue and love, as [when it has been said that] “the multitude of believers was one heart and one soul.” However, many humans are said [to be] one [also] by assent to the same vices, as [when it has been said that] “who joins a prostitute becomes one [in the] body.”

In this way, everything desires unity, and it is also said that what is multiple wants to be one. In fact, whatever exists is what it is either because it strives to be a real unity or because, at least, it strives for that by imitating [it].

Every existing thing is one or many. Nonetheless, plurality only exists by the aggregation of unities, which become a multitude when they are dispersed and a magnitude when they are continuous in matter. As a consequence, there is no difference between the unities [composing] a discrete quantity and those [composing] a continuous quantity subsisting in matter, except that the former are dispersed while the latter are

continuous. Therefore, what is continuous comes forth only from what is dispersed, since the meaning of continuity in what is continuous is just the continuation of the dispersed [unities]. Accordingly, continuous quantity necessarily comes forth into substances only through unities.

Whatever part of quantity one might choose must necessarily be one or many. As it has been said, however, every plurality derives from unities. Whence it is clearly understandable that discrete and continuous quantities have one root, since they are composed from one thing and are resolved into one [thing]. And [it is clear], too, that the more connected and compacted the parts of a body are, the thicker and more “quantum” [*magis quantum*] that body will be, such as in the case of a stone. Whereas to the opposite, the more dispersed and scattered the parts of a body are, the subtler, lighter, and less “quantum” [*minus quantum*] it will be, such as in the case of the air. As a consequence, it is true that continuous quantity comes into substance only on account of unity joining and flowing in it.

Unity, therefore, is that by which each thing is one, and [that by which that thing] is what it is.

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## Notes

- 1 See Burnett, “Coherence.”
- 2 This is the case of alchemy, for instance: a discipline that was completely new to the Latin audience at the time. See Mantas-España, “Interpreting the New Sciences.”
- 3 See Polloni, *Twelfth-Century Renewal of Latin Metaphysics*, 1–19. On the problem of anonymously transmitted translations and possible solutions to this impasse, see Hasse and Büttner, “Notes on Anonymous Twelfth-Century Translations.”
- 4 See Burnett, “Communities of Learning.”
- 5 The number of works written by Gundissalinus is still a matter of debate in the literature. For some works, his authorship is commonly acknowledged: these are *De divisione philosophiae*, *De unitate et uno*, *De anima*, and *De processione mundi*. The attribution of others is more controversial, and in most cases little can be said to either demonstrate or refute Gundissalinus’ authorship. This is particularly true for the *De immortalitate animae*, whose authorship tends to be ascribed to William of Auvergne. See Polloni, *Twelfth-Century Renewal of Latin Metaphysics*, 21–24; also Polloni and Burnett, “Peregrinations of the Soul.”
- 6 See Polloni, *Twelfth-Century Renewal of Latin Metaphysics*, 266–69.
- 7 See Schwartz, “Medieval Hebrew Translations”; Hasse, *Avicenna’s De anima in the Latin West*, 18.
- 8 See Polloni, *Twelfth-Century Renewal of Latin Metaphysics*, 190–209.

- 9 Boethius, *In Porphyrium* 1, PL 64, 83B.
- 10 To better appreciate Gundissalinus' change of angle and continuity of doctrinal features, see Polloni, *Twelfth-Century Renewal of Latin Metaphysics*, 30–37, where I discuss *De unitate et uno*'s theories, and 54–76, expanding on Gundissalinus' *De processione mundi*.
- 11 Gundissalinus, *De unitate et uno*, ed. Soto-Bruna and Alonso del Real, 104.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid., 116. See also Soto-Bruna, "La *lux intelligentiae agentis*"; Soto-Bruna, "La 'causalidad del uno' en Domingo Gundisalvo."
- 14 See Gundissalinus, *De unitate et uno*, 108.
- 15 See *ibid.*, 110.
- 16 See *ibid.*, 108 and 140–42.
- 17 See *ibid.*, 106.
- 18 Ibid., 112: "Materia [ . . . ] contraria est unitati, eo quod materia per se diffiuit et de natura sua habet multiplicari, diuidi et spargi; unitas uero retinet, unit et colligit."
- 19 See *ibid.*, 118.
- 20 See *ibid.*, 122–24.
- 21 See *ibid.*, 132–34.
- 22 See *ibid.*, 122.
- 23 See *ibid.*, 126.
- 24 See *ibid.*, 122.
- 25 See Polloni, *Twelfth-Century Renewal of Latin Metaphysics*, 54–76.
- 26 See Polloni, "Roger Bacon."
- 27 See Gundissalinus, *De unitate et uno*, 136.
- 28 See *ibid.*
- 29 See *ibid.*, 138–40.
- 30 Ibid., 146: "quo magis fuerint sibi coniunctae et constrictae, ipsum corpus erit spissius et magis quantum, ut lapis, et e contrario, quo magis fuerint partes corporis dissolutae et rariae, ipsum erit subtilius et leuius et minus quantum, ut aer."
- 31 Ibid., 146: "continua quantitas non uenit in substantiam nisi ex coniunctione et constrictione unitatum in illa."
- 32 Aquinas, *Quaestiones de quolibet* 9, q. 4, a. 1, ed. Leonina, 144–48: "Ad secundum dicendum quod liber ille non est Boetii, unde non oportet quod in auctoritate recipiatur. Sustinendo tamen librum, potest dici quod formam et materiam large accipit pro actu et potencia, ut dictum est"; Aquinas, *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 1, 21, ed. Leonina, 19.630–32: "Ad vicesimum primum dicendum quod liber De unitate et uno non est Boetii, ut ipse stilus indicat."
- 33 See Schwartz, "Medieval Hebrew Translations." The Hebrew text has been critically edited by Schwartz, "Gundissalinus, *Maamar ha-ehad ve-ha-ahdut*."
- 34 Conrad of Prussia, *Commentary on the De unitate et uno*; see Fidora, "Una nota sobre Conrado de Prusia."
- 35 Correns, *Die dem Boethius fälschlich zugeschriebene Abhandlung*, 3–11.
- 36 Alonso Alonso, "El 'Liber de unitate et uno.'"

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# 13 Institution and Causality in Albert the Great's Sacramental Theology

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In an article of 1951, Hyacinthe Dondaine, following H.-D. Simonin and Gilles Meersseman, discussed the development of Thomas Aquinas' theory of the causality of the sacraments.<sup>1</sup> Dondaine suggested that Aquinas "dropped the Avicennian conception of causality to adopt the position of Aristotle and Averroes." In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Thomas still embraced "the frame and the limits of the received theory at his time, namely dispositive causality," but progressively dropped it and, in his *Summa theologiae*, proposed his own conception of instrumental causality.<sup>2</sup> In his article, Dondaine does not refer to Albert the Great, but quotes Roland of Cremona, Gueric of Saint-Quentin, and William of Meliton instead as representatives of the dispositive causality. However, one could legitimately invoke Albert the Great's position, since he uses this expression in both his *Commentary on the Sentences* and his *De sacramentis*.<sup>3</sup> Based on Avicenna's distinction between physical and metaphysical causality, dispositive causality accounts for the efficacious aspect of the sacraments that cannot be considered as sole signs of salvation.<sup>4</sup> Such a study is still relevant for a better understanding of sacramentality today, since most contemporary theologians regard dispositive causality as belonging to instrumental causality, as it appears to unite the First Cause (God) with the secondary causes, the sacraments, in the act of salvation. Such categorization can, however, be challenged,<sup>5</sup> especially in the case of Albert the Great.

In this chapter, I question this interpretation of Albert the Great's dispositive causality, and qualify the reliance on Avicenna.<sup>6</sup> My aim is to show that the notion of "disposition," which characterizes the causal action of the sacraments in Albert the Great's sacramental theology, cannot be understood without considering Hugh of St. Victor's notion of "institution." In the following, I thus consider Albert's definition of the sacrament and establish the importance of the Victorine in this elaboration. I then draw the consequences from it for the dispositive causality of the sacraments and point to the role played by Avicenna's notion of causality in Albert's theory of sacramental grace.

## Albert the Great's Definition of Sacrament

Albert's general definition of sacrament is found in two major texts, his *De sacramentis* and the fourth book of his *Commentary on the Sentences*. The *De sacramentis* belongs to the first period of Albert's writing, and was probably composed in Paris in 1241, with some possible corrections in 1249; he wrote the fourth book of the *Sentences* in Cologne, where he laid the foundations of the Dominican *studium generale* in Germany.<sup>7</sup>

In both texts, Albert provides four definitions of the sacrament:<sup>8</sup> (1) Augustine: "a sacrament is the sign of a sacred thing";<sup>9</sup> (2) Peter Lombard: "a sacrament is the visible form of an invisible grace, which represents it and which exists insofar as it is its cause";<sup>10</sup> (3) Augustine again: "a sacrament is the thing in which the divine power specifically operates salvation under the appearances of visible things";<sup>11</sup> and (4) Hugh of St. Victor: "a sacrament is a corporeal or material element, put extrinsically to the eyes, which represents by similarity, signifies by institution, and confers the invisible grace by sanctification."<sup>12</sup> In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert states that the first Augustinian definition concerns the sacrament in a general sense. Indeed, this definition of the sacrament in terms of signification possesses only too a broad meaning, since it can be applied to both the sacraments strictly speaking and the sacramentals.

On a theological level, the notion of "sign," as fundamental as it might be, is too generic to account for sacraments, and only the three remaining definitions address the sacraments of the New Law in a sufficiently specific manner. For if the first definition accounts for the relationship between two terms—here, the signifier (the ritual as matter and form of the sacrament) and the signified (divine grace)—it fails on two ends. On the one hand, it does not specify the origin of the relationship (*similitude*); on the other, it does not provide an interpretive clue about the relation between signifier and signified.

Instead, Albert the Great suggests that three elements are necessary for defining a sacrament: "the property which signifies, the thing of which it is the property, and the sanctification produced by the form of the sacrament."<sup>13</sup> Albert corroborates this idea in reliance on Peter Lombard's definition and suggests that a sacrament must make reference to three dimensions: the *sacramentum tantum*, the thing that signifies; the *res tantum*, the thing that is signified; and the *res et sacramentum*, the sanctification, which comes as a result of the sacramental form. The first Augustinian definition only provides the first element.<sup>14</sup> It can therefore be applied to both the sacraments of the Old and New Covenant, but cannot be considered as a full and total definition of the sacraments of the Church.

Albert also saw a difficulty with Peter Lombard's second definition. Even if he takes into account the notion of invisible grace, the Lombard defines sacrament as a "visible form" and not directly as a sign.<sup>15</sup> In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert points out that the Lombard's



definition aims essentially at the operative efficacy of a sacrament.<sup>16</sup> Form in Peter Lombard's definition designates a form "that remains as from outside" and that is neither exemplary nor intrinsic.<sup>17</sup> Such a "form," according to Albert's reading, must amount to a relation of similitude between the extrinsic action and its intrinsic action in the sacrament.<sup>18</sup> Yet this relation of similitude remained unclear. Peter Lombard's definition can thus be considered to represent a significant contribution to the development of sacramental theology. It highlights the notion of sacramental causality, though the relation between sign and causality remains underdeveloped.<sup>19</sup>

The second Augustinian definition of sacrament does not fare much better in Albert's evaluation: he provides no explanation in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, and is quite allusive in his *De sacramentis*. He simply indicates that such a definition is given "in comparison with the origin of the [divine] power of the sacraments."<sup>20</sup>

As a result, Albert favors the fourth definition of sacrament, that of Hugh of St. Victor, as he takes it to perfectly account for "all the things that materially and formally exist in a sacrament."<sup>21</sup> It takes into account the three requisites for a perfect definition: a sacrament "justifies *ex opere operato*; it signifies because of its institution; it confers the invisible grace through the sanctification of the words."<sup>22</sup> The Hugonian definition sustains the notion of representation by way of similitude, which explains the correlation between the material element and the effect of grace in the soul. The properties of water, for instance, such as the refreshment and the ablution for the body, are representative signs, "metaphorically" speaking,<sup>23</sup> of the grace that operates in the soul. Moreover, the sign is not chosen at random. It was instituted and was therefore given a true causality. Institution is the main element that was clearly lacking in Augustine's definition. It is also missing in Peter Lombard's definition, at least in the terms Albert chooses to present it.<sup>24</sup>

In sum, in this typology, the different definitions are not mutually exclusive. They are all essential for a theology of the sacraments, as they reveal different possibilities of naming the nature and the action of the sacraments. They can even be reduced to unity.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, Albert favors Hugh of St. Victor's definition, as it is the only one which perfectly unites signification and institution.

### **Dispositive Causality and Institution**

In his own definition of sacrament, Albert the Great insists on the dimension of the signification and the causal efficacy, since sacrament "realizes what it signifies."<sup>26</sup> But the question remains how a sign can be considered causally efficient. This is particularly important to understand, since God is traditionally considered the sole cause of grace: "gratia non est nisi a solo Deo," reason Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux, for instance.<sup>27</sup> If God

is the sole cause of grace, why should one need the sacraments at all? Albert's *De sacramentis* consequently opens with the question of the existence of the sacrament and its legitimacy.

The principal argument for its existence, suggests Albert, cannot rely on its signification, since, according to the objector, any signification is subordinate to causal action. Therefore, if the sacrament is not a cause, it cannot signify and thus has no existence. Albert's answer distinguishes God's power operating in two ways and proposes that it either operates by itself or in created things. By itself, God is the immediate efficient cause of the sacrament. But this does not prevent the sacraments from possessing causality by themselves. They act as a "disposition" for the abolition of sin, which is a privation of grace. If one were to object that this understanding still allows too much of a substantial causal power (it would be in capacity of expelling sin), Albert underlines that in any sacrament, one has to distinguish between what is solely sign (*signum tantum*) and what is sign and thing (*signum et res*). The causality of the sacrament is found in the latter, and therefore it "disposes toward the abolition" of sin, "as in the natural things, nature does not prevent at all the existence of the substantial form, but disposes to its destruction."<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, if there is a true causality attached to the sacrament, even if it amounts merely to the causality of a disposition, does it not follow that God is bound to His sacrament, since disposition is either necessary to grace or precedes it? According to Albert, it is true that the disposition is necessary, as in the case of natural things. But such a necessity does not imply that God could operate salvation without the sacraments. For such a necessity comes from divine institution.<sup>29</sup> Sacraments only dispose for salvation, and they do so in a way in which grace does not come from them (*ex illis*), but resides in them (*in illis*), as Hugh of St. Victor stated.

The whole point then is to evaluate the meaning of such a "being-in," from which grace emanates. Is it purely material? As I said earlier, Albert valued Hugh's definition over Peter Lombard's because it showed the *res* in a better way and centered the notion of signification of the sacraments on institution. Taking up a passage of the *De sacramentis Christianae fidei* of Hugh of St. Victor, Albert points out that the sacraments do not dispose to salvation by anything that would come from them, whether efficient or formal, according to a property that they possess *in them*.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, according to Hugh,

if, therefore, vases are the sacraments of spiritual grace, they do not heal from their own [*ex suo*], since vases do not cure the sick but medicine does. Therefore, sacraments were not instituted for this, that from them should be that which was in them [*ut ex eis esset quod in eis esset*], but that the physician might show his skill he prepared in that a remedy from which the sick man learned the occasion of his sickness. For since man by desiring visible things was corrupted, to be restored

fittingly he had to receive an occasion of salvation in these same visible things, so that he might rise again through the same things through which he had fallen.<sup>31</sup>

It should be noted that the notion of “vase” used in this definition cannot be reduced to its material aspect alone. Its capacity is not a heterogeneous element, but it implies a relation, according to the Aristotelian and the Neoplatonic traditions.<sup>32</sup> There is an ontogenic dynamics of the “being-in” that derives from institution.<sup>33</sup> Thomas Aquinas, though insisting upon the notion of efficiency, notes that the vase is not only a container but also an instrument.<sup>34</sup> The institution proceeds from the Covenant that characterizes the relationship between God and humans. The Covenant is not an oath with contractual purpose, nor does institution imply a pact in the sacrament. On this specific issue, the sacramentality of grace in Albert the Great is fundamentally different from the so-called “occasional” causality, despite the common feature that results from the interpretation of the requirement that “God is the sole originator of grace.” Institution allows the sacrament to dispose the soul toward receiving grace,<sup>35</sup> but the latter is ineffective without the former.<sup>36</sup> Again institution there grants the possibility of a relationship between the material and the spiritual realms. If one follows Hugh of St. Victor, of the three terms which define the sacrament, it is the institution which establishes the link between justification, signification, and sanctifying cause.

The sacrament is neither the efficient nor the formal cause of salvation. It is no more a final cause, since sacraments have been instituted for salvation and not reversely. When Albert the Great returns to this question in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, he declares that the non-efficient causality of sacraments shows that God is not bound to His sacraments. Dispositive causality belongs to material causality: “and if one wonders to which type of causality such a disposition should be reduced, I answer material causality.”<sup>37</sup> The efficiency that operates in the sacraments belongs solely to the divine power (*divina virtus*),<sup>38</sup> and the material disposition together with the constitutive elements of matter constitute the *suppositum* of the form.<sup>39</sup>

Albert provides a telling example to clarify this point:<sup>40</sup> In order to produce a golden shield, one needs to whiten the wood before covering it with gold. It is well known that any craftsman who undertakes to paint some piece of furniture in raw wood previously needs to cover it with a primer coating. The material disposition is this primer coating, along with all the material elements needed. Similarly, the sacrament is the disposition, which, associated with the material element, allows grace to be effective. The material causality of this disposition does not have to be solely considered as the natural capacity of matter. It is true that water possesses a natural capacity to represent baptism, since it cleans, purifies, etc. But such a capacity is not a causal “disposition.” It becomes a disposition when

the baptism formula is pronounced because, ultimately, it has been instituted to be effective in this way. As a matter of fact, representation exceeds signification, as in the human realm of activity, representing exceeds the natural capacity of a thing to signify, since the action of the craftsman is added to the sign.<sup>41</sup> But God's action oversteps craftsmanship because of institution. The conclusion drawn from this passage is that any consideration about the causality of the sacrament for Albert the Great ultimately goes back to the notion of institution, and with this understanding he follows in the footsteps of Hugh of St. Victor.

Such institution is solely divine. To those who argue that the apostles could have instituted the sacraments through the authority and the will of God, being inspired by Him, Albert answers again that only God can institute the sacraments.<sup>42</sup> Any efficiency belongs to God, either for the question of causality or of institution.<sup>43</sup> Sign and causality are closely united in the unity of the institution by Christ; the first reveals his wisdom, the second his power:

Just as there are two things in the Son of God, power and wisdom, whence any sacrament derives its power [*virtus*], likewise there need to be two things in the sacrament that pertain to them, namely cause and sign. For the sign, which is in the service of intelligence, is ordered to wisdom, whereas the cause, which draws attention to the action, is ordered to power.<sup>44</sup>

Causality and signification are closely united in the nature and action of Christ. But institution needs to be befittingly understood. Institution allows the analogical link between the visible world and the invisible presence of God, as Christ has made himself visible through his Incarnation. Sacramentality derives from the presence of Christ, head of the Church,<sup>45</sup> through the action of the Holy Spirit. Thanks to institution, the sacrament is related not only to the act of creation but also to the deed of restoration; not only to the Creator but also to the Redeemer. The natural aptitude of the sign to signify, derived from the act of creation, is supplemented by the spiritual signification, provided by the institution and originated in the *acta* and *passa* of Christ. This institution does not only affect the material or formal element of the sacrament but also expresses itself in the sacramental action in the soul of the believer.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, to signify extends the limits of representation, or, we should say, to represent must be taken in its maximal extension.<sup>47</sup> If representation reveals the natural ability of the corporal element to signify, signification manifests the authority of institution.<sup>48</sup> In Hugh's definition and its resumption by Albert, representation and institution are thus closely connected.

Hugh of St. Victor's definition, according to Albert, holds together representation, signification, and efficacy of the sign, thanks to institution, without forgetting its material dimension.

To conclude this point, it should be noted first that Albert's dispositive causality cannot be reduced to the presentation of dispositive causality by Thomas Aquinas in his *Commentary on the Sentences*.<sup>49</sup> It is then fundamental to study Albert's causality within the Albertinian framework. And Albert's specificity resides in his use of Hugh of St. Victor. The "disposition" in Albert the Great is certainly more similar to the notion of "preparation" (*praepare*) of Hugh of St. Victor than any of his contemporaries. The efficacious action of the sacrament is to "prepare" ("dispose") the soul to receive grace.

### **Albert's Disposition of the Sacraments and Avicenna's Dispositive Causality**

If one agrees with my interpretation of the fundamental influence of Hugh of St. Victor on the Albertinian treatment of the sacramental theory, the place left to Avicenna in this theological construction is particularly narrowed. Against the background of the disposition of matter to receive grace, the dispositive causality belongs entirely to the natural capacity of things to receive a definite form, coming from creation; for instance, water possesses a natural disposition to clean and purify. It is true that Avicenna's "material disposition," which amounts to a preparation of matter, plays a role, to some extent, in Albert's theory of the inchoation of form.<sup>50</sup> But such a theory of secondary causality appears to belong as much as Avicenna's disposition as Augustine's theory of seminal reasons.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, such a disposition already belongs to institution (the first divine institution resulting from the creative act). Lastly, a sacrament is the deed of both Restoration and Creation. It has not only a visible element,<sup>52</sup> since for instance, it is by the "second" divine institution that the baptismal water cleans the soul.<sup>53</sup> Against the background of the notion of efficiency, Avicenna distinguishes between an agent cause (cause of motion or physical cause) and a cause of being (metaphysical cause).<sup>54</sup> But is such a distinction at all relevant to understand the dispositive causality of the sacraments in Albert the Great?

If the power of the sacraments emanates from the institution of Christ understood not only as a precise event coming from his Passion but also as the continuing flowing of grace which is diffused from Christ as head of the Church, then a sacrament itself cannot have a true efficiency in the diffusion of grace. But the question of the effect of the dispositive causality remains. For, as I have stated earlier, the vase of grace does not signify a purely heterogeneous container of the content; or, to return to the example of the shield, the material layout is not the wooden rafter that allowed the shield to be built, but the whitening that prepares the final layer of gold. This whitening is not only necessary but also effective, and results from an act of the craftsman. A sacrament is thus not merely a passive receptacle of grace. Like whitening, the sacraments create the necessary

conditions for the reception of grace. For Albert, however, these are not positive conditions, but purely negative ones. They act to *expel* the form that cannot coexist with grace, sin, which is privation of grace. Again, it only amounts to a disposition, since the sacraments do not expel sin by themselves (*ex illis*). There is therefore a similar action with the dispositive causality in the natural things “which do not expel the substantial form, but which dispose to its destruction.”<sup>55</sup> Under this set of conditions, there are some elements of Avicenna's physical causality in Albert's sacramental theory, provided that such causality is understood in a negative and not in a positive way, and without efficiency—which removes most of the features of Avicenna's physical causality. It can then be agreed that sacraments possess a certain efficiency since they alone are in capacity to *substantially* cure the sickness of sin, “by soothing pain like an ointment” (*ut leniendo dolorem quasi uego*) and “by hatching the nature of the soul” (*fovendo naturam animae*).<sup>56</sup>

If there are some elements that could be attributed to Avicenna's dispositive causality in the sacramental theory of Albert the Great, they are scarce and could be derived from different influences as well. If the Avicennian disposition is partly found in the ontogenic dimension of the vase, it is more surely present in the Hugonian *praeparatio*. Moreover, such “disposition” is always a negative action. Preparation leads to the positive reception of grace only by creating the conditions for the expulsion of sin. At the most, its positive soothing action lies in the warm maintenance of the soul. Finally, it must be remembered that Avicenna is never mentioned in these pages,<sup>57</sup> and that the purely philosophical elements are rather scarce and scattered. In contrast, the part allotted to Hugh of St. Victor and his theory of institution and vase of grace is omnipresent.

### **Some Controversial Texts Implying Efficient Causality?**

In his sacramental theory, Albert has clearly rejected any other causality than material. Of course, if there is no efficient causality of the sacrament for providing grace,<sup>58</sup> this does not mean that it has no effect, since it prepares the soul to receive grace. But effect does not imply efficient causality. Now I intend to discuss two passages in Albert the Great's works that raise some questions, since they seem to imply efficient and/or instrumental causality.

There are some rudiments that would induce the reader to think that Albert tends toward some physical instrumental causality. At the very beginning of the fourth book of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert accounts for an objection showing the uselessness of the sacraments for those who already have faith. If God heals sickness through faith alone, why would he also use the sacraments? The terms of the objector precisely belong to instrumentality. Would not the action of a craftsman be poorly

executed if, although he can achieve it with the aid of a single instrument (*uno instrumento*) at a given time, he uses two of them at another time?<sup>59</sup> In his answer, Albert does not use the term instrumentality, but he does not contradict it either, since his answer is only directed to the action of God and does not question the notion of instrumentality. The fact that Albert does not question the notion of instrument, which would imply that he admits it, is not decisive since the context is a case of an objection.

In the *De sacramentis*, when studying the sacrament of marriage, Albert uses the notion of efficient causality that he finds in the consent of the spouses, in the form of the words spoken before the minister.<sup>60</sup> He also recalls the order of anteriority and posteriority that belongs to Aristotelian efficient causality and uses it to categorize the different effects of the sacraments of marriage. In reliance on a medical example, this time one that considers the finality of health, the physician, walking, remedy, and medical instruments (*organa medicalis*) are all taken to be efficient causes, yet the latter three receive the name of efficient cause in relation to the physician, who is the true and foremost efficient cause.<sup>61</sup> This instrumental scheme is well known from Aristotle's *Physics*.<sup>62</sup> Is there here a first impulse toward a causality of the sacraments in terms of instrumentality? Though the question needs to be raised, a true positive answer is doubtful. First, marriage always represents a specific case in the septenary. Second, the comparison is based on an ordering of effects, and not causes. Third, the term used is *organum* (as in the Aristotelian text), and not *instrumentum*. Nevertheless, the vocabulary used clearly points to efficient causality.

There are, then, some narrowly limited expressions of a certain efficient causality in Albert's theory of the sacraments in both the *Commentary on the Sentences* and the *De sacramentis*, but they are sparse and always related to institution.

## Conclusion

Contrary to the ideas found in Albert the Great's contemporaries, the causality of the sacraments is hardly discussed in Albert's writings. Dispositive causality is never clearly understood as efficient, but rather conceived of as material. If the sacrament is always truly effective and its effect clearly stated, it is always invoked with the "local" dimension of the being-in, understood as the Hugonian vessel of grace. The sacrament's causal action is considered in its negative dimension of expelling sin, and it is always first related to institution, which is also the case of the notion of representation, in its larger extension or signification. It is therefore a theological causality whose efficiency is strictly considered in relation to the Passion of Christ.

From a philosophical viewpoint, the notion of causality in Albert's early works as discussed in this chapter does not have the degree of sophistication found in his later writings, especially in his *Metaphysica* or his *De causis et processibus universitatis a prima causa*. The influence of the *Liber de causis* is



moderate,<sup>63</sup> and the same could be said about Avicenna and the Peripatetic tradition, not least because in matters of faith, Albert explicitly favors Augustine over Aristotle.<sup>64</sup>

In answer to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter, it is clear that Avicenna's dispositive causality influenced Albert's sacramental theology to only a limited extent. Albert's understanding of a disposition depends far more on Hugh of St. Victor's notion of preparation than on Avicenna's idea of physical causality. This point is particularly noteworthy, keeping in mind the subsequent character of Albert's writings. For Albert, the effective ontogenic quality of a vase ultimately owes its action to the founding and continuous action of the Christ-head. Effective causality for Albert is part of a larger system, based on a parallelism between the power and wisdom of Christ, who is the fountainhead of all sacramentality. Cause and sign are on the same level, since they both flow from the same Christological source.<sup>65</sup> Such parallelism commands also the double possible ordering of the septenary which eventually finds its unity in the institution.

However, this parallelism is not strictly divided. The institution is ultimately related to the *ratio* of the sign, as it is in Hugh of St. Victor. Representation signifies by reason of similitude, as a material element, but signification derives its capacity to signify through the institution. Albert's attention is then primarily focused on the sacramental sign and not its cause. This wider theological context explains the absence of a detailed analysis on the proper causality of the sacraments. Signification allows the understanding of the relation between the bodily and the spiritual dimensions, between the visible and material quality of the sacrament and its participation to the invisible and immaterial grace. The Hugonian definition follows the same vein as the theses of the Dionysian corpus, on which Albert will comment precisely at the time he is writing his *Commentary on the Sentences*.<sup>66</sup> Even though some commentators have underrated the influence of Dionysian theology on the *De sacramentis Christianae fidei* of Hugh of St. Victor,<sup>67</sup> the joint reading of these texts allows Albert to construct his own sacramental theology in accordance with both works, which unites the visible theophany of the invisible within the realm of the sign, both founded and vivified by the presence of Christ. It is therefore the synthesis of Augustine, Dionysius, and Hugh of St. Victor that helps us to understand Albert's position and explains his focus on the notion of the sign rather than causality. Such a dependence also explains why Albert's causality of the sacrament is associated with the medicinal scheme.<sup>68</sup>

The sacramental theology of Albert the Great has thus left open different possible options on the question of causality that could be useful for modern theologians: a "dispositive causality" of reception, originating in the works of Dionysius; a causality based on "representation and signification," related to the institution of Christ according to Hugh of St. Victor, that clearly harmonizes with the Dionysian *virtus recipiendi*; some "physical



dispositive causality,” which resumed, if only to a certain extent, some elements of the philosophy of Avicenna; and some aspects of “moral causality” based on the merits of Christ.<sup>69</sup> Though Albert’s choice is clearly expressed, he is evidently one of the theologians who helped to open up these options regarding the causality of sacraments.

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## Notes

- 1 Dondaine, “À propos d’Avicenne”; Simonin and Meersseman, *De sacramentorum efficacia*, vii–ix. See also Van Meegeren, *De causalitate instrumentali humanitatis Christi*.
- 2 Dondaine, “À propos d’Avicenne,” 441.
- 3 Albertus Magnus, *Commentarii in IV Sententiarum* dist.1, B, art. 6, ed. Borgnet (hereafter: *In IV Sent.*), 17: “Ad aliud dicendum quod causa est sacramentum ut *disponens* in subjecto, et est *dispositio* quae est necessitas quantum est de se”; Albertus Magnus, *De sacramentis* q. 1, ad. 2, ed. Ohlmeyer (hereafter: *DS*), 2.37–39: “sed *disponit* ad abolendum eius [peccatum], sicut etiam in naturis *dispositio* non tollit formam substantialem, sed *disponit* ad destructionem eius”; *ibid.*, q. 2, ad. 5, 4.41–42: “dico, quod est *dispositio* similis illi quae in naturis dicitur necessitas”; *ibid.*, ad. 6, 4.51–52: “[sacramenta] *dispositionem* ponant respectu salutis.”
- 4 Marcia L. Colish quotes Dondaine in her study on the influence of this Avicennian distinction in Thomas Aquinas. Colish, “Avicenna’s Theory of Efficient Causation.”
- 5 See Pourrat, *La théologie sacramentaire*, who uses the term “causalité instrumentale dispositive,” 150; R. P. Hugon underlines that there is something of a material causality in the dispositive causality, since it prepares for “receiving the definitive form” (Hugon and Richard, “La causalité instrumentale,” 262; a position challenged by Richard at 266–67); more recently, Revel, *Traité des sacrements*, 1/2:90–97.
- 6 In, for instance, Revel, *Traité des sacrements*.
- 7 For a different dating, see McGonigle, “Significance.” See also Ohlmeyer, “Der gedruckte Sentenzenkommentar,” and especially Rigo, “Zur Redaktionsfrage.” On the global dating of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, see Burger, “Prolegomena,” xxv. I think that the text of the *DS* may have undergone some modifications in Cologne, when Albert composed Book 4 of his *Commentary*.
- 8 The order is slightly different in the *Commentary*, since the definition of Hugh of St. Victor comes last, contrary to the *De sacramentis*, in which Albert quotes first Augustine’s second definition. The objections and answers to these four definitions differ from one text to another. For a fine study of these definitions, see Rosier-Catach, *La parole efficace*, 35–98. See also Van den Eynde, *Les définitions des sacrements*; Van den Eynde, “Theory of the Composition of the Sacraments.”

- 9 Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 10. 5, ed. Hoffmann, 452.18–19. It is Berengar of Tours who first introduced the Augustinian definitions in the field of the sacramental theory, and especially those from *De civitate Dei*. Berengar, *Rescriptum contra Lanfrannum*, ed. Huygens, 44. In his answer to Berengar, Lanfranc not only adopts it as the basis of his own argumentation, but also grants it all its extent as a definition. See, for instance, Lanfranc, *De corpore et sanguine Domini* 12, PL 150, 422.
- 10 Peter Lombard, *Sent.* 4, d. 1, c. 4, ed. Quaracchi, 223.
- 11 Isidore, *Etymologies* 6, 19, 40, PL 82, 255C.
- 12 Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis Christianae fidei* 1. 9. 2, PL 176 (hereafter *DSCF*), col. 317D.
- 13 “Cum enim in sacramento tria sint, scilicet proprietates significans et res, cuius est proprietates illa, et sanctificatio causans ex forma sacramenti,” *DS* q. 2, ad. 13, 5.23–26.
- 14 “Prima accipit primum tantum et ideo convenit omnibus sacramentis veteris et novae legis,” *ibid.*, 5.26–28.
- 15 The core of Albert’s critique resides in the fact that, in the text of the Lombard, the word “sign” has been replaced by the notion of “form.” The notion of “form,” which one can already find in Berengar, is fully used by Abelard, one of Peter Lombard’s major sources. See Van den Eynde, *Les définitions*, 27–28.
- 16 “Secunda autem considerat efficienter operans in omni sacramento,” *In IV Sent.* 1, B, art. 5, sol., 15–16.
- 17 *DS*: “forma quasi foris manens”; *In IV Sent.*: “forma foris manens.”
- 18 “Per similitudinis convenientiam configuratur actio exterior actioni interiori in sacramento,” *In IV Sent.*, dist. 1, B, art. 5, ad diff. 2, 16.
- 19 Irène Rosier notes: “plusieurs théologiens remarquent que, si le sacrement est signe, il ne devrait pas pouvoir être cause de ce dont il est signe.” Rosier-Catach, *La parole efficace*, 75.
- 20 “Quarta autem datur in comparatione ad id a quo sacramenta trahunt virtutem,” *DS* tr. 1, q. 2, 5.31–33.
- 21 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, B, art. 5, sol., 16.
- 22 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, A, art. 2, ad 11, 10.
- 23 The meaning of the word “metaphor” is stronger in Albert the Great than in our modern terminology: it implies a true relation of proportional analogy.
- 24 Though it clearly appears in the definition of Chapter 4 of Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* quoted above.
- 25 “Non omnes diffinitiones illae sunt essentiales, sed primae tres essentiales sunt et reducuntur ad unam,” *DS*, 5.21–23.
- 26 “Sacramentum id efficit quod figurat.” See Hugh of St. Victor, *Dialogus*, PL 176, col. 35; *DSCF* 1. 9. 2, col. 318 (“efficax”); *Summa sententiarum* (Anonymous: Ps-Hugh of St. Victor), PL 176, col. 117.
- 27 Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps. 118* 18. 3, v. 73, CCSL 40, 1725.39–42. On a global scale, see, for instance, Augustine, *Retractationes* 1. 23. 1, PL 32, col. 621. On the relevance of such a formula and its consequences for the Albertinian causality, see Nocke, *Sakrament und personaler Vollzug*, 24 ff.; Bernard of Clairvaux, “In coena Domini,” PL 183, col. 272D; Bernard, *De gratia et libero arbitrio* 1. 2, SC 393, 166–67: “Deus auctor est salutis, liberum arbitrium tantum capax; nec dare illam, nisi Deus, nec capere valet nisi liberum arbitrium. Quod ergo a solo Deo et soli datur libero arbitrio, tam absque consensu esse non potest accipientis, quam absque gratia dantis.”
- 28 *DS* 1. 1, 1.17–34 for the first two objections, 2.23–39 for the two answers.
- 29 *DS* 1. 2, 4.43–47: “necessitatem salutis sacramentum non habet nisi ex institutione divina, et quia deus sine sacramentis salutem operari, ideo dicitur sacramentis suam potentiam non alligasse.”

- 30 I gloss *DS* 1. 2, 4.48–52: “salus proprie non est ex aliquo nisi ex illo ex quo est efficienter vel formaliter, sicut ex deo vel ex gratia, et ideo proprie non est nisi in sacramentis et non ex ipsis, licet dispositionem ponant respectu salutis.”
- 31 Hugh of St. Victor, *DSCF* 1. 9. 4, col. 323C; trans. Deferrari, *On the Sacraments*, 160.
- 32 Trouillard, *L'un et l'âme selon Proclus*, 98, who quotes “l'immanence de l'auto-constituant dans son principe,” according to Proclus' *Elementatio theologica*, 35.
- 33 Moulin, *Sacrement et sacramentalité*, 167–68. In such a conception, being is not conceived as purely static. In a static conception of being, the vase could contain either wine or oil without being modified, nor will the container be modified by its content. But in a dynamic conception of being (ontogenic), container's being and content's being are closely related to each other and the “being-in” (or the inhabitation) induces a modification to both parts.
- 34 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 3. 62. 3, sol. 1: “Grace is said to be in a sacrament not as in its subject; nor as in a vessel considered as a place, but understood as the instrument of some work to be done [*instrumentum alicujus operis faciendī*].” Aquinas refers to Ezek. 9:1 (“weapon of destruction”); see also Ps. 7:14.
- 35 *DS* 1. 1, ad 1, 2.28–29.
- 36 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, A, art. 1, ad 3, 5.
- 37 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, B, art. 5, ad diff. 2, ad 3, 17. Such is Albert's interpretation; see his note following his second quotation of “Master Hugh”: “sed non ex illis ut causa efficiente” (emphasis added).
- 38 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, B, art. 5, ad diff. 3, ad 2, 17. This aspect has been well noted by Weisweiler, “Die Wirkursächlichkeit,” 405: “Albert leugnet sogar mit ausdrücklichen Worten die Zugehörigkeit des Sakramentes zur *causa efficiens*.”
- 39 Albert adopts the hylomorphic structure of the sacrament inherited from Aristotle. See Jorissen, “Materie und Form der Sakramente,” though Jorissen tends to give too much credit to such a structure (279, for instance) and does not clarify the relation of matter and form of the sacrament with the causative disposition considering that efficiency comes solely from God.
- 40 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, B, art. 5, ad diff. 2, ad 3.
- 41 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, B, art. 5, ad diff. 4. See also dist. 1, B, art. 6, ad 2, 18: “signum a Deo et praecipue sacramentale, formam accipit ab institutione, licet aptitudinem habeat a natura.”
- 42 *In IV Sent.* dist. 23, B, art. 13, sol., 20.
- 43 On the importance of institution in Albert's sacramental theory, see Perrin, *L'institution des sacrements*, 30.
- 44 *DS* 1, q. 2, ad 3, 4.15–20: “cum duo sint in filio dei, scilicet virtus et sapientia, a quo omne sacramentum trahit virtutem, oportuit duo esse in sacramento respondentia his, scilicet causam et signum. Signum enim, quod deservit cogitationi, ordinatur ad sapientiam; causa vero, quae respicit opus, ordinatur ad virtutem.”
- 45 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, A, art. 2, sol., 9: “nunc autem dabimus divisionem secundum quod sacramentum configurat nos capiti Christo.” Albert reorganizes all the sacraments upon the basis of the institution of the sign. He is surely not its founder, but such reorganization belongs to his own interpretation of the relation between sign and institution (“Divisio autem sacramenti multipliciter accipitur a Magistris [. . .]. Sed mihi videtur hic, quod oporteret eam sumi penes multiplicationem eorum quae substantialia sunt sacramento: haec autem sunt causa, et signum,” *ibid.*, 7).
- 46 See Moulin, *Sacrement et sacramentalité*, 96–97.
- 47 This statement does not contradict what has been said above. The relation between the two concepts depends on the extent granted to each of them.

- 48 *DS* 1. 2, ad 9, 4.80–84. Representation proceeds directly from institution: “quod autem haec repraesentatio actualiter ducat in gratiam, habet ex institutione divina,” *In IV Sent* dist. 1, B, art. 5, sol., 16. It explains why the bronze serpent of the Old Covenant, though possessing a value of sign, has not been instituted to signify grace. *Ibid.*, ad 1, 16.
- 49 Considering the theses at stake, Revel’s diagram fits the first Thomas Aquinas, but it is inadequate for Albert. Revel, *Traité des sacrements*, 1/2:87. We still lack an extended study on the different variations of the dispositive causality at the beginning of the thirteenth century. To my knowledge, if one excepts Hugh of St. Cher, but only in a certain way, Albert the Great is the only one who insists so much on the relationship between disposition and institution, following Hugh of St. Victor and thus using this tradition in a quite original manner.
- 50 For instance, Nardi, “La dottrina d’Alberto Magno”; de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, 163–77; Lizzini, “Flusso.”
- 51 See Moulin, “Création et causalité”; also Moulin, “Albert the Great,” 15–16.
- 52 *In IV Sent*. dist. 1, A, art. 1, ad 4, 5.
- 53 It is fundamental to avoid the dissociation of the “two” institutions, since they are profoundly united in the Trinitarian God; it is precisely their union which prevents an erroneous interpretation of the “second” one as an act of authoritative “promulgation” that would be the origin of a sacramental theory understood as a “contract.” See Hugh of St. Victor, *DSCF* 1. 9. 2, col. 318: “Ipsa similitudo ex creatione est; ipsa institutio ex dispensatione; ipsa sanctificatio ex benedictione. Prima indita per Creatorem; secunda adjuncta per Salvatorem, tertia ministrata per Dispensatorem.” On the influence of the canonists in the twelfth century, see Ghellinck, *Le mouvement théologique du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.
- 54 See Marmura, “Metaphysics of Efficient Causality”; also Marmura, “Avicenna on Causal Priority.” A precise and detailed study of the question is Jolivet, “La répartition des causes”; see also Wisnovsky, “Towards a History of Avicenna’s Distinction”; more recently, Trego, “La métaphysique de la cause.”
- 55 *DS* 1, q. 1, 2.36–39: “Nihilominus tamen concedimus, quod sacramentum non tollit peccatum, sed disponit ad abolitionem eius, sicut etiam in naturis dispositio non tollit formam substantialem, sed disponit ad destructionem eius.”
- 56 *In IV Sent*. dist. 1, A, art. 1, ad 1, 5. The term “to hatch” (*foveo*) shows quite adequately the ontogenic action of the sacramental vase, which characterizes the action of the “being-in.”
- 57 Avicenna is never referred to in the questions that deal with the sacraments in general. Concerning Order, and the specific question at stake in this paper, one can find a mention of Avicenna about the power (*potestas*) which defines the character, not only as a distinctive quality but also as a place (*ubi*), where a spiritual power is granted: the character is the *res et signum* that grants a spiritual power (*DS* 8, q. 2, a. 1, 136.1–13). It is noticeable, however, that the local dimension (*ubi*) is put forward.
- 58 Weisweiler, “Die Wirkursächlichkeit,” 406: “Freilich handelt es sich hier um eine ganze eigene Ursächlichkeit, die nur im Terminus a quo handeln kann, da der Terminus ad quem ihr nicht erreichbar ist.” Albert grants them a “causality of dispensation” (“potestas dispensandi sacramenta,” *DS* 1. 5, 11.84–85). The first move in direction of efficiency appears to originate in Roland of Cremona; see Dondaine, “À propos d’Avicenne,” 444, who quotes dist. 1 of his *Commentary on the Sentences* (“Ergo proprie attribuitur sacramento iustificare tanquam causae materiali *adaptanti*, quae reducitur ad causam efficientem”). It is taken again, though differently, by Hugh of St. Cher, who considers a double virtue of the sacraments and who consequently appears

- to be closer to the Avicennian causality than Albert (Dondaine, "À propos d'Avicenne," 445). His writings are, however, prior to those of Albert; see Van den Eynde, "Stephen Langton and Hugh of St. Cher."
- 59 *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, A, art. 1, ad 3, 4.
- 60 *DS* 9, a. 5, 157–58.
- 61 *DS* 9, a. 5, ad 4, 158.44–50.
- 62 See Aristotle, *Phys.* 2. 3, 194b35–195a2.
- 63 Even if one could be tempted to give too much credit to the exemplar formal causality of the *Liber de causis* (*esse, vita, sensus*), one has to admit that Albert, though sustaining it, since it is grounded on the priority of simplicity, does not hesitate to qualify and amend it with an analysis of Aristotelian temporality, which eventually accounts for the primacy of baptism in the septenary (*DS* 1. 5, 12.52–67 and 13.30–46). But even when the *Liber* appears in these considerations about sacramental theory, its causality is purely considered from the formal point of view, without any reference to efficiency nor formal causality.
- 64 "Concerning the questions related to faith and ethics, it is better to rely on Augustine more than the philosophers if they differ," *In II Sent.* dist. 13, a. 2, ad 5, ed. Borgnet, 247. He adds: "Sed si de medicina loqueretur, plus ego crederem Galeno, vel Hipocrati: et si de naturis rerum loquatur, credo Aristoteli plus vel alii experto in rerum naturis" ("As for medicine, I would rather trust Galen or Hippocrates. But for matters regarding natural philosophy, I trust Aristotle more than any other experts in the natural sciences").
- 65 Albert often insists on the unique crucifixion as the source of repeated immolation. See Garrigou-Lagrange, "De sacrificio missae."
- 66 Albert undoubtedly composed his fourth book of the *Sentences* at the same time that he undertook the task of commenting on Dionysius in Cologne.
- 67 Rorem, *Hugh of Saint Victor*, 170–72; see also the reservations of Coolman, *Theology of Hugh of St. Victor*. For a critical discussion, see Moulin, *Sacrament et sacramentalité*, 132–59. See also Anzulewicz, "Systematic Theology," 56.
- 68 The remedies are classified according to the order of the sicknesses; consequently, the classification of the sacraments must follow that order (*DS* 1. 6, sol., 13.2–4). The division of the septenary according to causality is wholly constructed according to a classification of the spiritual "sicknesses" (*In IV Sent.* 1, A, art. 2, 7–8). For a study of Christ as "physician," see Arbesmann, "Concept of 'Christus Medicus,'" and more recently, Mulard, *La pensée symbolique*, 295–378.
- 69 "Et solutio alia est per virtutem Passionis Christi, sine qua nullum meritum nostrum aliquid valet," *In IV Sent.* dist. 1, A, art. 1, ad 3, 5.

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## 14 Averroes' *Decisive Treatise* (*Faṣl al-maqāl*) and *Exposition (Kashf)* as Dialectical Works

Peter Adamson

A prominent feature of Averroes' most widely read work, the *Decisive Treatise* (*Faṣl al-maqāl*, hereafter simply *Treatise*),<sup>1</sup> is its distinction between three types of discourse: demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical.<sup>2</sup> This classification is, of course, based on Aristotle's logical works and corresponds to the sorts of argument discussed in the *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics*, and *Rhetoric*, respectively. Averroes introduces it in order to show the harmony between religious revelation and philosophy. Both present their audience with truth, but philosophy does so by giving demonstrations that can be appreciated only by experts, whereas religion does so with dialectical and rhetorical proofs (see, e.g., *Treatise* 109). The fact that we can choose between these methods is a manifestation of divine providence. People are divided into three classes corresponding to the three kinds of discourse, and God has ensured that all three classes have access to the truths that everyone needs to accept.

It seems natural to ask which sort of discourse is being employed in the *Treatise* itself. Averroes gives no explicit indication toward an answer, but it would be rather disappointing if a work that is so conscious about registers of argument entirely lacked self-consciousness about its own argument. We can immediately exclude the possibility that the *Treatise* is demonstrative in character. Nowhere in its pages does Averroes offer a syllogism that would come close to satisfying the stringent requirements laid out in the *Posterior Analytics*. That leaves us with two options: the *Treatise* may be dialectical or rhetorical. In what follows, I am going to argue that it is a dialectical work, and quite deliberately so. Dialectic is the appropriate style of discourse for the occasion, namely the settling of a "problem" in the sense recognized in Aristotle's *Topics*. A "problem" (Gk.: *problema*, Ar.: *maṭlūb*) is a question to be answered by appealing to premises acceptable to the other side of a debate. Of course, the "problem" here is whether or not Islam requires the practice of philosophy, and, of course, Averroes answers this question in the affirmative.

This interpretation may seem unappealing, because in the *Decisive Treatise* itself, Averroes seems to have a rather negative attitude toward dialectic (*jadāl*). He associates it with the rationalist theologians of Islam, the *mutakallimūn*, and takes pride in distinguishing philosophy as a

demonstrative and not dialectical enterprise. But, as will emerge from an examination of the *Decisive Treatise* and a closely related work, the *Exposition of the Methods Used in Arguments Concerning Religious Doctrines* (hereafter simply *Exposition*), Averroes' critique of *kalām* is not simply that it is dialectical. Rather, he complains that the theologians make two mistakes: first, they offer dialectical arguments in the false belief that these arguments are demonstrative; second, and less obviously, they offer arguments that do not even rise to the level of successful dialectic. The theologians are "dialecticians" only in the sense that dialectic is the best we can hope from them, not in the sense that they are genuinely effective practitioners of the dialectical art. By contrast Averroes is, in his own estimation, an accomplished user of the tools described in Aristotle's theory of dialectical discourse.

### The Usefulness of Dialectic

Readers of the Arabic Aristotelian tradition could be forgiven for supposing that "dialectic" is a term of abuse. In the works of figures like al-Fārābī and Avicenna, "dialectical" tends to mean "merely dialectical." It refers to arguments that are suspect because they fall short of demonstration. But we should remember that Aristotle himself recognizes dialectic as an important and useful discipline. It is a familiar observation that Aristotle's own works look more like examples of dialectic than demonstrative science.<sup>3</sup> Later, Aristotelians also wrote self-consciously dialectical works on philosophical topics.<sup>4</sup> What then did Averroes think about dialectic? Fortunately, we are in a good position to know, because we have the two exegetical works that he devoted to Aristotle's *Topics*, the treatise of the Aristotelian organon dedicated to this art. These are a so-called "short commentary," or better "epitome," and a so-called "middle commentary," or better "paraphrase" (hereafter *Ep. Top.* and *Paraph. Top.*).<sup>5</sup> It emerges from these two works that Averroes has a good understanding of Aristotelian dialectic and an appreciation of its usefulness, including its usefulness for doing philosophy.

Fundamentally, dialectic is about debate. It presupposes a context in which a questioner is trying to refute an opponent. Dialectic is the "aptitude" (*malaka*) to produce such refutations (or, for the answerer, avoiding refutation), but without engaging in sophistry.<sup>6</sup> Dialectical arguments are not invalid, but they may be unsound. Dialectical arguments are sometimes made from false premises, and, even when they are true, this is merely accidental to their applicability in dialectic (*Ep. Top.* §4). Rather than truth, the characteristic of the dialectical premise is that it is "accepted" (*mashhūr*, cf. Gk.: *endoxon*) (see, e.g., *Paraph. Top.* §1.3). This does not, at least in the first instance, mean that it is broadly accepted by people in general, but that the opponent in the debate is bound to accept it. He may indeed do so because the premise is widely acknowledged. As

Averroes says, such a premise is “evident to all people or most of them, for there is no doubt [*shakk*] concerning it.”

But there are other kinds of dialectical premises:

*Paraph. Top.* §1.9 (cf. *Ep. Top.* §13): The dialectical premise is an accepted statement [*qawl mashhūr*] to which the questioner solicits agreement, in order to set up part of a syllogism. It has various types: first, those that are accepted by all, for instance that God exists, or accepted by most people without being rejected by the rest, or accepted by the scholars [*‘ulamā’*] and the philosophers [*falāsifa*] without being rejected by the masses, for instance what the sages think about the immortality of the soul, or accepted by most of the scholars without being rejected by the rest [of the scholars], or accepted by those possessed of insight and renown among experts [*ahl al-‘ilm*], without being an implausible opinion, that is, rejected by opinion of the masses.

The concept of doubt (*shakk*) is very important here. As the dialectical premise is distinguished by the opponent’s tendency not to doubt it, so the dialectical problem is one that *is* subject to doubt: “It is that whose truth is not known by itself in accordance with what is accepted [*mā lam yakun ma’lūman šidquhu bi-nafsihi bi-ḥasab al-mashhūr*]; instead, some doubt attaches to it as concerns what is accepted” (*Paraph. Top.* §1.10). If one tries to solve a dialectical problem by appealing to doubtful premises instead of acceptable ones, one has thus tried to solve a doubt by appealing to something doubtful. This is worse than pointless; it is sophistical, at least if one does so under the guise of presenting a proper dialectical argument: “Demonstrative syllogisms are from true premises, dialectical ones from accepted premises, and sophistical ones from premises which seem to be accepted but are not, or seem to be true but are not” (*Paraph. Top.* §1.11). A sophist may get away with this if his audience is not paying attention. But the skilled dialectician knows it is better not even to try. Doubtful premises tend to provoke “opposition” (*‘inād*), a problem that also befalls attempts to persuade through poetical and rhetorical devices (*Paraph. Top.* §1.2). And as soon as opposition is raised against a premise, it ceases to be dialectically useful (*Ep. Top.* §2).

Following the lead of Aristotle at *Topics* §1.2 (101a), Averroes identifies three contexts in which dialectic may be of use: “as practice [*riyāda*], in disputation with the many [*munāẓara al-jumhūr*], and for the theoretical sciences” (*Paraph. Top.* §1.2). Of particular importance to us is the second sort of application. It is obvious why dialectical arguments are useful for dealing with “the many” (I translate *al-jumhūr* this way because the underlying Greek in Aristotle is *hoi polloi*). A whole class of dialectical premises becomes “acceptable” because they are believed by all or most people. Lack of opposition, though not endorsement, from the masses is also used by Averroes to justify the inclusion of expert opinions among acceptable

premises (see the end of the longer quote just given above). You may wonder why a philosopher, at least one with the profoundly elitist attitudes expressed in Averroes' *Treatise*, would bother to dispute with the many. The answer is that there are some things that the many need to accept, including beliefs conducive to virtue and theoretical beliefs that have social or political importance (*Paraph. Top.* §1.2). Since the premises on which the dialectician draws may not even be true, the resulting cognitive state is mere "conviction" (*ẓann*), in contrast to the "certainty" (*yaqīn*) that is the hallmark of demonstrative arguments. But, for many purposes, this may be enough. In any case, it is often the best one can hope for, since, as we know from the *Treatise*, "the many" are not capable of appreciating demonstrative proofs.

### Dialectical Argumentation in the Decisive Treatise

But the audience of the *Treatise* is not "the many." Indeed, one might wonder whether any written text from this period could have had the *jumhūr* as its intended audience, literacy rates being what they were.<sup>7</sup> Rather, this is a juridical text, written "from the standpoint of the study of the religious law" (*alā jihat al-naẓar al-sharī*) (85). Averroes is writing for other jurists. This means that, if it is right to suppose that the *Treatise* operates at a dialectical level, we should expect it to argue from premises that would be "acceptable" to jurists, in the sense that they are bound to be endorsed by such readers. And this is exactly what we find. Take, for instance, Averroes' contention that philosophy has at least as good a claim to legitimacy as the study of the law:

*Treatise* 89: For, just as the jurist [*faqīh*] deduces, from [God's] command to engage in legal reasoning about judgments, the obligation to know the various sorts of juridical arguments, which of them constitute a [valid] argument [*qiyās*] and which do not, so in the same way the person of understanding [*al-ʿarīf*] must deduce, from the command to engage in reflection [*naẓar*] about existing things, the obligation to know the various sorts of intellectual argument. Or rather, this applies to him even more [*bal huwa aḥrā bi-dhālik*]. For, when the jurist deduces from His statement, may He be exalted, "reflect, you who have vision" (Q. 59:2), the obligation to know juridical argument, how much more worthy and appropriate is it for someone who understands God to deduce from this [verse] the obligation to know intellectual argument!

This kind of *a fortiori* argument appears repeatedly in the *Treatise*: whatever a jurist may say in his own defense will be at least as good a defense of philosophy. The judge who gets things wrong is still rewarded, and "which judge [*ḥākim*] is greater than the one who makes a judgment that being

[*wujūd*] is a certain way, or not? These judges are the scholars [*‘ulamā’*] God has entrusted with [allegorical] interpretation” (107). Or, closely thereafter (108), if the jurist needs to be qualified in order to exercise discretionary judgment (*ijtihād*), how much more would the “person who makes judgments about existing things” (*al-ḥākim ‘alā l-mawjūdāt*) need to be qualified by understanding intellectual principles?

Similarly, aspersions cast on the legitimacy of philosophy are not so much refuted as shown to apply equally to jurisprudence. For instance, philosophy is accused of being an “innovation” (*bid‘a*), on the basis that it was not practiced by the earliest Muslims. Instead of arguing that the accusation is misleading or irrelevant, Averroes counters with the observation that the early Muslims did not engage in jurisprudence either, yet we do not admit that it is an innovation (89). Likewise, while it is potentially true that the study of philosophy could corrupt some people, many jurists have also been corrupted by the study of the law (95). And again, one cannot complain of the philosophers’ resorting to allegorical interpretation, since the jurists do so as well (98). Loosely, one might describe all these arguments as *ad hominem*: Averroes is talking to fellow jurists and showing that Islamic law has no better claim to legitimacy than philosophy, or perhaps it has an even worse claim in light of the *a fortiori* arguments just considered.

More strictly, though, the arguments apply techniques described in Aristotle’s treatment of dialectic. Averroes is arguing “from the similar” (*min al-shabīḥ*), a strategy discussed in Aristotle’s *Topics* (*Paraph. Top.* §2.10). This means appealing to a similarity between two subjects to justify the transfer of a predicate from one of the two subjects to the other. An example given by Averroes in his *Paraphrase* is that since the king relates to the city as the navigator does to the ship, the king should not get drunk, since neither should the navigator. This is, of course, the pattern used in the arguments just mentioned from the *Treatise*. For instance, if the study of jurisprudence is licit despite sometimes corrupting the would-be jurist, then the same goes for the study of philosophy. Meanwhile, the *a fortiori* arguments about jurists and philosophers exemplify the next argumentative pattern or *topos* mentioned by Aristotle, the so-called “argument from more and less” (*min al-aqall wa-l-akthar*). Averroes says in his explanation of this *topos*:

If we find that a predicate applies to a subject, we may determine that what is all the more that subject has the predicate all the more, for instance, if pleasure is good, then what is more pleasant is more good.  
(*Paraph. Top.* §2.10; Aristotle gives the same example)

Compare the argument given in the *Treatise*: if jurisprudence is legitimate because it fulfills the Qur’ānic command to engage in reflection (a premise

any jurist is bound to grant), then philosophy, which is an even deeper sort of reflection, is even more legitimate.

Though these examples show Averroes appealing to assumptions that are acceptable to jurists, in particular, he does also make use of premises that are liable to be granted by everyone. When defending allegorical interpretation of the Qurʾān, he mentions a general agreement that allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) can be applied to the apparent meaning (*al-ẓāhir*) of Scripture. His phrasing here is significant: he says that “this is a determination that no Muslim doubts, and no believer questions” (98). The exclusion of doubt (*shakk*) is, as we saw, what makes such a premise dialectically acceptable. Here and in what follows, Averroes refers repeatedly to the idea of a consensus (*ijmāʿ*) concerning the use of allegory and to other matters of religion. Thus, he says that consensus is not certainly established with regard to theoretical questions, as it has been for some practical matters (99).

This may give rise to an objection to my reading of the *Treatise*, namely that I am confusing characteristically *legal* concepts and strategies with concepts and strategies that are at home in Aristotelian dialectic. It is quite clear in the passage just mentioned that Averroes is thinking of *ijmāʿ* as it was applied in Islamic law, since he discusses the problem of verifying the views of the *ʿulamāʿ* and even alludes to the possibility that their teachings may have been passed down by authoritative transmission (*tawātur*). Likewise, the strategy I described above as “argument from the similar” is highly reminiscent of the legal argument from analogy (*qiyās*), the classic example being that if a certain kind of wine (*khamr*) is forbidden because it intoxicates, then so too are other alcoholic beverages.<sup>8</sup> And there are other arguments in the *Treatise* that look straightforwardly jurisprudential. The best example is perhaps Averroes' argument that it is acceptable to make use of the teachings of non-Muslims (like Aristotle) on analogy to the use of an instrument owned by a non-Muslim in a sacrifice (91).

To this, I would reply that we cannot draw a strict contrast between dialectical and legal argumentation. The question of how jurisprudential reasoning fits into the framework of the Aristotelian organon is a complex one. On the face of it, it seems plausible to say that juridical arguments are typically rhetorical. Aristotle after all considers courtroom argument to be a kind of rhetoric, and Averroes follows him in this and has a good deal to say about law in his *Paraphrase of the Rhetoric*.<sup>9</sup> However, this has to do, in the first instance, with arguments given before a *qāḍī* or judge, with the aim to convince that judge (*Paraph. Rhet.* §1.3.1). In the *Treatise*, by contrast, Averroes *is* the judge who is passing down his decision on the status of philosophy. His role is not that of a legal advocate, but that of an interpreter of the religious law—hence the aforementioned remark at the start of the *Treatise* that it is written *ʿalā jihat al-naẓar al-sharʿī* (85). Later in the *Treatise*, we learn that for Averroes this sort of interpretation may be dialectical:

*Treatise* 117: In general, everything that is conveyed by these [Scriptural statements] is an interpretation that is grasped only through demonstration. So this interpretation is the duty of the experts [*al-khawāṣṣ*] in [demonstration]. The duty of the many is to take them in their apparent sense, and in two respects, namely in conception and in assent. For it is not in their nature to go further. Those who reflect on the Scripture [*al-sharīʿa*] may come upon interpretations because one of the common methods that yield assent predominates over the others. That is, if the indication [*dalīl*] offered by the interpretation is more fully convincing than the indication offered by the apparent meaning. These sorts of interpretation are appropriate to the many [*jumhūrī*], and it may be that they are a duty for those whose powers of reflection extend only to a capacity for dialectic [*al-quwwa al-jadaliyya*].

In what immediately follows, Averroes associates this kind of interpretation with the Ashʿarites and Muʿtazilites, so one may suppose that his condescending final remark applies only to *kalām*. But he has already said numerous times that Islamic jurisprudence involves offering allegorical interpretation of the Scripture. This would explain why the *Treatise* adopts a dialectical, and not rhetorical, method.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Kalām* as Failed Dialectic**

Averroes' allusion to the *kalām* schools in this passage does, however, return us to a worry mentioned at the outset of this chapter. How can we believe that Averroes would deliberately choose to write dialectically, when he excoriates the theologians for doing precisely this? Part of the answer is that Averroes is willing to meet the theologians on their own ground: they argue from merely dialectical premises, and he responds in kind. This is how we may take the famous passage in which Averroes complains about al-Ghazālī's unwise decision to air matters appropriate for scholars in front of a wider audience. It was the resulting "notoriety" (*shuhra*: from the same root as *mashhūr*) that prompted Averroes' composition of the *Treatise*, which seeks to undo the damage done by al-Ghazālī's dialectic (114). But this already points us toward another and more interesting reason why Averroes would choose to write dialectically. He does so because *kalām* is not merely dialectical, but often engages in unsuccessful or incompetent dialectic. Averroes, by contrast, plays by the rules.

To understand this, we need to turn to the *Exposition*, which explicitly describes itself as a kind of sequel to the *Treatise*, and also describes itself as being motivated by the need to respond to al-Ghazālī (*Exposition* 185–86).<sup>11</sup> The *Exposition* confirms that *kalām* is an example of dialectic. At one point, Averroes seems to treat the two as near synonyms, saying that in between the many and the true scholars are people who are in a defective



state, namely “the adherents of dialectic and *kalām*” (*ahl al-jadal wa-l-kalām*) (181; cf. 159, which just calls the *mutakallimūn* the “dialecticians”). Earlier, he has gone so far as to lump the theologians in with the many, because they do not deal in demonstrative proofs. Yet, even here, they are singled out as dialecticians:

*Exposition 168:* By “the many” [*al-jumhūr*], I mean all those who do not devote themselves to the demonstrative arts, whether or not they have achieved the art of *kalām*. For it is not within the power of the art of *kalām* to arrive at this degree of knowledge, since the most adequate rank of the art of *kalām* is dialectical, not demonstrative, wisdom [*ḥikma*].

He also mentions that, in what the Ash‘arites and Mu‘tazilites say, “there is a true part and a false part” (165). We can take this as a reminiscence of an observation, made in his epitome of Aristotle’s *Topics*, that dialectical premises are a mix of the false and the true (*Ep. Top.* §4, cited above).

But, as this reminds us, a dialectician may quite legitimately make use of false premises, so long as the premises are “accepted.” It is really on the latter point that *kalām* fails. It seems that the Ash‘arites may have *tried* to use commonly acceptable premises, given that they “take their start from prima facie opinion [*min bādi’ al-ra’y*], namely beliefs that people have when they first start to consider something” (204). But all too often, the premises used in the Ash‘arites’ standard arguments are subject to “doubt” (*shakk*), which as we saw is exactly the criterion that disqualifies a premise from being suitable for a dialectical syllogism. This criticism of being “doubtful” is applied, for instance, to the claim that there are atoms (139), and to al-Juwaynī’s assumption that the features of the world could be different and thus must be contingent (145). Another locution used to make the same point is that a premise is “not evident” (*ghayr bayyan*), as for instance the Ash‘arite claim that anything willed must be temporally originated (148).

The result of this is not merely that a skilled philosopher like Averroes can see through the theologians’ arguments, diagnosing them as non-demonstrative. It is also that the arguments are ineffective for convincing normal people:

*Exposition 138:* The methods that these people use in [proving] the createdness of the world combine two features: namely that the many are incapable of receiving [*qubūl*] them, and at the same time, that they are not demonstrative. So they are befitting neither for the scholars nor for the many.

Again, regarding the Ash‘arite assumption that an infinite series of events is impossible:



*Exposition* 144–45: The things certain people have supposed to be demonstrations about these topics are not in fact demonstrations, nor are they statements appropriate for the many.

And again, regarding an Ash‘arite argument for the uniqueness of God:

*Exposition* 158: Its not working in accordance with nature is because what they say about this is not a demonstration, and its not working in accordance with religion is because the many cannot understand what they are saying, never mind their being convinced by it!

In technical terms, he means that the *kalām* arguments are not apt to elicit “assent” (*taṣdīq*). In this respect, the theologians’ claims are less effective than the surface meaning of religious texts (*al-ḥawāhir al-shar‘iyya*) which do produce assent (174). This may be why Averroes hints, at one point, that the theologians would have done better to stick with merely *rhetorical* arguments. At least these would be persuasive! This suggestion comes in his discussion of al-Juwaynī’s aforementioned claim that God could have made the world differently. Averroes allows that this might qualify as a good rhetorical premise, since it would convince the many. Even this grudging concession is revoked immediately, though. Averroes adds that the premise undermines God’s perfection as designer of the universe, for which reason it shouldn’t be put before the many (146).

As with the comments about *kalām* in the *Treatise*, this hardly looks like an advertisement for dialectic. One might suppose, especially given Averroes’ harsh words about al-Ghazālī, that he would disapprove of any use of dialectical argumentation concerning religious beliefs, whether or not the dialectic is carried out competently. In fact, though, a closer look at the *Exposition* shows that Averroes himself makes use of self-consciously dialectical argumentation. In a sign that the intended audience of the *Exposition* may be wider than that of the audience envisioned for the *Treatise*, he sometimes says that his own premises are bound to be accepted by all people, and not just one group (like the jurists addressed in the *Treatise*). There is a particularly striking example early in the *Exposition*, which mentions that “all Arabs acknowledge the existence of the Creator” (136), striking because it is an accepted belief we also saw being cited in Averroes’ paraphrase of the *Topics* (§1.9). On the other hand, the remark comes within a summary of the views of the *ḥashwiyya* rather than of Averroes’ own position, so it doesn’t really prove that Averroes wants to base himself on accepted beliefs.

There is, however, ample evidence of this in other passages, where Averroes is indeed presenting his own views. In the midst of his treatment of the question whether God can be said to have a “spatial direction” (*jīha*), he says, “all the philosophers [*ḥukamā*] agree that God and the angels are in heaven, just as all religions agree to this” (177). In the terms

of his paraphrase of the *Topics*, this would be a thesis accepted both by “the scholars” and by “the many.” Though it may raise an eyebrow to see Averroes ascribing this particular notion to the philosophers, he actually has good grounds for doing so. In a rather puzzling passage at the end of *Physics* book 8 (267b), Aristotle says that the Prime Mover is “in the circle” (*en kuklōi*), usually taken to mean “at the circumference of the celestial sphere.”<sup>12</sup>

One of Averroes' favorite ways of describing such accepted premises in the *Exposition* is to say that they are rooted in human “instinct” or “in-born disposition,” in Arabic *fiṭra*. This is an idea familiar from the Islamic tradition, most famously in the *ḥadīth* that states, “every newborn is born according to *fiṭra*, but his parents turn him into a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian.”<sup>13</sup> Averroes applies this to the premises invoked by his own favored proofs for God's existence, namely that the universe is designed with the welfare of humans in mind, and shows other signs of providence, as for instance the cunningly designed organs of animals. Unlike the *kalām* arguments for the same conclusion, these arguments can be generated from premises accepted by all. Thus, the second argument is built on “two principles that are potentially available [*mawjūd*] in all human instincts [*fiṭar*]” (152). That Averroes understands this in terms of the dialectical theory from the *Topics* is proven by a passage at *Exposition* 155, which again mentions *fiṭar al-nās* and then explains that his methods of proof are appropriate to both the “elite” (*khawāṣṣ*) and “the many” (*jumhūr*), with the elite simply understanding them in fuller detail (*tafṣīl*).<sup>14</sup>

Another locution favored by Averroes when emphasizing the “acceptability” of his premises, so sorely lacking in the assumptions made by the theologians, is “known in itself” (*ma'rūf bi-nafsihi*). Truths said to be “known in themselves” include the impossibility of a single city being ruled harmoniously by two rulers (156), that the earth was made to give humans a place to live (197), that justice is good and injustice bad (235), and that it is better to have a greater good and less evil than no good at all (238). At first glance, it might seem that Averroes wants more than dialectical acceptability in such passages. Isn't a premise that is “known in itself” suitable for use even in proper demonstrations?

Not necessarily. We have already seen him use the phrase “known by itself in accordance with what is accepted” (*mā ma'lūm [ . . . ] bi-nafsihi bi-ḥasab al-mashhūr*) in his paraphrase of the *Topics* (*Paraph. Top.* §1.10, cited above). Here in the *Exposition*, too, something that is “known by itself” is apparently the same as that which is “accepted.”<sup>15</sup> Consider the following passage, which concerns the existence of prophets:

*Exposition* 216: The existence of those who are called messengers and prophets is known by itself [*ma'rūf bi-nafsihi*] [ . . . ]. For their existence is denied only by those who deny the existence of things depending on testimony, for instance the existence of other kinds of things we

have not witnessed, or people famous for their wisdom, etc. For the philosophers and all people [*al-falāsifa wa-jamī‘ al-nās*], except for those whose claims are insignificant, namely the *dahriyya*, agree that there are individuals who have been given revelation.

Here again, we have the appeal to both scholarly and popular opinion, and even the exclusion of skeptics about testimony and materialists or eternalists (*dahriyya*), groups that fall outside the pale because of their paradoxical teachings. I use “paradoxical” in the sense used in the *Topics*: these groups explicitly reject what is *endoxon*, that is, generally acceptable. The premise Averroes is asserting here—that there do exist people who have received a revelation—is then joined to another premise, namely that whoever brings a religious law is such a prophet. This second premise is something “about which there is no doubt in human instinct” (*ghayr mashkūk fī l-fiṭar al-in-sāniyya*). On this one page of the *Exposition*, Averroes uses nearly all the terminology that flags dialectically acceptable premises.

Let us now repeat a remark made by Averroes when paraphrasing the *Topics*: “dialectical arguments are from accepted premises, and sophistical ones from premises which seem to be accepted but are not, or seem to be true but are not” (*Paraph. Top.* §1.11). Applying this to what we have seen in the *Exposition*, we can say that, strictly speaking, it is Averroes who argues as a dialectician. The theologians are really arguing like sophists, because they fail to base themselves on premises that are accepted. Why then does Averroes label the theologians as dialecticians? The answer may lie in another remark we have already quoted above: “the most adequate rank [*aḡhnā l-marātib*] of the art of *kalām* is dialectical, not demonstrative, wisdom” (*Exposition* 168). I take this to suggest that the theologians may in principle aspire to do dialectic according to the rules, and may manage to do this much of the time despite the criticisms made in the *Treatise* and *Exposition*. When, for example, Averroes lambastes al-Ghazālī for arguing “dialectically” in the *Incoherence*, he may well mean that his arguments really are dialectically sound—that is, based on premises that are accepted, if not necessarily true. Whether a given *kalām* argument meets this standard, or instead falls into sophistry, will have to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

### Averroes the Dialectician and Philosopher

The general point in any case is that dialectic is the best we can hope for from the *mutakallimūn*, and it is in light of this highest attainment that they are labeled as dialecticians. The same reasoning can of course be used to explain why Averroes is not eager to style himself as a dialectician, even if he is well aware that the arguments he offers in the *Treatise* and *Exposition*

are dialectical in character. Averroes can do dialectic and do it right, but he can do better still if the context is appropriate. He is a philosopher and would be able to offer demonstrative arguments for the things he here establishes non-demonstratively. This is what lies behind the somewhat enigmatic remark in the *Exposition* that “the elite” understand providential design in greater depth than “the many,” even though both can use these proofs to show the existence of God (155). The philosophers are able to produce versions of these same proofs that go back to genuinely apodeictic premises, rather than premises that are merely accepted, on the basis of their detailed understanding of nature. For instance, the philosopher could explain exactly how a certain organ is well-designed to promote well-being in a given animal species, on the basis of the species' essential features. Here, of course, Averroes will be thinking of Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*, but also Galen's *On the Usefulness of the Parts* and its lengthy paean to the providence of nature.

If this is right, then the arguments found in these two works may be dialectical, but they need not be “merely” dialectical. Much as the philosopher is in a position to separate true interpretations of Scripture from false ones, he would be able to choose dialectically effective arguments that have true premises and conclusions. As Averroes says in the epitome of the *Topics*, truth is “accidental” to premises insofar as they are dialectical (§4). But then it is also accidental to a syllogism, insofar as it is dialectical, that it is being given by a philosopher. Whether Averroes has always been careful to select true premises in the *Treatise* and *Exposition* is something we could decide only through a close comparison of these premises to the views set forth in the properly scientific works, that is, the commentaries on Aristotle. But we should be careful not to leap to the assumption that Averroes is hiding his true convictions, simply because he is arguing dialectically.<sup>16</sup> To the contrary, he is presumably doing what he describes when summarizing the *Topics*: using dialectic to refute opponents who teach falsehoods and to argue for true beliefs that are useful for everyone to accept, such as the existence of God and the compatibility of philosophy with Islam, all in a way appropriate for a broad, non-philosophical audience. Insofar as the conclusions and perhaps even the premises of his arguments are true, there will be no clash between the teachings of these dialectical works and the deliverances of Aristotelian science. After all, truth does not contradict truth.

### Acknowledgments

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## Notes

- 1 I cite by page number from the following Arabic edition: Averroes, *Faṣl al-maqāl*, ed. Jābirī. There are numerous English translations: e.g., Averroes, *On the Harmony*, ed. Hourani; Averroes, *Decisive Treatise*, trans. Butterworth. All translations from the *Treatise* and other texts are my own.
- 2 One could hardly choose a more appropriate topic for this tribute to Richard C. Taylor, since he has contributed some of the most insightful studies of the *Decisive Treatise* and the issues it raises for his philosophical stance as a whole. See, for instance, Taylor, “Truth Does Not Contradict Truth”; Taylor, “Ibn Rushd/Averroes”; Taylor, “Averroes on the *Sharī‘ah*.”
- 3 On this question see, e.g., Barnes, “Aristotle and the Methods of Ethics”; Irwin, *Aristotle’s First Principles*; Smith, “Aristotle on the Uses of Dialectic.”
- 4 See Adamson, “Dialectical Method.”
- 5 For the terminology concerning these types of exegetical work, see Gutas, “Aspects of Literary Form.” For an Arabic edition and English translation of *Ep. Top.*, see Averroes, *Averroes’ Three Short Commentaries*, ed. Butterworth; for the Arabic of *Paraph. Top.* I have used Averroes, *Talkhīṣ mantiq Aristū*, ed. Jihāmī, both cited by section number.
- 6 The term *malaka* is used at both *Ep. Top.* §21 and *Paraph. Top.* §1.1.
- 7 Having said this, Averroes seems to worry that literary productions can reach the many, given his criticism of al-Ghazālī for airing controversial questions and corrupting his readers in a misguided attempt to make them “knowledgeable people” (*ahl al-‘ilm*) (113). See further below on the *Treatise* as a response to al-Ghazālī.
- 8 On the question of how the legal sense of *qiyās* (“analogy”) relates to the logical sense of *qiyās* (“syllogism”), see Bou Akl, “Averroes on Juridical Reasoning.”
- 9 See Averroes, *Averroès (Ibn Rushd): Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad. My thanks to Rotraud Hansberger for discussion of the following point.
- 10 At one point, Averroes explicitly reflects on the sort of discourse he himself is using in the *Treatise*. Having given a comparison between the legislator and a doctor, Averroes comments that the analogy (*tamthīl*) might seem to be “poetic” but is in fact “certain” (*yaqīn*), because it accurately portrays two kinds of relation: that of the doctor to the body and that of the legislator to the soul (*Treatise*, 121).
- 11 References are to Averroes, *al-Kashf*, ed. Qāsim. English version in Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, ed. Najjar.
- 12 On the history of this exegetical problem, see Adamson and Wisnovsky, “Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī.”
- 13 For this and further references, see Griffel, “Al-Ghazālī’s Use.”
- 14 Again, one might wonder whether it is really fair to ascribe these arguments to the philosophers. But the idea of design in nature, and anthropocentric design in particular, can be plausibly ascribed to Aristotle. See Sedley, “Aristotle’s Teleology.”
- 15 In addition to the example that follows, this is shown by a passage at *Exposition* 172, which discourages non-scholars from inquiring into God’s corporeality, since the issue is “not even close to being self-evident” (*laysa huwa qarīban min al-ma‘rūf ni-nafsīhi*). In other words, it is a matter concerning that for which we have no access to accepted premises, such as those which are useful for arguing with the many.
- 16 Indeed, he says in *Paraph. Rhet.* (§1.1.18–19) that even though both dialectic and rhetoric can be used to argue on either side of an issue, arguments based on true premises are superior.

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# 15 Averroes on Imagination (*takhayyul*) as a Cognitive Power

Deborah L. Black

Although it is widely recognized that the faculty of imagination is central to the philosophical psychology of Averroes (Ibn Rushd), his account of its nature as a cognitive power in its own right is comparatively neglected. Yet pinpointing Averroes' views on the imaginative faculty is not a straightforward task. A major obstacle is the equivocity of the very term "imagination" (*al-takhayyul* and cognates), which serves both as an umbrella term covering a cluster of sensory faculties and as the proper name for one of those senses.<sup>1</sup> This ambiguity is, in turn, rooted in the Aristotelian and quasi-Aristotelian texts that provide the foundations for Averroes' theory of the imagination. In the *De anima*, especially Book 3, chapter 3, Aristotle puts forward what seems to be his official account of imagination (*phantasia*), assigning it a wide variety of operations loosely united by their link to sensory images or *phantasmata*. Yet in the various texts of the *Parva naturalia*—and even more markedly in the version available in Arabic—these same functions are parceled out to several distinct faculties that are not mentioned at all, or only obliquely, in the *De anima*. On the basis of the version of the *Parva naturalia* available to him, Averroes had reason to believe that Aristotle himself upheld a fourfold scheme of sensory faculties, of which imagination is only one.<sup>2</sup> Averroes thus adopts this view as his own, and he continues to endorse it as an authoritative Aristotelian doctrine in his mature *Long Commentary on the De anima*, where he identifies four "individual discerning powers" (*virtutes distinctivas individuales*): the common sense, the imaginative,<sup>3</sup> the cogitative, and the memorative powers.<sup>4</sup> Of these four powers, the cogitative and memorative are unique to humans, whereas the common sense and imagination are found in most, if not all, animals, including humans.

In what follows, I trace the specific operations assigned to the imagination in Averroes' various commentaries on the *De anima* and *Parva naturalia* in an attempt to isolate its contributions from those of the other sensory powers. While it is possible to pick out some operations that can definitively be assigned to the imagination alone, certain ambiguities remain intransigent. Many of these reflect the simple conflation of the generic and specific uses of *takhayyul* and cognate terms. But in other cases, the confusion stems from Averroes' understandable tendency to focus on the



distinctively human cognitive functions of the imagination, a focus that makes it difficult to discern whether the operations in question belong to the imagination itself or to the human imagination insofar as it falls under the influence of the cogitative power and the intellect.<sup>5</sup>

### **Imagination in the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia***

In his *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*, Averroes discusses the role of the imaginative faculty in the various cognitive operations addressed in the different books of the *Parva naturalia* as he knew it: in the basic act of sense perception (the *De sensu*), in memory and related activities (the *De memoria*), and in sleep and dreams (the *De somno* and *De insomniis*).<sup>6</sup>

#### ***Imagination and Sense Perception: Through the Looking Glass***

The faculty of imagination is evoked in Averroes' account of sense perception, understood as the spiritual reception of a sensible form (*ṣūrah*) which undergoes a process of gradual dematerialization as it is transmitted through the medium and the sense organs and received into the common sense. Averroes identifies three stages in this process: the form's corporeal existence in the external world; its first grade of spiritual existence in the common-sense power; and a final, more spiritual (*akthar rūḥānīyah*) level of existence in the imaginative faculty. As an indicator of its greater degree of spirituality, Averroes notes that the imagination is able to make a form present for its consideration even in the absence of an extramental object, which shows the imagination's independence from any physical contact with a material particular to perform its operation.<sup>7</sup>

Averroes employs a rather curious analogy to illustrate the relations between the external senses, the common sense, and the imagination and their relative degrees of spirituality. He asks us to imagine someone (person 1) looking into a translucent, two-sided mirror which is then placed in front of a body of water, so that her reflection passes *through* the mirror and is reflected a second time onto the water. From there, her image is reflected again onto the reverse side of the mirror, which a second person (person 2) is facing, and in which she sees the first person's image. Person 1 corresponds to the external sensible object; the mirror and the water represent the air and the eye, respectively. The common sense is represented by the reflection of person 1's image off the water and onto the second side of the mirror. The imagination, finally, is like person 2, who is gazing on the image reflected onto the second side of the mirror from the water. In order to capture the idea that the imagination can contemplate its object even when no physical thing is present, Averroes stipulates, rather fancifully, that the image on the second side of the mirror will remain behind, even after person 1 has turned away, so that person 2 can continue to behold her after her departure.<sup>8</sup>

The improbability of this model notwithstanding, it highlights two important features of how Averroes envisages the relation between the imagination and the common sense, on the one hand, and its link to the external sensible object, on the other. First, while Averroes goes to great lengths to incorporate the ability of the imagination to perceive an object after it has withdrawn from the perceiver's sensory range, the imagination remains dependent on the common sense—the reflection off the water—to provide it with an object in the absence of any external body. This close link between the imagination and the objects lingering in the common sense becomes a standard feature of Averroes' various accounts of the production of acts of imagining. Second, the imagination is depicted here as perceiving an object which has reached it through multiple levels of reflection and mediation. Yet Averroes does not seem worried that this might affect the veridicality of imagination. Instead, he takes this mediation as a yet another mark of the superiority of imagination, since its greater spirituality is directly tied to the distance that separates it from actual contact with the material particulars outside the soul.

At the end of the *De sensu* chapter, Averroes also introduces another metaphor which becomes a staple in his various accounts of the imagination. This metaphor breaks down the perceptual object into two components, which are analogous to the core (*lubāb*) of a fruit, on the one hand, and its rinds or shell (*al-qishr*), on the other. The core symbolizes “the differences of things and their proper intentions” (*fuṣūl al-ashyā' i wa-mā'ānī-hā al-khāṣṣah*), whereas the rinds correspond to their external features (*al-umūr allatī min khārijin*).<sup>9</sup> Averroes explains the ramifications of this metaphor most fully in the next section of the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*, which corresponds to Aristotle's *De memoria*.

### ***The Elephant in the Room: Memory and Creative Imagination***

Averroes builds his account of the nature of memory and related cognitive phenomena around two operations, sensory analysis or abstraction (*taḥlīl*) and composition or synthesis (*tartīb*). He is careful to parcel out the various components of these operations to one of the three powers of imagination, cogitation (*fīkr/mufakkīrah*),<sup>10</sup> and memory (*dhīkr*), and he again clarifies that the latter two powers are found only in humans. The process of analysis is the basic act of sensory abstraction, in which the cogitative faculty separates out the intention (*ma'nā*) of the perceived object from its “image” (*khayāl*) or “imagined form” (*al-ṣūrah al-mutakhayyalah*) and transmits the intention to the memorative faculty.<sup>11</sup> Averroes again likens the image to the rind or shell which covers the intentional core. Here Averroes adds a helpful example to illustrate what each of these objects represents: when a painter (*al-rāsīm*) is painting the portrait of some individual, Zayd, the physical features by which Zayd's outward appearance is described would be analogous to the image, whereas the intention corresponds to

the individual who is the subject of the painting, “this denotable Zayd.”<sup>12</sup> The imaginative or formative faculty is thus the power whose objects describe the external physical appearances of individual particular objects. This serves to differentiate the imagination from the higher, distinctively human powers of cogitation and memory, which have exclusive access to the individual core or intention buried within the image.<sup>13</sup>

The fairly circumscribed role assigned to imagination in the process of sensory analysis is also reflected in one of the most intriguing parts of the *De memoria* section of the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*, that is, Averroes’ account of the reverse process of synthesis as it is found in acts of creative imagination.<sup>14</sup> Averroes explains how the same three faculties are able to cooperate in order to produce a new image of an individual that the perceiver has never experienced before. Here and elsewhere, Averroes uses the example of someone forming an accurate picture of an elephant simply from hearing its physical description. In this case, the cogitative faculty takes the images and intentions that it once separated and then recombines them, so as to create a new image not previously encountered:

In some people the forms of sensible things may be made present from the joint operation [*itijmā*] [of these three faculties] without their having been sensed before, when only their attributes [*ṣifātu-hā*] were transmitted to them. This is as Aristotle relates of some of the ancients, that they formed images of things conveyed to them through hearing, without having observed them, and when these forms were examined, they were found to be in accordance with what was observed of them. And it is possible in this way for someone to form an image of elephant who had never sensed one.<sup>15</sup>

While I have referred to this process as one of “creative imagination,” the role of the imaginative faculty here is fairly limited. Averroes is quite explicit that the faculty responsible for both acts of recollection and the composition of novel images is the cogitative faculty, and he appeals to the principle that “the composer is also the divider” to support his view.<sup>16</sup> All that imagination does here is provide the cogitative faculty with images of previously sensed “attributes” which fit the reports of those who are describing the unknown creature. Its role seems entirely passive, so the process is probably better dubbed “creative cogitation” rather than creative imagination.

### ***Imagination and Imitation: Even Better than the Real Thing***

In the chapter on dreams in the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*, Averroes identifies two characteristics of dreaming that point to the imagination as its principal cause: (1) it involves the perception of physical objects even when no sensibles are present externally; and (2) it generally takes place

when all the other sensory faculties—cogitation and memory, as well as the common sense—are inactive, especially during sleep.<sup>17</sup> Averroes also appeals to a third property of the imaginative faculty that has not yet emerged in other texts—the imaginative faculty is by its nature incessantly active and thus the sole faculty that is never dormant: “For this faculty is always in motion and continual activity in forming images and making likenesses, and in transferring from image to image [*min al-taṣawwiri wa-al-tamthīli wa-al-intiqāli min khayālin ‘alā khayālin*].”<sup>18</sup> Averroes calls this imaginative activity a form of imitation, and, as such, it seems to require the imagination to have access not only to images but also to the intentions stored in the memorative faculty:

For sometimes it does this from the intentions in the memorative faculty, and sometimes it does it from the traces which are in the common sense. Sometimes it encounters the intention of this thing of which it formed an image from an external principle, as we will explain. This occurs in one of two ways: either it encounters this intention itself, or it encounters in place of it something that imitates it [*mā yuḥākī-hu badala-hu*]. It is clear from all of this that dreams are primarily related only to the imaginative faculty among the powers of the soul, whether they are true or false.<sup>19</sup>

One might worry that, in this description of how dreams are produced, the imagination seems to be usurping the role that Averroes elsewhere assigns to the cogitative faculty, as the composer of new images. One way to allay this concern would be to assign to the cogitative power only those acts of composing images that are the products of conscious effort, while the random acts of conjuring images that occur in dreams or hallucinations are the work of the unbridled imagination in isolation. Yet this leaves unexplained how the imagination would have access to the intentions stored in memory, since Averroes’ accounts of sensory abstraction suggest the imagination cannot perceive them. Perhaps Averroes thinks of the imagination as having a kind of blind access to intentions that involves no recognition of the individuals represented by them, though this does not seem adequate to account for how we experience images in dreams.

Averroes’ identification of imagination as imitative requires some further elaboration. This was also a defining characteristic of the imagination for Averroes’ predecessor, al-Fārābī.<sup>20</sup> For al-Fārābī, the nature of imaginative imitation involves depicting an object using the sensible appearance proper to some *other* thing. Thus, an imitation of *x* is a cluster of sensible forms that evoke some property of *x* by describing the physical characteristics of some other object, *y*, with whom *x* shares that property. For example, if I am dreaming about some person of whom I’m very afraid, I may imagine him as a towering vampire with fangs, rather than envisaging his actual appearance.<sup>21</sup>

Yet this Fārābīan understanding does not seem to be what Averroes means by imitation. This becomes clear from Averroes' account of imaginative prophecy, in which the "imaginative soul" (*al-naḥs al-khayālīy*) is said to receive a universal nature (*al-ṭabī'ah al-kullīyah*) from the Agent Intellect as a particular (*juḥṭīyan*). Averroes differentiates cases in which the imagination receives the image of an actual individual from those in which it receives "what imitates it" (*mā yuḥākī-hu*), and he claims that in dreams and prophecy the imagination usually receives "the imitative intention" (*al-ma'nā al-muḥākīy la-hu*) rather than that of the real individual "falling under the universal."<sup>22</sup> If Averroes were following al-Fārābī's account of imitation, we might read this as an appeal to the symbolic character of dreams and prophecies, as in my example above, in which the universal "dangerous person" is imitated by the image of a vampire. By contrast, the imagination would receive the universal "feline" as a real individual when it imagines a real cat, such as my cat, Fuscus. Yet this traditional understanding of imitation does not fit the account that Averroes himself provides. Instead, Averroes hearkens back to his earlier explanation of hallucinations and apparitions, in which our images are accompanied by actual sensory experiences, like seeing a ghost.<sup>23</sup> Averroes proposes, as the basic mechanism for such apparitions, a process of what we might call "inverse causality," according to which the imagination triggers a contrary motion in the common sense, contrary, that is, to the one that originally produced the image, which, in turn, arouses the organs of the external senses, causing actual episodes of seeing, hearing, smelling, and so on.

Averroes has in mind these sorts of apparitions when he speaks of the reception of a "real" individual in dreams. When we actually experience the object with our senses, we receive "the form itself and not what imitates it" (*al-ṣūrah naḥs-hā, lā mā yuḥākī-hā*). By contrast, to imitate that same object is just to imagine it without any corresponding sensory experience. Averroes says that such images count as *imitations*, because they are more spiritual than actual sensations. Thus, they do not produce any corporeal effects in the dreamer. In this context, then, an imitation is not being taken as an inferior copy, but as a perception that is even better than the real thing:

This is because the sensible thing has two forms [*li-l-shay' i maḥsūsi sūratayn*]: one of them is spiritual [*rūḥānīy*], which is the form that is imitative of it [*wa-hiya al-ṣūrah al-muḥākīyah li-hā*], and the other is corporeal [*jismānīy*], which is the form of the sensible thing itself, not the form imitative of it. And the imitative form is more spiritual only because it is closer to the universal nature than the form of the real thing.<sup>24</sup>

The imitative capacities of the imagination for Averroes are thus understood very differently from the way al-Fārābī understands them, as the representation of an object by an image that is not isomorphic with it. For

Averroes, images are imitative in virtue of their basic capacity to stand in for the external corporeal object and grant it a higher grade of spiritual reality in the soul that approximates the universal.

### **Imagination in Averroes' *Epitome of the De anima***

While all of Averroes' *De anima* commentaries contain some allusion to the hierarchy of the "four grades" of sensory powers elaborated in the *Parva naturalia*, Averroes' discussions of the imagination in these commentaries take their cue from the Aristotelian text, in which only the imagination and the common sense are treated thematically.<sup>25</sup> As a result, it becomes more difficult to ascertain when Averroes is using "imagination" as a generic, umbrella term for all these powers but the common sense and when he is describing its nature as a specific power. In the *Epitome*, the two main activities that seem to be proper to the special faculty of imagination are ones that have also emerged in the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*: its ability to perceive the traces of sensation in the absence of any actual object and its random act of incessantly scanning the images that those same traces comprise.

### **Spontaneous Necessity**

One of the most striking features of Averroes' account of imagination in the *Epitome of the De anima* is that he attributes two opposed characteristics to its operations, namely, that they are both voluntary or "up to us" (*la-nā*) and "one of the things incumbent on us." Following Aristotle, the voluntary character of imagination is evoked to show that imagination is neither sensation nor opinion.<sup>26</sup> In particular, Averroes appeals to our ability to fashion images of fictional beings such as goat-stags and ghouls to show its voluntary character, although he admits that this activity is "proper to humans" (*khaṣṣan li-l-insān*). By contrast, sensation is "necessary for us" (*darūrīyah la-nā*); for example, we cannot avoid smelling someone's perfume or hearing loud music if the sensible objects are within the range of the relevant senses. Opinion, too, is necessary for us, though for different reasons: opinions by their very nature are accompanied by an act of assent (*ma'a taṣḍīq*), and for me to assent to *p* entails that I must believe that whatever *p* asserts actually obtains in the external world. By contrast, when I conjure up fictional images of things like goat-stags and ghouls, I am under no compulsion to believe that there really are such things.

By contrast, Averroes later asserts, in opposition to his earlier declaration, that the activities of the imagination are not in fact voluntary, but incumbent upon us just as much as is sensation:

Moreover, it is not possible for us to imagine whenever we wish, but rather, we are in a state of continual imagination [*fī takhayyulin dā'imin*]. And in general, the imagination is one of the necessary things

for us [*la-nā min al-umūr al-ḍarūrīyah*], as is the case with the sensibles. And since this is so, there is thus no cause for our imagining one time after another time, except that whenever we wish to, we consider by means of this power the traces remaining in the common sense. And for this reason the activity of this power is improved with rest.<sup>27</sup>

According to this passage, then, imagination is “necessary,” because it is continually engaged in randomly surveying its contents and combining images with one another.<sup>28</sup> As in the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*, Averroes seems to see this as the default mode for the imagination: we cannot turn it off, just as we cannot fail to sense something that is placed within the range of our sense organs. But Averroes also claims that this feature of imagination can be brought under our voluntary control. Such a process requires taking the continual and necessary aspect of imagination in which “we imagine many things simultaneously” and imposing an order on it by deliberately turning our attention to individual images successively.

It seems, then, that we can reconcile the apparent contradictions in Averroes’ statements regarding the necessity of imagination by acknowledging that only its underlying activity of flitting around among images is truly necessary and inescapable. On the basis of this core activity, Averroes seems to recognize two distinct forms of imagining that are under our voluntary control: (1) the concocting of fictional images such as goat-stags and ghouls; and (2) the ordered, sequential surveying of the traces of perception in the common sense.<sup>29</sup> However, it is unclear whether the faculty of *takhayyul*, as such, can be responsible for these voluntary activities. It remains difficult to see how one and the same faculty can be continually producing haphazard, uncontrolled motions and yet possess an intrinsic capacity to harness and control these very same motions. Moreover, Averroes himself has acknowledged that at least some of these voluntary exercises of the imagination—namely, its production of fictional images—are uniquely human. This suggests that, in both these cases, the ultimate source of voluntary control over the imagination is the cogitative faculty, since, as we have seen in the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*, Averroes views it as the faculty which is responsible for both sensory abstraction and the combination of new images like that of the unseen elephant. The apparent contradiction in the *Epitome of the De anima*, then, is ultimately reducible to the generic use of *takhayyul* to cover voluntary exercises of imagination in which the operations of all three internal powers of imagination, cogitation, and memory are implicated.

### ***Traces of Sensation: Imagination and the Common Sense***

A major concern of Averroes’ treatment of the imagination in the *Epitome of the De anima* is the relationship between the imagination and the common sense. For Averroes, the common sense is first and foremost the mover of the imagination, since the affections of the imagination (*infi’āl-hā*) are



produced by “the traces arising from the sensibles in the sensitive power.” Since these traces in the common sense, and not the extramental things themselves, are its mover, the imagination “holds fast to them only after they are absent” (*tatamassaku bi-hā ba‘da ghaybati-hā faqat*).<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, the imagination is not primarily a retentive faculty for the preservation of sensory information. Rather, Averroes treats both the imagination and the common sense as having retentive capacities: “And in general, there is in the common sense the power to hold fast to the traces of the sensibles and retain them” (*alā al-tamassuki bi-āthāri al-mahṣūsāti wa-ḥifẓi-hā*).<sup>31</sup> The common sense, then, is not simply the mover of the imagination; rather, the traces of the sensibles in the common sense are also the objects of the imagination, where they now exist in a spiritual mode of being:

But whenever we posit that the imagination itself consists only in the existence of these traces remaining in the common sense after the passage of the sensibles—not in the sense that these traces are the mover of the power of imagination—so that they have in the matter of the imagination an existence more spiritual than they have in the common sense, it follows that we will imagine simultaneously many things, the extent of their number being the same as the extent of the number of things which we have sensed.<sup>32</sup>

Averroes consistently speaks of the imagination considering the traces that remain *in (fi)* the common sense, as he does in this passage. He even uses the same expression when describing the activity of the imagination during sleep, when it is moved, not by present sensibles, but “by the remaining traces of the sensibles in [the common sense].”<sup>33</sup> Such locutions indicate that Averroes does not think of the imagination as containing an entirely distinct set of internal objects from the traces of the sensibles that are in the common sense itself.

Such a view comports well with the model presented in the *De sensu* chapter of the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*, in which the imagination gazes on an image that is the product of a series of reflections in mirrors and off the water.<sup>34</sup> More generally, this model of the relation between the common sense and the imagination seems to be the sensory counterpart to what ultimately becomes the theory of the double subject (*duo subiecta*) of cognition in the *Long Commentary on the De anima*.<sup>35</sup> According to this theory, each level of cognition involves a continuing relation to the object in the cognitive power immediately below it that is also its mover—the “subject in virtue of which it is true” (*subiectum per quod sensus fit verus*) in the parlance of the *Long Commentary*. The double subject model takes it as a structural feature of cognition that one and the same object will possess different modes of being in each successive cognitive power, which, in turn, functions as the “subject in virtue of which it is an existing form” (*subiectum per quod sensus est forma existens*).<sup>36</sup> If we view the relations between the imagination and the common sense in the light of this later



model, the traces in the common sense would constitute the subject in virtue of which images are true, and images would continue to depend upon these traces, even though they have a new, superior mode of being in the “matter of the imagination.” Thus, the traces in the common sense are not simply the movers of the imagination but the images themselves in their new mode of being. By the same token, just as it is a truism for Averroes (and Aristotle) to speak of the soul thinking intelligibles *in* images, so too it is natural for Averroes to speak of the imagination perceiving the traces *in* the common sense.<sup>37</sup>

While the theory of the double subject in this way provides a useful framework for understanding Averroes’ account of the causal relations between the common sense and the imagination, there is one important anomaly in the case of the imagination that should give us pause. Averroes has constructed his account of the spirituality of the imagination on its ability to perceive sensory objects in their absence. By contrast, the double subject model depends upon the continued presence of the object in the lower faculty to provide one of the two subjects of cognition.<sup>38</sup> Though the inchoate retentive capacities of the common sense, of course, will go some way to resolving this problem, Averroes seems to owe us a fuller account of how the imagination can view the traces in the common sense even when the images represent sensibles whose original perception was in the remote past. For these are cases which one assumes exceed the limited retentive capacities of the common sense itself.

### ***The Long Commentary and Middle Commentary on the De anima***

While Averroes occasionally rehearses the full threefold scheme of internal sensory powers in the *Long Commentary on the De anima*, he remains silent in both the middle and long commentaries on how these powers are to be fitted into the general account of imagination that Aristotle puts forward in *De anima* 3, chapter 3.<sup>39</sup> For example, there is no clear indication in his expositions of *De anima* 3.3 whether Averroes takes Aristotle to be making general points that pertain to all three of these faculties or whether he sees all or part of this account as focused on the faculty of imagination to the exclusion of cogitation and memory. Despite this ambiguity, there does not seem to be any substantial evolution in Averroes’ accounts of the imaginative faculty in these later commentaries, save for two subtle shifts in emphasis whose ultimate significance is unclear. Both points arise from Averroes’ understanding of what is entailed by identifying imagination as a power for grasping sensibles in their absence.

### ***Virtual Reality***

One of Aristotle’s arguments against the identification of imagination with opinion turns on the difference between believing that something

terrifying or inspiring is imminent and imagining that same event. Aristotle claims that, in the opinion case, we are immediately affected by the appropriate emotion, whereas, in the case of imagination, we react as mere spectators dispassionately viewing a painting. Averroes offers a subtle modification to Aristotle on this point, one which effectively undermines this mere spectator view of imagination.<sup>40</sup>

The key move that Averroes makes in his interpretation of Aristotle's text is to transform the opinions at issue from beliefs about something happening right now into beliefs about *future* possibilities that might come to pass.<sup>41</sup> Averroes then argues that, while we will obviously be affected in some measure by the anticipation of a possible future harm, such anticipation will never be as frightening as when we are actually confronting a clear and present danger. By contrast, since imagination is a capacity whereby we are able to consider absent sensibles *as if* they were present, Averroes argues that entertaining an image has more or less the same emotional impact as the present object would. That is, instead of being mere spectators looking at a scene which we know to be unreal, we become participants immersed in a present virtual reality:

For when we form the opinion that something fearful is going to occur [*aliquod timorosum futurum*], we are affected in some way, but not by the [same] affection as if that fearful object were present. Similarly, when we form the opinion that something inspiring courage is going to occur, immediately [*statim*] we are affected by it, but not with the sort of affection as there would be if that source of inspiring courage were existing at present. When, however, we have imagined that fearful thing, immediately we are affected as if it were present [*statim patiemur quasi essent presens*].<sup>42</sup>

Averroes' understanding of imagination as emotionally charged seems far truer to experience than Aristotle's mere spectator view. When we read a suspense novel or watch a horror film, we do get frightened, even as mere spectators of an imagined reality, and Aristotle's account here does not seem to do justice to such reactions. Moreover, in cases where the imagination does not produce an emotional impact, it does not seem to be because we are simply imagining something horrific, but rather, because we *believe* we are merely imagining it. Such dispassionate responses seem to be a function, not of the imagination itself, but rather, of a higher-order act of assent that recognizes that some particular act of imagining is merely fictional. This picture complements Averroes' understanding of the imagination in the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia* as an essentially imitative faculty that offers us something even better than the real thing available to the senses.<sup>43</sup> As the ability to perceive an absent object *as if* it were present, imagination brings with it the whole range of emotional responses that accrued to the original experience. Nothing is lost when we "merely" imagine it.

***So Far Away: Imagination and Absence Reconsidered***

One recurrent thread that runs throughout Averroes' various accounts of the nature of imagination is its ability to perceive in the absence of any extramental object. The *Middle Commentary* and *Long Commentary* follow this same pattern, and, indeed, in these texts Averroes seems to put even more emphasis on the absence of the object as essential to the act of imagining. This is most striking in Averroes' account of the degrees of error that can be found in the imagination. Whereas Aristotle himself makes the veridicality of images a function of the simultaneous perception of the object by the external senses, Averroes invokes the alternative criterion of whether the imaginer has had any *prior* sensory experience of the object.<sup>44</sup> The images of the proper sensibles are true, according to Averroes, "when they are present, that is, when their actual sensation *precedes* the imagination."<sup>45</sup> The same pattern holds in Averroes' account of the images corresponding to common and incidental sensibles: where Aristotle attributes the errors that plague the imagination to the spatial distance that separates the perceiver from the object during a concurrent act of sensation, Averroes focuses on the temporal gap that separates the original sensing of the object from its imaginative recall. Imagination will again be false "although sensation is present and has sensed them before imagination, and especially when the time of the sensible apprehension is distant from the sensation."<sup>46</sup> On Averroes' understanding, my image of a particular flavor, for example, is more likely to be accurate if I have actually tasted the food in question than if I am trying to imagine what a new cuisine will taste like based on a comparison to more familiar foods. And if I have seen an elephant before, my image of it will likely be more accurate than that of someone who is imagining it on the basis of someone else's report alone.

It might seem, then, that the *Long Commentary* offers decisive evidence that the ability to perceive an absent object is the essential, defining capacity of the imaginative faculty. Unfortunately, this suspicion is complicated by two passages in which Averroes explicitly extends the absence principle to cogitation and memory as well as imagination. The first of these occurs as part of Averroes' explanation of how the intellect is incidentally impeded in its operations "due to the change belonging to the powers of imagination, and especially the cogitative power".<sup>47</sup>

But the imaginative, cogitative, and memorative powers are *only* in place of the sensible power, and for this reason *there is no need for them except in the absence of the sensible [power]*. They all cooperate to present an image of the sensible thing so that the separate rational power may behold it and extract the universal intention and after that receive it, that is, apprehend it.<sup>48</sup>

Averroes makes the same point later in the text when commenting on Aristotle's example of a soldier seeing a beacon and recognizing it as the

sign of an approaching enemy. He observes that when someone needs to consider “possible things” on the basis of his occurrent sensory information, his cogitative faculty will search for “some individual thing which he will not have sensed before, although he will have sensed its like, not the very same thing.”<sup>49</sup> Averroes argues again that the cogitative faculty, like the imagination, is a power whose utility consists in nothing but its ability to present an absent object as if it were present:

The meaning of cogitation is nothing but this, namely, that the cogitative power presents a thing absent from sense as if it were a sensed thing. [. . .] For cogitation is only for discerning individual instances among those intelligibles and presenting them in act as if they were present in sensation [*quasi essent apud sensum*]. For this reason when they are present in sensation, then cogitation will cease and the activity of intellect in regard to them will remain.<sup>50</sup>

These two passages have troubling ramifications, not so much for Averroes’ understanding of the imagination, but for the role that he assigns to the cogitative faculty. On the picture presented here, Averroes seems to allow that as soon as some actual sensible is present to the perceiver, the cogitative faculty becomes superfluous. Averroes implies that, under these circumstances, the senses themselves can perceive the individual intention directly. If I am looking at Zayd, for example, it seems that my visual power itself is able to identify him as “this man Zayd,” without any further input from the more spiritual cognitive faculties.

Yet such a picture clearly undermines the division of labor among the faculties of imagination, cogitation, and memory in the process of sensory abstraction that Averroes has so carefully laid out in the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*.<sup>51</sup> On that account, as we have seen, Averroes appeals to the metaphor of the “core” and the “rinds” to differentiate the objects of the cogitative and memorative faculties, on the one hand, from those of the imagination, on the other. The core is not cognitively accessible to the imagination but must be extracted by the cogitative faculty. A reasonable inference to draw from such an account is that the senses too will lack awareness of the intentional core, unless the cogitative faculty supplements their operations. This seems to follow all the more, given Averroes’ insistence on the limitations of sensation in animals, to whom he explicitly denies the power of perceiving the core of the sensible object.<sup>52</sup> The common thread that runs throughout all these texts is that, absent the cogitative faculty, neither the imagination nor the senses would be able to reach the intention. And that would seem to be the case whether the sensible object is actually present or not.

While it is possible to offer a reading of each of these passages that limits their ramifications to the specific issues under consideration in their respective contexts, a fully satisfactory solution—especially as far as the role of the cogitative faculty is concerned—remains elusive. In the case

of the first passage, Averroes seems to be assuming that when the sensible object is actually present, the intellect can, at least in principle, grasp its essential features directly, so that it no longer needs access to the *individual* intention that exemplifies the nature. For all practical purposes, however, the intellect is unable to abstract the universal from a single act of perception. For this, it relies on the cogitative faculty to extract the individual intention after *multiple* encounters with the object, and this, in turn, will depend on its ability to operate in the absence of the object. Yet even if this is what Averroes has in mind, it remains unclear why one would need the cogitative faculty in addition to the imagination. Any information accessible to the senses would seem to be equally accessible from the image of the sensible. Unless the cogitative faculty has its own proper object and operation, even in the presence of sensation, the rationale for positing it as a distinct power seems rather tenuous.

The case presented in the second passage seems easier to resolve, since it deals with a practical judgment regarding a future contingent particular whose existence is inferred from some present sign, like the beacon. Here, if the particular object—the approaching enemy—is actually subject to sensory observation, the intellect will have no need for recourse to an image that signifies it in its absence—a beacon—in order to predict its imminent arrival. Yet here again, while this reading may explain why the *imagination* is not needed in such circumstances, it fails to address the extension of this reasoning to the cogitative faculty. If the cogitative faculty is uniquely able to recognize individual intentions, how will the senses, or even the intellect, be able to recognize some cluster of sensible forms as *this beacon*, a recognition that seems to be indispensable to its ability to function as a sign of some impending future event?

## Conclusion

From the foregoing tour of Averroes' psychological works from throughout his life, two features emerge as exclusive to *takhayyul* in contradistinction to the other internal sensory powers: (1) its ability to grasp the traces of the external qualities or "rinds" of physical objects that remain in the common sense in the absence of those objects; and (2) its continual perusal of those traces, which, while random in its own right, may also be brought under some sort of order and control by some other sensory or intellectual faculty.

The most pervasive characterization of Averroist imagination, however, is its identification as the power by which we are able to perceive the sensibles in their absence. The absence principle serves to establish the grade of spirituality proper to the imagination in contrast with the senses, and it seems to become more prominent in the later commentaries, where Averroes is more inclined to minimize the possibility of concurrent acts of sensation and imagination. Yet the absence principle also emerges as the

source of many of the tensions within Averroes' account of the imagination. It is hard to reconcile with Averroes' account of the imagination as a power that considers the traces of perception *in* the common sense, unless some activity of the common sense always accompanies the imagination. For, despite its inchoate retentive capacities, the common sense itself remains inextricably tied to occurrent sensations, which depend upon some physical link to a present object. But the most intractable problem raised for the absence principle is its transformation in the *Long Commentary on the De anima* into a generic property that applies equally to cogitation and memory as well as imagination, all three of which have apparently been demoted to mere understudies for the senses. Ultimately, this fits uneasily with Averroes' persistent identification of absence as a mark of the superiority of the imagination over the senses, and it is not entirely clear whether this tension admits of any satisfactory resolution.

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### Notes

- 1 This equivocity is also found in Avicenna, who explicitly remarks on it. See Avicenna, "Al-Ta'liqāt 'alā ḥawāshī Kitāb al-Nafs," 97, commenting on *De anima* 3. 3, 428b11ff.
- 2 For the character of the Arabic *Parva naturalia*, see Pines, "Arabic Recension"; Daiber, "Salient Trends"; and most recently the numerous contributions of Rotraud Hansberger: Hansberger, "How Aristotle Came to Believe"; Hansberger, "*Kitāb al-ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*"; Hansberger, "Arabic Adaptation"; and Hansberger, "Representation." In "Averroes and the 'Internal Senses,'" Hansberger argues that the label "internal senses" is not really appropriate for Averroes, but I will occasionally use it as a convenient moniker for the faculties of imagination, cogitation, and memory—as a synonym for "imagination" used generically.
- 3 Averroes, like Avicenna before him, also uses the label "formative faculty" (*al-muṣawwarah*) as a synonym for *al-mutakhayyalah*. See especially Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, ed. Blumberg, 30: *al-muṣawwar, wa huwa al-quwwah al-mutakhayyalah*.
- 4 Averroes, *Commentarium magnum*, book 3, comm. 6, ed. Crawford (hereafter *Commentarium*), 415–16; book 3, comm. 20, 449–50 (omitting common sense); translated in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, trans. Taylor, 331–32 and 359.
- 5 For a detailed consideration of the cogitative faculty in the *Long Commentary on the De anima*, see Taylor, "Cogitatio" and, especially, Taylor, "Remarks on Cogitatio," which discusses the evidence for the presence of this notion in the Arabic *De anima*.
- 6 My discussion follows the generally accepted chronology of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotelian psychology, according to which the epitomes are his earliest works, followed by the middle and long commentaries. As Blumberg notes in his introduction to Averroes, *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, xii, the

- colophons of two manuscripts of the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia* date it to January 1170 CE. Though Averroes also revised both of his earlier commentaries on the *De anima*, the revisions in question are limited to his discussions of the material intellect in Book 3 of the *De anima*.
- 7 See Blaustein, "Averroes," 32–122; also Black, "Memory, Individuals, and the Past," and Black, "Averroes on Spirituality" for Averroes on sensation and abstraction.
  - 8 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 30–32; trans. in Averroes, *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, 19–20. Averroes attributes the analogy to Aristotle, which suggests it derives from the Arabic *Parva naturalia*, the *De sensu* portion of which has largely not survived (see Hansberger, "Arabic Adaption," 301–3).
  - 9 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 33; trans. in Averroes, *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, 20. Other references to this metaphor occur in the *De somno* section of the text (Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 55; Averroes, *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, 34) and in the fragments of the Arabic original of the *Long Commentary on the De anima* (see Taylor's n. 155 in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 176). Hansberger, "Averroes and the 'Internal Senses,'" 148–49, indicates that this image originates in the Arabic *Parva naturalia* itself.
  - 10 Averroes often uses the alternative label "discriminative" faculty (*mumayyizah*) for the cogitative power in this chapter; here Blumberg's translation (Averroes, *Epitome of Parva naturalia*) must be used with extra caution, since he renders this term as "estimative faculty," despite Averroes' disavowal of this Avicennian label. On this, see also Taylor, "Remarks on *Cogitatio*," 220 n.15.
  - 11 Averroes occasionally talks as if the imagination or formative faculty is also an abstractive power, which "extracts [*yanzi'u*] the intention of the form from its image [*mīthāl-hā*]" (Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 31); or it "purifies [*yuṣaffī*] the description [*rasm*] of the thing so that the cogitative faculty can perceive its *ma'nā*."
  - 12 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 40–43. For the role of these faculties in accounting for memory, see Gätje, "Gedächtnis und Erinnerung"; Di Martino, "Memory and Recollection"; Black, "Memory, Individuals, and the Past"; and Black, "Memory in Avicenna and Averroes."
  - 13 In Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 40, Averroes argues that the faculties of memory and imagination (*al-muṣawwarah*) are distinct in both quiddity and subject (*māhiyyah/mawḏū'*) because their respective cognitive objects, the *ma'nā* and *khayāl*, can be grasped independently of one another.
  - 14 Synthesis is also the mechanism behind recollection, which is why it is included in the chapter on memory. See *ibid.*, 43–46.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, 45. The examples of an elephant and a camel are found in Al-Fārābī's *Book of Letters*. See al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-ḥurūf*, §169, ed. Mahdī, 169–70. (Thanks to David Wirmer for the al-Fārābī reference.)
  - 16 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 44: *al-murakkib huwa al-mufaṣṣil*. For further discussion, see Black, "Memory, Individuals, and the Past," 175–79; Black, "Memory in Avicenna and Averroes," 456–57.
  - 17 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 68–69; Averroes, *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, 40–41.
  - 18 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 69; cf. Averroes, *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, 41. The restlessness of imagination is also emphasized by Avicenna, although he differentiates this form of imagination from imagination as the retention of sensible forms. See Avicenna, *Avicenna's De anima* 4. 2, ed. Rahman, 174–75.
  - 19 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 69.
  - 20 Al-Fārābī has a parsimonious account of the internal senses, recognizing only the common sense and the imaginative faculty (*al-mutakhayyalah*). See al-Fārābī, *Alfarabi on the Perfect State* 4. 10, ed. Walzer, 165–75.



- 21 Cf. *ibid.* 4. 14, §4, 214–15.
- 22 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 79.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 69–70: “How it happens in sleep from this faculty that a person sees as if he were sensing through the five senses without there being any sensory objects [*maḥsūsāt*] outside the soul.”
- 24 *Ibid.*, 81–82. Of course, since the object isn’t actually there, sensing it is illusory and by that fact alone one would think it inferior. But it is telling that Averroes does not appeal to the non-veridical character of these hallucinatory episodes in his evaluation.
- 25 See Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-naḥs*, ed. Ahwānī, 61, and 101 for references to the other internal senses.
- 26 *De anima* 3. 3, 427b17–22.
- 27 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-naḥs*, 64. In the *De memoria* chapter of the *Epitome of the Parva naturalia*, Averroes seems to contradict this passage inasmuch as he says that we can retain (*naḥfazū*) many things simultaneously, although we cannot imagine them all together (Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 40).
- 28 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-naḥs*, 64: “But composition and division of these traces belong also to this power, and for this reason, it is active in one respect, but passive in another.”
- 29 This reading is supported by the later middle and long commentaries, where Averroes cites these two activities as evidence that the imagination is voluntary. See Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 2, comm. 153, 363; trans. in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 278: “For when we wish to imagine things sensed previously and placed in the preserving power we can do so [. . .]. That is, through this power we can also fashion imaginary forms, individual instances of which we have never sensed”; Averroes, *Middle Commentary*, §265, ed. Ivry, 102–3: “When we wish to imagine things of which our sensation has passed, we can; and with this faculty we create, whenever we want, likenesses and images [*mithālāt wa-khayālāt*] of things we have not sensed before and which cannot be sensed.”
- 30 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-naḥs*, 62; cf. 63 and 65. In the later commentaries, “traces” (*āthār*) is replaced by “intentions” (*ma’ānī/intentiones*): Averroes, *Middle Commentary*, 106; and Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 2, comm. 160, 372–73.
- 31 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-naḥs*, 63–64. Averroes cites as evidence the fact that our senses are temporarily impeded by intense sensibles, as when we are blinded by a bright light. The idea seems to be that the impediment is caused by the strength of the trace remaining in the common sense blocking any subsequent sensation. Avicenna has a similar view of the common sense, illustrated by how we perceive a falling raindrop tracing a line and a circle on some surface. See Avicenna, *Avicenna’s De anima* 1. 5, 44–45; Di Martino, “Memory and Recollection,” 21–22; and Black, “Memory in Avicenna and Averroes,” 450.
- 32 That the simultaneous actualization of contraries indicates a greater degree of spirituality is a principle that Averroes evokes in his early accounts of sense perception, though later he seems to reject it. On this, see Black, “Averroes on Spirituality.” Avicenna, *Avicenna’s De anima* 4. 3, 192–94, strongly rejects this principle.
- 33 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-naḥs*, 64. This locution is also used in Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 69 (*min al-āthār fī allatī fī al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*). It continues to be used in the *Long Commentary* as well. See Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 2, comm. 161, 375 (*illa signa remanentia ex eo in sensu communi*).
- 34 See note 8 above.



- 35 There is a precursor in Averroes' account of the relativity of the intelligible in the *Epitome of the De anima*, according to which intelligibles and images are to be understood as correlates, "so that whenever one of them exists the other exists, and whenever one of them is destroyed the other is destroyed" (Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-naḥs*, 80). On the relation between the double subject and Averroes' earlier views on cognition, see Blaustein, "Averroes," 58–67, 164–65, 174–77. There are numerous discussions of the double subject theory in Averroes' theory of the intellect, e.g., Bazán, "*Intellectum speculativum*"; Black, "Consciousness and Self-Knowledge"; and Taylor, "Introduction," lix–lxi.
- 36 Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 3, comm. 4, 400; trans. in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 316.
- 37 In the *Long Commentary*, Averroes is explicit that the subject in virtue of which cognition is true is also "a mover in some way" (*quod est motus illius quoquo modo*); Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 3, comm. 4, 400.
- 38 In the *Long Commentary*, Averroes explicitly applies the double subject thesis to sensation as well as intellection; he does not, however, apply it to the imagination, nor to cogitation or memory. In one of his treatises on conjunction with the Agent Intellect, he does speak of the common sense and imagination as mutually *perfecting* one another. See Averroes, *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction*, ed. Bland, 27–29; Blaustein, "Averroes," 58–67, takes this as a precursor to the double subject theory of the *Long Commentary*.
- 39 See especially Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 2, comm. 63, 224–26, and book 3, comm. 6, 415–16, in addition to the texts cited at notes 48 and 49 below.
- 40 This seems to be a case of Averroes trying to make sense out of the text he has. In the Greek text, it is clear that Aristotle is talking about our ability to look upon a painting of a horrific scene dispassionately; the lemma in the *Long Commentary*, however, suggests what Aristotle has in mind is a comparison between imagining something and actually seeing it. See *De anima* 3. 3, 427b22–25; Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 2, text 154, 364; and Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 278.
- 41 Averroes, *Middle Commentary*, §265, 103.
- 42 Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 2, comm. 154, 364; trans. in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 278, slightly modified.
- 43 See above, at note 24.
- 44 Aristotle, *De anima* 3. 3, 428b26–30.
- 45 Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 2, comm. 160, 374–75; cf. Averroes, *Middle Commentary*, §275, 107: *idhā kāna al-ḥiss qad adraka-hā qablu*.
- 46 Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 2, comm. 160, 375.
- 47 Note the plural here (*virtutum ymaginationis*), suggesting this is a generic use of *ymaginatio*.
- 48 Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 3, comm. 7, 419; trans. in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 334, slightly modified; emphasis added.
- 49 Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 3, comm. 33, 475–76; trans. in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 378. Averroes refers to this as a "true image" (*ymago vera*), i.e., an accurate representation of a future possibility.
- 50 Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 3, comm. 33, 476; trans. in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 379.
- 51 Averroes refers the reader to the *Parva naturalia* for a fuller account of this process: "This is evident from the things said in *Sense and Sensibilia*" (Averroes, *Commentarium*, book 3, comm. 33, 476; trans. in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 379).
- 52 See especially Averroes, *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-ḥiss wa-al-maḥsūs*, 33: "This is because in humans [the five senses] perceive the differences of things and their proper intentions, and these are what hold the rank in the sensed thing of the core of

the fruit; whereas in the case of animals, they only perceive the things which are external, namely, that whose relation to the things is the relation of the rinds to the core of the fruit.”

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**Part III**

**Forging New Traditions**



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## 16 The Emergence of a Science of Intellect

Albert the Great's *De intellectu et intelligibili*

Henryk Anzulewicz

Examining the development of Albertus Magnus' doctrine of intellect—from its beginning in his early theological works to its mature form, found in the two books of the philosophical treatise *De intellectu et intelligibili*—one notices two significant features. The first is the doctrine's unique position in Albert's oeuvre as an original creation. *De intellectu et intelligibili* was not a work of commentary, as most of Albert's philosophical works were, nor was it written for a specific occasion. Furthermore, it is distinctive in the importance that it attributes to human beings as human beings. As Albert understood it, this meant man as intellect alone (*homo solus intellectus*);<sup>1</sup> the perfection of this intellectual nature; and the subjective and objective conditions, modes, scope, and end of that perfection. In fact, these topics are central in Albert's work, and they characterize his whole intellectual endeavor, already forming a cohesive epistemological teaching in his early anthropological treatise *De homine*.

The second striking feature of Albert's doctrine of intellect is its holistic approach, which becomes evident in its formal, factual, and systematic continuity. Albert strives to develop a complete, Peripatetically informed theory of intellect that is congruent with a belief in the immortality of the soul as well as being philosophically consistent in itself, and one that also conforms to Christian biblical anthropology. The theory's point of departure and ultimate goal are two conceptual anchors that in reality form one self-identical center: in Neoplatonic terms, the First (*primum*), the necessary being (*nesesse esse*), the cause of all (*omnium causa*), and simultaneously the end of all (*principium ut finis*).<sup>2</sup>

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Albert is convinced that Aristotelian psychology and its doctrine of intellect (discovered in the Latin Middle Ages), along with its continuations through the Late Antique Greeks and more recent Arabic-Islamic Peripatetics, set up fundamentally new scientific standards. He considers it his task to critically examine the Augustinian-Platonic doctrines of the soul, knowledge, and intellect still dominant in the Latin tradition at the time, and to bring them into alignment with these new standards. Combined with an open but critical reception and assimilation of the *corpus Aristotelicum* and its accompanying Peripatetic sources, this examination led Albert to depart from what he

regarded as failed Platonic doctrines about intellect.<sup>3</sup> His efforts to achieve objective coherence, systematic consistency, and the philosophical plausibility of a continuity of human knowledge in this life and after death, as well as knowledge's perfection in the final beatitude of the *anima separata*, help to explain developments and innovations in his theory as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Albert's teaching on the intellect and the intelligible in his early work *De homine*, in which a prototype of the later treatise *De intellectu et intelligibili* takes shape, offers important insights, but cannot be discussed in more detail here.<sup>5</sup>

What stands out in both Albert's *De homine* and his *De intellectu et intelligibili* is, as I will show, that Albert did not develop his Aristotelian-Peripatetic doctrine of the intellect and its object, the intelligible, exclusively in immediate connection with the *littera* of the Philosopher or, more precisely, with *De anima* 3.4–5. The Aristotelian origin of the fundamental distinctions and concepts in Albert's work is unmistakable,<sup>6</sup> but Aristotle is not the most prominent source here. Instead, it is his Greek commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias and, as Albert continues to develop his teachings, the Islamic-Arabic Peripatetics Alkindi, Avicenna, Algazel, and Averroes.<sup>7</sup> The influence of the Arabic sources proliferates in Albert's *De intellectu et intelligibili* not least due to his assimilation of Alfarabi's work *De intellectu et intellecto* and an increasing reliance on the *Liber de causis* in his epistemological discourse.

Equally striking is that Albert is not content with the doctrine of intellect as an integral part of the Aristotelian psychology found in the *De anima*. He regards it as an autonomous discipline within the *corpus* of natural philosophy, and develops it as the *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* in line with Aristotle's understanding of a natural science. Albert's approach here shows not only the importance that he attributes to the intellect, its nature, and its gradual perfection but also the reasons for his attitude. These include the lack of a common, settled theory of intellect in the philosophical tradition in the Latin West, the assimilation of the Arabic sources that accompanied the progressive reception of Aristotle, and the subsequent problems associated with "Averroism," especially the differing interpretations of the agent intellect (*intellectus agens*).<sup>8</sup>

Albert's efforts were devoted to developing a *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* in the Peripatetic sense, which had hitherto been lacking in the Latin-speaking world, and to establishing it as a natural-philosophical discipline that was metaphysically sound. Against that backdrop, and as a first step, this chapter presents a rereading of the prologue to Albert's *De intellectu et intelligibili*, in order to provide a textual, systematic, and developmental overview of his doctrine of intellect in its mature expression. As a second step, I explore one aspect of this teaching inspired by the Peripatetics, by critically examining the Peripatetic sources, focusing on a central debate among the Islamic-Arabic thinkers with whom Albert engaged. That debate was on whether the intellect is of a general nature, common



to all men, or of a particular, individuated nature—a question that Albert discusses in the first book of *De intellectu et intelligibili*, part 1, chapter 7.<sup>9</sup> I will show the reasons for the shift in Albert's interpretation of the teaching of Averroes, and discuss how he advanced his own unique teaching in reliance on particular insights that he takes from Averroes.

### Developing His Own Natural Philosophy of the Intellect and Intelligible

Albert appears to have been the first and only medieval thinker in the Latin West to see the theory of intellect as a discipline in natural philosophy and establish it as a self-standing *scientia* in his system of the sciences of the philosophy of nature. He presents his overall approach to *scientia naturalis* in the preface to his commentary on Aristotle's *Physica*, with which he inaugurated his project of interpreting Aristotle. In this preface, he assigns the *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* to the branch of natural philosophy that deals with living beings and, more precisely, to the field that looks at the soul and its faculties and explores the capacities of the soul in the body.

Within the series of the disciplines of natural philosophy that deal with living beings, in the *Physica* commentary Albert places the doctrine of intellect after the science of breathing, last in the list except for botany and zoology. He altered that placement for didactic reasons when he began to comment on the *Parva naturalia*, but his view of the object of the *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili*—as “the work of the soul in accord with its intellectual part”—did not change.<sup>10</sup> Aristotle devotes several smaller treatises to the area, which can be subsumed under the concept of psychophysiology and in which Albert situated the *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* in his treatise of the same name. These smaller treatises, however, do not address the intellect as an ontological principle of the constitution of human nature, as a human cognitive faculty, or as a human form of knowing.<sup>11</sup>

The unique position of Albert's notion of the *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* in the Latin Middle Ages becomes clear against the background of prior, contemporary, and later scientific and systematic reflections. In scientific classifications such as those by Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae*), Alfarabi (*De scientiis*), Hugh of St. Victor (*Didascalicon*), Dominicus Gundissalinus (*De divisione philosophiae*), and Robert Kilwardby (*De ortu scientiarum*), as well as in the surviving thirteenth-century introductions to philosophy, the *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* does not appear either as an independent discipline or as a part of metaphysics or natural philosophy.<sup>12</sup> Not even Thomas Aquinas follows his teacher with regard to the systematic scientific classification of the theory of intellect as a discipline of natural philosophy. In his commentary on Aristotle's *De sensu et sensato*, Aquinas obviously borrows from the first chapter of Albert's *De intellectu et intelligibili*, though without mentioning Albert or his work, and agrees with Albert at least by asserting that Aristotle did not write a work with the

title *De intellectu et intelligibili*. But he quite evidently opposes his teacher's opinion when he affirms that even if Aristotle had written such a work, it would have been properly categorized not as part of natural science, but rather as metaphysics. For, Aquinas argues, the intellect is completely separated from the body, both in its highest concretion as a part of the human soul and in its most extreme separation from the body as *substantia separata*, and this makes it an object of metaphysics:

The intellect is not an act of any of the parts of the body, as is proven in the third book of *De anima*; because of this it cannot be considered through concretion, or a connection to the body or any organ of the body: for its greatest concretion is in the soul, and its highest abstraction is in the separated substances, and this is why, apart from the *De anima*, Aristotle did not write a book on the intellect and the intelligible (or, if he had written such a book it would pertain not to natural science but to metaphysics, which considers separated substances).<sup>13</sup>

Individual authors in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance who were inspired by Albert's *De intellectu et intelligibili* and wrote treatises on the topic, such as Dietrich of Freiberg and Agostino Nifo, appear to have regarded the theory of intellect as an independent area of philosophical thinking.<sup>14</sup> However, as far as I can see, they do not consider the question of where it should be placed within the system of the sciences.

Dietrich of Freiberg, along with Albert, can be counted among the fathers of a medieval "philosophy of mind" in the Latin West. With his treatise, also entitled *De intellectu et intelligibili*, Dietrich affiliates himself in doctrinal and literary terms with the traditional Peripatetic doctrine of intellect, reinvigorated by Albert, and carries it further. Certainly, Dietrich's treatise closely approximates—structurally, substantively, and in its sources—the teaching about intellect in Albert's *De homine*, but Dietrich's true interest is generally directed only to the *intellectus possibilis* and the *intellectus agens*.<sup>15</sup> He is much less concerned with the natural intellectual perfection of man in the sense of a *coniunctio formalis*, the levels of perfection of the intellect, the return to the real being of man through intellectual understanding, or the human soul's return to the divine mode of being.<sup>16</sup> Neither does he discuss the position of the theory of intellect within the larger system of the sciences, but it may be understood through his distinction between *ens reale* and *ens conceptionale*, which does not presuppose any dependence of the mental being upon its extramental reality and is regarded not exclusively but inclusively.<sup>17</sup>

Such a unification of the discourses of natural philosophy and metaphysics goes back to Albert, who declared it his methodological principle as a way of making his teaching more complete and easier to understand.<sup>18</sup> The principle became the hermeneutical principle of his view of nature, taken up and developed much later by Nicolai Hartmann among many others,<sup>19</sup>

according to which an intelligent causality underlies all processes of nature.<sup>20</sup> With the work of Dietrich of Freiberg, the placement of the philosophy of intellect within a systematic order of the sciences seems to be already decided, even for the non-hardcore realists—or, at least, it no longer plays a central role. This marginality can be observed in the Mainz City Library Codex I 610, where the anonymous author of *Conclusiones de intellectu et intelligibili*, despite borrowing from Albert's writings, excludes the introductory questions regarding method and the organization of science.<sup>21</sup>

What was it that prompted Albert to classify the doctrine of intellect as part of natural philosophy? When he proposes the order of the natural sciences in his commentary on the *Physica*, can we regard his laconic statement—that the operations of the soul in the body with respect to its intellectual part are the subject of psychology as a discipline in natural philosophy—as a sufficient answer to our question? Does it follow from Albert's principles and guidelines for the exploration of nature, and from his view of man,<sup>22</sup> that we can achieve a more complete and profound understanding of the intellectuality and intelligibility of man if we consider him as animal on the one hand and as *solus intellectus* on the other, within the metaphysically grounded philosophy of nature?

First of all, Aristotle's position on this matter is ambivalent: in his writings, the doctrine of the soul appears to be a hybrid science. Aristotle provides reasons why the doctrine of the soul might belong to natural philosophy, but he also implies that metaphysics might have jurisdiction on the soul that is fully separated from the body, yet still capable of being influenced by its affections and complexions.<sup>23</sup> The reasons for Albert's decision to view the *scientia de intellectu* as a discipline in natural philosophy do not, however, lie only in Aristotle. It is also based on the fact that Albert sees the intellect first and foremost as the natural constitutional principle of man as man (*natura dans esse*) and his cognitive faculty (*potentia per quam est operatio intelligendi*), and not merely as a formal, acquired content (*forma acquisita ex multis intelligibilibus*).

Albert expresses this opinion for the first time in his early work *De IV coaequaevis*. There, following Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (*De caelesti hierarchia*, cap. 15), he explains that the intellectuality appertaining to man's soul, together with the qualities of the body and the combination of the body and the soul, is the principle that constitutes the nature of man as man.<sup>24</sup> He clarifies the concept of intellect in his commentary on the *De anima*, where he restricts it to *intellectus agens*, and does the same in *De intellectu et intelligibili*.<sup>25</sup> This view prompts Albert to supplement the Aristotelian psychology and psychophysiology, as summarized in Aristotle's *De anima* and *Parva naturalia*, with a separate treatise on the intellect. He decides to place it after the work *De respiratione et inspiratione* and before the work *De vegetabilibus*, at the end of his commentaries on the *Parva naturalia*.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, in *De intellectu et intelligibili* Albert does not retain the *ordo et divisio librorum physicae* that he had set

out in his commentary on the *Physica. De intellectu et intelligibili* Book 1 is inserted between the commentaries on the *Parva naturalia* of Aristotle, after the commentaries written about *De nutrimento et nutribili*, *De sensu et sensato*, and *De memoria et reminiscentia*. This shows, as can be gathered from Albert's later explanation, that he subordinates his work on the intellect to the order of reason (*ordo rationis*) and not the order of the dignity of the subject (*ordo dignitatis objecti*).<sup>26</sup> The preference for the *ordo rationis* over the *ordo dignitatis objecti* does not, however, ignore the didactic aspect of the presentation of the theory of intellect. Albert privileges the communicability and comprehensibility of teaching over adherence to the natural order:

As we have often explained, we pay attention primarily to the ease of teaching. On this account, when we are dealing with the books of natural philosophy, we prefer the principle by which it is easier for the student to be taught, than the natural order of things. For this reason, when discussing these books we do not observe the order which we presented earlier in our introductions, where we presented the division of the books of natural philosophy.<sup>27</sup>

The didactic aspect becomes especially apparent when the *ordo doctrinae* is implemented in the individual writings about psychophysiology, including the doctrine of intellect. The *ordo*, as one can infer from Albert's approach, begins with considerations about the fundamental powers of the soul and then moves on to the higher powers. For this reason, the nutritive function of the vegetative powers of the soul is considered first, followed by discussions of the sense function of the powers of the sensible soul, and culminating in the cognitive ability of the rational soul. Because the sense function's activity does not rely on the intellectual part of the human soul, separate from the body, but uses the outer and inner sensory powers as its tools, it becomes clear why Albert follows up his explanation of the psychophysiology of the sense powers with a specific investigation of the intellect, to which the sense powers of the sensible soul are ordered and by which its functions will be perfected.<sup>28</sup>

How Albert implements his different priorities in the practice of teaching within the individual areas becomes perhaps most clearly evident in the fact that he begins his theory of intellect by investigating the intellect itself, and not with the object of the intellect, the intelligible. According to nature and substance, he argues, the intellect is prior to the intelligible, because it generates the intelligible as its formal content. Teaching therefore begins with intellect as such, and then turns to the intelligible as the product of the intellect, closing with the question of the unity and difference between the intellect and the intelligible. The methodology of the investigation, applied to such a complex field that is driven by its own internal dynamics, is what can secure a complete *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili*—a

body of knowledge that is not, as Albert notes in the introductory chapter of his work, supplied by Aristotle's *De anima*.

However, at the beginning of his work on the intellect and the intelligible, Albert also indicates that he has not lost sight of his original concept of *scientia naturalis*, presented in his commentary on the *Physica*, with regard to its classification into individual disciplines and their arrangement. He cites the didactic rationale and reasons immanent to the subject matter to explain why he has revised the order of the treatises following the *De anima* on matters "common to the human soul and body," adjusting the sequence he originally established in the *Physica*. Albert tells us that moving the work about the intellect and the intelligible forward, before *De somno et vigilia*—after the commentaries on *De nutrimento et nutribili*, *De sensu et sensato*, and *De memoria et reminiscencia* were already written—was done intentionally and is justified. After all, certain knowledge regarding the interpretation of dreams and the nature of dreams can only be communicated and understood once knowledge about the intellect and the intelligible can be presumed. Albert affirms that rational cognition, the characteristic of man, is in fact a characteristic of the human soul, not of the body, but he does not view this characteristic as a hindrance to revising the original sequence of the series to be written, which had been defined according to substantive criteria. As he puts it:

And these things [i.e., the qualities and activities that are common to the human soul and body] we have already discussed in part, in our usual way, in the books "On Nutrition and the Nutritious" and "On Sense and the Sensed." There remain also the books "On Sleeping and Waking," "On Youth and Old Age," "On Breathing In and Out," and "On Motions Called Animalistic," as well as "On Life and Death." All these books concern themselves with operations that are common to the soul and the body. But because the interpretation of dreams and their nature can only be adequately determined if we have prior knowledge of the intellect and the intelligible, therefore we must interpose here the science of the intelligible and the intellect, although intellection [as such] is proper for the human soul without the body.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of genre, content, and the systematic context of his oeuvre, Albert's approach can be summarized as follows: Inspired by the writings of Aristotle about psychology and psychophysiology, and by the Peripatetic doctrine of intellect, he follows these traditions insofar as he initially designs his theory of intellect in the anthropological synthesis *De homine* and, more than a decade later, elaborates and applies it in the interpretation of Aristotle's *De anima*, especially in "explanatory digressions" (*digressiones*).<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, he turns toward the Philosopher's shorter writings on natural philosophy,<sup>31</sup> and, in a different way than he had originally planned, composes the first book of *De intellectu et intelligibili*

after having commented on *De nutrimento et nutribili*, *De sensu et sensato*, and *De memoria et reminiscencia*. After writing the first book of *De intellectu et intelligibili*, he picks up his commentary or reconstruction of the remaining *Parva naturalia* again. Presumably during or just after the composition of *De animalibus*, Book 16, Albert supplemented his project with a second book of *De intellectu et intelligibili*. This second book, in which he sets out his teaching about the natural intellectual perfection of man, is the high point of his theory of intellect. In terms of content and chronology, the two books of the *De intellectu et intelligibili*, the *De animalibus*, the *Liber de natura et origine animae*, and Albert's commentary on the *Metaphysica* are closely related, as is evident from the reciprocal references within them.<sup>32</sup> This overview of his work clearly shows that, and how, the doctrine of intellect, natural philosophy, and metaphysics are closely linked in Albert's writings.

These close ties also had far-reaching practical implications for Albert's scientific work. First and foremost, because he had almost completed work on his program of natural philosophy—represented by his teaching about the soul (*De anima*), psychophysiology (*Parva naturalia* and *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1), and the as yet incomplete zoology (*De animalibus*)—Albert personally experienced his own intellectual development and formation of intellect as a course perfected through the acquisition of all the sciences. He learned this from his sources, upon which he had already begun to elaborate in his own previous theoretical works (especially *De homine*) and which he developed to the fullest extent in, especially, the second book of *De intellectu et intelligibili*.<sup>33</sup> Albert then addresses the perfection of the soul when it is separated from the body after death, in the subsequent work *Liber de natura et origine animae*, and defends the idea of a continuity between our knowledge in this life and in the next.<sup>34</sup> In doing so, Albert establishes a complete and holistic path from *De anima*, through the *Parva naturalia* and *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1, through to *De intellectu et intelligibili* 2 and the *Liber De natura et origine animae*, that was capable of demonstrating humans to be both ontologically and developmentally *solus intellectus* in both theory and practice.<sup>35</sup>

The interpretation here proposed with regard to the passage of time between the composition of Book 1 and Book 2 of the *De intellectu et intelligibili*, and also with regard to the different significance in content between the two books, can be illustrated by the history of transmission. Book 1 (considered separately) is transmitted almost exclusively in fourteen early manuscripts and Book 2 (considered separately) in eight manuscripts.<sup>36</sup> Both books appear in a catalogue of works by Dominican authors from the fifteenth century separately and with their own titles. Louis de Valladolid, the author of the catalogue, lists Book 1 in his *Tabulae* as *De intellectu et intelligibili librum unum* and Book 2 as *De naturali perfectione intellectus librum unum*.<sup>37</sup> In the fourteenth century, however, the vast majority of the manuscripts transmit both books together.<sup>38</sup>

These historical data also help us to understand the reasons for Albert's composition and arrangement of *De intellectu et intelligibili* close to his commentaries on the *Parva naturalia* of Aristotle, even though the *De intellectu* is not part of the commentaries to the *Parva naturalia*, as Albert tells us in the very first lines of the introductory chapter. He writes that from the outset "of this work,"<sup>39</sup> he made it very clear that the insights regarding the soul found in the *De anima* do not yield a complete psychological science. It is necessary to augment those insights with knowledge about the objects that are the causes of the proper affections of the parts of the soul. In the works that follow the *De anima*, it will therefore be necessary to explore which of these objects are proper only to the soul and which are proper to the soul and body together. In other words, Albert is concerned with a more thorough exploration of mental states, feelings, affections, and passions, which are caused by endogenous and exogenous factors—endogenous factors being those that are rooted in the soul and can be produced by the soul itself, exogenous factors those that can come to be through the joint activity of soul and body and to which the soul has reference by means of the body.

Albert tells us now that, whereas states caused by exogenous factors are naturally instantiated by the vegetative and sensible soul, the endogenous mental states and forces must have their principle in the rational soul separated from the body:

Just as we have said since the beginning of this work, one does not have a sufficiently complete knowledge of the soul by means of what is established about it in the book *De anima*. For one ought to know, in addition, about the objects that produce proper passions in the parts of the soul. Some of these objects, which produce proper effects in the parts or powers of the soul, produce proper passions in the soul, while others [produce passions] common to body and soul. For the common [passions] produce everything of the kind for which the operating soul uses a bodily instrument, as in the case of whatever takes place in the vegetative and sensible soul. Because of this, the old Peripatetics described the sciences of such things as sciences of operations that are common to the soul and body.<sup>40</sup>

Let me sum up. Following on from Aristotelian psychology and psychophysiology, Albert established a science of the intellect and the intelligible and wrote an independent work about it. The name of the science that Albert introduced is identical with its object. Although the nominal bifurcation of the object in Albert's version might have suggested an abolition of that unity—because humans as humans are understood with regard to their natural principle of constitution, which is the intellect, and because that intellect determines the formal content of knowledge (i.e., the intelligible object)—Albert defines his science as single in its object.



Determining the specific character and unity of the object in the *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili* does not only determine its own principles, methods, and goals; it also explains, in addition to its status as a natural science of living beings, its clear precedence vis-à-vis the botanical and zoological sciences. The object acquires the status of a hinge that connects metaphysics with the *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili*.

For Albert, the aim of efforts to acquire knowledge about the human intellect is not solely to supplement Aristotelian psychological knowledge. They are also reflexive and subject-perfecting, and thus represent an existential value for humans as humans. This consists of man's self-knowledge, insofar as he can come to understand what he is: intellect alone (*solus intellectus*). On the one hand, Albert agrees with the Peripatetics that this self-knowledge is the prerequisite for recognizing the principle underlying the happiness of man.<sup>41</sup> On the other, he ties to this the insight into the nature of the human intellect, its universal and particular character. Albert secures that knowledge for his science of the intellect and the intelligible through a critical questioning of his Peripatetic sources.

### Appropriating Sources and Critiquing Averroes

When Albert began to write his *De intellectu et intelligibili*, he had at his disposal many works of Greek and Islamic-Arabic Peripatetic authors as sources and examples, most of which he had already used in his lessons on the theory of intellect in *De homine*. Among these sources were the writings of a Greek commentator on Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias (second/third century CE), then Eustratius of Nicaea's (eleventh/twelfth century) commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the treatises on the intellect by the Islamic-Arabic thinkers Alkindi (ninth century) and Alfarabi (ninth/tenth century), the *Liber de causis*, attributed by Albert to the Aristotelian tradition (ninth century), and, finally, the *Liber de anima* of Avicenna (d. 1037) and the *Long Commentary on the De anima* by Averroes (d. 1198). Albert also draws on theological sources, among them the writings of Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, whose influence on his theory of intellect—especially in its early phase of development, but also in the *De intellectu et intelligibili*—must not be underestimated.

These sources, alongside the Aristotelian foundation, primarily the third book of *De anima*, formed Albert's inspiration as he employed concepts of Aristotle's doctrine of intellect to form his own theory. It is to them that Albert owed his knowledge of the opinions of some "older" Greek and "more recent" Arabic Peripatetics to whose writings he did not have direct access. That these authors and sources might be grouped under his designation "older Peripatetics" is not clear from his statement here,<sup>42</sup> but one can see in his later writings that he is referring to Aristotle and his interpreters, known only indirectly through Averroes, Theophrastus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Porphyry, Themistius, and the *Liber de causis*.



Albert counts the Arabic thinkers Alfarabi, Avicenna, Algazel, and Averroes among the more recent Peripatetics.<sup>43</sup>

Despite this diversity of sources, it was especially the hermeneutic coordinates and those of systematic philosophy—on the one hand, the authority of the Peripatetics with Aristotle as their leader; on the other, rationality and provability—that made it possible for Albert to integrate interpretations of varying provenance, including Plato and the Neoplatonists, into his doctrine of intellect:

In the exposition of the teaching concerning the intellect and the intelligible, we will presuppose all that was accurately established in the third book of our work *De anima*. All things here, however, which it seems must be investigated, we will deal with insofar as we are able to explore these things by means of proof and rational argument, thereby following in the footsteps of our master [*princeps*], whose book concerning this science we have not seen. We have, nonetheless, examined many books and letters, well written too, from his disciples on this matter. Occasionally, we will also recollect those [opinions] of Plato, insofar as he does not contradict the opinions of the Peripatetics in any way.<sup>44</sup>

On the very first page, the reader of Albert's *De intellectu et intelligibili* is confronted with a Neoplatonic, emanationist interpretation of the origin of intellect and its cognitive possibilities, as well as with all the levels in the hierarchical scheme of being (Being, Life, Perception, and Knowledge). With this teaching, whose hermeneutic potential and essential features Albert had already outlined in his commentary on the *Sentences*, he touches on a serious question as to how all created beings arise from God.<sup>45</sup> Albert refers back to his own commentary on the *De anima* and to the "most reliable" (*probatissimi*) Peripatetics, by which he very clearly means Aristotle (to whose name he attaches the *Epistula de universitatis principio* and the *Liber de causis*), Avicenna, and Eustratius.<sup>46</sup> As he promised at the beginning of the text, he repeatedly refers to Plato (*Timaeus*), and interprets Plato's position in harmony with his theory of emanation, which is drawn from the *Liber de causis* and from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Albert takes the formal emanation of substantial being from the First Cause to be mediated—with the sole exception of the intellect—by secondary causes, and he interprets these such as to regard them as an opinion universally corroborated by the authorities he cites.<sup>47</sup> When Albert adds that the secondary causes are named *intelligentiae caelestes* by the philosophers, it is evident that he is referring primarily to the *Liber de causis*, the Islamic-Arabic philosophers, and Isaac Israeli. He had forcefully rejected the Avicennian interpretation of emanation in his commentary on the *Sentences*, and in his commentary on the *Physica* (8.1.15), he indicated that, despite some reservations, the doctrine of emanation generally

offers an epistemically useful model.<sup>48</sup> So it is not surprising to find him adapting just that model epistemologically at the beginning of *De intellectu et intelligibili* and his commentary on the *Metaphysica*, and ontologically at the end of *De intellectu et intelligibili*.

The influence of the *Liber de causis*, often cited by Albert with the name “Aristotle” as a placeholder, is unmistakable at the beginning of *De intellectu et intelligibili* (Book 1, tr. 1). However, Albert takes a critical view of the opinion advocated by Avicenna and some other Arabic philosophers that the emanation of the *anima cognitiva* comes from the lowest superlunary intelligence, as well as the view that living things and their souls are caused and controlled by the heavenly bodies. He also rejects, here and elsewhere, the view that the cognitive power is caused by the intelligence in the lowest sphere of the heavens, and the implication that our knowledge and passions depend on such a cause or, more precisely, on the movements of the heavenly bodies. Albert claims the backing of *all* the Peripatetics and Ptolemy for his opinion that the soul is not limited in its cognitive and affective operations by the movements of the heavenly bodies—but it would be wrong to take this literally, because the astral determinism that he rejects is a doctrine typical of the Islamic-Arabic philosophers.<sup>49</sup>

Albert’s emanationist interpretation of the production of the forms of being, life, sense, and knowing is based upon a model that secures the reduction of causality to the First Cause and the denial of the univocal causality of secondary causes. The *causa univoca* of emanation, according to this theory, is the First Cause, while the secondary causes are, so to speak, instruments of the First Cause, which unfold its benefactions and introduce them into matter through the motions of the heaven. In contrast to Avicenna, Albert sees emanation as a natural process of hierarchical causality, in the sense found in the *Liber de causis*. The creative work of the First Cause is delivered to the very lowest effects by means of secondary causes; the ontological dependence of the lowest causes on the First Cause comes about through the middle causes. This ontological relation is expressed in the way that “everything that is, yearns for some goodness of the First Cause, and because of this desire, it has whatsoever effects it has.”<sup>50</sup>

Albert claims that the source of this causality, which he reads as a kind of emanation, lies in Plato’s *Timaeus*. Such causality, he posits, is a descent of an identical series of forms into matter, brought about by cosmic intelligences. Once enmattered, the forms are determined in different ways. He points out that in the Neoplatonic interpretation of this idea, the soul is the instrument of intelligence (*instrumentum intelligentiae*), like the basis of their illumination (*ut subiectum illuminationibus*):

In all intelligences, there is an order of creative forms [*formae practicae*], which descends through these intelligences into the matter of things

that are generated. And the forms are the same with all of them [i.e., all intelligences], but as they descend into the lower things they are made more and more determinate, just as the form of light in the sun, in air, in the clouds, and in a limited body is the same, although the light, insofar as it descends farther from the sun, is more and more contracted and determined to the nature of color. For as later philosophers said that souls are caused and poured out by means of the intelligences, they understood the aforementioned manner of flux. And for this reason, they also adopted the opinion that the soul is imprinted by the intelligence and that the soul is the instrument of the intelligence, and as it were is the subject of its illuminations in this matter, speaking entirely truly.<sup>51</sup>

Contradicting Avicenna, Albert insists that “the first and whole source of the soul and of nature” is the outpouring from the First Cause, whereas the secondary causes have only an instrumental function, in that they come into play to determine and incline the emanated natures to matter organically. With his modified emanationism, in which the rational soul is produced directly by the First Cause, Albert draws on the Platonic-Neoplatonic tradition, referring to his reappraisal of that tradition in his commentaries on *De caelo* and *De anima*, as well as this text from the *Liber de motu cordis* by Alfred of Sarashel:

It is clear enough, through what has been said, how the movers of the lower spheres pour forth and how they do not. For the first and total emanation of the soul and the whole nature is from the First Cause, whereas the lower circular orbits operate by determining and turning the natures toward matter. For this reason, Plato says that the soul receives something in each orbit: memory in the orbit of Saturn, and other things in different [orbits], as we determined in the first book of *On the Soul*. And in this way the essence of the soul is from the First Cause alone, whereas its attachment to the body and its determination to the body happen through others that serve the First Cause instrumentally. And regarding this ruling in illuminations and this moving through the motions in the bodies, it is subject to the intelligences of other orbits.<sup>52</sup>

If the most important exponents of the tradition that Albert here reviews are the *Liber de causis* and Plato, as my survey of the sources has shown, it is also apparent that he corrects Avicenna’s doctrine of emanation in relation to the intellect (and more generally). In contrast, Averroes’ psychology and doctrine of intellect, with which Albert tells us in his commentary on the *De anima* that he largely agrees (except on the question of a superindividual *intellectus agens* common to all men),<sup>53</sup> at first seems to remain in the background. This initial finding, however, is not characteristic of the

whole of the *De intellectu et intelligibili*, as becomes clear when Albert takes up Averroes' opinion on the unity of the superindividual active intellect.<sup>54</sup>

Albert first explicitly mentions Averroes in the seventh chapter of the first tract of Book 1 of his *De intellectu et intelligibili*, in a discussion of whether an intellectual nature in reality is general or particular. Averroes is introduced here, together with Ibn Bājja (Avempace, Abubacher) and other unnamed Islamic-Arabic thinkers, as the defender of the opinion that there is a superindividual, general intellect that can only be accessed by means of imagination and sense perception.<sup>55</sup> This argumentative demonstration indicates how Albert presents the position of Averroes, and how that presentation relates to his earlier interpretation of the problem in his commentary on the *De anima* and in *De homine*.

According to Albert, this opinion that the intellect is an immortal, general, and superindividual nature is a position shared by Avempace, Averroes, and other Islamic-Arabic Peripatetics, and one that is in many ways justified. Of the many arguments imputed to this group, Albert chooses three, apparently because of their logical rigor and the truth of their premises. He describes these arguments as the most excellent methods of proof and presents them briefly. Albert is not interested in the authority of these sources; what concerns him is the strength of their arguments—the rational bases and conditions he set out in the introductory chapter of his work as the guiding principles of his scientific investigation.<sup>56</sup> The conclusion he draws from the premises of the first proof is that the intellect, according to its very nature, is necessarily one universal intellect for all, because it naturally thinks universally and because the proper place of the universal intelligible is in the intellect.<sup>57</sup> The second proof is based on the separateness of the intellect, which is contrasted with matter as a principle of individuation.<sup>58</sup> The third and final proof, which he says is the most important, aims to show that the intellect has no “proper matter” that would individuate it.<sup>59</sup>

The center of Albert's account in this passage, then, is the question whether the intellect is universal (*universalis*) according to its very nature, or whether it is determinate, particular, and individuated.<sup>60</sup> His concise discussion in the *De intellectu et intelligibili* lacks neither objectivity nor vigor. It must be seen against the backdrop of the controversy in which Albert was participating publicly at the time regarding the numerical and specific unity of a separate intellect common to all men.<sup>61</sup> A more detailed examination of the erroneous opinion of Averroes would be redundant, Albert says, because he has already dealt with this in his commentary on the *De anima*.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, he takes a stand on “the view and error” of Averroes that is similar in its clarity and sophistication to his treatment in the commentary on the *De anima*:

If it is said that the universal intellect is essentially identical in all souls, many absurd things follow from this, as we noted in the book “On the

Soul.” Therefore, it seems to us that an intellectual nature in its genus belongs to the genus of bodies just as the sun does. For we know that the sun is numerically individual, and that its light can be considered in two ways. If one considers [light] as it is in the sun, then numerically it is one form of the sun. If one takes it however as it shines forth from the sun, it is general in that it illuminates all transparent things, both the continuous [transparent], which it makes luminous in act, and the non-continuous [transparent], which it makes colored, just as we stated in the first book of “On Sense and the Sensed,” and light, considered in this way, causes and produces many things.<sup>63</sup>

Using the sun analogy, Albert here employs the hermeneutic formula by means of which he prefers to explain the intellect’s universality and at the same time its particularity. This formula indicates the unique character of the sun in the visible world, and the twofold aspect of the ontological and operative definitions of its light—on the one hand, as the numerically *one* form of the sun and, on the other, as an outflowing manifold of illumination. Conceiving the intellect as light, which is an Aristotelian image, makes it possible for Albert to regard the intellect both as belonging to the nature of the soul and individuated, insofar as it is the form of the human being as such, and as universal, according to its cognitive capacity, insofar as it abstracts forms and is the place of universals.<sup>64</sup>

Moving on from the metaphor of the sun, Albert clarifies that the universal in the intellect is received not as a form in matter or an accident in a subject, but rather as a universal intention of a thing (*intentio rei*).<sup>65</sup> By using the likeness of the sun in relation to the intellect, he is able to nuance his threefold notion of the intellect, which he first formulated in his commentary on the *De anima* following Alexander of Aphrodisias. There, he interpreted the intellect according to the varying levels of its actualization: according as it is in a condition of its original potency (*in potentia*), in the process of being actualized (*in profectioe potentiae ad actum*), and in the act of self-attainment (*in adeptioe*). In a parallel way, this time with regard to the *intellectus agens* and its actualizing effect on the *intellectus possibilis*, Albert distinguishes between the intellect “as an ability and power of the soul” (*ut potentia et virtus quaedam animae*), as an “active principle” (*ut efficiens*), and “as form” (*ut forma*).<sup>66</sup>

This threefold modal division of the intellect is interpreted in *De intellectu et intelligibili* with reference to the universality and uniqueness of the intellect common to all men, a question associated with the Averroes and one that was hotly debated by Albert’s contemporaries. In this context, Albert understands the intellect, first, as the constitutive principle of human nature, and therefore individual, as is suitable for each individual person.<sup>67</sup> Second, he sees it functionally as a cognitive capacity, which is united to the person as a universal power. Finally, he interprets it as the acquired form that is extracted from many intelligibles. This intellect as form means

not only the union of the *intellectus agens* with the one contemplating as principle of activity (*agens tantum*) but also the proper happiness (*beatitudo*) of the one contemplating. The intellect can be distinct as capacity and also as form among human beings to varying degrees and can gradually be differently acquired. Albert does not exclude the possibility that some men lack intellectual capacity and the form of intellect entirely, as measured by their intelligence and wisdom.<sup>68</sup>

Propounding this view of intellect as capacity and as form, Albert seems to accommodate the aspect of Averroes' opinion that posits a universal capacity of a numerically single intellect, common to all men. Ultimately, however, as becomes clear in this context, he cannot and does not want to reconcile Averroes' positing of an ontologically single intellect for all men with his own theory of the individuation of the intellect. On the contrary, Albert shows himself once again to be a very sophisticated and knowledgeable reader of Averroes and at the same time a discriminating user of Averroes' doctrine of intellect, such that he can make use of it in his own teaching.

### Further Thoughts and Concluding Remarks

Albert's relationship to Averroes' doctrine of intellect in the chapter of *De intellectu et intelligibili* discussed here proves to be more complex than it seems at first glance. Understanding it requires familiarity with Albert's earlier statements about Averroes' doctrine of the intellect, since the place where Albert undertakes a thorough analysis, critique, and evaluation of the *Commentator Arabus* is not his *De intellectu et intelligibili* but his commentary on the *De anima*. If we include Albert's writings *De homine* and *Liber de natura et origine animae* in this survey of his relationship with Averroes, then developments, shifts in emphasis, and differentiations appear that can be explained, at least partially, by his deepening insight into the psychology and the doctrine of intellect of the Peripatetics in general and of Averroes in particular. Nonetheless, some questions of detail remain unanswered, of which I have only been able to address a few. These include the reason why Albert reinterprets Averroes' view of the *intellectus agens* (and the *intellectus possibilis sive materialis*) in *De homine*, and why he attributes Averroes' epitome of Aristotle's *Parva naturalia* to Alfarabi. Did the reasons lie in his insufficient early knowledge of the teachings of the Arabic commentator on Aristotle, or were they designed to avoid the dangers of the bans on Averroes' work?

One cannot fully rule out the possibility that the view Albert imputed to Averroes in his *De homine* and then later retracted in the *De anima* commentary—that of an individual *intellectus agens* for each particular person—was a precautionary measure, taken due to theological concerns and to his interest in the Commentator's interpretation of Aristotle.<sup>69</sup> But it would be equally conceivable that when Albert was writing his *De homine*, a canonical reading of Averroes' long commentary was not

yet established in the Latin West. With regard to earlier readings, and to Richard Rufus' work on the *De anima*, written at almost the same time, this would certainly be possible.

Because a clear distinction between insufficient knowledge on Albert's part and common readings of Averroes circulating in Albert's day can hardly be drawn, it is at the very least problematic to cling to the view that Albert's initial knowledge of Averroes' theory of intellect and his writings about psychophysiology were inadequate. Certainly, the discrepant portrayals of Averroes' opinions and the false attribution of Averroes' writings in Albert's early work, as well as their correction in his later works, seem to support that view. Yet they could just as well be due to an environment in which Albert relied on the readily available Latin interpretations of Averroes surrounding him, and read Averroes under their influence. One thing is certain: in his treatise *De intellectu et intelligibili*, Albert reiterates with slight qualifications the *status quo* of his own interpretation, presented in his commentary on the *De anima*. In the context of his commentaries on the whole *corpus Aristotelicum*, he was able to reinforce and nuance that interpretation, which should be understood as part of his genuinely independent theory of the human intellect.<sup>70</sup>

As we have seen, Albert constructed this, and all his other interpretations in *De intellectu et intelligibili*, on rigorous rational standards selectively derived from Aristotle, as the methodological and substantive criteria needed to develop a *scientia de intellectu et intelligibili*. He overcame the Platonic-Augustinian view of the intellect that previously held sway in the Latin West by opposing to that view his own vision of the human intellect, which was based on arguments and aimed to give an integral account. In that account, he constantly emphasized the continuity of the intellect's opportunities for growth. Thus, he was also able to unite strict philosophical consistency, in method and content, with a biblical anthropology. At the same time, the Peripatetic and Christian sources he used reinforced the development of his independent doctrine, both systematically and substantively. Yet as soon as these sources deviated from the essential principles of the holistic unity and continuity of the human intellect, Albert interpreted them antagonistically—as I have shown using the example of Averroes' teaching, rejected by Albert in his *De intellectu et intelligibili*, on the intellect as common to all human beings. Albert's natural philosophical teaching on the human intellect, as we see it in his work *De intellectu et intelligibili*, emerges in diverse ways (most of which remain to be shown in detail) from his Peripatetic sources, from his own previous writings, and from his overall historical context, but it is in no way reducible to any of these.

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## Notes

- 1 See Anzulewicz, “Anthropology.”
- 2 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 2. 12, ed. Borgnet, 521a–b: “Per istum [sc. librum] enim scitur, qualiter anima substantiatur ad vitam aeternam et reducitur. Et cum reducitur ad primum, quod est necesse esse et omnium causa, ita penetratur lumine eius mirabili et causali quod nihil amplius novit requirere, sed stans in seipsa manet in illo” (I correct the text of the non-critical edition by Auguste Borgnet here and in the rest of this chapter according to the unpublished critical edition currently being prepared by Silvia Donati); Albertus Magnus, *De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa* 1. 1. 11, ed. Fauser, 24.58–60: “Primum ergo principium principium omnium dicitur ut finis, et hoc est in ordine, quo se omnia habent ad ipsum”; *ibid.* 24.91–25.8: “Secundum exitum ergo rerum in esse primum erit principium ut artifex, secundum autem reductionem rerum ad perfectum primum erit principium ut finis. Propter quod a quibusdam theologis non inconvenienter ut principium et finis laudatur. Omnia enim ab ipso sunt et propter ipsum et ad ipsum. Ab ipso enim non propter aliud sunt quam propter seipsum, eo quod extra seipsum nihil habet, quod consequi intendat vel consequi intendere possit per opus.” See Rom. 11:36 (Vulgate): “quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso omnia.”
- 3 See Tracey, “Revisiting Albert the Great’s Abhorrence.”
- 4 Regarding the continuity thesis, see Krause and Anzulewicz, “Albert der Große.”
- 5 See Albertus Magnus, *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 396–442: *De intellectu*; 443–454: *De differentia intelligibilis*. See also Anzulewicz, “Entwicklung und Stellung der Intellekttheorie,” esp. 182–87.
- 6 See Anzulewicz, “Vermögenspsychologische Grundlagen.”
- 7 See Albertus Magnus, *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 396–99; Hasse, “Das Lehrstück.”
- 8 See Miller, “Aspect of Averroes’ Influence”; Zimmermann, “Albertus Magnus und der lateinische Averroismus”; Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 213–14; Bazán, “Was There Ever a ‘First Averroism?’”; Hasse, “Early Albertus Magnus”; Taylor “Averroes,” 190–95; Taylor, “East and West,” 728; Wirmer, “Einleitung,” 9–11, 16–26, and “Nachwort,” 325–409.
- 9 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, ed. Borgnet, 487b: “Utrum natura intellectualis sit universalis vel particularis.”
- 10 Albertus Magnus, *Physica* 1. 1. 4, ed. Hossfeld, 7.8–64, esp. 7.56–58: “Opus autem animae secundum partem intellectualem tractatur in scientia subtili de intellectu et intelligibili.”
- 11 Albert commented on all the natural philosophy *opuscula* of Aristotle available to him in Latin translations. Those that were not available, but whose existence was testified to in references by Aristotle or Averroes, he reconstructed with the relevant source texts. The following writings are such reconstructions: *De nutrimento et nutritio*, *De spiritu et respiratione*, *De motibus animalium*, and *De iuventute et senectute*. See Donati, “Alberts des Großen Konzept der *scientiae naturales*,” 360, 364–65, 367–69 and notes at 524–38; see note 31 below.



- 12 See Lafleur, *Quatre introductions*; Gauthier, "Notes sur Siger de Brabant."
- 13 Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia libri de sensu et sensato*, prooem., ed. Leonina, 5.68–79: "intellectus quidem nullius partis corporis actus est, ut probatur in III De anima; unde non potest considerari per concretionem uel applicationem ad corpus uel ad aliquod organum corporeum: maxima enim eius concretio est in anima, summa autem eius abstractio est in substanciis separatis; et ideo preter librum De anima Aristotiles non fecit librum de intellectu et intelligibili (uel, si fecisset, non pertineret ad scienciam naturalem, set magis ad methaphisicam, cuius est considerare de substanciis separatis)." See Donati, "Alberts des Großen Konzept der *scientiae naturales*," 371; Winkler, "Albert der Große," 72.
- 14 See Mojsisch, *Die Theorie des Intellekts*, 44–45; Mahoney, "Albert the Great," esp. 551–54; Mahoney, "Sense, Intellect, and Imagination."
- 15 This treatise is available in the critical edition of *Tractatus de intellectu et intelligibili*, ed. Mojsisch, 125–210. The textual similarities between Dietrich and Albert concerning the doctrine of intellect have not yet been investigated. Some "historically significant" aspects are pointed out by Mojsisch, *Die Theorie des Intellekts*, 71 n. 113. Quero-Sánchez, *Über das Dasein*, 260 and 262, makes reference to the Averroist opinion of the formal conjunction of the *intellectus agens* with the *intellectus possibilis* in Dietrich, which is common to both Dietrich and Albert. In this regard, see also Mojsisch, *Die Theorie des Intellekts*, 86ff. (without reference to the commonality with Albert).
- 16 See Anzulewicz and Rigo, "*Reductio ad esse divinum*."
- 17 See *Magistri Theodorici Tractatus de visione beatifica*, ed. Mojsisch, 96ff.; Führer, "Introduction," 11–22.
- 18 Albertus Magnus, *Liber de natura et origine animae* 2. 17, ed. Geyer, 44.15–20: "De his tamen omnibus primi philosophi determinare est opus. Sed in eis quae hic diximus, cum naturalibus metaphysica composuimus, ut perfectior sit doctrina et facilius intelligantur ea quae dicta sunt; haec enim est consuetudo nostra in toto hoc physico negotio."
- 19 Hartmann, *Philosophie der Natur*.
- 20 See Weisheipl, "Axiom 'Opus naturae est opus intelligentiae'"; Hödl, "'Opus naturae est opus intelligentiae'"; Wéber, "Les emprunts majeurs à Averroès," 153.
- 21 Mojsisch and Stammkötter, "*Conclusiones de intellectu et intelligibili*."
- 22 See Zimmermann, "Gedanken Alberts des Großen"; Anzulewicz "Anthropology."
- 23 Aristotle justifies the placement of the doctrine about the soul in natural philosophy in *De anima* 1. 1, 403a3–28; he gives the reason for the opinion that the soul is an object of metaphysics at *De anima* 3. 4, 429a10–b10. See Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 1. 1. 6, ed. Stroick, 11.56–13.61; *ibid.* 3. 2. 1–15, 177.7–199.69, 177.73–77 (Arist. text); *De sensu et sensato* 1. 1, ed. Donati, 19.8–20.61, 19.23–34 (Arist. text); *Metaphysica* 1. 1. 5, ed. Geyer, 8.4–31; *ibid.*, 2. 2, 93.81–90.
- 24 Albertus Magnus, *De IV coaequaevis* 4. 61. 4, ed. Borgnet, 655b: "Id autem quod constituit naturam, est triplex. Quoddam enim inest homini gratia corporis [. . .]. Quoddam autem inest homini gratia animae, ut intellectuale. Quoddam autem gratia conjuncti inest, sicut secundum naturam principale et regale." See also Köhler, *Homo animal nobilissimum*, 169–232.
- 25 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, ed. Borgnet, 488b–489a: "Nos enim in libro *De anima* diximus quod tripliciter homini unitur intellectus, uno videlicet modo ut natura dans esse, et sic est individuus; alio modo ut potentia per quam est operatio intelligendi, et sic est virtus universalis; et tertio modo ut forma acquisita ex multis intellectibus, sicut explanavimus, ubi tractatum est de intellectu agente, qui non unitur contemplativis ut agens

- tantum, sed ut beatitudo eorum est, quando perveniunt ad hoc quod inest eis ut forma.” See Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 3. 3. 11, ed. Stroick, 222.15–28: “intellectus agens tribus modis coniungitur nobis, licet in se et secundum essentiam suam sit separatus. A natura enim coniungitur ut potentia et virtus quaedam animae, sed faciendo intellecta speculativa coniungitur ut efficiens, et ex his duabus coniunctionibus non est homo perfectus, ut operatur opus divinum. Coniungitur tandem ut forma, et causa coniunctionis illius est intellectus speculativus; et ideo oportet esse speculativum ante adeptum. Et tunc homo perfectus et divinus effectus est ad suum opus, inquantum homo et non animal est, perficiendum; et sunt gradus in intellectu speculativo, quibus quasi ascenditur ad intellectum adeptum, sicut per se patet cuilibet.”
- 26 Albert considers this approach to natural philosophy to be reasonable, as he writes in *De anima* 1. 1. 2, ed. Stroick, 4.42–47: “Licet autem sic in prioritate dignitatis animae scientiam ponamus, tamen in ordine doctrinae inter scientias naturales non ponimus eam primam, quia ordo doctrine non sequitur prioritatem dignitatis, sed potius ordinem rationis tenet, in quo de communioribus prior est speculatio [. . .]”; see *ibid.* 1. 1. 1, 3.6–13: “Cum autem iam certum sit nobis de anima esse scientiam, et quod haec scientia est pars naturalis scientiae, facile advertere possumus ordinem illius inter libros scientiae naturalis. Cum enim a communibus omnis incipiat speculatio et communis sit mixtum tantum quam mixtum et animatum, scimus, quod animati notitia est tradenda post notitiam mixtorum in specie consideratorum.”
- 27 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 1, ed. Borgnet, 478a: “Attendimus enim, sicut saepe protestati sumus, principaliter facilitatem doctrinae; propter quod magis sequimur in tractatione librorum naturalium ordinem quo facilius docetur auditor quam ordinem rerum naturalium. Et hac de causa etiam non tenuimus in exsequendo libros naturales ordinem, quem praelibavimus in prooemiis nostris, ubi divisionem librorum naturalium posuimus.” See Albertus Magnus, *De sensu et sensato* 1. 1, ed. Donati, 20.7–10: “*Primum autem de primis est dicendum secundum ordinem scientiae naturalis, in qua communia sunt prius nota quoad nos quam particularia, et ideo ab illis debet incipere speculatio.*” (Italics here show individual words and groups of words that Albert takes over without alteration from the original.)
- 28 See Albertus Magnus, *Metaphysica* 1. 1. 4, ed. Geyer, 6.25–52; Tellkamp, “Albert the Great.”
- 29 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 1, ed. Borgnet, 477b–478a: “Et de his in parte iam pro modulo nostro expediti sumus in libris *De nutrimento et nutribili* et *De sensu et sensato*. Restant autem adhuc libri *De somno et vigilia*, *De iuventute et senectute*, *De inspiratione et respiratione*, *De motibus qui dicuntur animales*, *De vita et morte*, qui omnes sunt de operibus communibus animae et corporis. Sed quia nequaquam interpretatio somnii et natura eius bene determinabilis est nisi prius scito de intellectu et intelligibili, ideo oportet nos hic interponere scientiam de intelligibili et intellectu, licet intelligere animae humanae sit proprium praeter corpus.”
- 30 In the commentary on the *De anima*, Book 3, Albert includes twenty-five chapters of digressions, and twenty of these deal with the doctrine of intellect. In them, he discusses questions that in various ways are connected with his original documents, which Aristotle either did not sufficiently explain or did not discuss at all, but which were treated by the Late Antique commentators or the more recent Arabic Peripatetics, Avicenna, Algazel, and Averroes, Albert’s most important intermediaries when it came to Late Antique psychology, the doctrine of intellect, and the theories of knowledge. See, among others, Schneider, *Die Psychologie Alberts des Großen*, 1:190–95; Craemer-Ruegenberg, “Die Seele als Form”; de Libera, *Albert le Grand*, 215–66; Pluta, “Averroes als Vermittler.”

- 31 The following nine *opuscula* belong to the group of writings included in the *Parva naturalia*, as it was shaped by the Greek commentators on Aristotle and his interpreters in the Latin Middle Ages and in the Renaissance: *De sensu et sensibilibus*, *De memoria et reminiscencia*, *De somno et vigilia*, *De insomniis*, *De divinatione per somnum*, *De longitudine et brevitate vitae*, *De iuventute et senectute*, *De respiratione*, *De morte et vita*. See Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, *Psychologie d'Aristote*; De Leemans, "Secundum viam naturae et doctrinae."
- 32 While Albert was writing Book 2 of *De intellectu et intelligibili*, his commentary on the *Metaphysica*—or at least on Book 5—was not yet complete. See Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 2. 10, ed. Borgnet, 518b: "hoc autem in *Prima philosophia* erit demonstratum [. . .] de quo in prima philosophia probabimus." The *Liber de natura et origine animae* follows after the two books of *De intellectu et intelligibili*. See *Liber de natura et origine animae*, Indices (Auctores ab Alberto ipso allegati), ed. Geyer, 322. For the references to *De intellectu et intelligibili* in the commentary on the *Metaphysica* (from Book 5), see Albertus Magnus, *Metaphysica*, Indices (Auctores ab Alberto ipso allegati), ed. Geyer, 601.
- 33 See Krause and Anzulewicz, "Albert the Great's *Interpretatio*."
- 34 Albertus Magnus, *Liber De natura et origine animae*, tr. 2, ed. Geyer, 18–44. See Anzulewicz and Krause, "Albert der Große."
- 35 On epigenesis in Albert, see Krause, "Albert the Great." A reason why the *Liber de natura et origine animae* was written and later detached from the *De animalibus* as an independent work can perhaps be found in Albert's composition of the second book of the *De intellectu et intelligibili*, in that he was able by doing so to expand on a continuity and integrity of the existential execution and development of man as man, by means of stand-alone works.
- 36 Fauser, *Die Werke des Albertus Magnus*, 108–10; Fauser, "Albertus-Magnus-Handschriften: 2," 106; Fauser, "Albertus-Magnus-Handschriften: 3," 135; Fauser, "Albertus-Magnus-Handschriften: 4," 134.
- 37 Scheeben, "Die Tabulae Ludwigs von Valladolid," 247.
- 38 Fauser, *Die Werke des Albertus Magnus*, 105–8.
- 39 By "this work," Albert means the explication of the *Parva naturalia* of Aristotle that he had already begun, and his treatises *De nutrimento et nutritibili*, *De sensu et sensato*, and *De memoria et reminiscencia*, which were already complete at this point.
- 40 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 1, ed. Borgnet, 477a–b: "Sicut a principio istius operis diximus, scientia de anima non satis complete habetur ex hoc quod de anima secundum seipsam in libro *De anima* determinatum est. Oportet enim scire cum hoc de obiectis, quae proprias animae partibus inferunt passiones. Horum autem obiectorum quorum propria passiva pro partibus sive potentiis habet anima, quaedam proprias passiones inferunt animae, quaedam autem communes animae et corpori. Communes enim inferunt passiones quaecumque sunt talia, circa quae operans anima instrumento utitur corporeo, ut quaecumque sunt circa vegetabilem et sensibilem animam. Propter quod etiam Peripatetici veteres scientias de talibus scientias de operibus communibus animae et corporis vocaverunt."
- 41 Ibid. 1. 1. 1, 478a–b: "Cum autem secundum probabiliores Philosophos intellectus faciat intelligibile in forma intelligibilitatis, oportet nos prius loqui de natura intellectus secundum quod est intellectus, et deinde de intelligibili secundum quod est intelligibile, et demum de unitate et diversitate intellectus secundum intelligibilia: quia his cognitis perfecte satis habetur scientia de intellectu et intelligibili. Operae pretium autem est huiusmodi investigare, quia his scitis et homo scit, quid proprie est, cum sit solus intellectus, ut dicit Aristoteles in decimo *Ethicorum*, et scit insuper praecipuum inter ea quae faciunt in ipso felicitatem contemplativam. Incipientes igitur investigare naturam intellectus in primis ponemus, quae secundum naturam sunt priora."

- 42 Ibid. 1. 1. 1, 477b: "Peripatetici veteres."
- 43 See ibid. 1. 1. 4, 482a (Theophrastus, Dionysius et alii Philosophi); ibid. 1. 2. 2, 492b "(Peripatetici fere omnes, Avicenna videlicet, et Algazel, et Averroes, et Abubacher [i.e., Ibn Bājja, alias Avempace] et alii quamplures)"; *De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa* 1. 2. 7, ed. Fauser, 32.54–55; ibid. 1. 4. 7, 53.3–5. Albert did not have direct access to the writings of Themistius and Avempace or to John Philoponus; he owed his knowledge of their positions to Averroes. On the extent of the influence on Albert that came from the opinions about intellect of older and more recent Peripatetics (especially the Arabic Peripatetics), see Bach, *Des Albertus Magnus Verhältnis*; Hasse, "Das Lehrstück"; Hasse, "Early Albertus Magnus"; Müller, "Der Einfluss der arabischen Intellektspekulation."
- 44 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 1, ed. Borgnet, 478a: "Determinantes autem de intellectu et intelligibili supponemus quaecumque in tertio libro nostro *de Anima* convenienter determinata sunt. Quaecumque vero hic inquirenda esse videntur, quantum per demonstrationem et rationem investigare poterimus, tractabimus, sequentes principis nostri vestigia, cuius licet librum de hac scientia non viderimus, tamen discipulorum eius de hac materia plurimos et bene tractatos perspeximus libros et epistulas. Interdum et Platonis recordabimur in his in quibus Peripateticorum sententiis in nullo contradicit."
- 45 See Albertus Magnus, *Commentarii in II Sententiarum* 2. 1. 12, ed. Borgnet, 32a: "Gravis autem quaestio incidit circa primum, de fluxu omnium creatorum a Deo, et tenet haec quaestio fructus totius scientiae istius, si posset bene investigari."
- 46 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 1–3, ed. Borgnet, 478a, 479b, 480b.
- 47 Ibid. 1. 1. 2–3, 478b–481a. Albert clarifies his opinion regarding the transcendental source of the human intellect in *Liber de natura et origine animae* 1. 5, ed. Geyer, 12.70–14.43.
- 48 Albertus Magnus, *Physica* 8. 1. 15, ed. Hossfeld, 580.45–70.
- 49 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 4, ed. Borgnet, 481b: "Quod autem anima praecipue humana sub motibus astrorum sic restringatur contra omnes est Peripateticos et contra Ptolemaeum. Ipsa enim et superiora sphaeris apprehendit et ab his ad quae motus astrorum inclinatur, libere avertitur, et alia avertit per sapientiam et intellectum, sicut testatur Ptolemaeus." See Anzulewicz, "Alberts des Grossen Stellungnahme."
- 50 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 4, ed. Borgnet, 482a: "Amplius non ideo est ordo primi ad media et mediorum ad ultima quod aliquid causetur in ultimis a mediis, quod a prima causa non sit perfectum. Et dico de his causatis, quae nomine suo aliquam dicunt nobilitatem; aliter enim ex ultimis per media non fieret recursus ad primum. Et hoc esse non potest, cum omne quod est, aliquam bonitatem primae causae desideret et propter illam agat quicquid agit."
- 51 Ibid. 1. 1. 4, 482b: "Est enim in omnibus intelligentiis ordo formarum practicarum, qui per ipsas in materiam generabilium descendit, et sunt formae in omnibus eadem, sed in inferioribus magis et magis determinatae, sicut forma lucis eadem in sole et nube et corpore terminato, licet lumen secundum quod magis descendit a sole magis et magis coartetur et determinetur ad naturam coloris. [ . . . ] Quotquot autem posteriorum philosophorum animas ab intelligentiis causatas et profluxas esse tradiderunt, hunc modum fluxus, qui dictus est, intellexerunt. Et hac de causa etiam animam imprimi ab intelligentia posuerunt et esse eam instrumentum intelligentiae, ut subiectum illuminationibus eius, in hoc verum utique dicentes."

- 52 Ibid. 1. 1. 4, 483a: “Per ista etiam quae dicta sunt, satis patet, qualiter motores inferiorum sphaerarum fundant, et qualiter non. Prima enim et tota fusio animae et omnis naturae est a prima causa. Inferiores autem orbis operantur organice determinando et inclinando naturas ad materiam. Propter quod Plato dixit, quod in quolibet orbe anima aliquid accipit, memoriam quidem in orbe Saturni, et alia in aliis, sicut in primo *De anima* determinavimus. Et secundum hunc modum essentia animae est a prima causa tota et sola, applicatio autem et determinatio ad corpus est ab aliis instrumentaliter primae causae deservientibus, et quoad hoc regenda in illuminationibus et movenda motibus corporalibus, subicitur intelligentiis aliorum orbium.” See Albertus Magnus, *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 18.12–14 (with references): “In libro vero *De motu cordis* sic diffinitur: ‘Anima est substantia incorporea, illuminationum quae sunt a primo secunda relatione perceptibilis’”; Albertus Magnus, *De caelo et mundo* 2. 2. 6, ed. Hossfeld, 138.40–139.7; *De anima* 1. 2. 7, ed. Stroick, 34.29–38.
- 53 Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 3. 3. 11, ed. Stroick, 221.9–14 and 70–72: “Nos autem in paucis dissentimus ab Averroë, qui inducit istam questionem in *Commento super librum De anima*. Convenit tamen Averroës cum omnibus aliis fere philosophis in hoc, quod dicit intellectum agentem esse separatum et non coniunctum animae. [. . .] In causa autem [sc. coniunctionis], quam inducimus, et modo convenimus cum Averroë in toto et cum Avempeche et in parte cum Alfarabio”; ibid. 3. 2. 12, 194.78–79: “Et in hac sententia convenit nobiscum Averroës in *Commento de anima*”; ibid. 3. 2. 7, 186.57–58: “Et in veritate in ista solutione bene satisfacit et verum dicit Averroës.”
- 54 It is not a mistake to assume that Albert includes Averroës on a case-by-case basis when he mentions *omnes Peripatetici, probabiliores philosophi, or philosophi*. See note 43 above and Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 4–6, ed. Borgnet, 481b, 483b, 486b.
- 55 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, ed. Borgnet, 488a: “Abubacher et Averroës et multi alii intellectum universalem esse naturam posuerunt, nec appropriabilem nobis nisi per imaginationem et sensum, sicut diximus in libro *De anima*.” On Ibn Bājja, i.e., Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṣā’igh Ibn Bājja—Albert cites him as “Abubacher” or “Avempace”—see Crawford, “Prolegomena,” xii, and index 575, 577; López-Farjeat, “Avempace en el *De anima*,” 194 n. 44; Taylor and Druart, “Introduction,” lxxxix n. 163; López-Farjeat, “Albert the Great,” 99 n. 12; and see note 43 above.
- 56 See note 44 above.
- 57 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, ed. Borgnet, 487b: “omne quod suscipit aliquid, suscipit illud secundum suae propriae naturae potestatem; intellectus autem recipit in se universale, neque est universale secundum quod hujusmodi nisi in intellectu; oportet igitur quod natura intellectus sit universalis, quia si esset individua, individuaretur omne id quod est in ipso. Omnis enim forma individuatur per individuitatem sui subiecti in quo est.”
- 58 Ibid. 1. 1. 7, 488a: “natura intellectualis est substantia separata a materia; omnis autem individuitas est per materiam, et ideo intellectum dixerunt esse universalem.”
- 59 Ibid.: “si esset individuus, non esset individuus nisi ad materiam propriam, et tunc sicut visus, qui coniunctus est cuidam materiae propriae, non recipit nisi proportionata illi materiae et non alia, ita intellectus non reciperet nisi quaedam materiae suae proportionata et non reciperet omnia. Hoc autem falsum est; igitur ipse intellectus non est individuus.”
- 60 On this question, Thomas Aquinas apparently distinguishes himself from his teacher, insofar as he does not see the three attributes (determination, particularity, and individuation) as interwoven in this way, nor does he understand

- individuation as particularity. See note 13 above; Taylor, "Aquinas and 'the Arabs'"; Speer, "*Yliathin quod est principium individuandi*," 282–85.
- 61 On Albert's participation in the public debate on this question at the papal court in Anagni in 1256 (or 1257) and regarding its written account, *De unitate intellectus*, see Simon, "Prolegomena."
- 62 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, ed. Borgnet, 487b–488b; see Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 3. 2. 3 ("Et est digressio declarans dubia, quae sequuntur ex dictis de intellectu possibili"), ed. Stroick, 180.45–181.90; *ibid.* 3. 2. 7 ("Et est digressio declarans opinionem Averrois et errorem eiusdem"), 186.1–188.6.
- 63 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, ed. Borgnet, 488a–b: "Si autem intellectus universalis esse dicatur et in omnibus animabus essentialiter idem, sequuntur multa absurda, de quibus in libro *De anima* fecimus mentionem. Et ideo nobis videtur, quod intellectualis natura sit in genere suo sicut sol in genere corporum. Scimus enim solem esse unum numero individuum, et lucem quae in eo est, esse dupliciter consideratam. Si enim consideretur prout in eo est, est forma solis una numero. Si autem accipiatur prout ab eo est emanans, sic est universaliter illuminativa diaphanorum, tam perviorum, quae facit esse lucida secundum actum, quam non perviorum, quae facit colorata, sicut in primo libro *De sensu et sensato* determinavimus, et hoc modo considerata multa agit et facit." See Albertus Magnus, *De sensu et sensato* 2. 1, ed. Donati, 56.11–58.69.
- 64 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, ed. Borgnet, 488b: "Cum autem dicat Philosophus intellectum esse sicut lucem, videtur intellectus prout est aliquid naturae animae, esse individuus, et tamen prout emittit actiones intelligendi, esse in virtute universalis. Et hoc modo universalis sunt in ipso, quia sic est abstractivus et denudativus formarum sicut lux corporalis colorum; licet ergo individuus ponatur secundum quod est forma hominis, tamen secundum suam potestatem, in quantum est potentia lucis spiritualis, universalis est."
- 65 *Ibid.* 1. 1. 7, 488b: "intentio rei non specificatur neque individuatur per hoc quod est in luce incorporea intellectuali, sed manet universalis. Et in hoc est cognitio secundum congruentiam intellectus et facultatem." Regarding Albert's understanding of *intentio rei*, see Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 1. 3. 4, ed. Stroick, 102.58–52.
- 66 Albertus Magnus, *De anima* 3. 3. 12, ed. Stroick, 224.90–225.5: "Est enim, sicut supra diximus, triplex status nostri intellectus, scilicet in potentia et in profecione potentiae ad actum et in adeptione. In potentia autem existens nullo modo attingit agentem sicut formam, sed dum proficit, tunc movetur ad coniunctionem cum adepto, et tunc, quantum habet de intellectis, tantum est coniunctus, et quantum caret eis, tantum est non coniunctus. Habitis autem omnibus intelligibilibus in toto est coniunctus et tunc vocatur adeptus. Et sic sunt differentiae intellectus nostri quattuor: Quorum primus est possibilis vocatus intellectus, secundus autem universaliter agens et tertius speculativus et quartus adeptus." See *ibid.* 3. 3. 11, 222.15–37; *ibid.* 3. 3. 6, 215.35–64.
- 67 See note 41 above.
- 68 Albertus Magnus, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, ed. Borgnet, 488b–489a: "Nos enim in libro *De anima* diximus quod tripliciter homini unitur intellectus: uno videlicet modo ut natura dans esse, et sic est individuus; alio modo ut potentia per quam est operatio intelligendi, et sic est virtus universalis; et tertio modo ut forma acquisita ex multis intellectibus, sicut explanavimus, ubi tractatum est de intellectu agente, qui non unitur contemplativis ut agens



- tantum, sed ut beatitudo eorum est, quando perveniunt ad hoc quod inest eis ut forma. Et secundo et tertio modo secundum prudentiam et sapientiam dictus intellectus non inest aequaliter omnibus hominibus, sed alicui plus, et alii minus, et alicui fortasse nihil inest de intellectu.”
- 69 See Albertus Magnus, *De homine*, ed. Anzulewicz and Söder, 412.69–76: “Sequentes enim Aristotelem et Averroem dicimus caelum non habere animam praeter intelligentiam, ut supra in quaestione de caelo determinatum est. Et similiter dicimus intellectum agentem humanum esse coniunctum animae humanae, et esse simplicem et non habere intelligibilia, sed agere ipsa in intellectu possibili ex phantasmatibus, sicut expresse dicit Averroes in commento libri de anima.”
- 70 As an example of certain divergences in Albert’s portrayal of Averroes’ theory of intellect, we can find his view, expressed in *De homine*, that Averroes thought that the human *intellectus agens* is part of the soul of the human being (*De homine*, 412.72–76). Moreover, there is the opinion attributed to the Commentator, elsewhere in this same work, that the *intellectus speculativus* is one and the same species for all human beings (*De homine*, 436.52–54). In the commentary on the *De anima*, Albert is of the opinion that Averroes taught the uniqueness and indivisibility of the *intellectus possibilis* common to all human beings (*De anima* 3. 2. 7, 187.18–45). In *De intellectu et intelligibili*, Albert affirms that Averroes, along with “Abubacher” and other Peripatetics, supposed that the intellect is general (*universalis*) and that human beings can only possess it by means of imagination and sensory perception (*De intellectu et intelligibili* 1. 1. 7, 488a). On Albert’s false attribution of the *Epitome* of Aristotle’s *Parva naturalia* of Averroes to Alfarabi in his early writings, see de Vaux, “La première entrée d’Averroës,” 237–41; Gätje, “Der Liber de sensu et sensato.”

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# 17 Action by Being Alone in the *Plotiniana Arabica*

*Michael Chase*

The question of the origins of the ensemble of works known as the *Plotiniana Arabica* (hereafter: PA) is still a matter of controversy, despite decades of excellent work on the subject. The works known under this title are, of course, paraphrastic translations, containing a large number of interpolations, of extracts from the last three of Plotinus' *Enneads*, but that is where agreement among modern interpreters ceases. In their interpolations, the PA exhibit some notable divergences from the doctrines of Plotinus. Some scholars hold that these divergences are due to the works' editor al-Kindī; others that they are to be attributed to the translator Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī. Among the latter, some, like Peter Adamson,<sup>1</sup> insist on the importance of situating the composition of the PA within the context of early ninth-century debates between the Mu'tazilites and their adversaries; others, like Alexander Treiger,<sup>2</sup> feel it is equally important to take into account the background of al-Ḥimṣī, a Syrian Christian likely to have been influenced by Origenistic tendencies. Although the PA were probably not transmitted through a Syriac intermediary, the entire Syriac philosophical tradition,<sup>3</sup> including such leading figures as Sergius of Resh'aynā,<sup>4</sup> is relevant for an understanding of the background of these works, as is, for that matter, the entire history of the translation movement of Greek and Syriac philosophical works into Arabic in the first two centuries of Islam.<sup>5</sup>

All these factors must be taken into account. However, in my opinion, the Greek Neoplatonist background to the particular constellation of non-Plotinian ideas found in the *Theology of Aristotle* (henceforth: ThA) should not be neglected either. More specifically, I believe, following many earlier scholars,<sup>6</sup> that we should take seriously the title of the ThA itself, which announces that the work is a "Commentary by Porphyry the Syrian." In what follows, I will adduce some considerations in favor of this hypothesis.

## **The Prologue of the *Theology of Aristotle***

As is well known, the circle of translators around al-Kindī manifested a keen interest in Neoplatonic texts,<sup>7</sup> unlike the slightly later circle of Nestorian translators around Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 873 CE) and his son

Ishāq ibn Ḥunain (d. ca. 910 CE), who concentrated on Galen and Aristotle. It was Kindī's circle that undertook the translation of excerpts from Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, leading to the composition of the Arabic *Book of the Pure Good*. But what interests us here is the Arabic version of a series of extracts from Plotinus, entitled *Theology of Aristotle*, which its prologue describes as follows:

The first mīmar of the book of the philosopher Aristotle, that is called in Greek "Theology." It is the discourse on Divine Sovereignty, commentary [*tafsīr*] by Porphyry of Tyre, translated into Arabic by 'Abd al-Masīḥ ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī, corrected for Aḥmad ibn al-Mu'taṣim bi-llah by Abū Yūsuf ibn Ishāq al-Kindī, may God have mercy upon him.<sup>8</sup>

This prologue provides us with several precious pieces of information: that the translator of the *Theology* was the Syrian Christian ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī,<sup>9</sup> that al-Kindī "corrected" or "edited" the work, and that he did so for Aḥmad ibn al-Mu'taṣim bi-llah, son of the caliph al-Mu'taṣim. This allows us to date the work between 833 and 842 CE. Yet the prologue raises as many questions as it answers. The title of the *Theology of Aristotle* attributes the work to Aristotle: Was this an innocent mistake or a deliberate forgery?<sup>10</sup> While the PA consist of paraphrases of extracts from Plotinus' *Enneads* 4–6, they do not respect the order of Plotinus' text, and their present structure seems to be chaotic. One of the most influential suggestions for explaining this state of affairs has it that an original complete Arabic translation of the *Enneads* suffered some material accident in which the manuscript fell apart and was clumsily put back together, pretty well any old way, by a subsequent editor;<sup>11</sup> others, with whom I am inclined to agree, reject this "Big Bang" hypothesis and claim to be able to discern some order in the PA, although it is hard to perceive at first glance.<sup>12</sup> Above all, there is the question of authorship. Although the PA are based on the *Enneads* of Plotinus, they actually consist in some passages of more or less literal translation of Plotinus embedded within an explanatory paraphrase, sometimes including passages of commentary that contain doctrines that are not to be found in Plotinus, while some Plotinian passages are omitted from the Arabic paraphrase. These differences from the Greek original—divergence in the order of chapters, the inclusion of material in the Arabic that is lacking in the Greek, the omission of some Greek passages from the Arabic, and the addition of commentaries that sometimes contain views at variance with those contained in the Greek original—are remarkably similar to those found, for instance, in the Arabic "translation" of Aristotle's *Meteorology* by Yaḥyā (or Yūḥannā) ibn al-Biṭrīq, a prolific translator active at the Bayt al-Ḥikma and in the circle of al-Kindī in the first third of the ninth century.<sup>13</sup> After remarking on these differences from the original Greek text of Aristotle's *Meteorology*,

Paul Lettinck concludes that “it was not Aristotle’s original text that was rendered into Arabic but a later Hellenistic paraphrase.”<sup>14</sup> The Arabic version of the *De anima*, probably also due to ibn al-Bīṭrīq, is also more of a Neoplatonic paraphrase than a translation. According to its editor Rüdiger Arnzen, it goes back to a late sixth-century Greek paraphrase based largely on John Philoponus’ commentary on the *De anima*.<sup>15</sup>

One may wonder whether the divergences between the PA and the original Greek text of Plotinus do not warrant a similar conclusion: it was not, or not only, the original text of Plotinus that was translated into Arabic, but an intermediary Greek version (except, of course, that, in this case, the text rendered into Arabic will have been not a Hellenistic, but a Neoplatonic paraphrase posterior to Plotinus’ death in 270 CE).<sup>16</sup>

In the PA, in any case, these interpretive passages transform Plotinus into a creationist monotheist, much more acceptable to an Islamic audience than the pagan Neoplatonist would have been. Who is responsible for these modifications? To illustrate the complexity of the question, I’d like to compare some Plotinian doctrines with the way the Adaptor interprets them in the PA.

## Some Doctrinal Elements of the *Plotiniana Arabica*

### *Designations of the First Principle*

The PA contain several doctrinal elements that are absent from, or at least not as prominent in, the extant Greek works of Plotinus himself. One is the nature of God or the First Principle: he is referred to, among other designations, as *al-anniyya*, *al-huwiyya*, or *al-ann*, terms which are used elsewhere to render the Greek participle *to on* or the infinitive *to einai*, “being.”<sup>17</sup> As Richard C. Taylor pointed out in an important article of 1998, this differs from Plotinus, for whom the One or the First Principle is *beyond* being, while being corresponds to the *second* hypostasis of the *Nous*, or intellect.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Plotinus’ student Porphyry speaks, at least in his *Commentary on the Parmenides*, of the First Principle as being (*to einai*). This is one element that suggests a certain similarity between the metaphysics of Porphyry and that of the PA.

### *Creation by Mere Being*

Another point of similarity concerns the mode of activity of this First Principle. In the PA, this Principle produces the world “by mere being” or “by being alone” (Ar.: *bi-anniyati faqat*). According to this doctrine, God, or the First Principle, creates by his or its very being: not by any particular act of will or intention, not, in fact, by doing anything at all, but merely by being what he/it is. Far from choosing between alternatives and then making a choice before creating the world,<sup>19</sup> God already possesses within



himself what he creates. As the *Theology of Aristotle* states, in a passage that is independent from Plotinus:

It is impossible for us to say that the Creator first reflected over how to originate things and then after that originated them [ . . . ] he does not need reflection in creating things because he is the things, by virtue of being their cause.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, a passage from the *Sayings of the Greek Sage* states that:

The First Agent must be at rest and unmoved, since it is necessary [ . . . ] that His action be without deliberation, motion and volition inclining towards the effect [*min-ğayri rawiyyati wa-lā ħaraka wa-lā irāda mā'ila ilā-l-maf'ūl*].<sup>21</sup>

This doctrine seems to have been originally designed to avoid a number of conundrums, paradoxes, or objections that had been or might be raised against the doctrine that God created the world at a specific moment in time. Such questions included, but were not limited to:

- i What was God doing before he created? Was he idle? But if his essence is to be good, and being good implies granting being or existence to other things, as Plato taught in the *Timaeus*, then how could God exist without creating? Was he jealous, miserly, impotent, or all three?
- ii Why did God create at a specific time, and not earlier or later? Did he change his mind, altering from an eternal state of not willing to create to a sudden state of willing to create?

The doctrine of creation by being alone (*bi-anniyati faqat*) fulfills several functions. It obviates the need for reflection,<sup>22</sup> will,<sup>23</sup> and choice on the Creator's part, with the resulting damage to the thesis of his divine simplicity and immutability.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, reflection, will, and choice can be considered as intervening between God and his creation, interrupting the immediacy of his relation to them. More importantly, it seems to me, they all imply change and motion in God.

### ***The Doctrine of Instantaneous Creation***

In the PA, God or the First Principle creates all things instantaneously, by his mere being:<sup>25</sup>

every science and every wisdom and every thing [ . . . ] were all originated at once [*daf'atan wāḥidatan*], without reflection or thought [*lā bi-rawiyyati wa-lā fikrin*], because their originator was one and simple, originating the simple things all at once [*daf'atan wāḥidatan*], by his being alone [*bi-annihi faqat*].<sup>26</sup>

This text introduces a link between several doctrines: creation by being alone, creation without reflection or thought, and the doctrine of instantaneous creation. This doctrine holds that God creates all things all at once (Ar.: *daf'atan wāḥidatan* = Gk.: *athroōs*) or instantaneously. As we read in another fragment of the *Sayings of the Greek Sage*:

We say that the First Being performs all his action all at once [*al-anniyya al-ūlā fā'alat fi'lahā kullahu daf'atan wāḥidatan*].<sup>27</sup>

According to the *Theology of Aristotle*, this instantaneous mode of action of the First Being contrasts with the way Intellect, the second hypostasis, creates:

The intellect [. . .] is the maker of things, but it makes them one after another in succession and order. As for the First Agent, he makes all the things he makes without an intermediary [*bi-ghayri tawassuṭin*], simultaneously [*ma'ān*], and all at once [*fī daf'ati wāḥidatin*].<sup>28</sup>

The connection between these doctrines is further explained by another text from the *Sayings of the Greek Sage*.<sup>29</sup> For creation to take place, we read here, the First Agent must transmit the intelligible forms to the intellect, so that the latter can, with the help of soul, insert the forms into matter, thereby bestowing form, shape, life, and perpetuity upon the universe. But this process must happen all at once or instantaneously (*daf'atan wāḥidatan*). Otherwise, if we assume that the Intellect receives the forms from the First Agent one by one (*wāḥidatan ba'da wāḥidata*), this would mean that the First Agent would perform only a partial, fragmentary act (*fī lan muta-jazzi'an*).<sup>30</sup> If the First Agent carried out his acts one by one, unmanifested acts would still remain within him. But if this were so, he would not make things by being alone (*lam taf'al al-ashyā'a bi-annihā faqaṭ*) but by some kind of deliberation and motion (*bi-rawiyyati wa-ḥarakati mā*), which is absurd and repugnant.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the Greek Sage—who is probably Plotinus—has previously emphasized that the First Cause “is at rest and unmoved by any kind of motion”;<sup>32</sup> he “has no motion, since he is prior to thinking and prior to knowledge.”<sup>33</sup>

We see here a cluster of several interconnected ideas in the PA: instantaneous creation, creation by being alone, creation without motion, and creation without reflection. Creation must be instantaneous. If it were not, God's action would be piecemeal, and there would always be some parts of it that remains unrealized within him. This, however, would lead to the unpalatable conclusion that God does not create by being alone, which, in turn, would lead us to infer that God creates by reflection or deliberation. Yet if he does create by reflection or deliberation, this would imply motion in him, which is to say, change. But to suppose that God moves or changes is absurd, hence, he does not reflect or deliberate but creates

by his being alone. Hence, he creates everything all at once. We see, then, that the prime motivation behind the doctrine of creation by being alone seems to have been the desire to avoid motion or change on the part of the creative First Principle.

### Some Greek Sources of These Concepts

All these notions are, I would argue, ultimately of Greek origin; more specifically, they derive from representatives of Greek Neoplatonic thought of Late Antiquity. The link between motionlessness of the cause and action by being alone was already a prominent feature in Greek philosophy, especially among such later Neoplatonists as Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius.

In the fourth argument of his treatise *On the Eternity of the World*,<sup>34</sup> extant only in the fragments preserved by John Philoponus, Proclus argues that God cannot change. If he did, since change is motion, and motion, according to Aristotle's definition,<sup>35</sup> is an incomplete actuality, then God would change from an imperfect to a perfect state, but such a suggestion is impious. In addition, all change takes place in time, but God is the creator of time. Therefore, no change can take place in God prior to his creation of time.

The doctrine of creation by being alone (Gk.: *autōi tōi einai*) was important in such later Neoplatonists as Hierocles and Proclus.<sup>36</sup> Yet it was first formulated, as far as I know, by Plotinus' student Porphyry of Tyre (ca. 234–ca. 310 CE).<sup>37</sup> According to Proclus, Porphyry wrote:

Fourth and next is the section of [Porphyry's] arguments in which he shows that the divine Intellect practices a mode of creation [*dēmiourgia*] by mere being [*autōi tōi einai*], and he establishes [this] by a number of arguments. Even artisans, he says, need tools for their activity because they do not have mastery over all their material [*hulē*]. They show this themselves by using these tools to get their material ready for use [*euergos*] by drilling, planing, or turning it, all of which operations do not add form, but merely eliminate the unreadiness of what is to receive the form. The actual rational formula [*logos*], on the other hand, supervenes upon [*paraginesthai*] the substrate timelessly [*akhronōs*] from the art, once all obstacles have been removed. And if there were no obstacle in the case of [artisans] either, they would add the form to the matter instantaneously [*athroōs*] and have absolutely no need of tools.<sup>38</sup>

In Porphyry's argument, we can see the link between creation by being alone and instantaneous creation already established, although in this case it is the Intellect, not the One, that acts in this manner. Proclus, who transmits this fragment, reports Porphyry's rationale for introducing the doctrine of creation by being alone. Craftspeople, such as carpenters or sculptors, need tools because they lack complete mastery over their

material: If they had such mastery, they would need no tools and would insert the form they have in their mind directly into the wood or stone they are working on. This would happen instantaneously, since, as things are now in the real world, the form in the artisan's mind—his notion of the chair he wants to create, for instance—also supervenes instantaneously on matter as soon as all obstacles have been removed. But the divine Intellect has complete mastery over matter, hence, this Intellect creates, that is, it inserts forms within matter, instantaneously.

We find an interesting parallel to this notion in the *Theology of Aristotle*:

when craftsmen wish to fashion a thing [. . .] when they work they work with their hands and other instruments, whereas when the Creator wishes to make something [. . .] he does not need any instrument in the origination of things [*fī ibdā'-l-ashyā'*] because he is the cause of instruments, it being he that originated them.<sup>39</sup>

### Augustine on Creation in Time

Let us return to the main questions raised by objectors against the idea of creation in time: What was God doing before he created, and why did he create at a specific time, not earlier or later?

Writing in the first quarter of the fifth century CE, hence about fifteen years before Proclus wrote his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, St. Augustine knows of people—probably the Platonists around Porphyry—who raised precisely these questions and came up with the solution of eternal creation:

But why did the eternal God decide to make heaven and earth at that particular time and not before? [. . .] There are some who admit that the world is created by God, but refuse to allow it a beginning in time, only allowing it a beginning in the sense of its being created [*non tamen eum temporis volunt habere, sed suae creationis initium*], so that creation becomes an eternal process [*semper sit factus*]. There is force in that contention, in that such people conceive themselves to be defending God against the notion of a kind of random, fortuitous act [*velut a fortuita temeritate defendere*]; to prevent the supposition that the idea of creating the world suddenly came into his mind, as an idea which had never before occurred to him, that a new act of will happened to him [*et accidisse illi voluntatem novam*], whereas in fact he is utterly unsusceptible of change [*cum in nullo sit omnino mutabilis*].<sup>40</sup>

The people Augustine is referring to are almost certainly, I think, the followers of Porphyry. As in the texts we have studied previously, the doctrine of eternal creation is here introduced in order to avoid the unseemly suggestion that God changes.<sup>41</sup>

To say that the world did not have a beginning of its time, but did have a beginning of its creation is, I think, the same as what Augustine earlier attributes to the *Platonici*:

However, Plato [*Timaeus* 28b7ff.; 41b2] openly says both of the world and of what he writes as the gods in the world made by God, that they began to exist and have a beginning [*habere initium*], but by the most powerful will of the creator he testifies they will remain for eternity [41b2]. Yet they [i.e., the *Platonici*] found a way to understand this, i.e., that this is not a beginning of time, but of subsistence [*non esse hoc videlicet temporis, sed substitutionis initium*]. “Just as,” they say, “if a foot was in dust from eternity, a footprint would always be under it, yet no one would doubt that the footprint was made by someone treading, so,” they say, “both the world and the gods created within it always existed, since He who made them always exists, and yet they were made.”<sup>42</sup>

In this text, the Latin term *substitutio* takes the place of *creatio* in the previous passage; the term is likely to be a literal translation of the Greek *hypostasis*, “existence” or “subsistence.” In both passages, what the *Platonici* mean is that, despite the surface meaning of the text of Plato’s *Timaeus*, the world did *not* have a temporal beginning (Gk.: *arkhē khronikē*), but merely a beginning or principle of its existence (*arkhē hupostaseōs*). This, in turn, means that the world is created causally (Gk.: *kat’aitian*), not in time. This is precisely the doctrine we find attributed to Porphyry in a fragment of his *Commentary on the Timaeus*:

And Porphyry, having stated that it is primarily insofar as it is compound that the world is said to be generated [*genēton*], nevertheless, a bit further on, says that [Plato says] that it is generated causally [*kat’aitian*].<sup>43</sup>

The same Porphyrian doctrine features in a quotation preserved only in Arabic:

And he [Porphyry] claimed that the statement attributed to Plato concerning the world’s coming into being is not correct. He said in his letter to Anebo: what separates Plato from you, viz. that *he gives the world a temporal beginning*, is a mendacious assertion. This is because *Plato did not think that the world has a temporal origination, but an origination with regard to a cause* [*anna Aflāṭūn laysa (yarā) anna li-l-‘alam ibtidā’ zamāniyyan lakinna ibtidā’ ‘alā jihati al-‘illa*]; and he claimed that the cause of its existence is its origination. He [Porphyry] was of the opinion that whoever had the illusion that he [Plato] believed that the world was created and that it had come into being *ex nihilo*, and that

it had emerged from disorder into order—such a person has erred and been deluded. That is because it is not always true that all non-existence precedes existence in that which has the cause of its existence in something else; nor is all lack of order prior to order. But *by saying that the creator revealed the world from non-existence into existence, Plato merely meant that it does not exist by itself, but the cause of its existence is from the creator.*<sup>44</sup>

In turn, the doctrine of this text corresponds closely to what we find in a passage from the *Theology of Aristotle*, at the end of a lengthy excursus that does not correspond to anything in Plotinus:

How well and how appropriately does this philosopher [sc. Plato] describe the Creator when he says: “He created mind, soul, nature, and all things else,” but *whoever hears the philosopher’s words must not pay attention to the letter of his words and imagine that he said that the Creator created the creation in time.* If anyone imagines that from his mode of expression, he merely expressed the will to follow the custom of the ancients. The ancients were compelled to mention time in connection with the beginning of creation [*fī bad’i al-ḥalq*] because they wanted to describe the generation of things, and they were compelled to introduce time into their description of becoming and into their description of the creation—which *was not in time at all*—in order to distinguish between the exalted first causes and the lower secondary causes [. . .]. But this is not so: not every agent performs his action in time, nor is every cause prior to its effect in time.<sup>45</sup>

The similarities between these texts from Porphyry and from the *Theology of Aristotle* seem to me to be quite striking. In all three cases, it is argued that Plato’s description of the creation of the world by the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* is to be understood not as a temporal act, but as a causal dependency (Ar.: *ibtidā’ alā jihati al-’illa* = Gk.: *kat’aitian*).

For Porphyry, if God creates by his very being, none of the thorny questions we have mentioned above arise. This is, I believe, the same view we have seen in the PA: for the First Principle, creation is coextensive with its existence, and there never was a moment when he or it did not create. Contrary to what one might assume from a superficial reading of Plato’s *Timaeus*, God’s creative act did not take place in time.<sup>46</sup> Nor did God first reflect, calculate, and weigh alternatives before creating. Instead, his creation flows from him like heat from fire or light from the sun,<sup>47</sup> or even as a solid object casts its shadow.<sup>48</sup>

These doctrinal parallels, among many others that I cannot go into here,<sup>49</sup> have led me to take seriously the statement of the Prologue to the *Theology of Aristotle*, which, as we saw, describes the work as a “commentary” (Ar.: *tafsīr*) by Porphyry.

To make a long story short, I think what may have happened was the following. We know from Porphyry's own testimony that he wrote a commentary or series of commentaries (Gk.: *hupomnēmata*) on the *Enneads* of Plotinus.<sup>50</sup> These commentaries are likely to have taken the form of glosses in the margin of a manuscript surrounding the text of Plotinus, as was frequent in Late Antiquity.<sup>51</sup> The translator Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī then translated into Arabic both the text of Plotinus and the commentaries of Porphyry—he may not always have been able to distinguish between what belonged to Plotinus and what was due to Porphyry. But the resulting text of the PA is no word-for-word translation of Porphyry's commentaries. The translator may have skipped passages he did not understand or simply did not find interesting, for whatever reason. An editor, probably al-Kindī, later went over the translation, introducing transitional phrases and modifying some doctrinal elements to accentuate the creationist and monotheistic aspects of the text, so that it would be easier to reconcile with Islam.<sup>52</sup>

So, there you have it. A text written in Greek by Plotinus, an Egyptian-born philosopher of the late third century, and commented upon by his student Porphyry came to be partially translated into Arabic half a millennium later, where it played a fundamental role in shaping several different trends in Islamic philosophical and theological thought. It has been argued that Porphyry also played an important role in transmitting the thought of Plotinus in the West: when Latin authors of the fifth century cite Plotinus, they may actually owe their knowledge not to a direct reading of Plotinus, who seems never to have been translated into Latin, but to the commentaries of Porphyry, some of whose works were indeed translated by Marius Victorinus, the teacher of Augustine. Thus, through its possible role in the elaboration of the PA, what we might call the “underground Porphyry” may have had an importance in the Islamic East comparable to his considerable influence on the Latin-speaking West.

## Notes

- 1 Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus*.
- 2 Treiger, “Palestinian Origenism.”
- 3 See Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote*, and Watt, “The Syriac Aristotelian Tradition,” with references to previous publications.
- 4 See, in addition to the works cited in the previous note, Fiori, “Un intellectuel alexandrin.”
- 5 The literature on this subject is too vast to be listed here. Fundamental studies are Gutas, *Greek Thought*; Endress, *Proclus Arabus*; Endress, “Die wissenschaftliche Literatur”; Endress, “Circle of al-Kindī.” For a useful survey, see D'Ancona, “Greek into Arabic.”
- 6 See Thillet, “Indices porphyriens”; Pinès, “Les textes arabes.”
- 7 Endress, “Circle of al-Kindī.”



- 8 Plotinus, *Aflūṭīn 'inda al-'Arab*, ed. Badawī (hereafter “ThA”), 1.6–9. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the Greek, Latin, and Arabic are my own.
- 9 Who may have been a Melkite, trained in Palestine, or a Maronite, trained in Syria. See Treiger, “Palestinian Origenism.” At any rate, he was well versed in philosophy and fluent in Greek, Arabic, and perhaps Syriac.
- 10 Zimmermann, “Origins,” and Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus*, think the misattribution was the result of an honest mistake; like D’Ancona (see Plotinus, *La dicesa*, ed. D’Ancona, 85–87), I am pretty sure we have to do with a deliberate forgery, committed by either Ḥimṣī, Kindī, or both, deliberately structured and rephrased this collection of paraphrastic translations from Plotinus in order to give it the appearance of a work by Aristotle.
- 11 Zimmermann, “Origins.”
- 12 Such as D’Ancona (see Plotinus, *La dicesa*, ed. D’Ancona, 85–87).
- 13 Other works allegedly translated by Ibn al-Bīṭrīq, who was said to have accompanied Salm, head of the *bayt al-ḥikma*, on his expedition to Byzantium in search of Greek manuscripts (Endress, “Die wissenschaftliche Literatur,” 3:24), include Plato’s *Timaeus*, Aristotle’s *De caelo*, *Generation and Parts of Animals*, and *Prior Analytics* (in a translation denounced as unsatisfactory by subsequent Arabic scholars, see Endress, “Die Bagdader Aristoteliker,” 293), and perhaps the *Secretum secretorum*; see Endress, *Proclus Arabus*, 191–92; Endress, Review of *The Arabic Version of Aristotle’s Meteorology*; Endress, “Building the Library,” 345. It is not always easy to distinguish which translations are due to Yaḥyā and which were carried out by his father al-Bīṭrīq, who translated the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy and some works on medicine, and died ca. 815; see Endress, “Die wissenschaftliche Literatur,” 2:421.
- 14 Lettinck, “Aristotle’s ‘Physical’ Works,” 107.
- 15 Arnzen, *Aristoteles’ De Anima*.
- 16 Another “translation” exhibiting similar features is the *Book of the Senses and the Sensibles* (*Kitāb al-ḥiss wa-l-maḥsūs*). The *Kitāb* represents an extreme case of adaptation, with only about 30 percent of the work occupied by text corresponding to the Aristotelian original, and the rest representing exegetical developments or interpolations. The text’s future editor Rotraud Hansberger believes an initial, rather poor translation of Aristotle’s *De sensu* was subsequently adapted and interspersed with Neoplatonic-style interpolations written directly in Arabic; Hansberger, “Arabic Adaption.” We will have to wait for Hansberger’s upcoming critical edition to be able to evaluate the author’s conclusions, and see whether the existence of a late Greek intermediary paraphrase really is so improbable.
- 17 For *annīya* as equivalent to the Greek *to on*, see, for instance, ThA 8, ed. Badawī, 111.12–17. *Huwiya* sometimes renders the Greek *tautotēs*; cf. *ibid.*, 112.5, 9, 11.
- 18 Taylor, “Aquinas,” 217–39.
- 19 On Plotinus’ rejection of deliberation on the part of the Platonic demiurge, see D’Ancona, “The *Timaeus*’ Model.”
- 20 ThA 10. 185–86, ed. Badawī, 162.3–10 (comment on *Enn.* 5. 8. 7).
- 21 *The Philosophy Reader*, ed. Wakelnig (hereafter “GS”), 31, 94.7–9. In contrast, Intellect, the second principle and first creation of the First, does act by motion (*bi-ḥarakati*, ThA 8, ed. Badawī, 112.7–8), although it is a motion that does not involve change from state to state.
- 22 ThA 5. 8.11–14, ed. Badawī, 66–67.
- 23 *Epistle of the Divine Science* 105–9, in ThA, ed. Badawī, 174; English in Plotinus, *Enneades*, trans. Lewis, 321: “We say that between mind and its act there

- is volition [ . . . ] the action of the First Agent is not preceded by volition, because he acts solely by the fact of his being.”
- 24 This aspect is stressed by Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus*, 132, who writes that if God willed, he'd be many. It should be noted, however, that the text does *not* state this in so many words.
- 25 As D'Ancona, “The *Timaeus*' Model,” 220–22, points out.
- 26 ThA 10. 159–60, ed. Badawī, 160.9–12; trans. Lewis modified.
- 27 GS 38, 21a, ed. Wakelnig, 98.
- 28 ThA 8, ed. Badawī, 98.12–13.
- 29 GS 37, ed. Wakelnig, 98.5–22 = ed. Badawī, 187.4–10.
- 30 For the terminology, see ThA, ed. Badawī, 38–39.
- 31 On the fact that the Creator creates without deliberation, see ThA, ed. Badawī, 66.12–13. Similarly, the World Soul governs the universal body without thought or deliberation; ThA, ed. Badawī, 91.7–8.
- 32 GS 30, ed. Wakelnig, 92.15–16. Cf. GS 32, ed. Wakelnig, 94.7: “The First Agent must be at rest and unmoved.”
- 33 GS 36, ed. Wakelnig, 98.11–12.
- 34 Proclus, *On the Eternity of the World*, quoted by Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, ed. Rabe, 55.22. On this argument and its interpretation, see Chase, “Discussions,” 61–62.
- 35 Aristotle, *Phys.* 3. 2, 201b31–32; *De anima* 2. 2, 417a14–17.
- 36 Hierocles, *On Providence*, Book 2, ap. Photius, *Library*, cod. 251, 436b 30ff. See also, for instance, Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 76.
- 37 And not by Syrianus, as claimed by D'Ancona, “La notion,” n. 49, and “L'influence,” 94.
- 38 Porphyry, *Commentary on the Timaeus*, fr. 51, ed. Sodano, 38.5ff. = Procl., *In Tim.*, ed. Diehl, 1:395.10ff.
- 39 ThA 10. 190, ed. Badawī, 163.
- 40 Augustine, *De civitate dei* 11. 4, ed. Dombart and Kalb, 465.9–10.
- 41 On the notion of immutability in Augustine, see, for instance, O'Donnell, *Augustine*, 394–95. Yet it seems rash to deny that the concept is Platonic simply because “A. claims stoutly that the doctrine was part of him before he ever read the Platonists.”
- 42 Augustine, *De civitate dei* 10. 31, ed. Dombart and Kalb, 453.26–27.
- 43 Porphyry, fr. 172, from Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi* 6. 177, ed. Rabe, 172.4–7 = ed. Scholten, 3:682. For a French translation with commentary, see Rashed, “Nouveaux fragments,” 276.
- 44 Porphyry, fr. 459 Smith, from al-Shahrastānī, *Livre des religions et des sectes*, ed. Jolivet-Monnot, 2:357–58 (my emphasis).
- 45 ThA, 27.7ff. = ed. D'Ancona, 237; trans. Lewis in Plotinus, *Enneades*, 231 (my emphasis).
- 46 ThA 1, ed. D'Ancona, 237.14: *al-ḥalīfa, allatī lam takun fī zamānin al-battata*.
- 47 Cf. Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi* 4, ed. Rabe, 13.12ff., who speaks of those—including Porphyry?—who say that “The sun, [ . . . ] which is the cause of light, creates the latter by its very being [*autōi tōi einai*], and neither is light prior or posterior to the sun nor the sun to light. The bodies in light, moreover, are the cause of the shadow that is brought about from them and always co-exists with them.”
- 48 Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophrastus*, ed. Colonna, 45.20–22.
- 49 Pinès, “Les textes arabes,” and Thillet, “Indices prophyriens,” enumerate these as follows: a preference for describing the derivation of the various levels of the universe in causal terms; the idea that the First Principle produces being, while the second principle produces Form; and the doctrine of learned

- ignorance. One could add a predilection for allegorical interpretation and a concern to harmonize Plato and Aristotle. For more details, see Chase, "Porphyry."
- 50 Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 26.28–37.
- 51 For evidence, see Chase, "Porphyry," 175.
- 52 Overt references by Plotinus to polytheism, for instance, are eliminated or explained away. When Plotinus states that his line of investigation will enquire into the memories of Zeus himself (*kai epitōlmēsei kai tou Dios autou tas mnēmas polupragmonein*, *Enn.* 4. 4, 6.7–8), the Adaptor writes (ThA 8, ed. Badawī, 104.112–13): "Then we shall proceed to the enquiry into the soul of Jupiter [*al-mushtarī*, i.e., the planet]: does it remember anything?" Some signs of Islamicization, however, will have been introduced by scribes: for instance, the formulas *'azza wa-jalla* ("the mighty and sublime," ThA, 84.18) and *'azza sha'nahu* ("mighty is his nature," ThA, 105.3), printed in Badawī's edition after the mention of the Creator, are lacking in the best manuscript, Aya Sofia 2457.

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## 18 “Incepit quasi a se”

### Averroes on Avicenna’s Philosophy in the *Long Commentary on the De anima*

*Amos Bertolacci*

In a very dense passage of the *Long Commentary on the De anima*, translated into English by Richard C. Taylor in his masterly annotated version of the work, Averroes (Ibn Rushd, d. 1198 CE) gives us a glimpse of how he sees the nature, aim, and impact of Avicenna’s (Ibn Sīnā, d. 1037 CE) philosophy.<sup>1</sup> In this passage, Averroes critically engages with Avicenna, as he often does elsewhere. However, unlike other passages in which he criticizes Avicenna, Averroes here does not take issue with a particular doctrine that he regards as false and untenable. Instead, he makes a more general statement about the distinctive features of Avicenna’s philosophy and its position in the history of philosophy. More specifically, Averroes highlights what he considers to be the fundamental weakness of Avicenna’s thought, namely, its distance from the ideal philosophical standard as established in Aristotle. Complementary motifs of dissent against Avicenna emerge in other commentaries: Averroes criticizes his affinity to Platonism and Islamic revealed theology, on the one hand, and his methodological feebleness—his incapacity to reach a properly demonstrative level of argumentation—on the other.

In the passage at issue here, Averroes’ attack on Avicenna’s general pretension to dispense with Aristotle is articulated in three points: (1) that Avicenna—as chief of the *moderni*—exerted a deleterious influence in Andalusia with effects reverberating on Ibn Bājja (the Latin Avempace, d. 1138 CE) and Averroes himself; (2) that logic is the most faithfully Aristotelian and, therefore, the strongest part of Avicenna’s philosophy, whereas other domains of Avicenna’s system, namely natural philosophy and metaphysics, are originally (and dangerously) Avicennian, with metaphysics displaying the greatest hiatus between Aristotle and Avicenna; and (3) that Avicenna’s philosophical project intends to begin natural philosophy and metaphysics anew, after and distinct from Aristotle, a project which clashes radically with Averroes’ own.

In other words, the passage in question is one of the most extensive, informative, and far-reaching discussions of Avicenna ever made by Averroes. The present chapter focuses on this passage, using the methodology that Taylor has so painstakingly applied for other crucial points of Averroes’ *Long Commentary on the De anima*—and, more generally, for

the Commentator's noetics and psychology—in pioneering essays that have substantially advanced the scholarship. Particularly inspiring for the present contribution is Taylor's analysis of the *loci paralleli* in the various writings of Averroes and his investigation of the textual and doctrinal sources of Averroes' contentions. Specifically, this chapter has three interrelated aims: to clarify the details of the passage from Averroes that are still debated in scholarship, on the basis of similar passages in other Aristotelian commentaries and other works by Averroes; to emphasize the historical importance of this passage as a precious *testimonium* of the entrance of Avicenna's philosophy in Andalusian *falsafa* and document that Averroes' knowledge of Avicenna's philosophy is probably based on a specific *summa* by Avicenna, the *Kitāb al-Shifā'* (*Book of the Cure, or of the Healing*), which he apparently knew firsthand; and finally, to call attention to the possibility that, concerning what he says about Avicenna in the passage under discussion, Averroes might have depended on the Introduction of the *Kitāb al-Shifā'*, authored by Avicenna's biographer and secretary al-Jūzjānī.

### The Fundamental Text and the Problems of Its Interpretation

Averroes' *Long Commentary on the De anima*, to which the passage that concerns us here (Text 1) belongs, dates from shortly before 1186 and is almost completely lost in the Arabic original. Fortunately, it is preserved in its Latin medieval translation, commonly ascribed to Michael Scot. The passage reads:

Text 1: Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De anima* Γ.30 (Averroes Latinus, *Averrois Cordubensis commentarium magnum*, ed. Crawford, 470.41–48):

[a] But what made that man [i.e., Ibn Bājja] err, and us too for a long time [*longo tempore*],<sup>2</sup> is that modern thinkers [*moderni*] set aside the books of Aristotle and consider [only] the books of the commentators, and chiefly in the case of the soul, since they believe that this book [i.e., Aristotle's *De anima*] is impossible to understand.

[b] This [i.e., the *moderni*'s neglect of Aristotle's *De anima* and their exclusive consideration of the commentators in psychology] is due to Avicenna [*et hoc est propter Avicennam*], who followed Aristotle only in logic [*dialectica*], but in the other [parts of philosophy] [*in aliis*] he [did not follow Aristotle, and hence] erred, and chiefly in the case of metaphysics.

[c] This [happened] because [*et hoc quia*] [Avicenna] began [*incepit*] [these other parts of philosophy] as if [he was drawing them] from himself [*quasi a se*].<sup>3</sup>



This criticism complements a comment a little earlier in the same passage, where Averroes accuses Ibn Bājja of misunderstanding Aristotle:

He [i.e., Aristotle] also expressly says that the relation of the intelligibles to images is just as the relation of color to the colored body, not as the relation of color to the sense of sight, as Ibn Bājja thought.<sup>4</sup>

In section [a], Averroes stigmatizes the tendency of modern philosophers to dispense with Aristotle's books, especially in the case of cryptic works like the *De anima*, in favor of the commentators' interpretations. This new trend is portrayed as very influential, since, according to our text, it determined how the "father" of philosophy in Andalusia, Ibn Bājja, approached Aristotle and it exerted a lasting impact upon Averroes himself. The neglect of Aristotle's *De anima* by the *moderni* and their preference for the commentators' views in psychological matters are said in section [b] to be determined by Avicenna. In Averroes' eyes, Avicenna imitates Aristotle only in a single area of philosophy, namely logic (or one of its branches, dialectic), whereas in the rest of philosophy, psychology included, he is original, diverging from the First Master. According to Averroes, Avicenna's independence from Aristotle reaches its climax in metaphysics. As independence from Aristotle amounts, in Averroes' view, to error, metaphysics is by implication the most flawed area of Avicenna's philosophy. The most obvious interpretation of the bulk of section [c] (*inceptit quasi a se*, lit.: "he began almost on his own") is that Avicenna undertook the task of beginning a large part of philosophy anew, almost independently from Aristotle, establishing himself as new *inceptor* of the discipline.

There are several debatable elements of this text. First, the relationship between the three classes of thinkers outlined in sections [a] and [b]—Ibn Bājja and Averroes; the *moderni*; and Avicenna—is not totally clear. Even if, for merely chronological reasons, Ibn Bājja and Averroes cannot but be counted among the *moderni*, there is good reason to keep them distinct from these, who are portrayed as the cause of the two men's error. The relationship between Avicenna and the *moderni* is even more unclear. In section [b], Avicenna is adduced to explain the error of the *moderni* in section [a]—their reliance upon the commentators rather than Aristotle—but this is different from the error that is ascribed to Avicenna himself in section [c], namely his independence from any previous authority in philosophy.

Second, the term *dialectica* in section [b] can be interpreted in either its literal sense of "dialectic," as a counterpart to the Arabic *jadāl*, thus limiting the field of consensus between Avicenna and Aristotle to the fifth part of the *Organon*, or as referring more broadly to logic (*manṭiq*) in general.<sup>5</sup>

Third, the overall sense of section [c] depends on ambiguous language: the reference of "This" (*hoc*) in the sentence "This [happened] because" (*et hoc quia*), the object of "begun" (*inceptit*) if read as a transitive verb, and the precise meaning of "as if [. . .] from himself" (*quasi a se*) remain unclear.

### ***Loci paralleli* in Other Works by Averroes**

Hints toward the resolution of these doubts can be found in other works by Averroes. As to the first doubt, Avicenna is included among the *moderni*, with relevant information given on both Avicenna and the *moderni*, in one of Averroes' *Quaestiones in Logicam* regarding the *Prior Analytics*, preserved in the Arabic original and dated to 1196, *Maqāla fī ma'nā l-maqūl 'alā l-kull wa-ghayr dhālika* (Treatise on the Meaning of What is Predicated Universally and Other Issues).<sup>6</sup> The relevant passage (Text 2), never fully translated before, also sheds further light on the doctrinal areas in which Avicenna distances himself from Aristotle, as well as on the reasons why Avicenna pursued independence from Aristotle. In comparison with Text 1, Text 2 displays a more openly critical attitude toward Avicenna (as well as al-Fārābī), which might, in a work written about ten years after the *Long Commentary on the De anima*, indicate a crescendo in Averroes' polemic against Avicenna.

Text 2: Averroes, *Treatise on the Meaning of What is Predicated Universally and Other Issues* (Averroes, *Maqālāt fī l-manṭiq wa-l-'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*, ed. Al-'Alawī, 175.1–8):

[i] From this, the goal of this man [i.e., Aristotle] has clearly appeared, and the doubts regarding him that have remained until this our time have been solved. This was the habit of this man toward those who doubted against him, namely [to believe that] time was the guarantor of the solution of what had been doubted against him.

[ii] This [persistence of doubts against Aristotle] is due to [*wa-dhālika li-*] people who most weakly consider and least know his [i.e., Aristotle's] worth in philosophy [*qadrihī fī l-ḥikmatī*] among those who have ventured to raise doubts against him and to refute his way of stating what became manifest to him, especially if [something similar] had not become manifest to his predecessors, as we find that Ibn Sīnā is doing, so that all his books [*kutubahū kullahā*] are nothing else than doubts against this man, especially in important questions.

[iii] One of the worst things that a posterior [thinker] [*muta'akh-khir*] can do is to wander far from his [i.e., Aristotle's] teaching and to follow another way different from his, as this happened to Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] in his books on logic [*al-manṭiqiyya*], and to Ibn Sīnā in the physical and theological [i.e., metaphysical] sciences.<sup>7</sup>

The second and third sections of Text 2 relate directly to Avicenna, with a more cursory reference to al-Fārābī in the third section. As regards Avicenna, Text 1 and Text 2 have several points in common: both connect Avicenna with a larger group of thinkers (Text 1 [a]; Text 2 [ii]); both say that Avicenna's attitude to Aristotle had lasting effects until Averroes' time

(Text 1 [a]; Text 2 [i]); and both say that the originality of Avicenna with regard to Aristotle concerns the areas of philosophy that lie outside logic (Text 1 [b]; Text 2 [iii]).

In the context of this general similarity, Text 2, being less elliptical than Text 1 and surviving in Arabic, brings clarity.<sup>8</sup> As to the relationship of Avicenna with the *moderni*, Text 2 [iii] informs us, first of all, of an Arabic term (*muta'akhhkir*, “posterior [thinker],” pl. *muta'akhhkirūna*) that is closely related to the one that lies behind Michael Scot’s recourse to the adjective *modernus* in Text 1 [a] (arguably stemming from the root *ḥ-d-th*). Thus, Text 2 [iii] makes it clear that, for Averroes, Avicenna belongs to the class of the *muta'akhhkirūna/moderni*, along with al-Fārābī, and that his negative impact on the *moderni* in Text 1 [a] should therefore be taken as coming from one particularly influential member of the same group, not from someone who is not a *modernus*.<sup>9</sup>

Most importantly, Text 2 [ii] helps to elucidate the relationship between Avicenna and the *moderni*, problematically adumbrated in Text 1, in which Avicenna is said to have influenced the *moderni* and, nonetheless, the *moderni* are portrayed as relying on the commentators rather than on Aristotle, whereas Avicenna is depicted as independent from all previous authorities. On the one hand, the group, comparable to that of the *moderni* in Text 1 [a], in which Avicenna is inserted in Text 2 [ii] is formed by “those who have ventured to raise doubts against him [i.e., Aristotle] and to refute his way of stating what became manifest to him.” This description fits the portrayal of the *moderni* in Text 1 [a] as scholars ready to dispense with Aristotle’s books due to the difficulty of understanding how these books formulate crucial tenets in pivotal areas of philosophy such as psychology. On the other hand, Text 2 [ii] distinguishes within this larger group a more restricted sub-group, formed by those with little consideration for and insufficient knowledge of Aristotle’s value in philosophy. This feature, presented as typical of certain “people” (*nās*) at the beginning of section [ii], applies especially, if not exclusively, to Avicenna at its end. By implication, Avicenna appears as not only, along with the other members of the larger group, dismissive toward Aristotle’s statements about given doctrines or disciplines but also, as a prime representative of the smaller sub-group, moved by personal lack of esteem for the Greek master and hence systematically critical of him as a philosopher *in globo* (“all his [i.e., Avicenna’s] books are nothing else than doubts against this man [i.e., Aristotle], especially in important questions”). The constant animosity against Aristotle ascribed to Avicenna here well explains what Text 1 [c] contends about Avicenna’s decision to dispense with the Stagirite and to do philosophy on his own in some domains.<sup>10</sup>

As to the second doubt, the exact meaning of *dialectica* in Text 1 [b], Text 2 sheds clarifying light. In fact, Text 2 [iii] offers good reasons to understand it as “logic.” In this section, Avicenna is said to part company with Aristotle only in natural philosophy and metaphysics, to the

exclusion of logic, an area of philosophy in which distance from Aristotle is imputed only to al-Fārābī. Thus, if we take *dialectica* to mean “logic” in Text 1, we obtain a precise correspondence between Texts 1 and 2 as to the areas of distance between Aristotle and Avicenna. These areas would include all of philosophy other than logic, with particular regard to metaphysics, in Text 1; natural philosophy and metaphysics, logic excluded, in Text 2.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, the literal, narrower, interpretation of the term *dialectica* in Text 1 as “dialectic” (*jadal*) is hardly tenable in light of Averroes’ quotation of the epilogue of the section on sophistry (*safsafa*) of Avicenna’s *Shifā’*, in which Avicenna pays tribute to Aristotle as an unmatched model of this branch of logic and, possibly, of logic in general. The quotation appears in Averroes’ *Middle Commentary on the Sophistici Elenchi*.<sup>12</sup> Averroes therefore knows firsthand a text by Avicenna in which Avicenna claims to be following Aristotle in the art of sophistry as well—that is, outside the narrow boundaries of dialectic. Since Averroes does not rebuke Avicenna for a similar contention in the *Middle Commentary on the Sophistici Elenchi* or elsewhere, he probably agrees with the statement. Moreover, the looser interpretation of *dialectica* in Text 1 as meaning logic in general is corroborated by the vocabulary of some Arabic–Latin translations and by specific passages of the Arabic–Latin translations of Averroes made by Michael Scot (in all likelihood the translator of the *Long Commentary on the De anima*), in which *dialectica* corresponds to “logic” (*manṭiq*).<sup>13</sup> Thus, although the narrower meaning of *dialectica* as “dialectic” might fit with other motifs of Averroes’ anti-Avicennian polemic,<sup>14</sup> the broader understanding of it as “logic” is decidedly preferable in the context of Text 1.

Concerning the third doubt, the “This” (*hoc*) occurring at the very beginning of Text 1 [c] might refer either to Avicenna’s independence from Aristotle’s natural philosophy and metaphysics in general or to his independence from Aristotle’s metaphysics in particular, both expressed in the previous section 1 [b].<sup>15</sup> As to what exactly Avicenna began (*inceptit*)—whether it was studying natural philosophy and metaphysics, or writing works of natural philosophy and metaphysics, or proposing a new trend in natural philosophy and metaphysics—we can only speculate. The exact meaning of the closing *quasi a se* (“as if [. . .] from himself”) is equally elusive.

Since the same pronoun “This” (*hoc*) in the sentence “This is due to Avicenna” (*Et hoc est propter Avicennam*) at the beginning of Text 1 [b] refers to the part of the previous sentence delimited by “chiefly” (*maxime*), namely the case of the science of the soul, one would be tempted to assume that the pronoun “This” (*hoc*) in Text 1 [c] also refers to the part of the previous sentence delimited by “chiefly” (*maxime*), i.e., the case of metaphysics. However, Text 2 [iii] suggests a broader interpretation: an application of the point not only to metaphysics, but also to natural philosophy, as other statements in Averroes’ works confirm.<sup>16</sup>

The following passages of Averroes' *Middle Commentary on the Sophistici Elenchi* and of his *Epitome of the Metaphysics* clarify, respectively, the meanings of *inceptit* and of *a se*:

Text 3: Averroes, *Middle Commentary on the Sophistici Elenchi* (Averroes, *Talkhīṣ maṭīq Aristū*, ed. Jihāmī, 2:729.16–17):

Because the one who undertakes to understand his [i.e., Aristotle's] statements without anyone else who precedes him in that, is similar to the one who *begins* [*yabtadi'u*] the art.<sup>17</sup>

Text 4: Averroes, *Epitome of the Metaphysics* (Averroes, *Compendio de Metafísica*, ed. Quirós Rodríguez, 14.10–11; English translation in Menn, "Fārābī," 74, emphasis added):

All this [i.e., the falsity of Avicenna's position] is clear on the slightest reflection, but that is the nature of this man [i.e., Avicenna] in much of what he brought forth *out of himself* [*min 'inda nafsihī*].<sup>18</sup>

In Text 3, which is part of the colophon of the commentary, Averroes applies to himself this role of new initiator of the "art" (or discipline) of sophistry, because of the lack of previous satisfactory commentaries on Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi* and the ensuing need for direct recourse to Aristotle's doctrine. In Text 4, many metaphysical theories of Avicenna are declared by Averroes to be false insofar as they result from Avicenna's own point of view rather than from the scrutiny of previous authorities. If applied to the case of Text 1, the content of these passages shows that, for Averroes, Avicenna is initiating anew the disciplines of natural philosophy and metaphysics much more radically than Averroes does in the case of the sophistic art, because Avicenna performs this new beginning not only autonomously from Aristotle's commentators, like Averroes, but also—quite audaciously—from Aristotle himself, relying almost exclusively on his personal talents and substituting himself for Aristotle, which makes him almost totally independent from any previous source.

The adverb *quasi* that one finds in Text 1 [c] is very frequent in Averroes' *Long Commentary on the De anima*, as it is in his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*. In the latter, it very often translates the Arabic *ka-anna* ("as if," "as though"),<sup>19</sup> as is probably the case in Text 1.<sup>20</sup> This correspondence, if confirmed, would indicate that *quasi* in Text 1 [c] does not convey primarily an approximation in mode ("as it were") or in quantity ("almost"), thus qualifying the following *a se*, but expresses the way in which Avicenna is acting, according to Averroes. In Averroes' eyes, Avicenna performs natural philosophy and metaphysics as if he were drawing these disciplines from himself, rather than from their real and authoritative source, which in Averroes' opinion is Aristotle.

The idea that Avicenna intended to be the new initiator of natural philosophy and metaphysics after Aristotle, contrary to his faithfulness to the Stagirite in logic, occurs in a particular passage of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Shifā'*

which might be the source of Averroes' contention. This passage has no correspondence in the other *summae* by Avicenna, since it is not written by Avicenna himself, but by a member of his school. Before focusing on this passage later in my chapter, I wish to argue in the following section that Averroes resorted to the *Shifā'* as his main source of knowledge of Avicenna's philosophy, not only in the case of Text 1, but more generally in his many references to Avicenna throughout his commentaries on Aristotle, as well as elsewhere.

### Averroes as a Reader of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Shifā'*

The exact date, the number of texts, and the precise channels for the introduction of Avicenna's philosophy into Andalusia still require assessment. The first documented familiarity with Avicenna's thought in Andalusia dates approximately to the first decades of the twelfth century CE,<sup>21</sup> largely before the famous *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* (composed between 1177 and 1182) by Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185), which has been traditionally taken as the starting point of Andalusian Avicennism.<sup>22</sup> Whatever the exact *terminus post quem* of the introduction of Avicenna's works in Andalusia may be, Averroes' early works, especially his epitomes, composed in the 1160s (after 1158) and containing extensive explicit quotations of Avicenna, provide an indisputable *terminus ante quem*.<sup>23</sup> The chronology of the beginning of the translation activity regarding Avicenna in Andalusia (before 1166),<sup>24</sup> and the recourse to Avicenna in the work *al-'Aqīda al-rafi'a* (The Exalted Faith), composed around 1160 by the promoter of the Andalusian translations of Avicenna, Abraham ibn Daud (ca. 1110–1180),<sup>25</sup> confirm this approximate date. Whether Ibn Bājja had access to Avicenna's texts is disputed. On the one hand, in specific doctrinal areas of his writings, one can detect traces of Avicenna's influence.<sup>26</sup> On the other, the fact that Ibn Bājja never explicitly quotes Avicenna, even when discussing topics of shared interest, can be taken as a sign that he lacked knowledge of Avicenna's works.<sup>27</sup> It should also be recalled that Averroes himself—doubtlessly a connoisseur of Andalusian philosophy—highlights in Text 1 [a] a pervasive and profound, albeit negative, influence of Avicenna's philosophy on Ibn Bājja (“But what made that man [i.e., Ibn Bājja] err”). Averroes' testimony should not be overlooked in any future, more comprehensive, considerations of the issue.

As to the works of Avicenna known in Muslim Spain at the time of Averroes, one can surely point to the *Shifā'*, since parts of this *summa* were translated into Latin in Toledo during Averroes' lifetime in the second half of the century.<sup>28</sup> Several manuscripts of this work were apparently at the translators' disposal.<sup>29</sup> The diffusion of the *Shifā'* at that time in Andalusia is confirmed by its noticeable presence among the sources of the *al-'Aqīda al-rafi'a* written by the initiator of the Latin translation, Ibn Daud, in Toledo around 1160.<sup>30</sup> Information about other works by Avicenna that may have

spread throughout Andalusia is less certain.<sup>31</sup> The route by which the *Shifā'* (and other Avicennian works) were transmitted to the Muslim West remains undetermined, although the diffusion was surely rapid. One can explain this rapidity by recalling that Baghdad, the capital of the Muslim empire, was the city in which the *Shifā'* was repeatedly copied at the very beginning of the twelfth century CE (its metaphysical section was copied in 1110 and 1115).<sup>32</sup>

This being the case, it comes as no surprise that Averroes' knowledge of Avicenna's philosophy appears to depend primarily on the *Shifā'*. First of all, Averroes mentions the title of this work on several occasions.<sup>33</sup> Although he points to a variety of works by Avicenna with which he was acquainted,<sup>34</sup> the evidence of his knowledge of other ones than the *Shifā'* is much less extensive.<sup>35</sup> In light of these numerous explicit references, the writing by Avicenna that Averroes simply mentions as "Avicenna's book" (*suo libro*) without further qualification can hardly be anything other than the *Shifā'*.<sup>36</sup> In fact, many quotations attributed to Avicenna by Averroes concern doctrines that can be found in the logic,<sup>37</sup> natural philosophy,<sup>38</sup> and metaphysics of the *Shifā'*.<sup>39</sup> The same applies to the tacit quotations of doctrines of Avicenna that can be detected here and there in Averroes' writings.<sup>40</sup> The technique of Averroes' quotations of Avicenna has been described as "condensed paraphrase," on account of the liberty that Averroes takes in reporting Avicenna's text.<sup>41</sup> The abridged character of these accounts, however, cannot hide a very significant fact: several doctrines of Avicenna that Averroes quotes, either explicitly or tacitly, occur *only* in Avicenna's *Shifā'*.<sup>42</sup>

The frequency and comprehensiveness of Averroes' explicit critical references to Avicenna's philosophy suggest a wide-ranging familiarity with the *Shifā'*, although it is difficult to determine the limits of his acquaintance with this work, i.e., whether it was exhaustive or not. Despite the existence of indirect sources of information about the *Shifā'* (such as al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, Incoherence of the Philosophers, which Averroes famously refuted in his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, Incoherence of the Incoherence),<sup>43</sup> Averroes' access to the work appears to have been mainly firsthand.<sup>44</sup> Sometimes he refers to doctrines of the *Shifā'* as if he were quoting the passages in which they are expressed,<sup>45</sup> while also providing information on the mode through which the work was transmitted to the Islamic West.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, he mentions doctrines of Avicenna that he is unable to understand, as if he were struggling with Avicenna's formulations.<sup>47</sup> Finally, he discards the authorship of doctrines wrongly ascribed to Avicenna, referencing their discordance with Avicenna's original texts (the "evidence of his statements," *al-ẓāhir min kalāmihī*).<sup>48</sup>

### **Did Averroes Read al-Jūzjānī's Introduction to the *Shifā'*?**

From the evidence presented in the previous section, one can conclude that Averroes was most probably acquainted with Avicenna's *Shifā'*, that



the *Shifā'* was his privileged way of accessing Avicenna's philosophy, and that he knew this work extensively, if not exhaustively.

If the interpretation of Text 1 that I presented earlier in this chapter is correct, the text may further determine Averroes' familiarity with the *Shifā'*, by providing evidence that he knew of one special part of Avicenna's work, a part that, though traditionally transmitted with the rest of the work, was penned not by Avicenna himself, but by his eleventh-century secretary and biographer Abū 'Ubayd 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Muḥammad al-Jūzjānī, namely the Introduction. Al-Jūzjānī's Introduction to the *Shifā'* was surely one of the parts of the work available in Andalusia in Averroes' time, since it is among the portions translated from Arabic into Latin in Toledo in the second half of the twelfth century.

In the Introduction to the *Shifā'* (whose relevant parts are gathered in Text 5), al-Jūzjānī contends the following: that Avicenna intended to compose the *Shifā'* in an original way; that he fully implemented this plan in the sections of the work concerning natural philosophy and metaphysics, writing most of the former and all the latter without the help of any book; and that he reverted to a more traditional way of composition, and consequently to a more faithful attitude to the transmitted corpus of philosophy, in logic and in the remaining portion of natural philosophy. In all this, al-Jūzjānī's Introduction strikingly mirrors Text 1 (as clarified in Texts 2–4). There, Averroes assesses the main parts of Avicenna's system in terms of their comparative fidelity to the writings of Aristotle. In Averroes' estimation, for example, Avicenna's logic is dependent on Aristotle, whereas the other parts of his philosophy, especially metaphysics, are not. Averroes also suggests that the parts of Avicenna's system less faithful to Aristotle were originally produced by Avicenna himself. This is precisely what al-Jūzjānī, in a different form, maintains in the Introduction. On the basis of this resemblance, one should not overlook the possibility that Averroes' main points in Text 1 might reflect motifs of al-Jūzjānī's Introduction.

Text 5: Abū 'Ubayd 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Muḥammad al-Jūzjānī (fifth/eleventh century), Introduction to Avicenna's *Shifā'* (Avicenna, *Al-Shifā'*, *al-Manṭiq*, *al-Madkhal*, ed. Qanawātī, al-Khuḍayrī, and al-Ahwānī, 2.11–13, 2.19–3.2, 3.10–11, 4.1–5; ed. Di Vincenzo, 4.21–6.23, 6.27–29, 8.36–38, 8.41–10.44)

[a] I [i.e., Avicenna] have neither the time nor the inclination to occupy myself with close textual analysis and commentary. But if you [pl.] would be content with whatever I have readily in mind [which I have thought] on my own [*bi-mā yatayassaru lī min 'indī*], then I could write for you [pl.] a comprehensive work arranged in the order that will occur to me [*lī*]. We readily offered our consent to this and urged him to start with Physics. He began with that [ . . . ].

[b] He [i.e., Avicenna] voluntarily applied himself with great earnestness to its [i.e., the *Shifā*'s] composition, and in a period of twenty days he finished Metaphysics and Physics (except for the two books on Zoology and Botany) without having available any book to consult, but by relying solely upon his natural talents [*tab'ahū fa-qattf*] [. . .].

[c] There [in Hamadhān] he worked on the Logic [of the *Shifā*']. He had access to the books [of Aristotle and the commentators], and it consequently happened that he followed a course parallel to them, proceeding according to the order followed by people [in the Aristotelian tradition] and discussing their statements of which he disapproved [. . .]. He composed also the Zoology and Botany.

[d] My [i.e., al-Jūzjānī's] purpose in recounting these stories is to tell the reason why [. . .] there is a disparity between his [i.e., Avicenna's] organization of the Logic and that of the Physics and Metaphysics, and also to provoke wonder for his ability to compose the Physics and the Metaphysics in a period of twenty days without having access to books but by taking dictation only from his heart [*wa-innamā yumli 'alayhi qalbuḥū . . . fa-qattf*] which was preoccupied with the afflictions [then] besetting it.<sup>49</sup>

Text 5 matches Text 1 in several aspects. First, it explains that “from himself” in Text 1 [c]—corresponding to “on my own,” “relying solely upon his natural talents,” and “taking dictation only from his heart” in Text 5 [a], [b], and [d]—means “without having available any book to consult” (Text 5 [b]), where “book” refers in all likelihood to the works of Aristotle and the Aristotelian commentators (Text 5 [c]).<sup>50</sup> Second, it confirms that the logic of the *Shifā*' in its entirety (not only the dialectic) is the part of Avicenna's system most similar to Aristotle's counterpart, the *Organon*, which Avicenna imitated (“he followed a course parallel to them [i.e., Aristotle's and the commentators' books]”) and of which he adopted the traditional order for the exposition of topics (Text 5 [c]). Third, it also provides some clues for understanding the expression “chiefly in the case of metaphysics” in Text 1 [b], insofar as it asserts that most of the natural philosophy of the *Shifā*' was original with respect to Aristotle, but also that the two sections of natural philosophy on botany and zoology were written by Avicenna according to a more traditional style (Text 5 [b]–[c]); in this way, the partial originality of the natural philosophy of the *Shifā*' with respect to Aristotle's natural philosophy turns out to be lower than the full originality of the metaphysics.

One can therefore suppose that Averroes had in mind Text 5 when he was writing Text 1, and that he fairly reported in Text 1 the amount of originality (or lack thereof) of the actual content of the *Shifā*' with respect to Aristotle not only because he personally evaluated sources and formats of the various sections of Avicenna's *summa*, but possibly also because he relied on the information on this point offered by al-Jūzjānī in Text 5.<sup>51</sup> If

the parallels between Text 1 and Text 5 detected here should be confirmed and corroborated by further research, we would be entitled to add al-Jūzjānī's Introduction to the *Shifā'* to the parts of Avicenna's work known to Averroes and to extend to this section his acquaintance with Avicenna's masterpiece.

## Conclusion

Three points lie in the background of what we have observed in the preceding pages. First, independence from Aristotle not only inspires Avicenna's own self-perception and self-description in famous texts well-known to Avicennian scholars,<sup>52</sup> but also governs the concrete praxis of his way of doing philosophy, even in works avowedly lenient toward the Peripatetic tradition such as the *Shifā'*. One can grasp this tendency with particular clarity in the metaphysics of this *summa*, in which several veiled criticisms of Aristotle can be detected.<sup>53</sup> Whereas the former level may shed light on the question of the "self-marketing" promoted by Avicenna as a conscious innovator of the praxis of philosophy, the latter level is far more complex, and cannot be answered in the frame of a single paper. What is important for the present purposes is that in their remarks on the varying degree of Avicenna's faithfulness (or better, unfaithfulness) to Aristotle, both Averroes and al-Jūzjānī capture a real and pivotal aspect of Avicenna's philosophy.

Second, independence from Aristotle is fundamental not only in Avicenna's own understanding of the development and implementation of the philosophical heritage, but also in Averroes' animosity against his Eastern predecessor. In this perspective, the texts of Averroes analyzed here show that the quintessence of the Commentator's philosophy lies in a twofold relation with the previous philosophical tradition: positive in the case of Aristotle, and negative in the case of Avicenna. If Avicenna's way of doing philosophy follows the path of novelty (not only in programs, but also in practice), whereas Averroes' philosophical agenda consists in loyally following Aristotle on the basis of an almost "reactionary" assent to the idea of school tradition, Avicenna and Averroes turn out to propose different values and norms of what it means to do philosophy.<sup>54</sup> In fact, using a terminology commonly adopted in the history of science, we can speak of two different and opposed "paradigms" of the praxis of philosophy. The repercussions of these two paradigms on the fate of Aristotelian philosophy in the Latin West until the Renaissance, as assuring its continuity (Averroes) but also allowing its final dismissal (Avicenna), are worthy of attentive consideration.<sup>55</sup>

A third element may be relevant to the present discussion in connection with al-Jūzjānī's insistence on the "disparity between his [i.e., Avicenna's] organization of the Logic and that of the Physics and Metaphysics" (Text 5 [d], emphasis added). If it is true, as Dimitri Gutas has proposed, that this

insistence is “an attempt to answer Avicenna’s Peripatetic critics (actual or potential) who would have expected him to follow [. . .] the order and the contents of the Aristotelian canon of writings,” and that “the tenor of Jūzjānī’s Introduction is apologetic [. . .] and [. . .] its main thrust is to defend Avicenna’s Peripatetic orthodoxy,”<sup>56</sup> these advocates of Peripateticism are not necessarily to be sought only outside Avicenna’s circle, but might well be among the members of his own school. In fact, al-Jūzjānī himself could be one of them. The same “apologetic” attitude is reflected in the transmission history of the metaphysics of this *summa*, a process to which al-Jūzjānī surely contributed in his capacity as Avicenna’s secretary. In this part of the work, a more originally Avicennian way of arranging the doctrine of the universals in treatise 5 (attested, at least in part, by the Latin translation and some Arabic manuscripts) is transformed into a much more traditional way of expounding the doctrine. This less innovative and more customary account is the one transmitted by the Arabic *versio vulgata* of the work—that is, by the majority of its extant Arabic manuscripts.<sup>57</sup>

By the same token, al-Jūzjānī’s “bibliographical” explanation of why the natural philosophy and metaphysics of the *Shifā’* (dictated by Avicenna’s individual heart) are much more original than its logic (grounded in the solid textual support of a previous millenary tradition) may not be designed only to increase the appeal of the work for an external audience expecting a more uniform and traditional manner of exposition in the various parts of the *summa*. Merchandising strategies apart, his explanation may have also served to silence the Peripatetic orthodoxy internal to Avicenna’s school, which could not help noticing the unbridgeable difference within the *Shifā’* between the logic, on the one hand, and the natural philosophy and the metaphysics, on the other, in terms of closeness to Aristotle and his commentators. That orthodoxy arguably preferred the logic over the natural philosophy and metaphysics precisely because of its traditional character. One may surmise that al-Jūzjānī’s own philosophical tastes went in the same direction. After all, the *Shifā’* was Avicenna’s response to al-Jūzjānī’s request for a work replicating Avicenna’s previous commentaries on the philosophical corpus in a quite traditional format. In the Introduction, citing Avicenna’s reluctance to engage in such an endeavor as the reason why the *Shifā’* did not take the shape of a commentary, and invoking external circumstances such as the availability or unavailability of books to explain why Avicenna’s masterpiece turned out uneven in style and content, were also ways to downplay the failure of al-Jūzjānī’s solicitations and the shortcomings of his promotional activity, in a sort of self-apology.

If this line of interpretation is correct, and if the tentative conclusions reached in the present chapter are tenable, we would then be confronted with an interesting similarity between the closest disciple of Avicenna in the East, al-Jūzjānī, and his archenemy in the West, Averroes, concerning Avicenna’s attitude to Aristotle. Being equally unable to manage

Avicenna's extreme originality with respect to Aristotle in natural philosophy and metaphysics, Averroes would have resorted to overtly criticizing and rejecting it, whereas al-Jūzjānī would have obliquely attempted to justify its presence and minimize its outcomes.

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## Notes

- 1 Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 374–75. The passage in question is further discussed by Taylor, “Introduction,” xciv.
- 2 The expression *longo tempore* in section [a] has been interpreted either as “for a long time,” as in the above translation, or as “a long time ago”: Averroes, *L'intelligence*, 139 (“il y a longtemps”); Janssens, “Ibn Rushd,” 405, modifies the French translation as “longtemps,” although he acknowledges the fundamental ambiguity of the expression *longo tempore*, since Averroes continued to hold “admiration pour les ‘Commentateurs’” for a long time (*ibid.*, n. 1). Although the two competing interpretations are not mutually exclusive (Averroes might be talking about a state of affairs that happened a long time ago *and* continued for a long time, with reference to the time period covering the composition of his epitomes, which lasted about a decade), it seems difficult to totally exclude the first interpretation, since the more natural way to understand the expression *longo tempore* is that it designates duration, and one wonders why Michael Scot did not translate the Arabic text that he had in front of him with *olim* or *quondam*, rather than with *longo tempore*, if he understood it solely as “a long time ago.” It is important to stress in this context that the wrong attitude of which Averroes accuses the *moderni* in section [a] is not simply reliance on the commentators, but reliance on the commentators without recourse to Aristotle's text.
- 3 “Sed illud quod fecit illum hominem errare, et nos etiam longo tempore, est quia Moderni dimittunt libros Aristotelis et considerant libros expositorum, et maxime in anima, credendo quod iste liber impossibile est ut intelligatur. Et hoc est propter Avicennam, qui non imitatus est Aristotelem nisi in Dialectica, sed in aliis erravit, et maxime in Metaphysica; et hoc quia incepit quasi a se.” English translation by Taylor in Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 374–75; slightly modified (Taylor translates *dialectica* as “dialectics,” *in aliis* as “in other things,” and *quasi a se* as “as it were, [doing philosophy] from his own perspective”); insertions are mine. The French translation in Averroes, *L'intelligence*, 139 (“Mais ce qui a fait errer cet homme [Avempace], et nous aussi il y a longtemps, c'est que les Modernes laissent de côté les livres d'Aristote et examinent [plutôt] ceux des commentateurs—principalement pour *L'Âme*, car il pensent que ce livre est impossible à comprendre. Et tout cela est la faute d'Avicenne, qui n'a imité Aristote que dans sa *Dialectique*, mai qui a erré pour tout le reste, particulièrement dans la *Métaphysique*; car il a, pour ainsi dire, [re]commencé [à partir de lui-même]”), is reproduced, slightly modified, in Janssens, “Ibn Rushd,” 405. The importance of section [a] of this text is stressed by Endress, “Le projet d'Averroès,” 13.

- 4 Averroes Latinus, *Averrois Cordubensis commentarium magnum*, 469.27–31; Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 374 and n. 219.
- 5 The interpretation of *dialectica* as “logic” is upheld by Janssens, “Ibn Rushd,” 405, in an integration (“à notre avis, il s’agit de toute la logique, et pas seulement du livre de ce titre”) of the French translation in Averroes, *L’intelligence*, 139. The French translation opts for “Dialectique” (although “Dialectique” is then paraphrased as “Logique,” 335 n. 638).
- 6 Averroes, *Maqālāt fī l-mantiq wa-l-‘ilm al-ṭabī‘ī*, 175.1–8. The work is recorded under no. 3.7 in Endress, “Averrois Opera,” 368.
- 7 Section [iii] of this text (Averroes, *Maqālāt fī l-mantiq wa-l-‘ilm al-ṭabī‘ī*, 175.6–8) is translated as follows by Elamrani-Jamal in “Ibn Ruṣd et les *Premiers Analytiques*,” 52: “ce que l’auteur postérieur à Aristote peut faire de pire est de s’écarter de son enseignement et de suivre une autre voie que la sienne, comme cela est arrivé à Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī] dans ses livres de logique et à Ibn Sīnā dans les sciences physiques et théologiques.”
- 8 The causal clause at the beginning of Text 2 [ii] (“This is due to,” *wa-dhālīka li-*) even suggests the Arabic equivalent of the sentences “This is due to Avicenna” (*et hoc est propter Avicennam*) and “This [happened] because” (*et hoc quia*) in Text 1 [b]–[c] (arguably, *wa-dhālīka li-bni Sīnā* and *wa-dhālīka li-annahū*, respectively). This parallelism supports keeping the reading *Et hoc est propter Avicennam* in Text 1 [b], contrary to the alternative reading *Et hoc est proprie Avicennae* proposed by Janssens, “Ibn Rushd,” 406–7.
- 9 Since Text 1 belongs to a commentary on natural philosophy (*De anima*), al-Fārābī is understandably not mentioned there: in Text 2 [iii], al-Fārābī is depicted by Averroes in an equally negative light, but only with regard to the province of logic.
- 10 Since Averroes speaks generically of “all his [i.e., Avicenna’s] books,” in Averroes’ understanding Avicenna’s critical attitude to Aristotle appears in natural philosophy and metaphysics, but it also surfaces in logic, and should be taken as the motivating force of Avicenna’s choice to follow an independent course from Aristotle in natural philosophy and metaphysics.
- 11 If we take *dialectica* to mean logic, as Text 2 suggests, we also obtain a more balanced contrast between logic and metaphysics in Text 1 [b]. In this case, two entire parts of philosophy would be contrasted, rather than a section of a part, i.e., dialectic, and an entire part, i.e., metaphysics.
- 12 See the passage of Averroes’ *Middle Commentary on the Elenchi Sophistici* (Averroes, *Talkhīṣ mantiq Aristū*, 2:729.9–730.3) translated into French in Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:31–32. The pericope of Avicenna’s *Shifā’* quoted by Averroes in this passage is translated into English in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 28. See, in particular, Avicenna’s statement: “we [. . .] found no method for [the study of] sophistical matters other than the one Aristotle gave”; the expression “this art” in the sentence “And did there appear after him anybody who added anything at all to this art beyond what Aristotle said?” might refer to logic in general (cf. the French translation in Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, 1:32 n. 3).
- 13 For *dialectica* as a translation of “logic” (*mantiq*) rather than “dialectic” (*jadal*), see, for instance, Al-Fārābī, *Über die Wissenschaften*, 22–62. The same correspondence *mantiq*–*dialectica* can be noticed in passages of the Latin translations of Averroes’ commentaries: for instance, the expression ‘*alā sabīli l-mantiqi*’ in Aristoteles Arabus, *Al-ṭabī‘a*, 908.3 (= λογικῶς, *Phys. Θ.* 8, 264a8), is translated as *secundum dialecticam* in Averroes’ *Long Commentary on the Physics* (book Θ, c. 70, Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 4:414B); the same correspondence with *mantiq* and related expressions applies to *dialectica* and *sermones dialectici* in Averroes’ explanation of Aristotle’s passage,

- Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 4:414G–K. For a more straightforward translation of *mantīq* as *logica* in the *Long Commentary on the Physics*, see, e.g., the expression *nazarān mantīqiyyān*, 227.4, corresponding to λογικῶς in *Phys.* Γ, 5, 204b4, translated as *consideratione logica* in book Γ, c. 40, of Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 4:103A (I thank Matteo Di Giovanni for this information).
- 14 Significantly, the *Topics* are the only part of logic commenting on which, in his so-called Middle Commentaries, Averroes quotes Avicenna without explicitly refuting him (see Averroes, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Jadal*). Moreover, the emphasis on dialectic as the exclusive area of similarity between Avicenna and Aristotle might aim to underscore the dialectical character of Avicenna's method and his failure to attain a properly demonstrative approach—a critical remark that Averroes frequently makes (see, for instance, the passage of Averroes' *Long Commentary on the Physics*, book A, c. 83 (Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 4:47F–K), quoted in Bertolacci, "Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God's Existence," 86–87; see also the text of the same commentary cited in note 36 below).
  - 15 The absence of any specification might even suggest a wider application to philosophy *tout court*, as current translations seem to imply. See Averroes, *Long Commentary*, 374–75: "This is because he began [*inceptit*], as it were, [doing philosophy] from his own perspective." In Averroes, *L'intelligence*, Text 1 [c] is translated as "car il a, pour ainsi dire, [re]commencé [à partir de lui-même]" (139) and paraphrased as "parce qu'il a commencé comme s'il était le premier," "parce qu'il a voulu *tout* tirer de son propre fonds" (335 n. 638, emphasis added). However, neither the content of Text 1 [b], in which Avicenna is said to follow Aristotle in *dialectica*/logic, nor the testimony of Text 2 [iii], in which the distance from Aristotle's logic is ascribed to al-Fārābī rather than to Avicenna, lend themselves to this interpretation.
  - 16 A broader interpretation is supported by the following remark about natural philosophy at the end of a lengthy criticism of Avicenna in the *Long Commentary on the De caelo* (book Γ, c. 67, Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 5:227D–F; Averroes Latinus, *Averrois Cordubensis commentum magnum super libro De celo*, 635.115–39): "The insufficient training of this man in natural philosophy, and his excessive confidence in his own intelligence [*bona confidentia in proprio ingenio*], lead him to these errors" (emphasis added; on this criticism of Avicenna by Averroes, see Eichner, *Averroes' Mittlerer Kommentar*, 142–45). See also the following passage of *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* regarding a particular aspect of Avicenna's psychology, a part of natural philosophy (Averroes, *Tahafot at-tahafot*, 500.12–3; English translation in Averroes, *Averroes' Tahafut al-Tahafut*, 305): "As to the theory he [i.e., Avicenna] gives here about the cause of revelation and dreams, *this is the theory of Avicenna alone*, and the opinions of the ancient philosophers differ from his."
  - 17 فإن من يتعاطي فهم كلامه من غير أن يسبقه فيه غيره هو شبيهه بمن يبتدئ الصناعة French translation in Averroes, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:31.33: "Car celui qui se préoccupe de comprendre ses [i.e., Aristotle's] propos sans que quelqu'un d'autre le précède en cela est pareil à celui qui commence un art."
  - 18 وهذا كله بين بأيسر تأمل ولكن هذا شأن هذا الرجل في كثير مما يأتي به من عند نفسه Averroes, *On Aristotle's "Metaphysics"*, 29–30: "All this becomes clear upon a moment in reflection, but this is the case with many things presented by this man as being [original inventions] by himself."
  - 19 See, for instance, Averroes, *Tafsīr mā ba'd at-ṭabī'at*, 6.1, 7.6, 18.2, 37.2, 55.5, 56.2, 70.14, 79.11, 80.11, 81.5, 82.5, 84.5, 116.10, 138.17, etc. No passage containing *quasi* is among those taken into account in Averroes, "Grand Commentaire."



- 20 The Arabic behind Text 1 [c] might therefore be: وذلك لأنه ابتداء كان من عند نفسه *wa-dhālika li-annahū btada'a ka-anna min 'inda naḥṣihī*.
- 21 The most recent scholarship tends to posit the first entrance of Avicenna's philosophy in Andalusia around the beginning of the twelfth century, if not before, as already argued by Badawī, "Avicenne en Espagne," 12, according to whom it is difficult to maintain that Avicenna's philosophy had not yet arrived in Andalusia in the first decades of the twelfth century, due to its traces in the works of disciples of Ibn Bājja (d. 1138) and on account of the introduction of Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* in Andalusia around 1095–1125. Harvey, "Avicenna's Influence," 328, contends that Avicenna's philosophy entered in Spain in the late 1130s (the date of the completion of the *Kuzari* of Judah Halevi, ca. 1075–1141, where Avicenna is quoted and criticized) or even earlier, due to the recourse to Avicenna in the anonymous *Kitāb ma'ānī al-naḥṣ*, datable between the mid-eleventh and the mid-twelfth century (ibid., 331 and n. 15).
- 22 The widespread opinion according to which Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185) was the first Andalusian author to be acquainted with Avicenna's philosophy (see, for example, Cruz Hernandez, "Islamic Thought," 789) is no longer tenable. See the critical remarks in Harvey, "Avicenna's Influence," 329–30.
- 23 The frequent quotations of Avicenna in Averroes' epitomes, and the references to the contemporary investigators or followers of Avicenna's philosophy elsewhere (e.g., *Long Commentary on the Physics*, book Θ, c. 78; Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 4:424L), seem to imply a wide previous diffusion of Avicenna's thought in Andalusia. In the treatise *De separatione primi principii*, the author, supposedly Averroes, states: "Et quando pervenerunt ad nos libri Abolay ben Cine" (Averroes Latinus, "De separatione primi principii," 96). If taken literally, this statement would imply that Averroes came into contact with Avicenna's works at a certain point of his lifetime, being unaware of them before. It remains unclear, however, which city or geographical area of Averroes' biography (Cordoba, Marrakesh, Seville, etc.) may be referred to in this statement.
- 24 See Avicenna Latinus, *Logica*, 11.
- 25 See Fontaine, "'Happy Is He Whose Children Are Boys'"; Fontaine, "Avicennian Sources." Ibn Daud (Lat.: Avendeuth) was a Jew from Cordoba who moved to Toledo around the middle of the twelfth century.
- 26 For example, the divergence of opinions on the role of logic in philosophy (instrument vs. part) that Ibn Bājja reports in his glosses on al-Fārābī's commentary on the *Isagoge* (trans. in Forcada, "Ibn Bājja and the Classification," 300; see Di Giovanni, "Motifs of Andalusian Philosophy") has definite Avicennian overtones. Other doctrinal similarities between Ibn Bājja and Avicenna are underscored by Puig Montada, "Philosophy in Andalusia."
- 27 Akasoy, "Ibn Sīnā in the Arab West," 288.
- 28 The project of translating three of the four sections of the *Shifā'* (logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics) from Arabic into Latin in Toledo in the second half of the twelfth century, although not performed comprehensively (only some sections of these parts were in fact translated; see Bertolacci, "Community of Translators"; Bertolacci, "Translator's Cut"), seems to attest the circulation of an overall, if not complete, version of this work in Andalusia in Averroes' times.
- 29 The main promoter of the Latin translation of the *Shifā'*, Ibn Daud, had at his disposal several manuscripts of the *Shifā'*, since in the foreword to the Latin translation of the initial part of the work he contends that "in most manuscripts" (*in plerisque codicibus*) al-Jūzjanī's Introduction precedes Avicenna's Prologue (see the text in Birkenmajer, "Avicennas Vorrede," 314.7–8; now in Avicenna Latinus, *Logica*; Bertolacci, "Community of Translators," 53).

- 30 See Fontaine, “Happy Is He Whose Children Are Boys”; Fontaine, “Avicennian Sources.”
- 31 Ibn Ṭufayl’s *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* documents acquaintance with Avicenna’s *Shifāʾ*, *Ishārāt*, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, and/or *Risālat al-qadar* (see Gutas, “Ibn Ṭufayl,” 229). The diffusion of Avicenna’s *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* in twelfth-century Andalusia is confirmed by the Hebrew translation/adaptation by Abraham ibn ‘Ezra’ (1089–1167) (see Harvey, “Avicenna’s Influence,” 329; Szpiech, “In Search,” 201; Fontaine, “Avicennian Sources,” 244). Gutas’ contention that Avicenna’s *Ḥikma mashriqiyya* was not known in Andalusia (Gutas, “Ibn Ṭufayl,” 228–29) has been partially revised in Gutas, “Avicenna’s Eastern Philosophy,” 171–72. The dependence of Jehudah Halevi’s (d. 1141) *Kuzari* on Avicenna’s *Risāla fī l-naḥs* was documented by Landauer in 1876 (see Harvey, “Avicenna’s Influence,” 330 n. 9; Fontaine, “Avicennian Sources,” 244). On the works of Avicenna other than the *Shifāʾ* known to Averroes, see note 35 below.
- 32 See Bertolacci, “Avicenna’s *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ*,” 277–79. Puig Montada, “Transmission and Reception of Arabic Philosophy,” 7–8, remarks that during the reign of the caliph al-Ḥakam II (961–973) “a library containing most of the books available in the East was established” in Cordova, and that “*Falsafah* arrived materially in the books gathered by al-Ḥakam II,” although “its intellectual reception is much later.” One might assume that the circulation of *falsafa* from East to West continued afterward and that Avicenna’s philosophy was part of the transmitted material.
- 33 Explicit mentions of the *Shifāʾ* can be found in the colophon of Averroes’ *Middle Commentary on the Elenchi Sophistici* (Averroes, *Talkhīṣ manṭiq Aristū*, 2:729.12–14: “We have found no commentary on it [i.e., of Aristotle’s *Elenchi Sophistici*] by any of the commentators, either *ad litteram* or *ad sensum*, except what little there is of that in the *Kitāb al-Shifāʾ* by Abū ‘Alī ibn Sīnā”; English translation in Gutas, “Aspects of Literary Form,” 33, slightly modified; compare the French translation in Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:31–32), and in his *Middle Commentary on the Metaphysics* (Averroes Hebraicus, *Il commentio medio*, 343.21–22: “ed è questa la via nella quale [Avicenna] procede nel suo libro chiamato *al-Shifāʾ*”—I am indebted to the late M. Zonta for having kindly shared with me his Italian translation of the passage; see also Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, 334 n. 133). A joint mention of the *Shifāʾ* and the *Najāṭ* occurs in *Al-Qawl fī l-muqāddima al-wujūdiyya aw al-muṭlaqa* (Averroes, “Al-Qawl,” 33.1–2; Latin translation in Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 1.2b:80B–C; English translation in Averroes, “Averroes’ Quaesitum,” 103–4: “That is what he says in the *Kitāb al-shifāʾ*. As to [what he says] in the *Kitāb al-najāṭ*”). The *Shifāʾ* is mentioned in the title of one of the works of Averroes recorded by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a (*Kitāb fī l-faḥṣ ‘an masā’il waqa‘at fī l-‘ilm al-ilāhī fī Kitāb al-Shifāʾ li-bn Sīnā*; see Anawati, *Bibliographie d’Averroès*, 31, no. 37).
- 34 See the expression “all his [i.e., Avicenna’s] books” (*kutubahū kullahā*) in Averroes’ “Treatise on the Meaning of What is Predicated Universally and Other Issues” (above, Text 2 [ii]).
- 35 The only other *summa* of Avicenna that Averroes explicitly quotes is the *Najāṭ*, mentioned together with the *Shifāʾ*, in Averroes’ *Al-Qawl fī l-muqāddima al-wujūdiyya aw al-muṭlaqa* (see the passage quoted in note 33 above). For the rest, the evidence is uncertain and speculative: a passage of Averroes’ *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* on the alleged superiority of Avicenna’s proof of God’s existence, based on the analysis of being *qua* being, with respect to the Ancients’ proof, based on motion and time (Averroes, *Tahāfut at-tahāfut*, 419.10–14; English translation in Averroes, *Averroes’ Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, 253), might echo another *summa* by Avicenna, the *Inṣāf* (Avicenna, *Commentaire sur le livre Lambda*,

- 49.47–51; cf. Avicenna, “Sharḥ ḥarf al-Lām li-Ibn Sīnā,” 23.21–24.1; English translation in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 299). Gutas, “Ibn Tūfayl,” 228–29, on the other hand, contends that Avicenna’s *Inṣāf* was not known in Andalusia. As regards the shorter treatises by Avicenna, according to Francesca Lucchetta, Averroes’ *Faṣl al-maqāl* depends directly on Avicenna’s *Risāla adḥawiyya fī amr al-ma’ād* (Averroes, *L'accordo*, 6.20). On whether Averroes might have been acquainted with Avicenna’s *Risāla ‘arshīyya*, see Adouhane, “Al-Miklātī,” 188.
- 36 Averroes, *Long Commentary on the Physics*, book Θ, c. 3 (Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 4:340E–F): “Et quod existimavit Avicenna, quod divinus debet monstrare primum principium esse, est falsum, et via eius, quam finxit ipsum invenisse eam, qua usus est *in suo libro* et similiter Algazel sequens eum, est via tenuis et non est demonstrativa aliquo modo. Nos autem de hoc fecimus tractatum singularem super hoc. Et qui voluerit accipere quaestiones accidentes in ea, videat hoc ex libro Algazelis: plures enim, quas induxit contra alios, verae sunt” (emphasis added). Cf. book A, c. 83 (4:47F–K): “On this issue, in his [i.e., Avicenna’s] book on divine science [*in suo libro de scientia divina*].”
- 37 See the quotations (with explicit mentions of Avicenna) of: (1) chapter 2. 3 of the section of the *Shifā’* corresponding to the *De interpretatione* in *Qawl fī l-maḥmūlāt al-mufrada wa-l-murakkaba wa-naqd mauqif Ibn Sīnā* (Avicenna, *Al-Shifā’*, *al-Manṭiq*, *al-‘Ibāra*, 96–111; see Benmakhoulouf and Diebler, *Commentaire moyen sur le De interpretatione*, 152–55; Averroes, *Maqālāt fī l-manṭiq wa-l-‘ilm al-ṭabī‘ī*, 87–94; French translation in Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 157–63); (2) chapter 1. 7 of the section of the *Shifā’* corresponding to the *Prior Analytics* in the *Middle Commentary on the Prior Analytics* (Avicenna, *Al-Shifā’*, *al-Manṭiq*, *al-Qiyās*, 66.7–15, 67.14–70.9; Averroes, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Qiyās*, 197.13–15 (#174); see Aouad and Rashed, “Commentateurs,” 102; and Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:33); (3) chapters 2. 4 and 4. 3 of the section of the *Shifā’* corresponding to the *Topics* in the *Middle Commentary on the Topics* (Avicenna, *Jadal*, 139.5, 227.9–14; Averroes, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Jadal*, 87.12–13 (#85), 156.4–5 (#214); see Aouad and Rashed, “Commentateurs,” 102; Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:33); and (4) chapter 2. 6 of the section of the *Shifā’* corresponding to the *Elenchi Sophistici* in the *Middle Commentary on the Elenchi Sophistici* (Avicenna, *Al-Shifā’*, *al-Manṭiq*, *al-Safsāṭa*, 114.1–10; English translation in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 28; French translation in Aouad and Rashed, “Commentateurs,” 101 n. 56; Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:32 n. 3; Averroes, *Talkhīṣ manṭiq Aristū*, 2:729.25–730.3, French translation in Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:32).
- 38 For the criticisms of Avicenna contained in Averroes’ *Long Commentary on the Physics*, see Bertolacci, “Averroes ubique Avicennam persequitur”; for those contained in Averroes’ various commentaries on *Physics*, *De caelo*, and *Meteorologica*, see Cerami, “Map of Averroes’ Criticism.” About the criticism of Avicenna contained in Averroes’ *Long Commentary on the Physics*, 66G–67A, Belo, *Chance and Determinism*, 147–48, observes: “one is led to believe that Averroes was in some way familiar with the passage of the *Physics* of the *Shifā’* that paraphrases the Aristotelian passage in question (*Physics* 195b31–200b8).”
- 39 For the criticisms of Avicenna contained in Averroes’ *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, see Bertolacci, “Averroes against Avicenna on Human Spontaneous Generation”; Bertolacci, “From Athens to Buḥārā”; Bertolacci, “Avicenna’s and Averroes’ Interpretations.” For those contained in Averroes’ *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, see the notes to the English translation in Averroes, *On Aristotle’s ‘Metaphysics’*; Menn, “Fārābī.”

- 40 See the implicit quotations of the section of the *Shifā'* corresponding to the *Rhetoric* in Averroes' *Middle Commentary on the Rhetoric* (Aouad and Rashed, "Commentateurs," 98–124; Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:31–50). Eichner's critical edition *Averroes' Mittlerer Kommentar* documents similarities and differences between Averroes' *Middle Commentary on the De generatione et corruptione* and the corresponding part of the *Shifā'*. See also Menn, "Fārābī," 74: "As usual, Averroes mentions Avicenna by name only a few times [in *Epitome* I.34–43 and III.34–48], but in such a way as to make clear that Avicenna is on his mind throughout," and 73: "Averroes has presumably been thinking mainly of Avicenna throughout I.21."
- 41 The expression *paraphrase condensée* occurs in Averroes, *Commentaire moyen sur le De* interpretation, 154 n. 1.
- 42 A passage of Averroes' *Epitome of the Meteorologica* (Averroes, *Risālat al-āthār al-'ulwiyya*, 84.21–85.2, 85.21–22) is a quotation (with explicit mention of Avicenna) of a passage of the fifth section of the *Shifā'* (2. 3): "Ibn Sīnā rebuked them [i.e., the commentators] on this issue by saying: 'Our brothers Peripatetics have contributed nothing to [clarifying] the arrangement of colors [in the rainbow].' This is so because he believed that the green does not differ from the reddish and the purple only in terms of excess and defect, since, on the contrary, this difference applies exclusively to the reddish and the purple. On this issue this man does not say anything [on his own], but only casts doubts against them. No doubt, this rebuke would apply most properly to Aristotle, since he was the chief of the Peripatetics. [ . . . ] In either case [i.e., regardless whether or not the commentators have rightly reported Aristotle's thought on the colors of the rainbow], Ibn Sīnā should have excluded Aristotle from the group of the Peripatetics, and should have not spoken in absolute terms [of all of them together]." Averroes probably here refers to Avicenna, *Al-Shifā'*, *al-ṭabī'īyyāt*, *al-Ma'ādīn wa-l-āthār al-'ulwiyya*, 50.10–11, 50.14–15, paraphrasing Avicenna's contention: "I am not satisfied with what our companions Peripatetics say about it [i.e., the rainbow] [ . . . ]. As to the colors, their status has not resulted verily to me, and I have not grasped their cause; I am not satisfied with what they say, since it is all falsity and nonsense." Likewise, several quotations of Avicenna's metaphysical doctrines have a counterpart only in the *Shifā'*. For instance, Avicenna's statement according to which only metaphysics provides the proof of God's existence, criticized in several of Averroes' commentaries (see Bertolacci, "Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God's Existence," Texts 6–7, 9), occurs only in the metaphysical section of the *Shifā'* (*Ilāhiyyāt*) 1. 1 (see *ibid.*, Texts 3–4), being absent in the other metaphysical writings of Avicenna. More specifically, the "universal method" (*al-ṭarīq al-kullī*) by means of which Avicenna aims to prove God's existence in metaphysics, mentioned in Averroes' *Long Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, book A, c. 70 (Averroes, *Sharḥ al-burhān li-Aristū wa-talkhīṣ al-burhān*, 298.16–9; Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 1.2a:154F) probably echoes the expression "the method of universal and intelligible premises" (*ṭarīq muqaddimāt kullīyya 'aqliyya*) in *Ilāhiyyāt* 1. 3, Avicenna, *Al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:21.4; Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de Philosophia*, 23.33–34 (see Bertolacci, "Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God's Existence," 94 n. 66). Some other doctrines of Avicenna criticized in the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (such as the theory according to which mice can be generated from earth) come exclusively from the *Shifā'* (in the case at stake, from the *Ma'ādīn wa-l-āthār 'ulwiyya*, the fifth section of the part on natural philosophy; see Bertolacci, "Averroes against Avicenna on Human Spontaneous Generation"). The same happens in the *Epitome of the Metaphysics*: Averroes asserts that the consideration of a sensible thing simply as

- existent is tantamount to its consideration as immaterial (Averroes, *Compendio de Metafísica*, 6.21–7.2; Averroes, *On Aristotle's "Metaphysics,"* 22–23), which probably refers (non-critically) to Avicenna's doctrine in *Ilāhiyyāt* 1. 2, Avicenna, *Al-Shifā', al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:15.13–16; Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de Philosophia*, 16.95–99, according to which “existent *qua* existent” is, in principle, immaterial, since it applies not only to material, but also to immaterial realities (see Bertolacci, *Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 126); likewise, when Averroes states, “What has become manifest in the natural science about the existence of separate principles is not superfluous in this science, as Avicenna says, but rather necessary” (Averroes, *Compendio de Metafísica*, 8.19–20; Averroes, *On Aristotle's "Metaphysics,"* 24), he refers to *Ilāhiyyāt* 1. 1, Avicenna, *Al-Shifā', al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 1:7.3–4, Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de Philosophia*, 5.91–93: “What appeared to you about this [topic] in [the science of] natural things was extraneous to [the science of] natural things; of it [i.e., of this topic] it was used in it [i.e., in the science of natural things] what was not part of it [i.e., of the science of natural things].” See also the “argument that Avicenna makes in *Shifā' Metaphysics* I.5, 10–11” and the “fairly accurate summary of some of Avicenna's arguments in *Shifā' Metaphysics* III” that Averroes submits to criticism in the *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, as discussed by Menn, “Fārābī,” 73, 79.
- 43 Averroes also knew al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa*, *Intentions of the Philosophers*, a work which is much less dependent on the *Shifā'* than the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. See Averroes, *Epitome of the Physics*, Prologue (Averroes, *Al-Jawāmi' fī l-falsafa*, 8.1–7): “We have endeavored to transmit this [i.e., Aristotle's] opinion among those of the ancients, because it has already appeared evident to all [of them] that it [i.e., Aristotle's opinion] was the most convincing and well-grounded of all. What prompted us to [do] this is the fact that many people undertake the rebuttal of Aristotle's doctrine without considering its truth; this is why the consideration of the truth, or of its contrary, that can be found in it [i.e., in Aristotle's doctrine] is performed secretly. Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] has pursued this [same] aspiration in his book known as *Intentions of the Philosophers*, but he has not attained in them [i.e., in the *Intentions of the Philosophers*] what he aimed for. Therefore, we have esteemed convenient to strive for his [same] intent, because in this way we hope to bring to the people of our time the [same] benefit that he hoped, for the [same] reason that he mentioned.” On this text, see Griffel, “Relationship between Averroes and al-Ghazālī,” 54; Stroumsa, “Philosophes almohades?,” 1147 n. 40.
- 44 Davidson's claim that Averroes “must have relied on derivative accounts of Avicenna's philosophy, such as Ghazali's account, in addition to whatever incomplete copies of Avicenna's works might have reached him in Spain” (Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, 334), appears questionable: the unavailability of Mu'tazilite works that Averroes laments (*ibid.*, n. 133) might be due to theological restrictions not affecting the circulation of philosophical works. Likewise, the quotation of Avicenna in Averroes' *Middle Commentary on the Metaphysics* (see note 33 above), according to which in the *Shifā'* Avicenna would have advocated a proof of God's existence based on the concepts of “necessarily existent” and “possibly existent,” does not necessarily indicate a derivative or incomplete acquaintance with the work, since the presence or lack of such a proof in the *Shifā'* is debated in Avicennian scholarship. See Bertolacci, “Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God's Existence,” 78.
- 45 For instance, in the first criticism of Avicenna occurring in the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* (book α, c. 15), about a doctrine expounded only in the *Shifā'*, one reads: “Thus, we find [*najidu*] that Avicenna [ . . . ] says [*yaqūlu*]” (see Averroes, *Tafsīr mā ba'd aṭ-ṭabī'at*, 46.19–47.1; Bertolacci, “Averroes against Avicenna on Human Spontaneous Generation,” 41).

- 46 The aforementioned quotation of the *Shifā'* in the colophon of Averroes' *Middle Commentary on the Elenchi Sophistici* (note 12 above) contains the following remark: "L'écrit [*al-kitāb*] qui nous est parvenu de cela [i.e., of the *Shifā'*, or of its section on sophistics] se présente dans un désordre maximum [*ghāyat al-ikhtilāl*]" (Averroès, *Commentaire moyen*, ed. Aouad, 1:31). The term *ikhtilāl* in this passage might also mean "defectiveness," which would amount to an attestation of the possible incomplete circulation of the *Shifā'* in Andalusia.
- 47 Averroes, *Epitome of the Physics* (Averroes, *Al-Jawāmi' fī l-falsafa*, 56.11–14): "I do not understand Ibn Sīnā's contention that circular motion is not in space at all, but only in place. Most likely, by [saying] this he meant that [the object having circular motion] passes from a place to another without changing space in its entirety. If that is what he meant, it is correct. If, on the other hand, he meant that its motion is in the very place that is the category [of place], that [contention] is not correct." For Avicenna's exposition of this doctrine in the *Shifā'*, see Hasnaoui, "Le statut catégorial."
- 48 Averroes, *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, book α, c. 15, Averroes, *Tafsīr mā ba'd at-ṭabī'at*, 47.5–13 (Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis opera cum Averrois commentariis*, 8:35D–E; Averroes Latinus, *In Aristotelis librum II*, 77.30–78.38): "As to his [Aristotle's] statement 'It occurs to some people to search for the witness of poets' (*Metaph. α. 3*, 995a7–8), this also occurs to them by nature. These persons are those whose imaginative faculty overcomes the intellectual faculty. Hence, we find that they do not assent to demonstrative things [i.e., facts proved by demonstration] if imagination does not accompany them. Therefore, they are unable to assent to the fact that there is no plenum, no void and no time outside the world, and to the fact that there are existents which are not bodies, and do not exist in space and time. This occurred to many investigators of Avicenna's philosophy [*kathīr mimman nazāra fī falsafat Ibn Sīnā*], who ascribed this doctrine to him. But the evidence of his statements [*al-zāhir min kalāmihī*] [attests] that the ascription of this doctrine to him is false. This occurs because of habitude, and because of lack of instruction in the science of logic" (emphasis added).
- 49 English translation in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 31–34 (slightly modified). Compare the translation by Di Vincenzo in *Avicenna, The Healing, Logic*, 7–11.
- 50 The sentence "We readily offered our consent to this and urged him to start [*an yaqā'a minhu l-btidā'*] with Physics" might be related to the *incepit* of Text 1 [c]: but in al-Jūzjānī's Introduction the noun *ibtidā'*—though stemming from the same root *b-d-*' of *yabtadi'u* in Text 3—appears to have a mere chronological connotation, without involving any idea of the new foundation of a discipline.
- 51 In the Autobiography, Avicenna reports that his first studies of natural philosophy and metaphysics were no longer supervised by a master, contrary to what had happened in the previous phase of his education when he learned logic under the supervision of the master al-Nātilī (Avicenna, *Life of Ibn Sina*, 24.6–7; on this passage, see Bertolacci, *Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 39–43). But even assuming access to Avicenna's Autobiography (not attested in Andalusia), the point Averroes wants to make in Text 1 [c] is different, since in this text what is at stake is not Avicenna's debt toward his immediate teachers (as in the Autobiography), but his attitude toward Aristotle as First Teacher (as in al-Jūzjānī's Introduction).
- 52 See Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 325–26.
- 53 See Bertolacci, *Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 319–20; Bertolacci, "Different Attitudes to Aristotle's Authority," 159–60.



- 54 I comprehensively discussed this topic in a paper presented at the SIEPM conference *Averroès, l'averroïsme, l'antiaverroïsme*, Geneva, October 4–6, 2006, “The ‘Andalusian Revolt Against Avicennian Metaphysics’: Averroes’ Criticism of Avicenna in the Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*.” See also the publications mentioned in notes 38 and 39 above.
- 55 See Hasse, *Success and Suppression*.
- 56 Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 111–12.
- 57 Bertolacci, “Latin Translation,” 505 and n. 41.

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# 19 Averroist by Contagion? Marsilius of Padua on *civilis scientia*

Joerg Alejandro Tellkamp

When Marsilius Mainardini, better known as Marsilius of Padua, completed his opus magnum, the *Defensor pacis*, in 1324, he should have known that Pope John XXII would condemn it, which is what happened in the bull *Quia iuxta doctrinam* of April 1327.<sup>1</sup> The main thrust of Marsilius' arguments was in fact designed to show that the papal claims of *plenitudo potestatis* in temporal and spiritual matters had to be rejected on account of his own special brand of Aristotelian political theory.<sup>2</sup> In particular, his peculiar understanding of the Aristotelian model of demonstration allowed Marsilius to establish a philosophical method to determine what is relevant for political theory and what is not.

In recent years, the political philosophy of Marsilius of Padua has drawn increasing scholarly attention, underscoring his significance for a full and proper understanding of the history of political thought.<sup>3</sup> The historical circumstances of his time shaped his way of thinking about political issues, yet at the same time his ideas seem strikingly modern. His conception of active political participation, which highlights the *valentior pars*, springs to mind, as does his acrimonious critique of papal power, which some see as pioneering modern secularism.<sup>4</sup> Marsilius' theory of law, for instance, strikes a chord with those familiar with the classics of modern political thought in that it emphasizes the rule of law. There can be little doubt that Marsilius is as pivotal as he was controversial, as is shown, for example, by Francisco Suárez' sharp dismissal of his theory of the Church, almost three hundred years after the *Defensor pacis* first entered the public scene.<sup>5</sup>

These historical considerations aside, most scholars agree that Marsilius set forth several stringent arguments by means of which he arrived at novel, if not radical, conclusions; the rejection of papal *plenitudo potestatis in spiritualibus* and *in temporalibus* is just one example.<sup>6</sup> Although one might be tempted to highlight the polemical character of the *Defensor pacis* as a "call to action,"<sup>7</sup> it is equally obvious that he is meticulous about theoretical decisions regarding the proper structure of his political thought. His main point of reference in that respect is Aristotle's *Politics*,<sup>8</sup> which he read in William of Moerbeke's translation, although he also acknowledges that there are specific issues of his time that "Aristotle could not perceive and neither has anyone else after him," such as the aforementioned strife with the Papal curia.<sup>9</sup>

In this chapter, I will focus on the philosophical method in the *Defensor pacis*, a topic that, despite the increasing number of publications on Marsilius, has not received the attention it deserves. I look most closely at the opening chapters of *Dictio* 1 of the *Defensor pacis*, and accordingly divide my study into three parts. In the first, I examine how Marsilius establishes the foundations of his political thought. I point out that his language mirrors the *Posterior Analytics*, in which only evident propositions and demonstration allow one to reach necessary conclusions. Here, I address what can rightly be described as evident propositions in the political realm; whether Marsilius had a solid grasp of Aristotle's theory of demonstration will be mentioned only in passing. In the second part, I show how Marsilius' idea of demonstration plays out in one specific case of his political theory, the role of priesthood, which he sees not as constituting a separate spiritual power, but as playing a political role in the *civitas*. Finally, I discuss why Marsilius, while not a "Political Averroist"—a claim which has already been thoroughly discredited—formulates a point of view that is compatible with some of Averroes' tenets.

### Marsilius' Philosophical Method

In chapter 1 of the first *Dictio*, Marsilius establishes the approach he will pursue to establish a theory which allows him to hold that the peace (*pax*) and tranquility (*tranquillitas*) of the city (*civitas*) are its proper and natural goals. A particularly striking feature is Marsilius' emphasis that the bases for a political theory are justified in terms of self-evident (*per se nota*) propositions and that those propositions, in turn, allow for a set of demonstrations. In the secondary literature, at least that of which I am aware, Marsilius' appeal to self-evident propositions and the language of demonstration has largely been overlooked. Presently, there are two main questions that must be addressed: Does Marsilius have a cogent theory of demonstration underpinning his general political theory? And what is the function of demonstration for articulating specific political ideas (such as law or citizenship)?

The first question is more challenging than the second, mostly because, apart from his explicit reference to the terms *demonstratio* and *per se notum*, little can be said as to whether Marsilius was thoroughly acquainted with the *Posterior Analytics*. There are no direct references to it in the text, yet his terminology indicates that he must have had at least a rudimentary understanding of it. Some basic assumptions in the *Defensor pacis* are congruent with *Posterior Analytics*, in that what constitutes the framework for living in society must be incontrovertibly true. In this sense, quoting Aristotle, political theory is, insofar as it is science, an "understanding [that] requires knowledge of the explanation, and is of what cannot be otherwise; hence demonstrative understanding proceeds from principles which are true, primitive, and immediate, and prior to, more familiar than, and explanatory of the conclusions."<sup>10</sup>



The principles of demonstration are self-evident. They cannot be proven, yet they serve as premises that allow one to syllogistically reach a conclusion that must be true. This much must have been clear to Marsilius; however, it is uncertain to what extent he was acquainted with the details of the long medieval discussion of the nature of demonstration.<sup>11</sup> All the same, it is very likely that Marsilius knew a Latin translation of *Posterior Analytics* (although it is not clear which one, and, judging from the way he uses the language of demonstration—for example, he sometimes talks of *quasi demonstrando*—the thrust of his arguments seems to have been more dialectical). His lack of a structured understanding of Aristotle's theory of demonstration, at least from what can be gathered from the *Defensor pacis*, may also be due to the fact that he could not rely on additional aids, such as Averroes' *Middle Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, to which he most probably lacked access. Translated into Latin by William de Luna in the thirteenth century, only one manuscript of the *Middle Commentary* is known to be extant, which strongly suggests that copies of this translation were not abundant in the fourteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

In any case, it is sufficient to state here that any explicit or implicit reference to *Posterior Analytics* stresses the stringency and necessity of the demonstrative arguments advanced. That is to say: whenever a conclusion is reached via demonstration, scientific knowledge is obtained. It seems, then, that this is what Marsilius has in mind when he thinks that Aristotle's philosophy allows one to formulate a science of civil life (*civilis scientia*), that is, political theory as one branch of scientific knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

The *Defensor pacis* contains enough evidence that Marsilius was a keen reader of Aristotle. Obviously, references to *Politica* are frequent and, apart from *Posterior Analytics*, he recurs to the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. The general tone of his philosophical argumentation relies largely on Aristotelian vocabulary—this becomes evident on multiple occasions, such as his idea of the *civitas*, the teleology of communal life, and hence the idea of the common good.

### **Demonstration**

Outside the context set forth by the *Politica*, in *Dictio* 1 Marsilius' arguments are frequently framed in the language of demonstration, for example, in the following:

But on the subject of living and living well or the good life in its first mode, sc. the worldly, and those things that are necessary for it, the glorious philosophers grasped almost the entire matter by demonstration.<sup>14</sup>

From the outset, Marsilius is intent on setting the right perspective for his analysis. In describing the methodology of *Dictio* 1, he states:

I shall demonstrate what I intend by sure methods discovered by human ingenuity, consisting of propositions that are self-evident [*per se notis*] to any mind not corrupted by nature, custom, or perverse affection.<sup>15</sup>

This remark shows his commitment to the language of demonstration as the foundation of political theory, based on self-evident propositions which are accessible to natural reason (*humano ingenio*). The idea contains a striking commitment within his political theory: no arguments are acceptable that are not compatible with that method. Marsilius takes it that propositions that refer to the spiritual life and salvation of the soul pertain not to demonstration, but to revelation. In explaining the proper mode of the institution of the monarchy, he highlights this point by saying that Moses' political power was the consequence not of social and historical processes, but of divine institution, something that, again, is only to be believed without demonstration. Hence:

On the subject of this cause and its free action [i.e., God designating Moses], to explain or say why it acts or has acted in this way or that way and not the other—we can say nothing of this through demonstration, but hold it by simple belief without reasoning.<sup>16</sup>

Instead of accepting what has been transmitted by Scripture as truth, Marsilius intends to show that there are true propositions, accessible by natural reason. The most fundamental of those *per se* true propositions is the following: "For the city is established for the purpose of living and living well."<sup>17</sup> To further explicate this affirmation, deeply rooted in an Aristotelian teleological worldview, he adds:

For this is, as we have said, that for the sake of which the city was established, as well as the necessary condition of all those things that take place and are brought about by human communication within it. Let us then lay this down as the fundamental principle of everything that we must demonstrate, a principle naturally held and believed and freely conceded by all: sc. that all men not deficient or otherwise impeded naturally desire a sufficient life, and by the same token shun and avoid those things that are harmful to them. Indeed, this principle is not only granted for man, but also for every kind of animal.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, if political theory is to make sense, one must examine why humans live with other people. Since no one naturally seeks companionship in order to become miserable, the opposite must be evidently true,

namely, that everyone lives in society so as to achieve the goal for which he or she lives—happiness. Living in peace, as opposed to living in turmoil and despair, explains the natural sociability of humans who desire to live in a perfect community, the *civitas*:

The fruits of peace and tranquility, then, are the best, as we said, while those of its contrary, strife, are unendurable harm. For this reason we must desire peace, seek to acquire it when we do not have it, keep it once acquired, and fight off its opposite, strife, with every effort. Individuals who are brothers to each other, and all the more so collective bodies and communities, are moreover bound to help each other towards these goals, from feelings of heavenly charity as much as the bond or right of human society.<sup>19</sup>

What is important here is to see how Marsilius relates the purpose of living in society with the overarching desire to live well, *vivere et bene vivere*.<sup>20</sup> For brevity's sake, I will only discuss what is compatible with the demonstrative method previously described, as opposed to other methods which pretend to account for the existence of society, such as the predominant interpretation of the Church that the proper end of societal life is found in the spiritual realm. The juxtaposition of the temporal with the spiritual domain and the exclusive political relevance of the former is at the heart of Marsilius' argument:

There are two modes, however, of this same living and living well that is appropriate for man: one temporal or worldly, but also another, which is customarily called eternal or heavenly. And it being that philosophers as a whole could not convincingly demonstrate the second mode, sc. the sempiternal, nor was it among things that are self-evident, therefore they did not trouble themselves to pass on whatever might be in order to it. But on the subject of living and living well or the good life in its first mode, sc. the worldly, and those things that are necessary for it, the glorious philosophers grasped almost the entire matter by demonstration. From this they concluded the necessity, for securing it, of the civil community, without which this sufficient living cannot be obtained.<sup>21</sup>

This corroborates what has already been suggested, namely that whatever is politically relevant has to be cognitively accessible in virtue of being true by means of demonstration. One might take this to imply that whatever cannot be demonstrated is *eo ipso* not politically relevant, in the sense of complying with the basic and *per se* evident meaning of that for which societies exist. The teachings of the Church (such as those put forward by Boniface VIII or John XXII) demand the possession of both the temporal and the spiritual sword, thus implying *plenitudo potestatis in temporalibus*;

Marsilius considers this position untenable because it can only be held based on a precarious interpretation of Scripture, leaving no room for debate based upon rational certainties.

### **Priesthood**

All of this has significant implications not only for understanding what should count as relevant in the *civitas* but also for the role of the Church and the priesthood. Despite secularist interpretations of Marsilius, he is not keen to dispense with the role of priests in communal life, in part because Aristotle himself recommended priests as a part of the *civitas*:

We shall say, then, that the parts or offices of the city are of six kinds, as Aristotle said in *Politics* VII, chapter 7: agriculture, manufacture, the military, the financial, the priesthood and the judicial or councillor. Three of these, viz. the priesthood, the military and the judicial, are parts of the city in an unqualified sense, and in civil communities they are usually called the notables.<sup>22</sup>

Priesthood is not only a requirement for people's livelihood; it is also an essential part of the city which empowers its citizens to live well. There seems, however, to be a contradiction in what Marsilius says about the political relevance of spiritual life (or rather its absence) and its agents, the priests. On the one hand, nothing of what they say as priests about eternal life can be interpreted in a way that would imply a political directive, because, as we have seen, neither the contents of revelation nor those of Scripture can be demonstrated. On the other, priests are essential for a structured community whose aim *in hac vita* is civil happiness and peace. Marsilius was obviously too much of a philosopher to contradict himself so naively. So what are the reasons for attributing a political role to priesthood? The answer to this question consists of a string of arguments, which I now discuss in general terms.

Marsilius is generally fond of exploring the meaning of the terms he introduces, and true to form, he asks what the meaning of "priest" (*sacerdos*) encompasses. Analogously to soldiers or artisans, whose profession is fundamentally described in terms of function, so too the priesthood is defined functionally. Speaking of function entails a kind of teleological language, a final cause. Hence Marsilius states:

What remains for this discussion is to say something of the final cause for the sake of which the true priesthood was instituted in communities of the faithful. For this cause is the tempering of those human acts that result from an imperative of cognition or desire, both immanent and transitive, inasmuch as it is on the basis of them that the human race is ordered towards the best life of the world to come.<sup>23</sup>

Priests essentially fulfill their task when they administer the sacraments and when they preach the Gospel, which cannot be done unless faithful people are present. This seems to mean that one part of the priest's function is social and communicative, and the message transmitted refers to how "to attain eternal salvation and avoid eternal misery."<sup>24</sup> The promises of eternal salvation or its opposite belong to the realm of revelation and Scripture, the content of which cannot be demonstrated; however, the psychological makeup of the faithful and the social relations they engage in can be grounded in demonstrative argumentation. That is to say, emotions, reasonings, and actions are *per se* social and political in nature, and the priest, by addressing issues pertaining to revelation, is at the same time able to attenuate and shape desires. In other words, that eternal life awaits us is not a certainty, but the call on the faithful to behave themselves in order to increase the probability of obtaining salvation has immediate consequences for how people relate to each other.

For instance, obeying the commandment "Thou shalt not steal," which has a divine origin, may or may not give us access to eternal life, but it cannot be disputed that people, being generally keen to keep their belongings, think that not stealing has a political function in that it helps keep the peace and ensure social unity. Priests have, then, a very important role to play in the *civitas*, because by transmitting divine messages, they "temper those human acts (both immanent and transitive) which result from desire and cognition, and by which man becomes well-disposed in his soul for the status of this present world as well as of that to come."<sup>25</sup>

### **Marsilius' Milieu and "Political Averroism"**

So far, I have tried to reach two conclusions: that the method of Marsilius' political philosophy is broadly based on the Aristotelian method of demonstration, and that this method excludes spiritual concerns from playing a substantial role in politics. From this perspective, inasmuch as priests administer sacraments and preach, Marsilius even admits that priesthood plays a social and political role in society. He contends that his philosophical method is not only consistent with this conclusion but demonstratively necessary. As a corollary, Marsilius is convinced that religious devotion has an important function in the fourteenth-century Western European society about which he theorizes. Therefore, the claim of laicism, such as that made by Georges de Lagarde in *La naissance de l'esprit laïque*, rests strictly speaking on the wrong premises, leading Lagarde to dismiss the social weight that, according to Marsilius, priests should have.

Marsilius' subordination of religion to demonstration in the political sphere has rarely received the recognition it deserves. Rather, the predominant approach of discussions about Marsilius has been to highlight

his similarity to and even dependence upon Averroes, who—for instance, in the *Decisive Treatise*—advances a theory similar to what we read in Marsilius. In fact, Averroes says:

since this religion is true and summons to the study which leads to knowledge of the Truth, we the Muslim community know definitely that demonstrative study does not lead to [conclusions] conflicting with what Scripture has given us; for truth does not oppose truth but accords with it and bears witness to it.<sup>26</sup>

The truth of religious belief, however, is not something that concerns Marsilius, because it does not pertain to a demonstrative model, which must rely on established facts and true propositions. Religious language is not grounded in this way, and Marsilius therefore dismisses it as irrelevant, at least for the purpose of articulating political theory.

That said, in the past many scholars were fascinated by the apparent resemblance between Averroes and Marsilius, which prompted them to coin the term “Political Averroism.” Étienne Gilson even boldly states that “the *Defensor pacis* is an example of Political Averroism as perfect as one might wish.”<sup>27</sup> More recently, Charles Butterworth, arguing against Gregorio Piaia’s contention that Political Averroism is nothing more than a historiographical myth,<sup>28</sup> tried to connect Marsilius’ idea of the ultimate end of political life as attainable *in hac vita* with Averroes’ teachings regarding the first practical principles, found in his *Commentary on Plato’s Republic*.<sup>29</sup> Butterworth also refers to the *Decisive Treatise* and *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* as possible sources for Marsilius. But for the one certain source, the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, Butterworth fails to show how it could have shaped Marsilius’ political philosophy. In fact, I will argue that metaphysical discussions do not *eo ipso* lead into political theories or that they afford the framework for such theories. Despite the shortcomings of Butterworth’s account, however, we should not exclude the possibility that the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* might, after all, have played a key role in developing Marsilius’ methodological approach—as regards what principles are at stake, what conclusions to draw from them, how to relate certain phenomena to those principles, and so on.

Without having the space to discuss every single exposition on the merits of the Political Averroism hypothesis in Marsilius, an article by Wolfgang Hübener stands out, not only because he dismisses—correctly—Lagarde’s thesis of a kind of political individualism in Marsilius, but because he recognizes the long commentaries on the *Metaphysics* and *De anima*, which are theoretical writings, as the foundation for Averroism. From here, Hübener takes the leap to declaring that metaphysical and psychological Averroism was in fact politicized.<sup>30</sup>

The thesis regarding Marsilius’ alleged Political Averroism rests on two assumptions. The first is that some writings by Averroes discuss practical

principles as well as the relation between philosophy and religion (Butterworth). The second is that Averroes' metaphysical and psychological thought, which was widely known and intensely discussed in the Latin West, is almost automatically translated into political theory (Hübener and Butterworth). I think that both assumptions are false, but that they are not trivially false, because there are similarities between what we know of Averroes and Marsilius that are too striking to be dismissed out of hand. In order to establish whether Marsilius owed essential aspects of his thought to Averroes, we should ask whether the *Defensor pacis* could be coherently read and understood without having to presuppose a direct influence by the Andalusian philosopher. The answer to that question is Yes, even though Marsilius does in fact reach conclusions that are deceptively similar to those of Averroes.

As for the question of a direct influence of Averroes' political and ethical writings, it is clear that, excepting the commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, none of them was translated into Latin before the fifteenth century. In fact, Marsilius could not have known the content of the *Decisive Treatise*, nor could any other Latin author in the early decades of the fourteenth century.<sup>31</sup> If there ever was a "Political Averroism" in Averroes, Marsilius would not have known that it existed.<sup>32</sup> This clearly puts the weight of the argument on the writings that he knew, mostly the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, and with it on the hypothesis of a politicizing role for Averroes' metaphysics. To prove this hypothesis true is a tall order, and I think it can be dismissed intuitively. Imagine that out of all of Immanuel Kant's works, posterity had access to only the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and not to his ethical or political writings. Would it be reasonable to assume that his political theory becomes deductively evident once you read his metaphysics? Probably not.

Again, Averroes developed his own political theory in his writings, but it did not have a direct impact on the relevant discussions in the Latin West, mainly because his political writings were not translated into Latin in the thirteenth or early fourteenth century. This is the reason why direct references to Averroes are virtually absent in Marsilius' writings. The only exception in the *Defensor pacis* is a direct quotation from the *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*, which Marsilius uses to show that the process of formulating laws is a collaborative and historical effort, analogous to the way that the arts evolve through time.<sup>33</sup> I quote it in full, because it shows that he uses it only to corroborate his stance and not to endorse Averroes' thought as such:

In this way, by men's mutual aid and by adding together things discovered later and things discovered earlier, all the arts and disciplines have been brought to completion. Aristotle makes this plain in figurative language as well, when he said (in the same place) on the subject of the discovery of music: "If there had been no Timotheus, we would



lack much melody: but if there had been no Phrynes, there would have been no Timotheus,” sc. so accomplished in melodies, if he had not been in possession of discoveries by Phrynes. Averroes, explaining these words in his Commentary, Book II, says this: “And what he” sc. Aristotle “says in this chapter is plain. For no one by himself can discover the productive and reflective” (i.e., theoretical) “arts in their greater part, because they are not brought to completion except by the aid given by a forerunner to a successor.”<sup>34</sup>

If, then, Marsilius is to be seen as following Averroes, or as developing his theory according to the general lines of Averroes’ philosophy, it is odd that he is mentioned only once. In contrast, Marsilius quite frequently refers to Cicero and, of course, to Aristotle, and this should indicate that his thought is Aristotelian *cum* Ciceronian, but not Averroist.

## Conclusion

In order to reassess Marsilius’ political philosophy, we should keep in mind that it emerged within the historical context of radical Aristotelianism, mostly in Paris—think of Marsilius’ proximity to Jean of Jandun. During and after his short tenure as rector of the University of Paris, Marsilius was immersed in an academic climate that thought highly of Averroes as a valuable vehicle for interpreting Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and *De anima*. I have tried to show that Marsilius might have been familiar with those sources, but that they could not reasonably have influenced his political thought directly. In the absence of Latin translations of texts such as the *Decisive Treatise* or the *Commentary on Plato’s Republic*, is there a way of being a political Averroist without Averroes?

Marsilius was, first and foremost, a very good reader of Aristotle’s *Politics*, which, as we know, had been around in Latin for approximately fifty years but which Averroes did not know. By medieval standards it was still a fresh text, which had not seen as many commentaries as other Aristotelian writings; this allowed Marsilius to use it in a way he thought was in accordance with the general tenets of Aristotle’s philosophy. In this respect, using—even if rather loosely—the theory of demonstration derived from *Posterior Analytics* allows for an approach accommodating Aristotelian political naturalism with the need to curtail papal claims of *plenitudo potestatis*, of which, by the way, neither Aristotle nor for that matter Averroes could have been aware.

It seems that an independent and powerful thinker like Marsilius chose to read the *Politica* as a text which provided his conceptual foundations, such as the organic structure of the *civitas*, the teleological impetus toward civil happiness, and the importance of limiting the scope of the discussion to what can be shown as evident to reason. Aristotle himself provided the basic framework and Marsilius managed to combine political theory with

the theory of demonstration, thus showing the value of philosophy as an autonomous discipline that did not require religious guidance but could stand on its own.

## Notes

- 1 Godthardt, "Life of Marsilius of Padua," 22–25.
- 2 Saying this is not uncontroversial, for some authors have held that Marsilius relies more heavily on Ciceronian and other non-Aristotelian sources. See, for instance, Syros, *Rezeption*, 63–65; Nederman, "Nature, Justice, and Duty." As will be shown, the foundation of Marsilius' theory would not make sense if not seen from an Aristotelian perspective.
- 3 See Koch, *Zur Dis-/Kontinuität*.
- 4 See Lagarde, *La naissance de l'esprit laïque*. The *Defensor pacis* had even been translated into English by 1535, thus serving the political purpose of attacking the Roman curia and helping to present a sort of ideological basis for the Henrician reform; see Stout, "Marsilius of Padua." On Marsilius' influence, mostly on medieval and early modern authors, see Izbicki, "Reception of Marsilius."
- 5 For instance, in Francisco Suárez, *Defensio fidei* 3. 6, 3, ed. Berton, 231: "In hac ergo quaestione fuit haeresis Marsilii Paduani, qui fore ante quingentos annos inter alias haereses dixit, Christum nullam jurisdictionem Ecclesiae suae, aut Episcopis, vel Romano Pontifici dedisse."
- 6 Others, such as Ockham or Dante, criticized it as well, but they fell short of such a profound reassessment of papal power as the one put forward by Marsilius.
- 7 Godthardt, "Life of Marsilius of Padua," 19–20.
- 8 See Nederman, *Community and Consent*, 144. In fact, Marsilius dedicates the book to Emperor Ludwig, whom he considers the antidote to "singularem hanc litis causam" (Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis* 1. 1, § 7, ed. Scholz, 8), the cause of which is Pope John XXII.
- 9 Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor pacis* 1. 1, § 7, ed. Scholz, 8: "Huius vero quam nec Aristoteles conspiciere potuit, nec post ipsum qui potuerit." The English translations in the present article are taken from Annabel Brett's illuminating rendering of Marsilius' text: Marsilius of Padua, *Defender of the Peace*, trans. Brett (here 9).
- 10 Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Barnes, 75. Even though Marsilius spent considerable time in Paris until 1326, it is not clear whether he received his master's degree in Paris or in Padua. See Godthardt, "Life of Marsilius of Padua," 14–15.
- 11 Serene, "Demonstrative Science."
- 12 See Dod, "Aristoteles Latinus," 75.
- 13 Marsilius, *Defensor pacis* 1. 1, § 3, ed. Scholz, 5.
- 14 *Ibid.* 1. 4, § 3, 17 (trans. Brett, 19).
- 15 *Ibid.* 1. 1, § 8, 9: "In prima quarum demonstrabo intenta viis certis humano ingenio adinventis, constantibus ex propositionibus per se notis cuilibet menti non corrupte natura, consuetudine vel affectione perversa" (trans. Brett, 9).
- 16 *Ibid.* 1. 9, § 2, 40: "De qua a siquidem causa et ipsius actione libera tradere seu dicere, cur sic aut aliter nec sic esse aut fuisse factum, per demonstrationem nec quicquam dicere possumus, sed simplici credulitate absque ratione teneamus" (trans. Brett, 44).
- 17 *Ibid.* 1. 5, § 8, 24: "Est enim civitas vivendi et bene vivendi gracia constituta" (trans. Brett, 27).

- 18 Ibid. 1. 4, § 2, 16: “Est enim, ut diximus, cuius gracia civitas instituta est et necessitas omnium que sunt et fiunt per hominum comunicacionem in ea. Hoc ergo statuamus tamquam demonstrandorum omnium principium naturaliter habitum, creditum et ab omnibus sponte cona cessum: omnes scilicet a homines non orbatos aut aliter impeditos naturaliter sufficientem vitam appetere, huic quoque nociva refugere et declinare; quod etiam nec solum de homine confessum est, verum de omni animalium genere” (trans. Brett, 18).
- 19 Ibid. 1. 1, § 4, 5: “Sunt igitur, ut diximus, pacis seu tranquillitatis fructus optimi, opposite vero Litis importabilia nocumenta: propter quod pacem optare, non habentes querere, quesitam servare, litemque oppositam omni conamine repellere debemus. Ad ea quoque singuli fratres, eoque magis collegia et communitates se invicem iuvare tenentur, tam superne caritatis affectu, quam vinculo sive iure societatis humane” (trans. Brett, 6).
- 20 Ibid. 1. 4, § 1, 16: “Quod autem dixit Aristoteles: vivendi gracia facta, existens autem gracia bene vivendi, significat causam finalem ipsius perfectam, quoniam viventes civiliter non solum vivunt quomodo faciunt bestie aut servi, sed bene vivunt, vacantes scilicet operibus liberalibus, qualia sunt virtutum tam practice, quam speculative anime” (trans. Brett, 6).
- 21 Ibid. 1. 4, § 3, 17: “Vivere autem ipsum et bene vivere conveniens hominibus est in duplici modo, quoddam temporale sive mundanum, aliud verum eternum sive celeste vocari solitum. Quodque istud secundum vivere, sempiternum scilicet, non potuit philosophorum universitas per demonstrationem convincere, nec fuit de rebus manifestis per se, idcirco de traditione ipsorum que propter ipsum sint, non fuerunt solliciti. De vivere autem et bene vivere seu bona vita secundum primum modum, mundanum scilicet, ac de hiis, que propter ipsum necessaria sunt, comprehenderunt per demonstrationem philosophi gloriosi rem quasi completam. Unde propter ipsum consequendum concluderunt ipsi necessitatem civilis communitatis, sine qua vivere hoc sufficiens obtineri non potest” (trans. Brett, 19).
- 22 Ibid. 1. 5, § 1, 20: “Partes seu officia civitatis sunt sex generum, ut dixit Aristoteles 7<sup>o</sup> Politice, capitulo 6<sup>o</sup>: agricultura, artificium, militaris, pecuniativa, sacerdocium et iudicialis seu consiliativa. Quorum tria, videlicet sacerdocium, propugnativa et iudicialis, simpliciter sunt partes civitatis, quas etiam in communitatibus civilibus honorabilitatem dicere solent” (trans. Brett, 22).
- 23 Ibid. 1. 6, § 1, 28–29: “Dicere de causa finali propter quam fuit verum sacerdocium in communitatibus fidelium institutum. Est enim hec moderatio humanorum actuum imperatorum per cognitionem et appetitum, tam immanencium quam transeuncium, secundum quod ex illis ordinatur genus humanum ad optimum vivere venturi seculi” (trans. Brett, 31).
- 24 Ibid. 1. 6, § 3, 31 (trans. Brett, 35).
- 25 Ibid. 1. 6, § 8–9, 32–33: “Sacerdotalis igitur finis est hominum disciplina et erudicio de hiis que secundum evangelicam legem necessarium est credere, agere vel omittere propter eternam salutem consequendam et miseriam fugiendam. In hoc autem officium convenienter veniunt omnes discipline humano ingenio adinvente, tam speculative quam active, humanorum actuum moderate tam immanencium quam transeuncium, ab appetitu et cognitione proveniencium, quibus bene disponitur homo secundum animam pro statu tam presentis seculi, quam venturi” (trans. Brett, 35).
- 26 Averroes, *On the Harmony*, trans. Hourani, 50. As this work is usually referred to as the *Decisive Treatise*, I will do so as well.
- 27 Gilson, *La philosophie*, 691–92, quoted in Piaia, “Averroïsme politique,” 298.
- 28 Piaia, “Averroïsme politique.”
- 29 Butterworth, “What Is Political Averroism,” 243.

- 30 Hübener, “Unvorgreifliche Überlegungen,” 226: “Strukturell bleibt sie [die politische Philosophie des Marsilius] jedoch dem Averroismus verpflichtet und könnte daher ebensogut als Politisierung des metaphysischen Averroismus angesehen werden.”
- 31 For a list of the texts by Averroes translated into Latin and their respective dates, see Daiber, “Lateinische Übersetzungen arabischer Texte.”
- 32 The case of the *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Hermannus Alemannus in the early thirteenth century, could pose a problem to my interpretation, but there is no indication in the *Defensor pacis* that Marsilius knew it.
- 33 Scholz identifies two indirect references in chapters 15, § 5 and 17, § 9; see Scholz, “Einleitung,” lxii. Those references are, however, hard to corroborate.
- 34 Marsilius, *Defensor pacis* 1. 11, § 3, ed. Scholz, 56: “Sic ergo per auxilium hominum invicem et addicionem posterius inventorum ad inventa prius receperunt omnes artes et discipline complementum. Quod figuraliter eciam declarat ibidem Aristoteles circa musice invencionem, cum dixit: *Si Timotheus non fuisset, multam melodiam non haberemus; si autem Phrynys, Timotheus non fuisset, ita perfectus scilicet in melodiis, nisi habuisset prius inventa per Phrynem. Que verba exponens Averroys 2<sup>o</sup> Commento, sic ait: Et quod dicit in hoc capitulo, Aristoteles scilicet, manifestum est. Nullus enim potest invenire per se artes operativas aut considerativas, id est speculativas, in maiori parte, quia non complentur, nisi per iuvamentum prioris ad sequentem*” (trans. Brett, 59–60).

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## 20 Some Choice Words

### Al-Ṭūsī's Reconceptualization of the Issue of the World's Age

*Jon McGinnis*

When it comes to the issue of the world's age, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201–1274 CE) is less an innovator and more a defender and amender. He defends the world's eternity, or at least its temporal infinitude, primarily against the philosophically engaged Ash'arite theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1150–1210) and does so by amending the thought of the theologically sensitive philosopher Ibn Sīnā, or Avicenna (980–1037). While al-Ṭūsī's defense and emendations are intended to be in the spirit of Avicenna, one cannot help but feel, at times, that they equally would have perplexed and even pained the Sheikh rather than always pleased him. To bear out the thesis that there is a stark difference between the philosophies of Avicenna and al-Ṭūsī, in this chapter, I consider the theory of action that al-Ṭūsī develops in critiquing al-Rāzī. Particularly, I consider the action theory that emerges in response to the position that the very being of the Necessary Existent in Itself, that is, the deity, necessitates the eternal existence of the world. A standard objection to this position, which is identified as that of the philosophers and particularly that of Avicenna, is that creation becomes little more than an act of nature rather than a volitional act issuing from divine free will.<sup>1</sup> The historical Avicenna had anticipated the objection and had a compatibilist response: an action can be necessary and still volitional.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, al-Ṭūsī's Avicenna is a free-will libertarian—an action is free only if the agent could have acted otherwise.

In the hope of providing a relatively well-rounded account of al-Ṭūsī's action theory, I look both at one of his philosophical texts, his commentary on Avicenna's *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* (Pointers and Reminders), and at one of his theological texts, his commentary on al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-muta'akhhirīn min al-ḥukamā' wa-l-mutakallimīn* (A Summary of the Thought of Ancient and Modern Philosophers and Theologians), the relevant passages of which I have translated and include as an appendix at the end of this chapter. In the first section of this study, I begin with how al-Rāzī frames the issue of the world's age in the *Muḥaṣṣal* in terms of different modes of causation, whether material, formal, efficient, or final. I focus on the arguments based upon efficient and final causality and al-Rāzī's charge that the philosophers' position

makes God act of necessity and thus strips the deity of free will. While al-Ṭūsī's immediate responses to al-Rāzī are brief and seemingly weak, he significantly develops his thoughts later in the *Muḥaṣṣal* commentary, as well as in his *Ishārāt* commentary. I consider these developments in the second section. Specifically, al-Ṭūsī clarifies the necessity of God's creation of the world and argues that the theologians are likewise committed to a similar form of necessitation. He thereafter clarifies the notions of a sufficient reason (*murajjih*) and a choosing agent (*mukhtār*) and argues that it is only the philosophers' position that makes God's action one of free choice rather than a mindlessly random act. I then return to al-Rāzī's critique of the philosophers' position concerning the age of the world and al-Ṭūsī's rejoinders in the third section, now in light of al-Ṭūsī's developed action theory. Therein, I argue that al-Ṭūsī's seemingly weak arguments are, in fact, quite strong. The final section looks at al-Ṭūsī's libertarian theory of divine action in light of certain arguments that Avicenna presented, which suggest that a choosing agent is always a composite and so cannot be the absolute one and simple deity required both by Avicenna and al-Ṭūsī's philosophical theology and by traditional interpretations of monotheism more generally. Al-Ṭūsī, I maintain, does have the philosophical wherewithal to sidestep Avicenna's argument. The result is that al-Ṭūsī reconciles two seemingly incompatible positions, namely God is absolutely simple and yet chooses to create—although, admittedly, his position requires one to accept a principled agnosticism about God's reason for creating. In the end, what emerges is a theory of action that, while Avicennian in its beginnings, is uniquely Naṣirean, that is, al-Ṭūsī's own, in its end. Moreover, it is this new Naṣirean position that reshapes the way the issue of the world's age is treated in the Islamic East thereafter. Indeed, it is a position still worth considering today.

### **Al-Rāzī against the Philosophers on the Age of the World**

Al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal* is a summary of the thoughts of both ancient and contemporary philosophers and theologians. In it, al-Rāzī introduces and critiques the philosophers' arguments for the temporal infinitude of the world within the context of discussing the constitutive features (*muqawwimāt*) of body, that is, the causes of a body's existing.<sup>3</sup> The philosophers' general strategy, according to al-Rāzī, is to note that whatever is temporally generated (*muḥdath*) requires four distinct causes, and, regardless of how one construes those causes, the world must be eternal, or so claim the philosophers. The four causes are just those of Aristotle: matter and form, as well as the agent who produces the action and the end for the sake of which the agent acts. Additionally, al-Rāzī, following the philosophers, defines an action as temporally generated, just in case it comes to be at some moment prior to which it did not exist.



While al-Rāzī presents and rejects the philosophers' arguments from all four forms of causation, I focus here exclusively on the arguments drawn from the agent and end of a purportedly temporally generated world. Al-Rāzī sets up the philosophers' arguments from these two forms of causation as a dichotomy: either the agent who creates the world is one who acts by choice (*mukhtār*), and so acts for some end, or it does not act by choice, but by the necessity of what it is (*mūjib li-dhātihī*). Al-Rāzī then asserts that the philosophers take the following premise as a simple given: whatever acts by choice must necessarily have some preponderant cause or sufficient reason (*murajjih*) for choosing to act at the moment that it does and not earlier or later. Call this premise the Principle of Sufficient Reason.<sup>4</sup> The philosophers then simply deny that, in the case of God, there could ever be any sufficient reason for the deity's choosing to go from not creating to creating. For, either this sufficient reason perfects something in God, and so God was deficient in some respect (obviously heresy) or that sufficient reason is some distinctive feature existing in a nonexistent moment, which is absurd. Thus, the deity must act from the necessity of what God is, given the initial dichotomy. Since God is eternal, God then must act eternally, and so must bring about an eternal effect, namely, a cosmos that has no first moment before which it did not exist.

Al-Rāzī's own position is that God is an agent who acts by choice, and he uses two arguments found already in al-Ghazālī (ca. 1058–1111) to undermine the philosophers' argument here.<sup>5</sup> The first is an *ad hominem* argument against the philosophers. The philosophers cannot gainsay that heavenly bodies are situated in the celestial spheres in positions that seemingly could have been different, notes al-Rāzī. Moreover, he continues, neither can they deny that the celestial spheres rotate in certain directions that, again, seemingly could have been different from what they are.<sup>6</sup> For example, there could have been different constellations of stars than there in fact are, or the heaven's apparent diurnal rotation could have been eastwardly rather than westwardly. The criticism now continues: the divinity either had a sufficient reason for specifying these seemingly arbitrary features of the cosmos or it did not. If God did not have a sufficient reason, then the Principle of Sufficient Reason is not necessary, and the philosophers' argument does not succeed. As I explain later, God, in this case, would not act volitionally but randomly. If the divinity did have a sufficient reason, then it acts by choice. In that case, God need not act by the necessity of what he is, and so again the philosophers' argument does not succeed.

Al-Rāzī's second response to the philosophers' argument—the one that he considers the real response (*al-jawāb al-ḥaqīqī*)—is that God's will (*irāda*) is associated with temporally generating the world at the precise moment that the deity generates it. The very nature of the will is such that it can choose without a sufficient reason acting as its final end, or so claims al-Rāzī. In the words of al-Ghazālī, whom, again, al-Rāzī is echoing here:

“The world temporally came to be through an eternal will [*irāda qadīma*] that decreed its existence at that moment at which it came to exist.”<sup>7</sup> As for the nature of will, which both al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī adopt, the words of the former are again insightful: the will is “an attribute whose character is to distinguish/specify [*tamyīz/takhṣīṣ*] something from its like” and “pure will and choice is something that does away with purpose,” that is, it does away with a reason or end (*mujarrad al-irāda wa-l-ikhtiyār al-munfakk ‘an al-gharaḍ*).<sup>8</sup> For both Ash‘arite theologians, an agent does not always need a sufficient reason, that is, something that gives greater weight (*murajjih*) to a decision, in order to act. Some actions are just the result of sheer will.

Al-Ṭūsī’s immediate responses to these two objections, at least on the face of it, seem weak as well as irrelevant to the issue of agency and choice, which underwrites al-Rāzī’s comments. Thus, against the first objection, namely that the specification of the placement of the various heavenly bodies and their motions appears random and so without some sufficient reason, al-Ṭūsī merely says, “[the objection] is useless because in the case of existing things one can say that the sufficient reason exists but is unknown, whereas in the case of nonexistent things that is impossible.”<sup>9</sup> Al-Ṭūsī’s response seems little more than a bold assertion that, on the one hand, a sufficient reason must exist in the one case despite the absolute lack of evidence for what that reason might be, while, on the other hand, it is impossible that such a reason exists for an apparently structurally identical case. Al-Ṭūsī’s comments certainly feel like special pleading.

Al-Ṭūsī’s response to al-Rāzī’s second objection seems to fare no better. Again, al-Rāzī’s claim is that the nature of the will is such that it can choose among indiscernible things, in this case among indiscernible possible moments at which to temporally create the world. Al-Ṭūsī objects that the response is “a pretension for lack of argument.”<sup>10</sup> The remainder of al-Ṭūsī’s comments, then, focuses exclusively upon the ontological status of nonexistent moments. It now would seem that al-Ṭūsī has just missed al-Rāzī’s point that the divine will can choose among various possible, and so nonexistent, indiscernible moments at which to create, since for al-Rāzī, following al-Ghazālī, the will, by its very nature, purportedly is something that can choose among indiscernibles without having any end, purpose, or reason in sight for choosing.

Despite the ostensible weaknesses of al-Ṭūsī’s two responses, I argue that they are in fact much stronger than they first appear. Their strength is apparent, however, only once one sees them against the background of al-Ṭūsī’s own rather novel theory of action. To get into that theory, we must now turn to al-Ṭūsī’s commentary on Avicenna’s *Ishārāt*.

### **Al-Ṭūsī’s Theory of Action**

Al-Ṭūsī’s *Hall Mushkilāt Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-Tanbīhāt* (The Solution of the Problems of the Book of Pointers and Reminders) is as much (if not more

so) a response to al-Rāzī's commentary on Avicenna's *Ishārāt* as it is a commentary on the Sheikh's own work. In al-Rāzī's commentary on *namaʿ* 5.3 of the *Ishārāt*, when discussing the created order's causal dependence upon God, The Eminent Commentator (*al-fāḍil al-shāriḥ*), that is, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, distinguishes between the philosophers and the theologians. His distinction is that the theologians believe that God acts by choice (*fāʿ il mukhtār*), whereas the philosophers believe that God acts out of necessity (*ʿalā wujūb*), namely through the necessity of what God is, and so without choice.<sup>11</sup> Al-Rāzī is responding to Avicenna's claim that creation continuously depends upon God, because the world is merely possible in itself. As such, it is continuously in need of a cause for any necessity or actuality it has. In contrast, al-Rāzī maintains that the world's dependency is due to its being temporally generated. Still, maintains al-Rāzī, this difference is merely verbal (*fī lafẓī*), since both agree that the world's existence is dependent upon God.<sup>12</sup> The real difference between the philosophers and theologians, according to al-Rāzī, is that the philosophers all agree that the efficient cause of the world does not act by choice but instead acts out of necessity, whereas the theologians make God act by choice and so ensure God's free will. Add to this substantive difference the closely aligned one that the philosophers held that creation is necessarily eternal, whereas the theologians held that creation is necessarily temporal, and the positions of the philosophers and theologians seem all but diametrically opposed.

Thus, it comes as no little surprise that al-Ṭūsī argues that the philosophers' and theologians' positions are fundamentally the same, albeit differing in one (significant) detail. The theologians, according to al-Ṭūsī, hold, on the one hand, that *if God chooses to create, then of necessity God creates temporally* given the purported impossibility of an infinite regress. The philosophers, on the other hand, hold that *if God chooses to create, then of necessity God creates eternally* given the nature of divine unity and simplicity. In both cases, on al-Ṭūsī's analysis, God chooses whether to create or not to create—so there is choice—and in both cases, the choice to create imposes a necessity on the mode of creation, whether necessarily temporal or necessarily eternal—and so there is necessity. Al-Ṭūsī's observation about al-Rāzī's distinction between the theologians and the philosophers is novel and, I believe, marks a major reorientation of the issue of God's agency with respect to the world. Let us, then, consider it more deeply.

If al-Ṭūsī's claim is correct, then al-Ṭūsī has undermined one of the theologians' key rhetorical objections to an eternal creation. The objection I have in mind is none other than that the philosophers' position seemingly renders God as little different from a natural force, like gravity, that acts without volition. Additionally, if this analysis is correct, it suggests that al-Ṭūsī has an action theory very distinct from Avicenna's (or at least the traditional reading of Avicenna).<sup>13</sup>

In his *Metaphysics*, Avicenna distinguishes among actions that are intentional (*ʿalā sabīl al-qaṣd*, by which I take him to mean actions by choice),

actions that are by nature (*'alā sabīl al-ṭab'*), and finally acts of the will (*irāda*), that is, volitional actions.<sup>14</sup> The hallmarks of volitional action for Avicenna are: (1) that the agent is an intellectual being (*'aql*), (2) that the agent knows that the action proceeds from it (*dhāt ya'lamu mā yaṣḍuru 'anhi*), and (3) that the agent consents (*riḍā*) to the action. Volitional actions, thus, are intended to stand between intentional actions—that is, actions that are not necessary but involve a choice among possible options—and actions of nature—that is, actions that are necessary but do not involve a rational agent and consent. In short, Avicenna has a compatibilist theory of action in that God freely wills the creation of the world, even though the deity cannot choose otherwise.

In contrast, al-Ṭūsī maintains that God *could choose to do otherwise*. God could choose not to create at all. Consequently, for al-Ṭūsī God is an agent who acts by choice, even if God has no choice as to the mode of that action, that is, the action must be eternal, if the deity so chooses to act. In effect, al-Ṭūsī concedes to the theologians that free will requires options, and thus he has a libertarian theory of action that contrasts with Avicenna's compatibilist theory. Let me set aside the issue of whether al-Ṭūsī's reading is a faithful interpretation of the historical Avicenna and instead consider al-Ṭūsī's arguments on their own merit. The question is whether al-Ṭūsī can make sense of a libertarian theory of divine action within the general Avicennian framework that he adopts. I believe that he can and indeed does so. His strategy involves three steps: first, motivate a Principle of Sufficient Reason; second, criticize the theologians' theory of the will; and third, provide an analysis of the proper object of choice.

As for the first step, namely to motivate the Principle of Sufficient Reason, al-Ṭūsī notes the following in his comments on *namaṭ* 5.10 of the *Ishārāt*:

That which is temporally generated is not something necessary and thus it is something possible. In order for one of two extremes—namely, the existence or nonexistence of what is possible—to carry greater weight [*tarajjuh*] than the other, it needs a cause that gives greater weight [*'illa murajjihā*] to that extreme. This is a primitive judgment [*ḥukm awwālī*] even if at times the intellect can lose sight of it.<sup>15</sup>

If the Principle of Sufficient Reason is a first principle, as al-Ṭūsī claims, then in principle it need not nor even can be demonstrated. That is because one of the requirements of a first principle is that it is immediate. That is, there is no middle term that links the subject and the predicate of the principle such that it could be the conclusion of a demonstration. Al-Ṭūsī notes, nonetheless, that there are non-demonstrative ways of motivating the Principle of Sufficient Reason. In the *Ishārāt* commentary, he

mentions proofs by examples, although he feels no need to provide such examples, either there or in his *Muḥaṣṣal* commentary. Still, in his commentary on the *Muḥaṣṣal*, he suggests one non-demonstrative proof for the Principle of Sufficient Reason. To deny the Principle, he says, simply leads to absurdity (*maḥāl*).<sup>16</sup>

Al-Ṭūsī's observation occurs within the context of commenting the following claim from al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal*. Al-Rāzī writes:

Of the one who acts by choice, it turns out true that there is the giving of greater weight to one of two possibilities over the other without something giving greater weight [*al-mukhtār yaṣiḥḥu minhu tarjīḥ aḥad al-jā'izayni 'alā l-ākhar lā li-murajjih*].<sup>17</sup>

Al-Rāzī's general idea is that the will alone can choose among options without having a reason for choosing the option that it does. The position is again close to that of al-Ghazālī's account of will. For both theologians, an agent does not always need a sufficient reason, that is, something that gives greater weight (*murajjih*), in order to act. Some actions are just the result of sheer will, and, indeed, it is the very nature of the will simply to choose with or without a reason.

Al-Ṭūsī complains that such a claim simply cannot be conceded without absurdity. What is the absurdity? Al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī assert as true that there can be a *tarjīḥ* without a *murajjih*. I believe that one can get a sense of al-Ṭūsī's concern if one translates these terms into the language of sufficient reason. Al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī's claim, then, would be that there is a *giving of a sufficient reason* without there being a *sufficient reason*. Such a claim is tantamount to asserting simultaneously both that there is a sufficient reason for doing *x* and that there is not a sufficient reason for doing *x*. The claim is absurd, because it implicitly involves a contradiction. If al-Ṭūsī is correct, this argument explains why the Principle of Sufficient Reason, namely that for every action proceeding from a choice there must be a reason for that action, is a *first* principle.

The second step in al-Ṭūsī's strategy to show that God chooses necessarily to create from eternity is to undermine the theologians' theory of the nature of the will. He provides his critique in the same place that we have been considering. Now he writes:

The one that acts by choice [*mukhtār*] is the one whose action follows owing to its will and reason [*dā'i*], not that the action occurs from it by chance. The reason is enough to give the greater weight.<sup>18</sup>

Choosing requires two things for al-Ṭūsī, both a will to act and the reason for acting. In the *Ishārāt* commentary, al-Ṭūsī insists that the reason for acting must be other than the will itself, since the will might or might not have a reason to act.<sup>19</sup> Thus, if the will were identical with the reason,

as the theologians seemingly imply, the will might be and not be itself, which is clearly absurd. Thus, for the theologians to maintain that the will can choose independent of a reason is to fail to understand the nature of the will (or at least the nature of the will as al-Ṭūsī understands it). For al-Ṭūsī, then, there is no willing without a reason, for the reason is precisely what gives one of the possibilities the greater weight such that it is chosen rather than another, in accordance with the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

Both al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī had denied just this claim based upon a thought experiment, which supposedly shows that even humans can choose among indiscernibles without having a sufficient reason. The thought experiment is well known. A hungry man is presented with two indiscernible pieces of food, palm dates in al-Ghazālī's text and rounds of bread in al-Ṭūsī's, and al-Rāzī mentions a thirsty man presented with indiscernible cups of water.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the setup, the presumption is that the man chooses one of the indiscernible objects without having a reason for choosing it over the other. The purpose of the thought experiment is to show that it belongs to the very nature of the will to choose in the absence of a sufficient reason. One simply can will an action based upon the very power of the will itself.

Al-Ṭūsī again knows this thought experiment, mentioning it in both his commentary on the *Ishārāt* and on the *Muḥaṣṣal*, and wants to resist the conclusion of the theologians concerning what it purportedly tells us about the nature of the will.<sup>21</sup> He does so by distinguishing between *giving greater weight* (*tarjīh*) and *carrying greater weight* (*tarajjuh*). The distinction, as I understand it, is that *carrying greater weight* refers to some feature of the object chosen itself, while *giving greater weight* refers to the reason that the agent has for choosing. The reason might refer to some choice-worthy feature of one of the objects, but it equally might refer to something about the choosing agent. In other words, *giving greater weight* simply states without qualification that there is a reason for choosing the object without specifying where that reason lies, whereas *carrying greater weight* introduces the qualification that it is something about the object itself that specifies why it is chosen.

The theologians' thought experiment gets its purchase, because one does not know which object *carries the greater weight*; however, not knowing which object carries the greater weight does not prove that what *gives the greater weight* does not exist. Indeed, al-Ṭūsī asserts that if the hungry man's action is truly volitional, then one necessarily knows that a sufficient reason exists, based upon the Principle of Sufficient Reason. The thought experiment is perplexing, says al-Ṭūsī, precisely because, based upon the Principle of Sufficient Reason, one knows necessarily that some reason *gives greater weight* for choosing one piece of food over another, and yet what it is about the chosen object that *carries the greater weight*, if anything, is unknown. In other words, one knows that a willful, choosing agent must have some reason for choosing one object over the other, but

there is nothing about the object that the agent ultimately chooses that appears to be a reason for choosing it. In the case of the hungry man, al-Ṭūsī continues, should he take one piece of food without any reason giving greater weight, the action would be wholly by chance (*bi-l-ittifāq*). In his commentary on the *Ishārāt*, he similarly asserts that such an action is mindlessly random (*juzāf*) rather than a volitional choice.<sup>22</sup>

In short, for al-Ṭūsī the following three notions are all distinct things: (1) an agent's having no reason for choosing one object over another (and so acting by chance), (2) an agent's having a reason for choosing a given object (and so *giving* greater weight to that object), and (3) the object's providing that reason (and so *carrying* greater weight). Consequently, one can know that (2) is true, namely the agent has a reason to act, while not knowing whether (3) is true, namely that there is something about the object that is the reason for choosing it, for the agent may have a reason for choosing the object, independent of some good-making feature about the object itself. Indeed, in principle one might even know that (3) is false, while knowing that (2) is true. Call this second step of al-Ṭūsī's action theory the distinction between *carrying* greater weight and *giving* greater weight.

Providing an analysis of the object of choice is the third step in developing al-Ṭūsī's libertarian theory of action. Admittedly, al-Ṭūsī's comments on this point are sketchy and have to be abstracted from his criticisms of al-Rāzī's responses to the argument for the eternity of the world based upon efficient and final causality.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, I shall be conservative in what I ascribe to al-Ṭūsī here. Still, as a minimum, al-Ṭūsī thinks that in order to be an object of choice, that object must exist in some way. As far as I know, al-Ṭūsī provides no argument for this thesis nor even states it as boldly as I just have; nonetheless, he vehemently criticizes al-Rāzī and the theologians' response to the philosophers precisely on the grounds that they make the objects of God's choice nonexistent.

Despite his lack of argument for this principle, I believe that one can motivate it by considering the theologians' own example. The theologians' thought experiment of the hungry man is only compelling because one is asked to imagine that the man *is presented* with two indiscernible, but existent, pieces of food. Now imagine a slightly different scenario in which the hungry man is asked which of two nonexistent pieces of food he would choose. The question seems perverse. If the hungry man made any choice at all in this latter scenario, it would be precisely because he imagines two pieces of food, in which case the imagined pieces of food, at the very least, exist in the mind (or more precisely in the estimative faculty for those like al-Ṭūsī who are working within an Avicennian psychological framework).<sup>24</sup> There simply cannot be a choice unless *there is* something to choose, where I take "there is" to indicate an existential quantification. There exists something to choose. Again, al-Ṭūsī does not make this final point about the existential status of objects of choice explicitly, although it



is implicit in his criticism of al-Rāzī's response to the philosophers on the world eternity. Call this third step of al-Ṭūsī's action theory the Existential Principle.

### **Al-Ṭūsī's Response to al-Rāzī**

One is now in a position to return to al-Ṭūsī's seemingly weak responses to al-Rāzī, which initiated this study. His responses actually have some bite, when considered within the context of al-Ṭūsī's theory of action just presented. Al-Rāzī's first objection to the philosophers' argument for the eternity of the world from divine agency noted that God's choosing the placement of the heavenly bodies and the direction of their motions appears just as random as the choice of the specific moment at which God purportedly chose to create. Al-Ṭūsī's response is that there is a sufficient reason for choosing the celestial configuration that is chosen, even if we do not know what that reason is, whereas this choice is impossible in the case of nonexistent moments at which to create.

Let us unpack this response. First, there are principled differences between the two cases. In the case of the specification of the heavenly bodies, the various possible objects of choice are discernible based upon real differences inherent in the configurations themselves, whether it be the placement of the planet or the direction of motion, etc. In contrast, moments considered just as moments are essentially alike; there is nothing inherently different about them. Any difference that might exist between moments is owing to something extrinsic to the particular moment *qua* moment. For instance, the difference might be owing to a given moment's relation to some other moment, e.g., one moment's being before or after another moment. Alternatively, the difference might be on account of the accidental content of the differing moments, that is, what happens to be going on during the moment, as, for example, this moment is different from that moment because in the former moment I am eating breakfast while in the latter moment I am eating lunch.

Returning to the principled differences between the configuration of the heavens and the purported moment of creation, different possible configurations of the heavens can be viewed as distinct *intrinsic properties* of the various imagined cosmoses. In other words, the heavenly bodies' having a given configuration is like my having the property of standing or sitting. I need never have existed, but given that I do exist, my being in an erect position as opposed to a bent position is a property intrinsic to me, inasmuch as it can be explained solely in terms of the relation of my constitutive parts. In contrast, the cosmos' having the property of coming-to-exist-at some moment to the exclusion of some other moment(s) seems to be an *extrinsic property*. That is, because the cosmos would have the property of coming-to-be-at  $t_x$  rather than at  $t_{x-n}$ , apparently because it has a certain relation to the specific moment,  $t_x$ . Now just as I cannot come-to-be-at

some location,  $l_x$ , without there being a space with a series of locations, which is extrinsic to me, so likewise something cannot come-to-be-at  $t_x$  without there being a series of moments, that is, time, that is extrinsic to what comes-to-be-at  $t_x$ .

We are now in a position to appreciate al-Ṭūsī's first response to al-Rāzī. Again al-Rāzī had claimed that the choice of one moment to create over another is analogous to the choice of one configuration over another possible one. Al-Ṭūsī responded, "with respect to existing things one can say in that case [that is, the configuration of the heavens], the sufficient reason is something that exists but is not known, whereas with respect to nonexistent things, that is impossible."<sup>25</sup> According to al-Ṭūsī's Principle of Sufficient Reason, assuming that the actual configuration that exists right now is the result of a volitional act of choosing, then there must be some reason that gives greater weight to this configuration rather than any other imagined configuration. Nonetheless, al-Ṭūsī's distinction between *giving* and *carrying greater weight* states that just because one configuration *is given* greater weight than the other, there needs to be no intrinsic good-making feature belonging to that configuration that itself *carries* greater weight so as to necessitate its being chosen. The reason for choosing the one configuration might lie with the agent. Thus, while one knows with certainty that one celestial configuration was given greater weight, since it exists right now, one may find nothing about it that carries greater weight such that it is itself the reason for choosing it. As al-Ṭūsī says, "the sufficient reason is something that exists but is not known."<sup>26</sup>

In contrast, in the case of choosing a moment at which to create, the moments, by the theologians' own concession, are nonexistent. Moreover, the cosmos' coming-to-be-at some specific moment is an extrinsic property, which itself exists only inasmuch as the series to which that property is related exists. Thus, no moment or property exists to *carry* greater weight nor to be *given* greater weight, but according to al-Ṭūsī's Existential Principle, a nonexistent can never be the object of choice. It would be like asking the hungry man to choose between two nonexistent and even non-imagined pieces of food. As al-Ṭūsī says, "with respect to nonexistent things, that is impossible."<sup>27</sup> In short, al-Ṭūsī's terse single-sentence response, I contend, actually carries one hell of a wallop, since it points to an essential disanalogy between the two cases.

One might want to object to al-Ṭūsī's final point, claiming that the theologians' moments do exist in some way, namely in the mind of God. Thus, God's specifying a particular moment to create is not subject to al-Ṭūsī's existential criticism. Such a suggestion leads one to al-Rāzī's "real response" and al-Ṭūsī's rejoinder. Al-Rāzī's real response again runs thusly:

That specification has an association [*ta'alluq*] of God's will (may He be exalted) to His temporally generating at that moment, where that

association, in our opinion, is necessary and so does not need something to give it greater weight.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, for al-Rāzī the sole explanation for God's creating at one specific moment rather than another is that the divinity wills to create at that moment.

Al-Ṭūsī's response again is that there simply is no argument here, which he then follows up with a discussion of the ontological status of moments. The reason that there is no argument here is that, according to al-Ṭūsī's action theory, a will alone is not sufficient for volitional action. The will must also have a reason to act. In the case of moments that do not exist concretely, there simply can be nothing about one moment that differentiates it from another. One might *give* greater weight to one thing over another, but that is only because there are two things between which the agent chooses. In the present case, there simply is nothing to which the agent can *give* a greater weight so as to choose it. As al-Ṭūsī notes, and mentioned when discussing extrinsic properties, what allows us to differentiate moments, so that there are two or more things, is their different content, that is, the various and different things that are going on in the world at those different moments. In the case where the world purportedly does not exist, different moments cannot exist. Al-Ṭūsī writes:

The correct answer to it is to say that the moments in which one seeks the sufficient reason are nonexistent, and so there is no distinction among them except in the estimative faculty. Judgments of the estimative faculty concerning things like that are unacceptable. The existence of time begins only with the initial existence of the cosmos and the rest of the existents' beginning to occur simply cannot be before the beginning of time's existence.<sup>29</sup>

Al-Ṭūsī's point is twofold. First, there simply cannot be the extrinsic property, coming-to-exist-at  $t_x$ , unless time already exists, and yet the theologians themselves deny that time exists in any ontologically robust sense "prior" to creation. Second, the existence that the theologians are ascribing to moments is nothing more than their imagined existence in the estimative faculty. Presumably, one is imagining moments laid out as on a number line, a swath of temporal vacua, as it were, and then God chooses one from among them. Setting aside the obvious fact that God does not have images in his "head," al-Ṭūsī's response is that there simply cannot be a sufficient reason to choose one imagined nonexistent moment at which to act over another imagined nonexistent moment. Again, it is analogous to asking our hungry man actually to eat one of the imagined rounds of bread in the scenario presented above.

Here, it is interesting to note that nothing about al-Ṭūsī's critique absolutely precludes God's creating at some first moment in the finite past, if

such an action is at all possible. I suspect that al-Ṭūsī thinks that it is impossible. Still, even allowing that it is possible, al-Ṭūsī's analysis shows that such an act could not be a volitional action, that is, an act of the will. That is because for al-Ṭūsī the will only acts for reasons, and the theologians have all but conceded that there is no reason for God's action. Thus, if al-Ṭūsī's theory of action is correct, the act of choosing among nonexistent moments could only result from some chance and mindlessly random action. Al-Ṭūsī has effectively turned one of the theologians' most damning criticisms against the philosophers—namely that the philosophers' God does not willfully create—against the theologians. It is now the theologians' God, acting by chance and randomly, who is not a willful agent.

### **Al-Ṭūsī and Avicenna on Divine Choice**

Al-Ṭūsī's response to the theologians is complete. The theologians complained against the philosophers that the latter's deity acts no differently from a force of nature and is hardly worthy of adoration. While Avicenna developed a compatibilist theory of action as a preemptive response to this objection, his unwillingness to give choice a role in his account (or at least not give it an explicit place in his theory of action) left that response unsatisfactory to many. In contrast, al-Ṭūsī does give choice an explicit role in his theory of divine action. Moreover, as he carefully analyzes and develops his action theory, with its account of the nature of the will and the place of the Principle of the Sufficient Reason, al-Ṭūsī argues that it is the theologians' conception of God that is unworthy of adoration, since God would act mindlessly. Still, the proverbial elephant in the room is whether al-Ṭūsī can make sense of a divine eternal choice in light of Avicenna's initial concern that choice would entail multiplicity in the deity, jeopardizing God's simplicity, a point that neither Avicenna nor al-Ṭūsī would concede.

My comments at this point are more programmatic than systematic, but I think that a case can be made in al-Ṭūsī's favor. Avicenna's original argument and criticism of divine choosing involve actions that are intentional (*'alā sabīl al-qaṣd*).<sup>30</sup> The rubbing point for Avicenna is that in an intentional action there is (1) the reason to act, which is some good in the intended object, (2) the action of acquiring that good for the agent's own self, and, finally, (3) the good acquired by the agent. Since these three things are different, they would require that the agent has three different facets, which is impossible for an agent who is absolutely simple in the way that Avicenna and al-Ṭūsī supposed the Necessary Existent in Itself to be.

The most important thing to note about Avicenna's argument is that the reason the intending agent chooses what it does is because that object is good. Presumably, it is the good of the object that carries the weight and so ultimately gives greater weight to choosing it rather than not choosing it. Al-Ṭūsī, as we have seen, distinguishes between giving greater weight

and carrying greater weight. Thus, while it is true for al-Ṭūsī that God has a reason for choosing to create over not creating, that reason needs not refer to anything about the created object itself, let alone about some good in creation. The reason that gives greater weight, then, is traced back to God rather than the object, albeit one does not know what that reason is. On al-Ṭūsī's account, then, God's choosing to create does not involve (1) some desired good in the object of choice, nor (2) the act of acquiring that good, nor, finally, (3) the good acquired. Thus, none of the three facets Avicenna identified in an intentional action appears in the divine act of choice as al-Ṭūsī understands it.

One might ask, then, "What is God's reason for creating?" Al-Ṭūsī, as we have seen, admits that although a choosing agent always acts for a reason, frequently we cannot identify the reason for that choice. Be that as it may, he continues, one cannot infer from our ignorance of what the reason for an action is to the assertion that the reason for the action does not exist, for that is an illicit inference from an epistemic fact to an ontological one. It is simply bad logic to argue from *x is not known* to *x does not exist*. Still, al-Ṭūsī's claim is not a mere appeal to ignorance either, for not knowing *what-x-is* is different from knowing *that-x-is* (or *that-x-exists*). His Principle of Sufficient Reason guarantees our knowledge that some reason exists.

An objector might complain that the concern about divine simplicity still looms large. That is because al-Ṭūsī affirmed against the theologians that the will and the reason that initiates a will are distinct things. Thus, it certainly appears that al-Ṭūsī's action theory commits him to God's having a will that is distinct from the divine reason to create. In that case, God is not absolutely simple but a composite of a sufficient reason and a will. While I am not immediately aware of any passage where al-Ṭūsī addresses this concern in either his commentary on Avicenna's *Ishārāt* or his summary of al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal*, he does suggest a response to it in *Rawḍa-yi taslīm* (Paradise of Submission).<sup>31</sup> The immediate context is whether one or many can be said to issue from God. Al-Ṭūsī notes that no matter how we consider this issue, we either deny divine simplicity or deny that God is the creator of all and knows all, all of which is heresy. Al-Ṭūsī's own position is that while one simply cannot ignore this issue without being unmindful of the deity, anything that a creature thinks or says will fall short of the divine reality.<sup>32</sup> This claim, however, is not merely a retreat into mysticism; rather, it is based upon a firm epistemic or psychological principle: whatever is known is known according to the mode of the knower. Thus, al-Ṭūsī writes:

Every creature speaks about [God], the Exalted, according to the existential rank that it has received from His exalted command, and in proportion to the existential traces of [God] which [the creature] witnesses in itself.<sup>33</sup>

He then continues that, because we humans have a composite nature, we can only ever see things in terms of multiplicity. This limit of our cognitive abilities, unsurprisingly, means no one can demonstrate a reason for God's creating that does not appear to give rise to multiplicity in the divinity.

Whatever one might think of al-Ṭūsī's analysis, it was certainly not a flash in the pan. Indeed, al-Ṭūsī's position came to be identified positively with that of the Ṣūfīs' position in contrast with the positions of either the theologians or the philosophers. For example, the fifteenth-century Ṣūfī scholar and poet 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī (1414–1492) writes about the debate over the age of the world and the divine creative act in his popular work *al-Durra l-fakhira* (The Precious Pearl) thus:

As for the Ṣūfīs, may God sanctify their souls, they allowed the dependence of an eternal effect to a choosing agent and combined an affirmation of choice with the belief in the existence of an eternal effect.<sup>34</sup>

Arguably a more significant effect of al-Ṭūsī's analysis is that in the post-classical period, the issue of the age of the world, which had so animated discussions of creation and the divine nature, became less and less heated. Philosophers and theologians alike began to take a more agnostic stance toward the once thorny question of whether God created the world temporally or eternally.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps in this respect, al-Rāzī's observation was spot on: the real issue between the theologians and the philosophers was less about the age of the universe and more about whether God acts of necessity or by choice. Al-Ṭūsī, thus, provided an account where one no longer had to choose.

Let me end on this observation: the result of al-Ṭūsī's argument on the later eastern Islamic world was not wholly unlike the effect of Thomas Aquinas' meta-argument on Latin Christendom.<sup>36</sup> By "Aquinas' meta-argument" I mean his proof that one could not demonstrate whether God necessarily creates eternally or necessarily creates temporally. For Thomas, and al-Ṭūsī would concur, the only action God necessarily undertakes is the willing of His own being; all other actions are a matter of God's choice to will or not to will it.

## Appendix

### Translations of Relevant Passages from al-Rāzī's *Muḥaṣṣal* and al-Ṭūsī's *Talkhīs Muḥaṣṣal*

(The pagination for al-Rāzī's base text is given in curly brackets, {}, while the page numbers for al-Ṭūsī's text are given in angle brackets, <>.)

{Rāzī, ed. Atay, 299}/<Ṭūsī, ed. Nūrānī, 205>

"The Philosophers' proof concerning the impossibility of the cosmos' temporal generation"

[Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī] said: The philosophers have said [that] everything that is temporally generated inevitably results from four causes {300}: the agent, the matter, the form, and the end. They said, "From these viewpoints we prove the impossibility of the cosmos' temporal coming to be."

From the perspective of the agent, it is because [even] if the cosmos were something that temporally comes to be, its producer would be eternal [literally, it would have an eternal producer]. In that case, the specification of the moment at which it temporally generates [the cosmos] either has a sufficient reason [*murajjih*, literally, something that give greater weight] or it does not. The first is dismissed as a matter of sheer denial, the distinction being just unintelligible with respect to [an eternal producer]. The second is dismissed owing to what [was said] previously, [namely] that it is absurd that the preference of one of two possible options over the other is without some sufficient reason. [. . .]

From the perspective of the end, it is that if what brings about the existence of the cosmos is something that chooses, then it inevitably has some end for bringing about the existence. In that case, it would be perfected by bringing about the existence, and so would have been essentially deficient. If it is not something that chooses, then it necessitates [the existence of the cosmos] essentially, and so from its eternity follows the eternity of the effect.

The answer to the first [namely from the perspective of the agent] is what we mentioned concerning the specification <of the cosmos' temporal coming to be at its particular moment like the specification> of the heavenly body by the particular position on the celestial sphere despite its being simple,<sup>37</sup> and the specification of one of the two portions of what is completed [*mutammam*]<sup>38</sup> by the specified thickness and the other portion by the thinness. <206>/302.

Furthermore, the real answer is that what is required for that specification is the association of the Most High's divine will to its temporal generation at that moment, and that association in our opinion is necessary and so is in no need of a sufficient reason. It is not said that the specification of the temporal generation at the particular moment demands distinguishing that moment from the rest of the moments, where this requires the moments' being existents before that temporal coming to be. Because we say that just as one moment may be distinguished from another, even if the one moment does not have another moment, so why is it not permitted that nonexistence is distinguished from existence without the existence of the moment? [. . .]

[The answer] to the fourth [namely the proof from the end] is that we shall prove that the Most High agent is one that chooses <if God all mighty wills>.<sup>39</sup>

I [i.e., Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī] say: the first skeptical remark is that the temporal generation of the cosmos at one moment to the exclusion of



another would require one of two equal things' carrying a sufficient reason [*tarajjuh*] over the other without something giving a sufficient reason. The answer is that it is like the specification of the heavenly body by one location on the celestial sphere to the exclusion of another location and the specification of the thickness of what is completed by one portion to the exclusion of another. [This response] is useless because with respect to existing things one can say in that case, the sufficient reason is something that exists but is unknown, whereas with respect to nonexistent things that is impossible.

His claim in the real answer—namely that the Most High's divine will <207> is associated with one of two moments necessarily without needing a sufficient reason—is a pretension for lack of argument. The objection to it is to claim that providing a sufficient reason demands that moments truly do exist. The response—namely that just as the distinction here does not require that the one moment have another moment, likewise in distinguishing nonexistence from existence does not require that they both have some moment—is not a response to it. It has passed right over the discussion that while two moments are two things not needing another moment, nonexistence and existence do need a moment other than them. The correct answer to it is to say that the moments in which one seeks the sufficient reason are nonexistent, and so there is no distinction among them except in the estimative faculty. Judgments of the estimative faculty concerning things like that are unacceptable. The existence of time begins only with the initial existence of the cosmos and the rest of the existents' beginning to occur simply cannot be before the beginning of time's existence. [. . .]

The fourth skeptical remark is that the action of one that chooses has some end by which the agent is perfected, and that <208> is absurd with respect to the reality of God [*haqq Allah*]. Nothing was needed against it but to say, "we will prove that the agent is one that chooses." The correct response to the opinion of some of the *mutakallimīn* is that the end here is the perfection of the action not the agent, while to the opinion of others of them it is that there is no end here. In the opinion of the philosophers, the end in this case is the agent itself because the Most High acts only for the sake of Himself and because He is above perfection.

This then is what the author mentioned in this chapter and the discussion about and against it.

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<251> [Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī] says in response to that [i.e., the philosophers' proof for the eternity of the world based upon the final cause], "we already proved that the one who produces the effect is an eternal craftsman acting by choice and that the one who acts by choice turns out to give greater weight to one of two possible things over another without having

a sufficient reason.” A note about [al-Rāzī's response]: for indeed up to now he has *not* proven that the one who produces an effect acts by choice, and will prove it later only based upon the temporal coming to be of the cosmos. Thus, if the cosmos' temporal coming to be is based upon [the effector's] acting by choice, then a circle follows.

Moreover, the pretension that “the one who acts by choice turns out to give greater weight to one of two possible things over another without having a sufficient reason” is not conceded. For the one who acts by choice is the one whose action follows his will and his reason for acting [*li-l-irādihī wa-l-dā'ihī*], not that the action occurs from him by chance. The reason to act is enough to give greater weight [to one of two possibilities]. The claim of the ancients, [namely] that one who is hungry chooses one of two equal rounds of bread without one of the two's carrying greater weight over the other, is rejected; for the ultimate goal of their discussion is that *giving* greater weight in an instance like that is unexplained [*ghayr ma'lūm*], and that does not prove that it does not exist. What is indeed perplexing, then, is that one of his reasons for acting did not *carry* greater weight than the remaining ones. The perplexity exists decidedly among many of those who act by choice despite its being self-evident that they judge that to carry greater weight without a sufficient reason is absurd. [. . .]



## Notes

- 1 See al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, ed. Marmura, disc. 3; al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt, namaṭ* 5. 3, ed. Najaf'zādah, 394–95; Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei* 3. 4. More recently, see Zedler, “Saint Thomas and Avicenna”; Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy*, 213; Leaman, *Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy*, 44; Kafrawī, “What Makes the Efficient Cause Efficient?” See Druart, “Al-Ghazālī's Conception of Agent,” for an excellent account of al-Ghazālī's formulation of this problem and his own theory of agency. For a view that denies that Avicenna's God creates of natural necessity, see Acar, *Talking about God*, ch. 3. A more recent discussion of this issue can be found in Kalin, “Will, Necessity and Creation”; although Kalin's focus is primarily on the creation account of Mullā Ṣadrā, in his section “Volition versus Necessity” he suggests that what he terms the necessitarian and libertarian views have more in common than previously has been appreciated. Finally, see Ruffus and McGinnis, “Willful Understanding,” for a presentation of Avicenna's action theory in light of this issue.
- 2 See Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, ed. Marmura, 9. 4 [2–4]; numbers in brackets refer to Marmura's paragraph divisions.
- 3 Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Atay, 299–302.
- 4 Richardson, “Avicenna,” established that Avicenna (and so by extension one can assume al-Rāzī and al-Ṭūsī too) had a well-developed theory of the Principle of Sufficient Reason.
- 5 Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, ed. Marmura, disc. 1 [48–64].
- 6 For an examination of this classic *kalām* argument, see Davidson, “Arguments.” Thanks to Nick Oschman for this reference.

- 7 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, ed. Marmura, disc. 1 [13].
- 8 Ibid., disc. 1 [45–46].
- 9 Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 206.
- 10 Ibid., 207.
- 11 Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, *namaṭ* 5. 3, ed. Najaf'zādah, 394–95; cf. al-Ṭūsī, *Hall*, ed. Āmulī, 646; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt*, ed. Dunyā, 3:69.
- 12 Al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, ed. Najaf'zādah, 394. Al-Ṭūsī's text reads *li-lafẓī*.
- 13 For a discussion of Avicenna's theory of action, with a gesture to al-Ṭūsī's action theory as well, see Ruffus and McGinnis, "Willful Understanding."
- 14 Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, ed. Marmura, 9. 4 [2–4].
- 15 Al-Ṭūsī, *Hall*, ed. Āmulī, 681; ed. Dunyā, 3:96.
- 16 Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 251.
- 17 Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Atay, 352; al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 251.
- 18 Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 251.
- 19 Al-Ṭūsī, *Hall*, *namaṭ* 5. 8, ed. Āmulī, 676; ed. Dunyā, 3:92.
- 20 Al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, ed. Marmura, disc. 1 [46]; al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, *namaṭ* 5. 12, ed. Najaf'zādah, 426–27; al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 251.
- 21 Al-Ṭūsī, *Hall*, *namaṭ* 5. 12, ed. Āmulī, 694; ed. Dunyā, 3:107–8; al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 251.
- 22 Al-Ṭūsī, *Hall*, *namaṭ* 5. 12, ed. Āmulī, 697; ed. Dunyā, 3:110.
- 23 Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 206–8; Al-Ṭūsī, *Hall*, *namaṭ* 5. 12, ed. Āmulī, 695–99; ed. Dunyā, 3:108–12.
- 24 For a discussion of the role of the estimative faculty in Avicennian psychology, see Black's now classic "Estimation (*wahm*) in Avicenna," and for the use of the estimative faculty specifically in thought experiments and a discussion of the "starving man" thought experiment, see McGinnis, "Experimental Thoughts."
- 25 Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 206.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Atay, 302; al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 206.
- 29 Al-Ṭūsī, *Talkhīṣ Muḥaṣṣal*, ed. Nūrānī, 207.
- 30 Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, ed. Marmura, 9. 4 [2]. For a discussion of Avicenna's argument, see Ruffus and McGinnis, "Willful Understanding," §3.
- 31 Al-Ṭūsī, *Paradise of Submission*, *taṣawwur* 3.
- 32 Ibid., *taṣawwur* 3, §33.
- 33 Ibid., *taṣawwur* 3, §34, trans. Badakhchani, slightly modified.
- 34 Jāmī, *Precious Pearl*, 57, §55, trans. Heer, slightly modified.
- 35 At present, I offer this claim more as a thesis to be tested than a conclusion that has been proven. Still, this view seemed to be the consensus of most of the participants at the Yale Workshop on the Eternity of the World (March 31–April 1, 2017), who presented on post-Naṣīrean philosophy and theology.
- 36 For a collection of studies on Aquinas' meta-argument and its reception in the Latin West, see Wissink, *Eternity of the World*.
- 37 The edited al-Rāzī text reads, "The answer to the first is what you all [presumably, the philosophers] mentioned undermining the specification of the heavenly body by the particular position on the celestial sphere despite its being simple."
- 38 It is not clear to what *mutammam* refers. Apparently, al-Rāzī mentions it in his earlier discussion, as al-Ṭūsī's "we mentioned" suggests. Unfortunately, I could not find the earlier reference and al-Ṭūsī's subsequent commentary does not elucidate the reference.
- 39 Added in al-Ṭūsī's text.

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## 21 **Unfounded Assumptions**

### Reassessing the Differences among Averroes' Three Kinds of Aristotelian Commentaries

*Steven Harvey*

The time has come for a full reassessment of the differences among Averroes' three kinds of commentaries on Aristotle and a renewed study of the chronology in which he wrote his commentaries. I am very much aware of the fact that there have already been numerous attempts to generalize about the differences among Averroes' three commentaries and to build a chronology, particularly among Spanish scholars over the past half century.<sup>1</sup> What I mean is that the time is ripe for more precise studies because we now have Arabic editions of all thirty-one of the thirty-six Averroean commentaries on Aristotle extant in Arabic, an increasing number of modern Latin editions or working editions of these commentaries,<sup>2</sup> and many editions or partial editions of the Hebrew translations of the commentaries. In addition, the past few decades have seen the appearance of impressive new annotated translations of Averroes' commentaries, the most anticipated, appreciated, and helpful of which is, without question, that of Averroes' *Long Commentary on On the Soul* by Richard C. Taylor, the scholar to whom this volume is dedicated.<sup>3</sup> For the progress on the scholarly editions of Averroes' commentaries, much gratitude must go to Gerhard Endress, the leading authority on Averroes today and the general editor of the *Averrois Opera*, for his inspiration and encouragement to all scholars working on Averroes' commentaries. It may be recalled that when Harry A. Wolfson submitted his original "Plan for the Publication of a *Corpus commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem*," more than ninety years ago in 1931,<sup>4</sup> the only Averroean commentaries on Aristotle in print in the original Arabic were of the *Short Commentary on the Metaphysics* and the *Middle Commentary on the Poetics*. The need for editions of Averroes' commentaries was desperate. Some thirty years later, when the revised plan was published in *Speculum*, Wolfson could add to his barren list nine more commentaries. Today, with relatively easy access to editions of all of Averroes' Aristotelian commentaries extant in the original Arabic, together with editions of the Latin and/or Hebrew translations of most of them, it is now possible to make an informed assessment of the differences among the three kinds of Averroean commentaries.<sup>5</sup> The time has come for this assessment, but it has not yet been done.

Now it is quite possible that some readers may not know what I am talking about. “What is the problem?” they may be thinking. “Every beginning student of Islamic philosophy knows the differences among Averroes’ three kinds of commentaries.” Indeed, they are spelled out—and have been for many decades—in virtually all histories of Islamic philosophy and repeated in numerous studies on Averroes and in introductions to editions and translations of his commentaries. Many readers have explained them to their students in brief or at length. The problem is that most of these accounts do not apply for all the commentaries and some are misleading, if not simply mistaken. The problem has to do with unfounded assumptions.

### **Unfounded Assumptions**

The most widespread and misleading assumption is that it is possible to distinguish among Averroes’ three kinds of commentaries without considering that his methods and aims in a given kind of commentary may vary from book to book. This means that as carefully as one may have studied Averroes’ *Short Commentary on On the Soul*, one would be misguided—on the sole basis of this commentary—to attempt to generalize about the method and intentions of all short commentaries, or, for example, about those of the *Short Commentary on the Physics*; or that as carefully as one may have studied Averroes’ *Middle Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, one would be misguided—on the sole basis of this commentary—to attempt to generalize about the method and intentions of all middle commentaries, or, for example, about those of the *Middle Commentary on On Generation and Corruption*. Any such accounts will inevitably offer, at best, superficial generalizations at the expense of accuracy and will be more misleading than helpful. I am here talking about attempts to distinguish the short commentaries from the middle commentaries. The long commentary—which goes by the name *sharḥ* or *tafsīr*—is clearly identifiable.<sup>6</sup> It comments on the entire text of Aristotle and reproduces the text of Aristotle in Arabic translation, lemma by lemma. Averroes wrote five such long commentaries.

Another unfounded assumption—related to the first—is that the middle commentaries (*talākhīṣ*) are all paraphrases (or *paraphrases*, as the Latin titles suggest) of the texts of Aristotle.<sup>7</sup>

A third unfounded assumption—also related to the first—is that the short commentaries are all abbreviated epitomes of Aristotle’s works.

A fourth assumption—perhaps unfounded—is that all commentaries are indeed either short, middle, or long commentaries, as Averroes understood these terms.

A fifth assumption—perhaps unfounded and related to the fourth assumption—is that the *mukhtaṣarāt* or short commentaries on the books of the *Organon* are indeed *jawāmi‘*, the usual term Averroes uses for his short commentaries.



And finally, a sixth assumption—perhaps unfounded and also related to the fourth assumption—is that Averroes knew from the beginning what he intended by calling a commentary *talkhīṣ* or middle commentary, and hence all such commentaries have more or less the same structure.

If certain of these assumptions prove false, the task of trying to identify the genre of some of the commentaries will be very difficult and perhaps not even possible. At the very least, there will be a need to avoid simplified generalizations.

### Differences among the Short, Middle, and Long Commentaries

Over twenty years ago, I addressed some of these issues in a lecture at a conference in Cordoba in commemoration of the eight-hundredth anniversary of Averroes' death. A revised version of that lecture, "Similarities and Differences among Averroes' Three Commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics*," appeared in 2011.<sup>8</sup> In this chapter, I pointed to several very helpful scholarly attempts to explain the differences among Averroes' three commentaries on a particular Aristotelian book, and suggested that Alfred Ivry's comparative studies on Averroes' three commentaries on *On the Soul*—and the robust debate to which they gave rise—elevated the discussion to a new level. Ivry made the first focused attempt to compare Averroes' three kinds of commentaries on a single work of Aristotle on the basis of a careful reading of each of the commentaries.<sup>9</sup> His studies sought to describe the nature of the three types of commentaries on *On the Soul* and to highlight the differences between them, but he also devoted much thought to determining the order in which they—and any revisions of them—were written. Ivry's most startling and controversial claim was that, contrary to the conventional view, Averroes wrote the *Long Commentary on On the Soul* before the *Middle Commentary* and that the former was written in preparation of the latter.<sup>10</sup> The issue of the order in which Averroes wrote the three commentaries is, of course, not simply a curiosity. It is important for evaluating what his goals were in the commentaries and for determining—when he offers differing interpretations of a passage or teaching in the various commentaries—which represents his most mature thought. For Ivry, Averroes began by writing the short commentaries on Aristotle when he was about thirty, in the late 1150s. The short commentary is indeed an epitome, but more a summary of the topic being discussed than of the book of Aristotle. The goal, in Ivry's words, is "to bring the reader to an adequate if minimal level of expertise, even to a certain degree of perfection in the subject." Accordingly, the Aristotelian text "serves at times only as a point of departure and reference" that can play but a "minor role in his presentation of the science [taught in the particular short commentary]." Thus, Averroes' primary concern in the *Short Commentary on On the Soul* is "the subject of the science of the soul, and not

Aristotle's text *per se*." To this end, Averroes makes liberal use in the *Short Commentary* of the Greek and Islamic commentators.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, so far is Averroes from Aristotle's text in his *Short Commentary* that Thérèse-Anne Druart has mused whether Averroes had read *On the Soul* carefully before writing the short commentary on it.<sup>12</sup> Regardless, the *Short Commentary on On the Soul* disproves our third assumption.

Ivry's conclusion with regard to the middle and long commentaries, based upon his studies of Averroes' commentaries on *On the Soul*, was that Averroes likely first wrote the long commentaries in preparation for writing the middle commentaries. The long commentary was then, with suitable revisions, used as a model for the middle commentary.<sup>13</sup> According to Ivry, the middle commentary, like the long commentary, "often quotes Aristotle directly, and comments on nearly every line, or every other line, in the text," "without rearranging the text or deviating from it." In fact, the middle commentary often appears to be an abridgement of the long commentary, borrowing phrases, sentences, and even passages verbatim from it.<sup>14</sup> It "stays close to Aristotle's text," and, unlike the long commentary, refrains generally from exploring the entailments and post-Aristotelian additions to the text," from "discussing at length the views of his predecessors, both Greek and Muslim, and adjudicating between them."<sup>15</sup> Averroes' main concern in the middle commentary "is to present Aristotle's text in a manner accessible to the audience for which it was written, a lay [ . . . ] audience, and for that reason to present it in as uncomplicated a manner as possible." While the long commentary offers no concessions to Muslim sensitivities, the middle commentary adroitly adjusts the text for his intended audience. The middle commentary is more "politically discreet" than the long commentary, for the latter text explicates "every nuance if not word of Aristotle's text for his own sake, without regard for the skills, patience or sensitivities of whoever may read it." "This discretion is part of Averroes' style [in the middle commentary], affecting [its] form and hence substance."<sup>16</sup>

Ivry's comparative studies provided the first such in-depth comparisons of the different ways Averroes approached a particular work of Aristotle in his three commentaries. He encouraged his readers to carry out similar comparative studies: "Other studies of this kind should be undertaken to see whether the style of the *De anima* commentaries is anomalous or not, and this may force a reevaluation of the order of Averroes' compositions in general."<sup>17</sup>

In my above-mentioned study, "Similarities and Differences among Averroes' Three Commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics*," I followed Ivry's lead and attempted a parallel study on Averroes' three commentaries on the *Physics*. My conclusions differed sharply from those of Ivry. This divergence underscores the different methods and styles employed by Averroes in his commentaries on the different books of the Aristotelian corpus. I concluded:

The order of the writing of the commentaries [on the *Physics*] is the one conventionally believed: short, middle, long. The *Short Commentary* hardly brings the reader to any degree of perfection in the

subject. The *Middle Commentary* is not at all an abridgement of the *Long Commentary*, nor is the *Long Commentary* a simple expansion of the *Middle Commentary*. The audience of the *Middle Commentary* may have been no less sophisticated than that of the *Long Commentary*. The *Middle Commentary* rarely quotes Aristotle directly and *does*, at times, rearrange the text of Aristotle. And finally, in the section considered, there was no lengthy borrowing from one commentary to the other.<sup>18</sup>

Ruth Glasner, for the most part, agrees with my conclusions in her groundbreaking study of creative aspects of Averroes' physics.<sup>19</sup> As I have written elsewhere, Glasner's book is "a work of immense scholarship, impressive detective work, and convincing argumentation."<sup>20</sup> My concern in the present study is with the first part of her book, which assesses the differences among Averroes' three commentaries on the *Physics* and determines the order in which the three commentaries were written and the various stages in which Averroes edited and revised them. As mentioned, Glasner shares my view regarding the order of the writing of the three commentaries on the *Physics* and the differences among them, but she adds some interesting points. For example, she observes that "while the structure of the middle commentary is dictated by the argument, that of the long commentary is dictated by the word-for-word commentary genre."<sup>21</sup> She then shows that when Averroes began the long commentary, he tried to adhere to the structure of the middle commentary, with its divisions into parts and chapters, and, as in the middle commentary, to include a short table of contents at the beginning of each book and part. Indeed, for the beginning of the long commentary, the divisions are the same. But while Averroes may have intended to carry out the division into parts and chapters from the middle commentary, he later, apparently, "gave up on the idea."<sup>22</sup> Glasner's account is also, in a few places, admirably more emphatic than mine. For example, after mentioning Ivory's comparison of the three commentaries on *On the Soul* and the similar or identical passages that he found in the middle and long commentaries on it, she notes, "I have not found similar passages in the middle and long commentaries on the *Physics*."<sup>23</sup> Regarding the nature of the middle commentary on the *Physics*, she states unequivocally that the "middle commentary on the *Physics* can by no means be described as paraphrase," for Averroes offers new interpretations, presents arguments with other commentators, and at times restructures the text.<sup>24</sup>

I should mention that the *Middle Commentary on the Physics* and the *Long Commentary on the Physics* are two of the five Averroean commentaries that are no longer extant in Arabic. The other three commentaries are the *Long Commentary on On the Soul*, the *Short Commentary on On Animals*, and the *Middle Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>25</sup> These five commentaries—which are all extant in Hebrew translation and, for the most part, in Latin translation—are crucial for understanding what Averroes does in the different kinds of commentaries. The three

commentaries on the *Physics* arguably provide us with the best examples of the most successful and helpful of such commentaries, but perhaps this is a personal prejudice.

Another study that attempts at some length to explain the differences among the three Averroean commentaries on a particular book is Yehuda Halper's 2010 Bar-Ilan dissertation on Averroes' *Long Commentary on Metaphysics*, Book  $\Delta$ . In this doctoral study, Halper discusses the structure and intention of each of the three commentaries on Book  $\Delta$ , and sums up:

Averroes' *Short Commentary on Metaphysics*  $\Delta$  presents an original metaphysical discourse, loosely based on the text of Aristotle, but restructured in such a way as to form an independent treatise. The *Middle Commentary on Metaphysics*  $\Delta$ , however, appears to be little more than a slightly simplified restatement of the text of Uṣṭāth's Arabic translation of Aristotle in which obscure words and sentences have been restated for clarity. Averroes' *Tafsīr* or *Long Commentary on Metaphysics*  $\Delta$  appears, in terms of the originality of its structure, to stand somewhere in between the *Short Commentary* and the *Middle Commentary*. The *Long Commentary* includes the entire text of Uṣṭāth's translation as textus separated from the commentaria of Averroes' discussion.<sup>26</sup>

### The Short Commentaries

Halper shows the drastic restructuring of the *Short Commentary*. Not only is the order of the books rearranged in the *Short Commentary*, beginning essentially with Book  $\Delta$ , but within  $\Delta$ , Averroes has reorganized the ordering of the chapters on terms so as to relate the terms one to another and especially to "being," the first of the terms in Averroes' reorganization.<sup>27</sup> Yet despite these differences, there is no question that the discussions of all the terms are clearly based on the text of *Metaphysics*  $\Delta$ .<sup>28</sup>

A similar account of the originality of the *Short Commentary on the Metaphysics* is given by Rüdiger Arnzen in the introduction to his translation of the *Short Commentary*. He describes the short commentaries in general—but clearly based on the entire text he has translated—as

abridged introductions or summaries, in which [Averroes] breaks away from the authoritative work at a remarkably higher degree than in the two aforementioned literary forms [i.e., the middle commentaries and the long commentaries], secludes any non-demonstrative sections or excursions he encountered in the Aristotelian work or in the commentaries thereon he had at his disposal, and presents what he conceives as the gist of this work in his own words.<sup>29</sup>

We thus have seen three accounts of the short commentary, and they are quite different. These three short commentaries were likely written

within a period of less than five years and presumably had some of the same goals and intentions in mind. The short commentary on *On the Soul*, as we have seen, is described by Ivry as “more a summary of the topic being discussed than of the book of Aristotle,” intended “to bring the reader to an adequate if minimal level of expertise, even to a certain degree of perfection in the subject.” Accordingly, the Aristotelian text “serves at times only as a point of departure and reference.” Druart even wonders how familiar Averroes was with the *On the Soul* when he wrote the short commentary.<sup>30</sup> The short commentary on the *Metaphysics* totally restructures the work, yet there is no question that its discussions are based on the text of *Metaphysics* and that Averroes intends to present “the gist of the work” in his own words. The short commentary on the *Physics* sticks much closer to the text of the *Physics*, covers most of its topics, and, in general, preserves its order. In consideration of these three short commentaries, it seems almost pointless to try to generalize about the nature of the short commentaries.

The situation becomes even more complicated when we try to include Averroes' short commentaries on the logic into our generalization. Charles Butterworth, who has studied the *Kitāb al-ḍarūrī fī l-manṭiq* (What Is Necessary in Logic) and has edited and translated parts of it under the title *Averroes' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's "Topics," "Rhetoric," and "Poetics,"* has painstakingly made the case not only that this work comprises the short commentaries on the logic, but that it is indeed a commentary on Aristotle and not an independent treatise. Part of the problem is that Averroes did not at all keep to the order of Aristotle's *Organon* but rather seems to have been influenced by al-Fārābī's ordering.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Butterworth lists several other factors that call into question the naming of *Kitāb al-ḍarūrī* as a short commentary. For example, Averroes presented a novel interpretation of the different kinds of syllogisms and introduced some that were not mentioned by Aristotle, and he gave a disproportionate amount of attention to some topics while neglecting others. Moreover, he never explicitly wrote in this work that he intended to set forth the teachings of Aristotle in it.<sup>32</sup> Yet this work is Averroes' short commentary on the *Organon*. Or perhaps I should say that in Averroes' youthful project of writing short commentaries on Aristotle's writings, the commentaries on the logical writings as well as that on the soul fit in nicely, however little he may have had direct knowledge of these Aristotelian texts.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, Averroes had some very different styles and intentions in writing the various short commentaries. How then can we generalize? And how can we identify a text as a short commentary? Interestingly, both Butterworth and Arnzen point out that there were short commentaries and we have the middle commentaries on these texts, so the works they translated must be the short commentaries. There are, of course, other arguments that they marshal for their claims.

## The Middle Commentaries

The situation regarding the middle commentaries is not much less obscure. Glasner, as we have seen, has emphatically explained that the “middle commentary on the *Physics* can by no means be described as paraphrase,” for Averroes offers new interpretations, presents arguments with other commentators, and at times restructures the text.<sup>34</sup> The Latin name for some of these middle commentaries, *paraphrasis*, would thus seem to be misleading. Yet respected Averroes scholars in their most recently published translations of Averroes’ commentaries continue to refer to the middle commentaries as “paraphrases.” Richard Taylor, for example, describes them as “paraphrastic summaries,” and Arnzen calls them simply “paraphrases” or “rewordings of the Aristotelian text which avoid for the most part raising any textual problems or dogmatic inconsistencies and are characterized by the highest degree of approval to and coherent representation of the Aristotelian doctrines.”<sup>35</sup> I have shown elsewhere that in the *Middle Commentary on the Physics*, Averroes keeps much closer to the text than in the *Short Commentary*, “reorganizes it, makes it easier to understand,” removes ambiguities, and “provides new examples.” Moreover, occasionally he adds introductory lines to a chapter and concluding words. At times, he even speaks in his own name.<sup>36</sup> To some extent, this account is not so different from Ivry’s account of the *Middle Commentary on On the Soul*:

The middle commentaries are more than mere paraphrases of Aristotle’s text. [. . .] In various places [. . .] Averroes goes beyond Aristotle’s words and purview to introduce explanations and viewpoints of his and other writers. [. . .] [The middle commentaries] go step by step through Aristotle’s texts, explicating them carefully and economically. [. . .] Aristotle’s struggles with an issue are duly recorded, [and] the text conveyed in a manner that combines paraphrase and explicit interpretation.<sup>37</sup>

Yet Halper’s discussion of the *Middle Commentary on the Metaphysics*, as we have seen, at least with regard to Averroes’ commentary on Book Δ, seems to present a far simpler and less impressive commentary, which “appears to be little more than a slightly simplified restatement of [. . .] Aristotle in which obscure words and sentences have been restated for clarity.”<sup>38</sup> The organization of the *Middle Commentary* follows the organization of the *Metaphysics*, and the Aristotelian text within the commentary closely follows the text of Uṣṭāth’s translation, although these citations are often rephrased for the sake of clarification, simplification, or elaboration. It is not without significance that for all its changes for clarification, simplification, and explanation, the text of the *Middle Commentary on the Metaphysics* is very similar to Aristotle’s text of the *Metaphysics*.<sup>39</sup>

Here, it seems that one could try to offer a generalized account of the middle commentaries—despite their differences and in contrast to the short commentaries—on the basis of these three commentaries. The middle commentary is a rephrased account of most of the Aristotelian teachings of the given work, at times reorganized but sticking closely to the text, replete with explanatory additions, new explanations, and illustrations, and with occasional reference to the teachings and arguments of the ancient and medieval commentators.

Yet some of the middle commentaries on the logical works appear for the most part to be little more than paraphrases. And the *Middle Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* often simply reproduces the medieval Arabic translation,<sup>40</sup> not even bothering to rephrase or paraphrase it. I have tried elsewhere to show with regard to this middle commentary that “there is no reorganization of the text, little reformulation, and only slight explication of and digression from it.” This led me to conclude that the commentary appears to be “among the least helpful of [Averroes’] middle commentaries for understanding an Aristotelian text, [for] often he seems to do little more than copy the Arabic translation.”<sup>41</sup>

There are, of course, significant exceptions to this generalization of the *Middle Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*. Lawrence Berman, the editor of the medieval Hebrew translation of the commentary, has discussed the most interesting of these exceptions, and Maroun Aouad and Frédérique Woerther have pointed to others.<sup>42</sup> Woerther and I reconsidered the question of the nature of Averroes’ *Middle Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics* in light of a careful study of the Hebrew and Latin translations of Book 1. We concluded:

Averroes, for the most part, copies the text of the Arabic translation, but he does not hesitate to insert words as he copies in order to make the text clearer and easier to understand. Where lengthier explanations are needed, they too are provided between sentences of the Arabic text. But, as we have seen, these lengthy explanations and even reworkings of the text in Book I—at times in response to problematic translations in the Aristotelian text before him—are usually not so helpful or insightful, and, in some cases, misleading. Averroes’ *modus operandi* is not consistent throughout Book I, and seems dependent on the subject matter, but also on the clarity of the Arabic translation. Thus, we have pointed to some instances of Averroes’ rearranging the Aristotelian text and omitting certain passages.<sup>43</sup>

With this assessment in mind, we can thus slightly modify as follows our generalization above of the middle commentaries to accommodate middle commentaries such as that on the *Nicomachean Ethics*: The middle commentary is an account of most of the Aristotelian teachings of the given work, at times reorganized but staying close to the text, replete with



explanatory additions, and with occasional new explanations and illustrations. Is this very broad description of the middle commentaries useful for discerning whether an Averroean commentary is a middle one or a short one? I am not sure, but the test would be the commentaries on *On Animals* and on the *Parva naturalia*.

### ***On Animals, Parva naturalia, and the Smoking Gun***

There is no *ijmā'* concerning the commentary on *On Animals*, that is, whether it is a middle or a short one, and the situation is not much different for the commentary on the *Parva naturalia*, completed a few months later. The DARE Averroes website lists all of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle as short, middle, or long, with two exceptions that are listed simply as "Commentary": the commentaries on *On Animals* and on the *Parva naturalia*.<sup>44</sup> However, both are somewhat long, remain rather close to the text, and are called *talkhīṣ* (presumably indicating a middle commentary) in the Arabic inventories of the commentaries.<sup>45</sup> Resianne Fontaine also refers to the commentary on *On Animals* simply as a "commentary." She explains: "This commentary is generally referred to as *Jawāmi'* [or short commentary], although in length and structure it is more akin to the Middle Commentaries."<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere, Fontaine writes:

Although its structure is more akin to a Middle Commentary, Averroes' *De animalibus* does not reveal the neat division into parts, chapters and sections that we know from other Middle Commentaries, such as that on the *Physics* or *On the Heavens*. It should be noted that such a division is also lacking in the Middle Commentary on the *Meteorology* (1172), which is nevertheless classified as a Middle Commentary and is clearly different from the Epitome on this text. It is also absent in Averroes' commentary on the *Parva naturalia*, the only other Aristotelian treatise on natural philosophy on which Averroes composed only one commentary and which was written around the same time as that on the *De animalibus*. The Middle Commentary on the *Physics*, the first "genuine" Middle Commentary in the field of natural philosophy, dates from the same period. In sum, in the years 1169–72 Averroes composed Middle Commentaries alongside two commentaries that differ from Epitomes on the one hand and from Middle Commentaries on the other. It might well be that he did not feel himself confined to writing one specific type of commentary.<sup>47</sup>

Fontaine groups the commentaries on *On Animals* and the *Parva naturalia* together and treats them as differing from both the short commentaries and the middle ones. In effect, she questions our fourth and sixth assumptions. Yet Ruth Glasner brings what seems to be smoking gun evidence for the commentary on *On Animals* (and that on *Parva naturalia*) being a

middle commentary. She cites from the Hebrew translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary on the Physics*:

The treatise on minerals is not available to us, nor is the treatise on plants, except for two books of it which are attributed to Aristotle; but we do have the book of animals and have already completed its commentary [*be'ur*] according to the signification [*ke-fi ha-'inyan*]. We shall work further, if God wills in our life, on a word-for-word commentary as we shall try to do, God willing, on the rest of the books. We have not yet had the opportunity to carry out this intention except in the case of *De anima*, and this book that we start now [the *Physics*]. But we have already laid down commentaries on *all his books* according to the signification in the three disciplines—logic, natural science, and metaphysics.<sup>48</sup>

By a “commentary according to the signification” (*be'ur ke-fi ha-'inyan*), Averroes means his middle commentaries.<sup>49</sup> He states he has already written such a commentary on *On Animals*, and from his remark that he has already written such commentaries on all his books “in the three disciplines—logic, natural science, and metaphysics,” we can infer that the commentary on the *Parva naturalia* is also a middle commentary. I believe this evidence is definitive. But what if we didn't have this statement? How could we decide what kind of commentaries these two are? In fact, both were completed seemingly before Averroes completed writing his middle commentaries on the other books on natural science. As Fontaine notes, they are not divided into parts and chapters as certain other middle commentaries are, and they are not replete with the *qāla/amar/dixit*, as so many of the middle commentaries. On the other hand, from what we know of the short commentaries from Averroes himself, his aim was to abstract the scientific statements from the Aristotelian works and deal only with them. He explains this at the beginning of the *Short Commentary on the Organon*:

The aim [*al-gharaḍ*] of this treatise is to abstract [*tajrīd*] from the art of logic the statements necessary to explain the ranks of the kinds of concept and assent employed in each of the five arts, viz., the demonstrative, dialectical, sophistical, rhetorical, and poetical.<sup>50</sup>

He explains it yet more clearly at the beginning of the *Short Commentary on the Physics* as follows:

Our intention [*qasdunā*] in this treatise is to approach the books of Aristotle by abstracting [*tajrīd*] from them the scientific statements [*al-aqāwīl al-'ilmīyya*] which determine his teachings—I mean, the most cogent [of these statements]—and by disregarding the statements of the ancients which are other than his own.<sup>51</sup>

And he states it in a similar fashion at the beginning of the *Short Commentary on the Metaphysics*:

Our intention [*qasdunā*] in this treatise, in accordance with our custom in the preceding books, is to glean [*naltaqītu*] the scientific statements [*al-aqāwīl al-‘ilmiyya*] from the treatises of Aristotle written on the science of metaphysics.<sup>52</sup>

Averroes refers to this custom of his in the short commentaries in the colophon to his commentary on *On Animals* when he writes: “And this treatise is completed, and with it the commentary [*be’ur*] on all the scientific statements [*ha-ma’amarim ha-madda’iyyim*] from this book, and praise to God.”<sup>53</sup> Would not this custom be grounds for considering it a short commentary?

For whatever reasons, Moritz Steinschneider, Harry Wolfson, Harry Blumberg (the editor and translator of the commentary on the *Parva naturalia*), and most other scholars considered the commentaries on *On Animals* and on the *Parva naturalia* short commentaries. Actually, Blumberg, writing in 1961, makes an interesting case for considering the commentary on the *Parva naturalia* a short commentary. First, he presents his own general understanding of Averroes’ method in his short commentaries:

Averroes’ aim in the epitomes was to summarize Aristotle’s conclusions on a given topic as clearly and concisely as possible, to arrange these topics in a systematic and logical manner, departing from the original Aristotelian order wherever necessary, eliminating the unessential details of argumentation, drawing upon Greek commentaries on Aristotle translated into Arabic as well as upon the works of earlier Arabic philosophers for further elucidation or corroboration of the text, and stating his own interpretation or conclusion on a given topic where Aristotle’s text is vague or inconclusive.

Then he states that Averroes does precisely this in his commentary on the *Parva naturalia*:

[A]t the very beginning of the book on *Sense and its Objects*, in commenting upon Aristotle’s brief statement as to the contents of the work, Averroes elaborates upon it and gives a detailed and orderly classification of the topics of the book under four headings. Or in discussing the manner in which the faculties perceive their sense-objects, Averroes takes the two theories of the ancient philosophers that are mentioned by Aristotle, expands them into four and proceeds to expound them with clarity and precision. Or in his comment on Aristotle’s mention of common sense, imagination and memory, Averroes increases these three inner senses to five, drawing upon the views of Galen, Alexander Aphrodisias, Alfarabi and Avicenna. Or in

his comment upon Aristotle's statement about the cognition of future events in dreams, he elucidates the topic by drawing upon numerous related topics from various other works of Aristotle.<sup>54</sup>

We have already cautioned about generalizations concerning both the short commentaries and the middle commentaries. Yet the Hebrew translation of the commentary on the *Parva naturalia* is clearly identified as a *qiṣṣur* or short commentary, even though Arabic manuscripts call it a *talkhīṣ*, the term used for middle commentaries. It would seem then that there are compelling reasons for considering these two commentaries short commentaries, and there are compelling reasons for considering them middle commentaries.

This is what I think. I believe there is, at least, a modicum of truth to the 850-year-old report that Sarah Stroumsa has called into question.<sup>55</sup> According to this oft-repeated narrative, after 1163 and presumably between 1166 and 1168, about ten years after Averroes began writing the short commentaries, the Almohad prince Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf hinted to Ibn Ṭufayl that he wanted someone, seemingly Ibn Ṭufayl himself or someone he would recommend, to "expound the aims" of Aristotle's books and write *talākhīṣ* or middle commentaries on them. For well over a century and a half, virtually all leading modern scholars of Averroes have accepted the veracity of this report and adduced it to show that Averroes wrote his middle commentaries at the bidding of the Almohad prince.<sup>56</sup> Indeed this view is supported by Averroes' earliest middle commentaries, which are, in fact, dated between 1168 and 1172.<sup>57</sup> Averroes began writing the middle commentaries on certain logical works in 1168, although some of the undated logical works may have been written a few years earlier; he completed the commentary on *On Animals* in November 1169, then the commentary on *Parva naturalia* in January 1170; and when that was completed, he turned to the *Middle Commentary on the Physics*, which he completed in March 1170, at which point he started work on completing the middle commentaries on the other books of natural science, in their proper order, one after the other.<sup>58</sup> But if Stroumsa is correct—and there is much that is persuasive in her arguments—then something else happened in Seville at precisely that time that led him to start writing the middle commentaries, unless it was just a coincidence, and Averroes began the first major project of his life on his own, without courtly patronage. But if so, I wonder whether the historian al-Marrākushī (who, granted, had a good sense of imagination to go with his Almohad sympathies) could have believed that he could so easily rewrite history and convince his readers of a direct connection between his beloved Almohads and Ibn Ṭufayl, Averroes, and the flowering of philosophy. After all, the meeting between Ibn Ṭufayl and the prince—if it indeed occurred—would have taken place only fifty years earlier, Averroes' death only twenty-five years earlier, and the student and jurist Abū Bakr Bundūd Ibn Yaḥyā al-Qurṭubī, who according to al-Marrākushī reported to him what his teacher Averroes had told him

of the meeting, likely did not share this fascinating story only with al-Marrākushī. How much of the story could al-Marrākushī have concocted? It seems more reasonable to me that there is, at least, some truth to the report. At the time, Averroes may have been thinking of completing the project of the short commentaries and may even have started writing the commentaries on the two remaining works, *On Animals* and *Parva naturalia*, as short commentaries. But we know that, around this time, he also recognized the need to write more serious commentaries. In the colophon to his *Middle Commentary on the Physics*, he writes:

I completed this commentary on Saturday, the first of Rajab 565 [March 1170], in the city of Seville. I already have among the multitude a commentary that I made in my youth, and it is short. I saw fit now to do this more complete commentary.<sup>59</sup>

The commentary of his youth that is short is, no doubt, the *Short Commentary*. It was apparently intended as an introductory commentary. The second commentary was intended as a more serious commentary of the entire book. He called this “more complete commentary” a *talkhīṣ*, the same term he had used for the more advanced commentaries on the books of the *Organon* that he had begun writing a few years before, although, as we have seen above, there were marked differences among the various middle commentaries. But why did he call them *talākhīṣ*? It is tempting to answer, as others (myself among them) have done, that this was the term used by the Almoḥad prince Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf when he expressed his wish to Ibn Ṭufayl that someone would expound the aims of Aristotle’s books and write *talākhīṣ* or middle commentaries on them. By taking on the project proposed by the prince and calling his commentaries *talākhīṣ*, he may well have gained the patronage of the prince for his own project. Stroumsa has convincingly claimed that al-Marrākushī “does not seem to distinguish” between the three kinds of Averroean commentaries and seems to have used *talkhīṣ* for all three. She also writes that “it would be difficult to deduce from [his] fuzzy report the inception of any specific kind of commentary.”<sup>60</sup> I think this is a reasonable assessment. If there is any truth to the report, the prince just wanted someone who understood Aristotle to make his books accessible and easier to comprehend. If so, his request for *talākhīṣ* came at a propitious time, for Averroes was about to embark—or had just embarked—on his own project of writing longer and “more complete” commentaries.

We do not know why Averroes did not write short commentaries on *On Animals* and on the *Parva naturalia* when he wrote the other short commentaries on Aristotle’s writings. He may well have begun both as short commentaries to complete at last the set of short commentaries on the books of logic, natural science, and metaphysics. Perhaps when he began to heed the request of the prince—in whatever form it was made—he decided to call these commentaries *talākhīṣ*, and to modify and adapt them

for inclusion in the new project of “more complete commentaries” or commentaries according to the signification. That he indeed considered both commentaries as “more complete” or middle commentaries is established, as we have seen, from the passage cited above, translated by Glasner from the Hebrew translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary on the Physics*:

[W]e do have the book of animals and have already completed its commentary according to the signification. [. . .] [W]e have already laid down commentaries on all his books according to the signification in the three disciplines—logic, natural science, and metaphysics.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, we should now refer to the commentaries on *On Animals* and on the *Parva naturalia* as middle commentaries. But while Averroes regarded them all as commentaries of the same sort, there are, as we have seen, noticeable differences among them. It is true that by the time he concluded the two commentaries under discussion, he had already concluded several such commentaries on the books of the *Organon*. But these commentaries are quite different. Averroes apparently did not, at first, have a clear idea of how to write his middle commentaries and, I suspect, he thought a lot about this while working on the two commentaries. Perhaps, in the end, it was the Aristotelian book upon which he commented that determined the way he would write each middle commentary. If our leading scholars have not been able to agree on whether the two commentaries are short or middle ones, this may be because they are, despite their titles, hybrids, and the lines between the two types of commentaries are not always as sharply defined as one might assume. This brings us to our sixth and last assumption. In the course of this chapter, I have tried to show that most of the listed assumptions are mistaken. The last assumption is that Averroes knew in some detail from the beginning what he intended by calling a commentary *talkhīṣ* or middle commentary, and hence that all such commentaries have more or less the same structure. Apparently, he did not, and they certainly do not.

## Conclusion

The path to classifying Averroes' various Aristotelian commentaries has been clouded by unfounded assumptions, some reasonable and some blindly adopted from other writers. We have tried to draw attention to these assumptions, while not stumbling on them ourselves. The basic account of Averroes put forward over a century and a half ago by scholars such as Ernest Renan and Salomon Munk—that Averroes wrote three kinds of commentaries on Aristotle, and that the short ones were written in his youth, the middle commentaries next, and the long commentaries in his advanced age—is fundamentally correct with significant qualifications. These scholars knew that Averroes wrote only five long commentaries, and their descriptions of the three different kinds of commentaries

were certainly true for some commentaries of each kind.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps inevitably, in their zeal, they also presented unfounded assumptions that would be followed and repeated by others, some of whom—at times, the most learned—introduced their own assumptions, again generalizing on the basis of the commentaries they had studied. It is only now, with relatively easy access to all of Averroes' commentaries and important studies on many of them, that we can discern the problems with many of these unfounded assumptions and offer an accurate classification of the commentaries. Most significantly, while the general account of the three types of commentaries and the stages in Averroes' life in which they were written is basically sound, not all short commentaries are alike and neither are all middle ones; yet it is still correct to speak of the three general kinds of commentaries.

Averroes indeed wrote short introductory commentaries in “his youth,” during his early and mid-thirties. These are generally known as *jawāmi'* (or, for at least some of them, *jawāmi' ṣiḡhār*) or, as in the case of the ones on the *Organon*, *mukhtaṣarāt*. As we have seen, these differ markedly in the extent to which they focus on the underlying text of Aristotle, but they are all part of the project of giving short introductory accounts of the Aristotelian texts. This is true for the *Short Commentary on the Organon*, whose main access to the Aristotelian text seems to be via the writings of al-Fārābī. It is also true for the *Short Commentary on On the Soul*, which Averroes revised, in part, decades later on the basis of his much improved knowledge of the Aristotelian text. The short commentaries were written on all the available Aristotelian works, apart from *On Animals*, the *Parva naturalia*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The middle commentaries (*talākhīṣ*) were begun by Averroes in his early forties and occupied him for a decade or so. As he himself testifies, he wrote middle commentaries—or more precisely, as he describes them, *talākhīṣ 'alā l-má'nā* (commentaries that elucidate the sense<sup>63</sup>)—on all Aristotle's books in the three disciplines: logic, natural science, and metaphysics, and we may add practical philosophy. They are more complete, serious, and text-based commentaries. The third set of commentaries consists of the long word-for-word commentaries, called *sharḥ* or *tafṣīr*. Averroes referred to these literal commentaries as his *shurūḥ 'alā l-lafẓ*. These commentaries are undated, although, as Averroes tells us, he completed the one on *On the Soul* first, and it was followed by the one on the *Physics*.<sup>64</sup> It seems that Averroes completed the *Long Commentary on On the Soul* in his mid to late fifties and completed four others before his death at the age of seventy-two in 1198.<sup>65</sup> We know he intended to write more such literal commentaries. If only God had granted him an even longer span of life!<sup>66</sup>

## Notes

- 1 On the Spanish tradition, see, e.g., Alonso, *Teología de Averroes*, 54–98; Cruz Hernández, *Historia de la filosofía española*, 2:48–51 and 60–64; Cruz Hernández, *Abū-l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Ruṣd*, 46–48 and 57–59; and Puig Montada,



- Averroes, 19–21 and 123–26. Despite inevitable shortcomings, one of the most valuable and in-depth resources for assessing the differences among Averroes' three commentaries and for building a chronology remains al-'Alawī, *Al-Matn al-Rushdī*.
- 2 See, most recently, Horst Schmiejā's critical edition with a learned introduction of Michael Scot's Latin translation of the *Long Commentary on the Physics*, Book 8: Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis Physicorum librum octavum*.
  - 3 Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De anima*, trans. Taylor.
  - 4 Wolfson, "Plan for the Publication of a *Corpus commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem*," versions of 1931 and 1961.
  - 5 For a list of editions of Averroes' commentaries, see Endress, "Averrois Opera." An updated version is available at <https://dare.uni-koeln.de/app/works>. See further, the descriptive listing of the commentaries by al-'Alawī, *Al-Matn al-Rushdī*, 14–45 (for an attempt at a chronology, 47–126). I do not concern myself in this study with Averroes' *Quaestiones*—such as his "Questions in Logic," "Questions in Physics," and *De Substantia orbis*—and other independent writings related to the Aristotelian corpus either directly or indirectly.
  - 6 Not all scholars agree. See Fakhry, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 305: "The distinction between the large and intermediate commentaries is not always easy to make." Perhaps Fakhry's surprising statement in his popular history may be explained by his identifying the middle commentary with Averroes' *sharḥ*, one of two terms Averroes used for his long commentaries. On this identification, see Fakhry, *Averroes (Ibn Rushd)*, 3 (and, similarly, 131): "The commentaries are usually divided into large (*tafsīr*), intermediate (*sharḥ*), and short, i.e. paraphrase or epitomes (*jawāmi'*)."
  - 7 On the suitability of the term "paraphrase" (or, for that matter, "middle commentary") for translating Averroes' term *talkhīṣ*, see Gutas, "Aspects of Literary Form," 38–43 (on *paraphrasis*, cf. 40 and 56).
  - 8 Harvey, "Similarities and Differences."
  - 9 See, in particular, Ivry, "Averroes' Three Commentaries." This study is the first such attempt in modern times. Five years earlier, Thérèse-Anne Druart briefly compared Averroes' three commentaries on *On the Soul*; see Druart, "Averroes," esp. 197–202. One medieval thinker who compared the three kinds of commentaries is the fifteenth-century Jewish philosopher Abraham Bibago. Bibago compared Averroes' three commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in his supercommentary on Averroes' middle commentary on the *Metaphysics*; see Steinschneider, "Abraham Bibago's Schriften," 131 and nn. 33 and 34.
  - 10 See Ivry, "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries," 76–78, 83–84, 91.
  - 11 Ivry, "Averroes' Short Commentary," esp. 511–13 and 548; Ivry, "Averroes' Three Commentaries," 200, 209, 216. On Averroes' use of the commentators in his three commentaries on *On the Soul*, cf. Druart, "Averroes," 191–93 and 197–202.
  - 12 Druart, "Averroes," 193.
  - 13 Ivry, "Averroes' Short Commentary," 519; Ivry, "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries," 91.
  - 14 Ivry, "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries," 76; Ivry, "Averroes' Short Commentary," 513 and 516. Ivry, "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries," 76, likens Averroes' style to that of Avicenna, who, Ivry writes, "wrote his *al-Najāt* by abridging the *Shifā'*." But the example is not accurate, for the *Najāt* actually shares lengthy passages verbatim with the *Shifā'* while, of course, omitting others entirely. In any case, Dimitri Gutas states in *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 113–14, that the *Najāt* "is not a summary or abridgment" of the *Shifā'*, as frequently claimed, but rather both copy passages from earlier works by Avicenna.

- 15 Ivry, "Averroes' Three Commentaries," 201; Ivry, "Averroes' *Short Commentary*," 513.
- 16 Ivry, "Averroes' Three Commentaries," 202; Ivry, "Averroes' *Short Commentary*," 517–19; Ivry, "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries," 85–86; Ivry, "Response," 154; and Ivry, "La logique de la science de l'âme," 696.
- 17 Ivry, "Averroes' Middle and Long Commentaries," 91.
- 18 Harvey, "Similarities and Differences," 96–97.
- 19 Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*. Her references are to a pre-publication version of my paper.
- 20 Harvey, "Reflections on Ruth Glasner's *Averroes' Physics*," 403.
- 21 Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*, 14.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 15–17.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 21 n. 13.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 25 On the rather large number of Arabic (Judeo-Arabic) fragments of the *Long Commentary on On the Soul*, see Sirat and Geoffroy, *L'original arabe*.
- 26 Halper, "Averroes on Metaphysical Terminology," 93.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 91.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 29 Arnzen, "Translator's Introduction," 2.
- 30 See notes 11 and 12 above.
- 31 In fact, Averroes' *Kitāb al-darūrī fī l-mantiq*, his short commentary on the logic, seems to follow al-Fārābī's short commentaries, most noticeably with regard to its structure. See al-'Alawī, *Al-Matn al-Rushdī*, 49–52. For a good illustration of al-Fārābī's influence on Averroes' short commentaries on the logic (as opposed to his middle commentaries), see Lamprakis, "Al-Fārābī and Averroes." See also Elamrani-Jamal, "Averroès, le commentateur d'Aristote?" 646–48. Al-'Alawī also argued that Averroes' summaries on the logic were of subjects, not books of Aristotle (against Butterworth's conclusions). He referred to these summaries as *mukhtaṣarāt* (summaries or epitomes). For the same reason, he also called the short commentary on the *De anima* the *Mukhtaṣar on On the Soul*. Butterworth defended his position in "Account of Recent Scholarship," 93–97.
- 32 Butterworth, "Introduction," 5–10.
- 33 On this point, see Ivry, "Averroes' *Short Commentary*," 512–13, 520–21, 548–49. See also Druart, "Averroes," 190–93. Decades later, Averroes returned to the *Short Commentary on On the Soul*—as he did to other commentaries—and made revisions on the basis of his improved knowledge and new understanding of the Aristotelian text. See Druart, "Averroes," 193; Ivry, "Averroes' *Short Commentary*," 516, 520–21, 546–47, cf. 523.
- 34 Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*, 11.
- 35 Taylor, "Introduction," xvi; Arnzen, "Translator's Introduction," 2. Gutas, "Aspects of Literary Form," 56, refers to Averroes' *talākhīṣ* of the books of the *Organon* as "paraphrases." Earlier in that paper, he explains that "during the period of translations, and perhaps ever [ . . . ] [the verb] *lakhkhaṣa* did not and does not mean 'to comment' in the sense of *sharḥ* or *tafsīr*, nor did it mean 'paraphrase' as the term is understood either in Greek or in English" (40).
- 36 Harvey, "Similarities and Differences," 91 and 95.
- 37 Ivry, "Averroes' *Short Commentary*," 512–13.
- 38 Halper, "Averroes on Metaphysical Terminology," 93.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 46, 48, 68. For a more detailed account of Averroes' changes in his *Middle Commentary on the Metaphysics* to the Arabic text of Aristotle, see now Halper, "Averroes' Rewrite." For Yehuda Halper, the *Middle Commentary on*

- Metaphysics* Δ is not only very similar to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Δ but is the closest of all three commentaries to it (263).
- 40 It now appears that Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn translated only the first four books, while Uṣṭāth translated books 5–10. See Schmidt and Ullmann, *Aristoteles in Fes*, 15–16.
  - 41 Harvey, “Nature and Importance,” 271–73.
  - 42 See, e.g., Berman, “Ibn Rushd's *Middle Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*,” esp. 293; Aouad and Woerther, “Le commentaire par Averroès.”
  - 43 Harvey and Woerther, “Averroes' *Middle Commentary*,” 283. See also Woerther, *Le plaisir*, esp. 84–107. On the above-mentioned exceptions, see Harvey and Woerther, “Averroes' *Middle Commentary*,” 257–58.
  - 44 See the entries for *Parva naturalia* and *De animalibus* at <http://dare.uni-koeln.de/app/> (accessed March 14, 2022).
  - 45 See, for example, Cruz Hernández, *Abū-l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Ruṣd*, 362; al-'Alawī, *Al-Matn al-Rushdī*, 19 (cf. 70–71, 136–37). The Arabic title of the commentary on the *Parva naturalia* calls it a *talkhīṣ*.
  - 46 Fontaine, “Averroes as a Commentator of Aristotle,” 103.
  - 47 Fontaine, “Averroes' Commentary,” 491. On the previous page, Fontaine leans toward considering the commentary on *On Animals* a middle commentary: “It looks more like a Middle Commentary. Not only is it considerably longer than Averroes' other Epitomes, but it also follows the Aristotelian text closer than the Epitomes do” (490).
  - 48 Translated in Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*, 20, from the Hebrew translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary on the Physics*. Concerning Averroes' statement in his commentary on *On Animals* on how he sees his commentary, see his introduction to it (especially the end), translated from the medieval Hebrew by Gerrit Bos and David Wirmer, Averroes, *Sefer Ba'alei Hayyim*.
  - 49 Ar.: *'alā l-ma'nā*. Averroes distinguishes clearly between the middle commentaries and the long commentaries, referring to the middle commentaries as “according to the signification” (or, in Endress' translation, “elucidating the sense”) and the long commentaries as “word-for-word” or “literal” (Ar.: *'alā l-lafẓ*; He.: *millah be-millah*). See Glasner, *Averroes' Physics*, 20; Endress, “If God Grant Me Life,” esp. 245.
  - 50 Translated in Harvey, “Averroes' Use of Examples,” 92.
  - 51 Translated in *ibid.*, 93. See, similarly, the beginning of Averroes' *Commentary [Be'ur] on Plato's Republic*: “The intention of this treatise is to abstract such scientific arguments [*ha-ma'amarim ha-madda'iyim*] attributable to Plato as are contained in the *Republic* by eliminating the dialectical arguments from it.” Averroes, *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, trans. Lerner, 3.
  - 52 Translated in Harvey, “Averroes' Use of Examples,” 93. Arnzen, in Averroes, *On Aristotle's "Metaphysics,"* 21, translates this passage: “In this treatise, we wish to present scientific doctrines gathered from the treatises Aristotle devoted to the science of metaphysics in the manner we have practised generally in the preceding books.”
  - 53 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Marsh. 472 (Neubauer 1381), fol. 254r.
  - 54 Blumberg, “Introduction,” xiii–xiv.
  - 55 Sarah Stroumsa has for nearly two decades questioned the credibility of the “semihagiographic” story reported in 1224 by the Maghribian historian 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī. See, most recently, Stroumsa, *Andalus and Sefarad*, esp. 135–41.
  - 56 For one recent illustration, see Endress, “If God Grant Me Life,” 240: “[Averroes] rejoined the *amīr* Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf [. . .] the same who after his accession in 1166 had encouraged [Averroes] to make the commentary of Aristotle the project of his life.”

- 57 See, e.g., the dating in Alonso, *Teología de Averroes*, 76–88; Cruz Hernández, *Historia de la filosofía española*, 2:61–62; Cruz Hernández, *Abū-l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Ruṣḍ*, 58–59; Puig Montada, *Averroes*, 124; al-'Alawī, *Al-Matn al-Ruṣḍī*, 61–86.
- 58 The *Middle Commentary on On the Soul* may well have been written later; see note 10 above.
- 59 The Hebrew reads as follows: ראשון יום שבת, ראשון וחדש רגב, שנת תקס"ה לחשבון ישמעאל, וזה במדינת שביליה. וכבר יש לי בהמון ביאור לעשות בעת הנערות, והוא קצר, וראיתי עתה לעשות זה הביאור יותר שלם. See the Hebrew translation of the *Middle Commentary on the Physics*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS héb 938 (Oratoire 125), fol. 156v; translated in Harvey, "Similarities and Differences," 87.
- 60 Stroumsa, *Andalus and Sefarad*, 140–41. Actually, al-Marrākushī's confusion may have been rooted in Averroes' own use of the term *talkhīṣ* as a title for the *Short Commentary on the Physics*, as evidenced by at least one manuscript of the short commentaries (*al-jawāmi' al-ṣiḡhār*) and to describe as well the *Short Commentary on the Meteorology* and the three other *jawāmi' ṣiḡhār* of natural science that preceded it, in the colophon of that short commentary, as evidenced by at least two manuscripts. On these references, see Averroes, *Epitome de fisica*, trans. Puig, introduction, 25 and 65; al-'Alawī, *Al-Matn al-Ruṣḍī*, 55–57; Gutas, "Aspects of Literary Form," 41–42. Averroes also uses *nulakh-khiṣ*, a verb form of *talkhīṣ*, at the beginning of the *Short Commentary on the Physics* (in all the extant manuscripts, shortly after the passage quoted at note 51), when stating what he will do in that book: "and we will elucidate [*nulakh-khiṣ*] what is in each of the treatises [of the *Physics*] of scientific statements." Averroes, *Epitome in physicorum libros*, ed. Puig, 8. For Averroes' statement on the difference between his short and middle commentaries on the *Physics*, see the previous note. See also Endress, "If God Grant Me Life," 244, for Averroes' use in the *Middle Commentary on the Prior Analytics* of "our *talkhīṣ* on these topics," in reference to an earlier writing.
- 61 See notes 48 and 49 above.
- 62 See Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, 44–48; Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, 431–34. These scholars' knowledge of Averroes' commentaries—attained, in great part, through perusing numerous manuscripts—is indeed impressive, although not, of course, definitive. We can today correct their overgeneralizations and imprecisions, while still appreciating their great contributions toward classifying Averroes' many commentaries. Gutas, "Aspects of Literary Form," 55, views things differently. Rather than seeing himself as standing on the shoulders of these scholars and others, such as Moritz Steinschneider (see 41–42), he regards them as an "albatross" around our necks. Gutas writes: "The accepted wisdom about Averroes's commentatorial activity, namely, that he wrote three kinds of commentaries for most of Aristotle's works—the short in his youth, the middle in his mature age and the long in his old—dates back to the Renaissance and has since been codified as dogma through sheer repetition. Like other similar pieces of accepted wisdom, it fails accurately to depict what Averroes actually did, but rather seems to reflect European perceptions of the Latin Averroes." This statement about the periodization of Averroes' commentatorial activity is translated from Renan's French along with Renan's remark that it was already generally accepted during the Renaissance (Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, 45–46 n. 3). However, what neither Renan nor Munk nor Steinschneider would mistakenly write is Gutas' insertion that Averroes "wrote three kinds of commentaries for most of Aristotle's works," for they knew that he wrote only five long commentaries. It is also misleading to suggest that they accepted this opinion blindly without checking it out themselves (see, e.g., Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*,

- 423 and 431). Gutas is correct, as we have seen, that the “accepted wisdom” is not completely accurate, but this was hardly a “failure”; it was unavoidable at the time. Munk’s and Renan’s knowledge of what Averroes “actually did” in his various commentaries was, as mentioned, based primarily on their perusal of manuscripts, and certainly not simply on the basis of their titles in Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin, or on their statements of aim and intention.
- 63 Endress’ translation; see note 49 above.
- 64 There are reasonable attempts by learned scholars to date the completion of the long commentaries, but I know of no definitive dating for any. Few scholars seem aware of the passage, quoted at note 48, where Averroes refers to his earliest long commentaries. In his *Long Commentary on On the Heavens*, Averroes expresses his hope to be able to write a long commentary on the *Metaphysics*, so we know that long commentary was written after the one on *On The Heavens*; see Endress, “If God Grant Me Life,” 251.
- 65 If Ivry is correct that the *Long Commentary on On the Soul* was written before the middle commentary, it may well be the case that it was not completed or circulated before the latter. This indeed is Ivry’s suggestion (Ivry, “Averroes’ Middle and Long Commentaries,” 91): “The positive reception of his Middle Commentary would have encouraged him to publish the Long Commentary afterwards, later in his life.” During this last period of his life, when he was engaged, *inter alia*, in writing the long commentaries, he also made the effort to revise his earlier commentaries. On these revisions, see, e.g., Druart, “Averroes.” Glasner, *Averroes’ Physics*, 28, writes that “all three commentaries on the *Physics* were massively revised,” and she illustrates these revisions throughout her book. Curiously, Glasner argues that “sometimes, in [late revisions to] the short commentary, we find Averroes’ last word on issues that were of the utmost importance for him” (30). Significantly, she adds that the “long is the most heavily revised of the three commentaries on the *Physics* and possibly the whole corpus of Averroes’ commentaries” (32). See, in general, her chapter, “Versions and Revisions,” 28–40, and 35–36 on Averroes’ revisions to his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*.
- 66 On Averroes’ repeated prayer throughout his career, “from the first beginning to the very end,” that God might grant him “a life long enough to attain his goal,” see Endress, “If God Grant Me Life,” esp. 228, 244, 246, 252; and above at note 48. In the passage quoted at note 48, Averroes states his hope to be able to write long commentaries on *On Animals* and indeed on all the remaining Aristotelian books. On his explicit hope to be able to write a long commentary on the *Prior Analytics*, see Endress, “If God Grant Me Life,” 244, and on the *Sophistics*, 245; on his hope, if God will grant him life, to write a long commentary on the *Metaphysics*, which he in fact achieved, see Munk, *Mélanges de philosophie juive et arabe*, 423 and 431, and the reference in note 64 above.

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## Appendix

# “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’”—A Short History

*Richard C. Taylor and Brett Yardley*

*This Appendix is an edited account of Richard C. Taylor’s comments on the origins, history, and purpose of the “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’ International Working Group,” as told to Brett Yardley in 2019.*

I’m often asked what “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’” is and how it came to be. As its longer name implies, “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’” is an international group of scholars with a common expertise who critically engage one another’s work in friendly, but astute, ways—that area of expertise being medieval philosophy in the classical rationalist tradition in the Islamic world and its impact on the Latin West, namely Christian thinkers of the High Middle Ages in Europe.

It is well known that when developing the foundation of his metaphysical thought, Thomas Aquinas drew heavily on Moses Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed* for his famous proofs for the existence of God, and on Avicenna’s distinction of essence and existence. Less well known is that Thomas and his teacher, Albert the Great, put Averroean concepts into their natural theology, their epistemology and psychology, and even their supernatural theology of beatitude, all of which are key to understanding human nature and the unity of the human person as body and soul together. As such, the project is not limited to Aquinas, but rather seeks to promote the understanding of philosophical thought in all three Abrahamic traditions in themselves, as well as their interactions with one another and their influences on later thinkers. To that end, the project encourages work in all three traditions and is particularly interested in contributions, influences, parallel developments, and valuable philosophical and theological insights within the history of philosophy.

As for origins, there is no fateful day, no epiphany, that we can point to as the impetus for what is today called the “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’ International Working Group” (AAIWG). It evolved slowly and naturally from a rather unremarkable beginning. For years, David Twetten and I had invited speakers to Marquette University’s campus to discuss prominent philosophical and theological issues within the Abrahamic traditions throughout the medieval period, whether the issues be found in Arabic, Hebrew, or Latin writings. It was only in the fall of 2005 that we held

our first meeting under the title “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs,’” so as to reflect the rich legacy of the classical rationalist tradition in the Islamic cultural milieu, whose thinkers the Latin West historically referred to as “the Arabs” because they were unaware of their ethnic differences.<sup>1</sup> However, we really saw ourselves as merely continuing the long history of Jesuit education’s engagement around the globe, not only to educate young people of all religions but also to contribute research for interreligious and cross-cultural understanding and cooperation.

As such, we merely stood on the shoulders of nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars and teachers, whose sound scholarship greatly contributed to the study of Arabic/Islamic philosophy in its own right, to the study of Greek sources foundational for the development of Arabic/Islamic philosophy, and to the powerful and penetrating influence of Arabic/Islamic philosophy on the Latin West. For example, we were emulating scholars like those from Saint Joseph University, established in Beirut in 1860, and Baghdad College, established in 1932, such as the renowned Jesuit scholar Rev. Maurice Bouyges, SJ, who produced critical editions of Averroes’ works (editions which continue to be considered exemplars of scholarship nearly seventy years after their completion), in addition to many articles on Arabic philosophy and its influence in *Mélanges*, an important research periodical on Arabic/Islamic philosophy that was published by Saint Joseph University. Another key figure was Rev. Georges Anawati, OP, of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo, who produced editions of Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* of the *Shifā’* and Galen’s Arabic texts, as well as a bibliography of Averroes, to name just a few of his contributions. We felt that these scholars provided a model for future work in medieval philosophy: research within the context of Islamic culture and religion that respects and appreciates the sophisticated philosophical and theological insights of medieval thinkers. In this respect, “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’” is really just a natural continuation of work begun decades, even centuries, ago.

Within three years of our first meeting, we were able to open up the group more broadly, initially thanks to assistance from the College of Arts and Sciences at Marquette University, which allowed us to become an *international* working group by engaging with scholars outside of North America in earnest. This led to a cooperative arrangement, after some discussion in Paris and Palermo in 2007, between the AAIWG at Marquette and the Commissio Leonina for an international project on the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the role of the Arabic philosophical tradition as a source during his development.<sup>2</sup> Although time and resources never allowed for the culmination of this ambitious joint series, which aimed to explicate Aquinas’ first, foundational encounters with Arabic philosophy in his early *Commentary on the Sentences*, the project confirmed both the value of and the need for understanding classical philosophy in the Islamic

world as regards its influence on the Latin West. Furthermore, a visit by Adriano Oliva, OP, of the Paris Leonine Commission to Marquette University in 2008 marked the official launch of our biannual conferences on “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs.’” Moving forward, our conference schedule continued to expand, as the group became better friends and colleagues: Adriano Oliva hosted us at the Sorbonne in Paris; Luis Xavier López-Farjeat in Mexico City; Edward Houser in Houston; Cristina D’Ancona in Pisa; and then, in 2018, Fouad Ben Ahmed hosted us in Rabat, followed immediately by Jamal Rachak in Marrakesh, for our first conferences in a traditionally Muslim country.

The fruit of these conferences, and of the group’s collaboration more generally, is evidenced in the numerous publications by our members, including both edited books such as *The Judeo-Christian-Islamic Heritage: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives* (2013) and *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy* (2016) and special issues of journals such as *The Thomist* (2012), *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* (2014), and *Anuario Filosófico* (2015). Members of our group have also published their works on the subject in other journals, including *Tópicos: Revista de filosofía*, *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales*, and *Oriens*. The impact of these publications, in addition to our members’ numerous individual contributions, was even formally recognized by the Société Internationale pour l’Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale (SIEPM). With new publications every year, “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’” continues demonstrating that knowledge of the Arabic philosophical tradition is essential to understanding philosophical thought within all three Abrahamic traditions, including the Latin West.

At the time of writing, membership of the working group has grown to include over one hundred scholars from across North Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Each is interested in medieval philosophy, focusing on either medieval philosophy in the Islamic world, the Latin West through the time of Thomas Aquinas, or both. Work to identify the Arabic philosophical influences on Thomas and his teacher Albert the Great is well on its way, but the current group leaves other influential Scholastics—such as Suárez, Ockham, and Scotus—to future scholars. My hopes for the AAIWG are that, as the next generation takes the reins, we will be able to integrate more scholars from even more institutions across the globe, especially the Islamic world. Most of all, I hope to see “Aquinas and ‘the Arabs’ International Working Group” members continue to support one another, while mentoring future scholars. Through exploring and explicating the thought of Thomas Aquinas and the influence of the Arabic/Islamic philosophical tradition upon his thought, I believe the group is able to make a special contribution not only to our knowledge of the Catholic philosophical tradition but also to establishing and publicizing the real historical foundations for interfaith dialogue found in the medieval world.

**Notes**

- 1 Of course, today we know better than scholars of the Latin West. Though al-Kindī, known as “the philosopher of ‘the Arabs,’” was truly of Arab lineage (he was born and studied in Baghdad), *in toto* the *falāsifa*—the philosophers or the classical rationalists within the Islamic world—were of diverse origins and even faiths. Al-Fārābī (Alfarabi) was born in Turkestan and studied in Baghdad, in what is now Afghanistan and Iraq respectively. Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) was born to a culturally Persian family in Afshana, near Bukhara, and moved west to study in Hamadan and Isfahan, in present-day Uzbekistan and Iran, respectively. Ibn Rushd (Averroes) was born in Cordoba and should be properly considered Andalusian or Maghrabi, now Spain. Maimonides, who resided in Cordoba, Morocco, and Egypt, is also included among the philosophers of the tradition, since his philosophical thought was importantly formed through study of Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, among other sources, and is, in significant respects, a continuation of the classical rationalist tradition.
- 2 The Commissio Leonina was established to edit and study the works of Thomas Aquinas in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII, with a directive and financial support provided to a scholarly *collège* of Dominicans who chose to honor Pope Leo by taking the name “Commissio Leonina.” Since then, the Commissio Leonina has published some thirty-eight volumes of scholarly, critical editions of the works of Thomas, with a number of volumes now awaiting publication and still others in the process of being studied and prepared for editing. See [www.commissio-leonina.org](http://www.commissio-leonina.org) for more details on the work of the commission.

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