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**Ammonius and al-Fārābī:
The Sources of Avicenna's Concept
of Metaphysics***

The doctrinal influence of Ammonius Son of Hermeias, active in Alexandria between the V and the VI c. AD, on the metaphysical system of Avicenna is one of the main tenets of R. Wisnovsky's recent monograph on Avicenna's metaphysics¹. As portrayed by Wisnowsky, though, the influence of Ammonius' metaphysics on Avicenna's thought in particular, and on Arabic philosophy in general, is indirect in a double respect. First, it is not exerted by Ammonius himself, but rather by Aristotelian commentators that were his disciples, like Philoponus. Second, it does not stem from works on metaphysics by these commentators, but rather from works on natural philosophy and psychology (i.e. their commentaries on Aristotle's *Physics* and *De Anima*).

In the present article, I wish to provide evidence for a direct influence of Ammonius' metaphysics in Arabic philosophy. As I am going to argue, this influence is direct in both the aforementioned respects: it comes directly from Ammonius and originates from some works of his on metaphysics. The first recipient and witness of this influence is al-Fārābī in his treatise *On the Goals of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, whose impact on Avicenna's understanding of the *Metaphysics* is well-known. Thus, the relationship of Avicenna's metaphysics with Ammonius' metaphysical thought is broader than the one envisaged before: Avicenna is connected with Ammonius' metaphysics not only through commentaries

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¹ R. WISNOVSKY, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (New York) 2003 (see my review of this book in «Journal of Near Eastern Studies», forthcoming). On Ammonius Son of Hermeias and the Arabic tradition related to him, see C. HEIN, *Definition und Einteilung der Philosophie. Von der spätantiken Einleitungsliteratur zur arabischen Enzyklopädie*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a. M.-Bern-New York 1985, 13-14; H.D. SAFFREY / J.-P. MAHÉ, *Ammonios d'Alexandrie*, in R. GOULET (éd.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes antiques*, vol. I, CNRS Editions, Paris 1989, 168-170; U. RUDOLPH, *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios. Ein Beitrag zur neuplatonischen Überlieferung im Islam*, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, Stuttgart / Kommissionsverlag F. Steiner, Wiesbaden 1989, 210-211.

on natural philosophy and psychology by later Greek commentators, but also by means of a treatise on metaphysics by his closest predecessor in Arabic philosophy, al-Fārābī. If my analysis is correct, a fundamental joint connecting the Greek metaphysics of Late Antiquity with the early phase of Arabic metaphysics is now available for further investigation.

Al-Fārābī's work *Maqāla ... fī Aḡrād al-ḥakīm fī kull maqāla min al-kitāb al-mawsūm bi-l-ḥurūf* (*Treatise ... on the Goals of the Sage [= Aristotle] in Each Treatise of the Book named by means of Letters [= Metaphysics]*) has already attracted the attention of scholars². Previous studies have remarked the importance of this treatise both in itself and in its subsequent reception. The treatise is important in itself, in so far as it shows that in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* philosophical theology is part of a broader doctrine of being, or ontology, and keeps Aristotelian philosophical theology distinct from Islamic revealed theology. The importance of the treatise in its subsequent reception is mainly due to the deep influence it exerted, above all, on Avicenna. In the present article I am going to articulate more in detail these two points and to show the importance of this treatise also with regard to its sources.

I divide the exposition into three sections. In the first (§1), I analyze the content of the *Fī Aḡrād*. In the second section (§2), I point at Ammonius as the main source of the *Fī Aḡrād* and tentatively identify the work of Ammonius which al-Fārābī might have taken as model. In the third section (§3), I document Avicenna's reception of al-Fārābī's treatise.

1. Analysis of the *Fī Aḡrād*

The *Fī Aḡrād* consists of three main parts (see the outline of contents below). The first ([1]) is an Introduction: it indicates the themes of the following two parts and explains their importance. The second part ([2]) takes into account the goal of the *Metaphysics*. The third part ([3]) deals with the single treatises of this work and their specific goals.

² Edition: *Alfārābī's Philosophische Abhandlungen*, ed. F. Dieterici, Brill, Leiden 1890, 34-38. Translations: *Die Abhandlung von den Tendenzen der aristotelischen Metaphysik von dem Zweiten Meister*, in *Alfārābī's Philosophische Abhandlungen*, aus den Arabischen übersetzt von F. Dieterici, Brill, Leiden 1892, 54-60; TH.-A. DRUART, *Le traité d'al-Fārābī sur les buts de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, «Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale», 24 (1982), 38-43; R. RAMÓN GUERRERO, *Al-Fārābī y la «Metafísica» de Aristóteles*, «La Ciudad de Dios», 196 (1983), 211-240; D. GUTAS, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition. Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, Brill, Leiden-New York-København-Köln 1988, 240-242.

Outline of the contents of the *Fi Agrād*:

[Title (34,1-5)]

[1. Introduction (34,6-20)]

[1.1 Presentation of parts 2 and 3 (34,6-8)]

[1.2 Importance of part 2 (34,8-13)]

[1.3 Importance of part 3 (34,14-18)]

[1.4 Topics dealt with in parts 2 and 3 (34,19-20)]

[2 Goal of the Metaphysics (34,21-36,20)]

[2.1 The particular sciences (34,21-35,7)]

[2.2 The universal science (35,8-12)]

[2.3 There is only one universal science (35,13-16)]

[2.4 The divine science is part of the universal science (35,16-19)]

[2.5 The universal science's name is "metaphysics" (35,19-36,9)]

[2.6. Contents of universal science/metaphysics (36,9-20)]

[3. Goals of the single treatises of the Metaphysics (36,21-38,5)]

[3.1 Alpha Elatton (36,21-22)]

[3.2 Beta (37,1-3)]

[3.3 Gamma (37,4-5)]

[3.4 Delta (37,6-8)]

[3.5 Epsilon (37,9-13)]

[3.6 Zeta (37,14-18)]

[3.7 Eta (37,19-21)]

[3.8 Theta (37,22)]

[3.9 Iota (37,23)]

[3.10 Kappa [?] (38,1)]

[3.11 Lambda (38,2-4)]

[3.12 Mi [?] (38,5)]

[Conclusion (38,6)]

Part [1] presents briefly the content of the following two parts in [1.1] and [1.4], and shows their importance in [1.2] and [1.3] respectively. Section [1.2] shows the necessity of discussing the goal of the *Metaphysics* in part [2]. This necessity arises from the conflict between the common expectations about the *Metaphysics* and its actual content: whereas people expect the *Metaphysics* to be fully devoted to the investigation of theological matters, and metaphysics as a discipline to coincide with Islamic theology, such an investigation is in fact available only in one of its treatises (Λ). Al-Fārābī's way of describing the misconception regarding the *Metaphysics* in [1.2] is revealing. On the one hand, the content of the *Metaphysics* is misconceived as amounting to the study of "the Creator, the Intellect, the Soul" (*al-bārī ... wa-l-'aql wa-l-nafs*) and other

related topics. On the other hand, the science of metaphysics is misconceived as identical with “the science of the profession of God’s oneness” (*‘ilm al-tawhīd*). The former misconception makes possible the latter, and in fact is the only one that will be taken into account and refuted in part [2]. The Neoplatonic background of the triad Creator-Intellect-Soul is evident, whereas *‘ilm al-tawhīd* is an expression designating Islamic theology³. Thus, al-Fārābī is dealing with an attempt at isolating the theological content of the *Metaphysics* from the rest of the work, at interpreting it in a Neoplatonic perspective, and at stressing its congruence with Islamic theology. This way of reading the *Metaphysics* is the one proper to al-Kindī. For al-Kindī gives special importance to books α and Λ of the *Metaphysics*, inserts the *Metaphysics* in a canon of metaphysical works to which also the *Theologia Aristotelis*, the *Liber de Causis* and other Neoplatonic writings belong, and emphasizes the affinity between Greek metaphysics and Islamic theology in order to “legitimize” the former (and philosophy in general) in the Muslim cultural environment. As an answer to the Kindian way of reading the *Metaphysics*, in part [2] al-Fārābī will show that the investigation of theological matters is one of the main topics of the *Metaphysics*, but not the only one.

Section [1.3] (see Text 4 below) shows the necessity of discussing the goals of the single books of the *Metaphysics* in part [3]. This necessity, al-Fārābī says, is due to the fact that no commentary on these books is available in Arabic, with the only exception of book Λ and the commentaries on it by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius. In part [3], therefore, al-Fārābī will provide the Arabic reader with a first acquaintance with the contents and goals of the books of the *Metaphysics* other than Λ.

Part [2] constitutes the doctrinal core of the treatise. In it al-Fārābī deals with the science contained in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* more than with the *Metaphysics* as such. The *leit-motiv* of this part is the status of metaphysics as universal sci-

³ HEIN, *Definition und Einteilung der Philosophie* cit., 310-312, remarks the Neoplatonic overtones of al-Fārābī’s account, even though she overemphasizes the point, regarding not only the mention of the Creator, the Intellect and the Soul as a reference to the *Theologia Aristotelis*, but also the mention of the *‘ilm al-tawhīd* as a reference to the *Liber de Causis*. GUTAS, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* cit., 240, n. 4, clarifies that the expression *‘ilm al-tawhīd* refers properly to Islamic theology. The Creator is mentioned together with the Intellect and the Soul in *Theologia Aristotelis*, cap. 1 (PLOTINO, *La discesa dell’anima nei corpi* (Enn. IV 8 [6]). *Plotiniana Arabica* [Pseudo-Teologia di Aristotele, Capitoli 1 e 7; “Detti del sapiente greco”], a cura di C. D’Ancona, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2003, 237,4-8) and cap. 7 (249,3-10). The triad Creator-Intellect-Soul apperas, in the reverse order, in Avicenna’s refutation of Platonic philosophy in *Ilāhiyyāt*, VII, 3 (IBN SĪNĀ, *Al-Šifā’*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt* [2], ed. M.Y. Mūsa / S. Dunya / S. Zayed, al-Hay’a al-‘āmma li-šū’ūn al-maṭābī’ al-amiriyya, Cairo 1960, 318,15; AVICENNA LATINUS, *Liber de Philosophia prima sive Scientia divina*, V-X. Édition critique par S. Van Riet. Introduction par G. Verbeke, Peeters, Louvain / Brill, Leiden 1980, 369, 18; henceforth the pages and lines of the Latin translation of the *Ilāhiyyāt* are reported within square brackets).

ence, something that distinguishes it from particular sciences like natural philosophy, geometry, arithmetic and medicine ([2.1]-[2.2]; see the translation in Table 2, below). The universality of metaphysics entails that it is one ([2.3]), that it encompasses philosophical theology as one of its parts ([2.4]; see the translation in Table 2, below), and that it is more general than natural philosophy, i.e. higher than and posterior to it, accordingly being named “metaphysics” ([2.5]). Part [2] ends with an ordered list of the topics dealt with by metaphysics, which amounts to a description of its ideal structure ([2.6]). In this list al-Fārābī first mentions the primary concern of metaphysics, i.e. the investigation of “existent”, “one”, non-existence and multiplicity; then he assigns to metaphysics the study of their species, properties, and principles; finally he maintains that metaphysics clarifies the principles and definitions of the other disciplines (see [2.6e] in Table 2, below).

To sum up: part [2] establishes that metaphysics is the only universal science and the only science worthy to be called “metaphysics”; that it has some subject-matters, primary among which are “existent” and “one”, and deals with their species, properties and principles; that philosophical theology, meant as the investigation of the principle of “existent” in so far as it is existent, is only a part of metaphysics.

Part [3], finally, provides the description of twelve of the fourteen books of the *Metaphysics*. The missing books are A and – in all likelihood – N. The description of some books is rather vague. This happens in the case of the tenth ([3.10]) and twelfth book ([3.12]), even though there is no reason to assume that these descriptions do not refer to books K and M respectively.

The *Fi Aḡrād* is neither a commentary on the *Metaphysics*, nor a reworking of it, but rather an introduction. Thus, al-Fārābī deals with certain issues – like the “goal” (*ḡaraḍ*) of the *Metaphysics* (see below, Text 1), the “name” (*ism*) of the science contained in it (see [2.5]), and the “divisions” (*aqsām*) of this work (see [1.1] and [4]) that correspond to some of the preliminary questions discussed in the Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle's works, namely the question of the “goal” (σκοπός), “title” (ἐπιγραφή) and “division into chapters” (εἰς τὰ κεφάλαια διαίρεσις) of the work commented upon⁴.

Among these issues, the “goal” (*ḡaraḍ*) is no doubt the most important, as the title of al-Fārābī's essay makes clear. Since al-Fārābī speaks of the goal of the *Metaphysics* in different ways and contexts, it is convenient to examine preliminarily all his relevant statements in this regard.

⁴ See A. BERTOLACCI, *The Structure of Metaphysical Science in the Ilāhiyyāt (Divine Science) of Avicenna's Kitāb al-Sifā' (Book of the Cure)*, «Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale», 13 (2002), 22-23.

Text 1

[Title] «Treatise ... on the goals (*agrād*) of the Sage [i.e. Aristotle] in each treatise of the book named by means of letters [i.e. the *Metaphysics*], namely (*wa-huwa*) the determination of Aristotle's goal (*garaḍ*) in the book *Metaphysics*».

[1.1] «He [i.e. al-Fārābī] says: Our aim in this treatise is to indicate the goal (*garaḍ*) that Aristotle's book known as *Metaphysics* contains, and the primary divisions (*aqsām*) of it».

[1.2] «[...] since we find most of the discussion in it [i.e. in the *Metaphysics*] devoid of this goal (*hādā l-garaḍ*) [i.e. the treatment of theological matters], or, rather, we do not find in it any specific discussion of this goal (*hādā l-garaḍ*), except [the discussion] that takes place in the eleventh treatise, the one designated as “L” [i.e. Λ]».

[1.4] «We want to indicate the goal (*garaḍ*) that is present in it [i.e. in the entire *Metaphysics*] and that which each of its treatises contains».

[Conclusion] «This is the clarification of the goal (*garaḍ*) of this book and [the clarification] of its divisions (*aqsām*)».

In Text 1, al-Fārābī mentions both the specific goals of the single books (“divisions”, *aqsām*) of the *Metaphysics* (in [Title] and [1.4])⁵, and the overall goal of the entire *Metaphysics*. In [Title], the goals of the books are treated as equivalent to the goal of the whole work; in [1.4], on the other hand, the two are distinguished. In part [3] of the *Fī Agrād*, devoted to discussing the goals of the single books, al-Fārābī provides an account of their content, focusing either on one or several of their themes. Thus, it appears that the goal of the books of the *Metaphysics* is constituted by their prime topic or topics. As to the overall goal of the *Metaphysics*, it is always referred to in the singular. Furthermore, the goal of the *Metaphysics* mentioned in [1.1] is identified in [1.2] with the theological investigation performed by Aristotle in book Λ. Thus, according to al-Fārābī the single goal of the entire *Metaphysics* is the theological investigation. In other words: according to al-Fārābī, the *Metaphysics* has both a primary goal, i.e. the theological investigation, and several secondary goals, corresponding to the main topics of its single books.

This explains why, in the part of the *Fī Agrād* devoted to discussing the general goal of the *Metaphysics* (part [2]), al-Fārābī, as we have seen, deals primarily with the theological investigation, but takes into account also several other themes, roughly corresponding to the topics of the single books, without assigning specifically to any of them the role of goal of the *Metaphysics* or regard-

⁵ In [Title], he refers to these goals collectively in the plural; in [1.4], on the other hand, he refers to each of them distributively in the singular. Whereas in [Title] the goals of the single books appear to coincide with the goal of the entire *Metaphysics*, in [1.4] the former are distinct from the latter. Due to the distinction that al-Fārābī draws, in [1.1] and [Conclusion], between the *Metaphysics* in its entirety and its single books, it is safe to assume that he has in mind two distinct types of goals.

ing any of them as more important than the others. Significantly, in light of what we are going to see, among these themes (i.e. secondary goals) there are the investigation of being *qua* being (see especially [2.2] and the beginning of [2.6]) and the metaphysical proof of the principles of the other sciences ([2.6e]).

2. The Sources of the *Fī Agrād*

A work like the *Fī Agrād* is unprecedented in Arabic philosophy: it is reasonable to look for its source in Greek metaphysics. In fact, it is related to the commentatorial tradition of Late Antiquity, in general, and to Ammonius' school in VI c. Alexandria, in particular. The dependence of the *Fī Agrād* on Ammonius' metaphysics is shown by the similarities with Ammonius' commentary on the *Metaphysics* – preserved in Greek in the *reportatio* by the disciple Asclepius⁶ – even though this commentary, as we are going to see, is not the direct source of the *Fī Agrād*. The relevant indications are the following.

First, as I have already remarked, the *Fī Agrād* inherits from the commentatorial tradition of Late Antiquity the character of *prolegomenon*. Now, Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary on the *Metaphysics* is the only Greek commentary on this work which includes the discussion of *prolegomena*. Thus, even though the propedeutic issues discussed by Ammonius/Asclepius in the commentary on the *Metaphysics* are more numerous than, and partially different from, those dealt with in the *Fī Agrād*⁷, and even though al-Fārābī is not the first Arab philosopher

⁶ ASCLEPII *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Libros A-Z Commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck, Berolini 1888 (CAG VI.2). On Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary, see C. LUNA, *Les commentaires grecs à la Métaphysique*, in R. GOULET (éd.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes antiques*, Supplement, CNRS Editions, Paris 2003, 249-258.

⁷ In Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary there are two distinct Prolegomena, both belonging to the theory of the first praxis (ASCLEPIUS, *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Libros A-Z Commentaria*, ed. Hayduck, 1,4-5,32): the former occurs in the commentary on the first lemma of the theory (1,4-2,3), the latter in the commentary on the second lemma of the theory (2,4-5,32). In the first Prolegomenon, three topics are first mentioned (1,6-7) and then discussed (1,7-22): (i) the goal of the *Metaphysics* (σκοπός, 1,7-8); (ii) its position within Aristotle's *corpus* of works (τάξις, 1,8-19); (iii) the reason of its title (ἡ αἰτία τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς, 1,19-22). In the remainder of the commentary on the first lemma (1,22-2,3), it is shown that Aristotle "theologizes", i.e. speaks about God, not only in the *Metaphysics*, but also in his works of natural philosophy (*De Generatione et Corruptione*, *Physics* and *De Anima* are mentioned). In the second Prolegomenon, four general topics are mentioned (2,5-7) and discussed (2,9-4,3): (i) the goal of the *Metaphysics* (σκοπός, 2,9-20); (ii) its utility (τὸ χρήσιμον, 2,20-3,20); (iii) its position within Aristotle's *corpus* of works (τάξις, 3,21-27); (iv) the reason of its title (ἡ αἰτία τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς, 3,27-4,3). A fifth topic follows: (v) the way according to which the *Metaphysics* is organized (ὁ τρόπος τῆς συντάξεως, 4,4-16). Two more specific topics (mentioned at 2,7-9) are added, as a way of introducing the exegesis of book A: the relationship between books A and α (4,17-35); Aristotle's starting-point in conveying the knowledge of first philosophy (4,36-5,32). Only topics (i) and (iii) in the first Prolegomenon and topics (i) and (iv) in the second have a

to discuss these issues with regard to the *Metaphysics*⁸, the common application to the *Metaphysics* of the explicative tool of the *prolegomena* represents a first significant similarity between Ammonius and al-Fārābī.

Second, the specific description of the goal of the *Metaphysics* is remarkably similar in the *Fī Aḡrād* and in Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary on the *Metaphysics*. As already pointed out (see above, Text 1), the goal of the *Metaphysics* in the *Fī Aḡrād* is identified primarily with the investigation of theological matters, but also, in a secondary way, with the group of topics mentioned in the outline of metaphysics in part [2]. A similar approach can be found in the *prolegomena* of Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary on the *Metaphysics*.

Text 2

[a] (1, 7-8) «Goal (σκοπός) of the present investigation [i.e. of the *Metaphysics*] is to theologize. For in it Aristotle theologizes».

[b1] (2,9-15) «The goal (ὁ σκοπός) of the present book is to speak about beings and [to speak about them] *qua* beings, and to discuss about all beings in absolute terms, in so far as they are beings. Hence we have proposed the following definition of philosophy: “Knowledge of beings *qua* beings”. For here the discussion regards neither particulars, like comets, as in the *Meteorologica*, nor universals, as in the *De Caelo*. Rather, it regards all beings universally».

[b2] (2,15-16) «For theologizing is incumbent upon him [i.e. Aristotle] in the present book».

[b3] (2,16-20) «By all means, [it is incumbent upon him] also to discuss about elements and principles, for only first philosophy is charged with proving the principles of all the sciences. For the other sciences do not prove the[ir] proper principles, but only first philosophy proves the principles of all the sciences.

This [has to be said] about the goal (τοῦ σκοποῦ)».

The idea that the theological discussion is the goal of the *Metaphysics* occurs in two places of Ammonius/Asclepius' *prolegomena* ([a] and [b2]). Even though this idea is present *in nuce* in Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on *Metaphysics* Λ, as reported by Averroes⁹, it is strongly emphasized in Ammonius/As-

parallel in the *Fī Aḡrād*. Nowhere in Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary we find a division of the *Metaphysics* similar to the one that al-Fārābī provides in part [3].

⁸ The issues of the title and of the “intention” (*qaṣd*) of the *Metaphysics* are briefly discussed in Ṭābit Ibn Qurrah's *Talḥīṣ* of this work (see the forthcoming critical edition, with English translation and commentary, by D.C. Reisman and A. Bertolacci).

⁹ AVERROËS, *Tafsīr ma ba'd at-Tabī'at*, ed. M. Bouyges, Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut 1938-1948, 1394,12: «The clarification of this [i.e. of the first] substance is the aim sought for (*al-ḡāya al-maḡṣūda*) in this discipline». In Ṭābit Ibn Qurrah's *Talḥīṣ* of the *Metaphysics* (see above, n. 8), the “intention” (*qaṣd*) of the *Metaphysics* is portrayed as the investigation of the unmoved substance. The author of the *Theologia Aristotelis* mentions the “goals” (*aḡrād*) of the previous subjects dealt with ('A. BADAWĪ, *Aflūṭin 'inda l-'arab*, Maktaba al-naḡḡa al-miṣriyya, Cairo 1955, 6,1-2), including the *Metaphysics* (5, 1-2, 12), but he does not specify the identity of the goal of these subjects.

clepius' commentary: besides being repeated twice in Text 2, it also recurs elsewhere in the commentary¹⁰. This corresponds to the primacy that al-Fārābī assigns to the theological investigation among the goals of the *Metaphysics*, as we have seen. In sections [b1] and [b3] of Ammonius/Asclepius' *prolegomena*, the goal of the *Metaphysics* is portrayed differently. In [b1], it is the universal investigation of being *qua* being¹¹. This is the same as one of the secondary goals of the *Metaphysics* according to part [2] of the *Fī Aḡrād*. In section [b3] of Ammonius/Asclepius' *prolegomena*, finally, the goal of the *Metaphysics* coincides with a further notion, i.e. the proof provided by metaphysics (called "first philosophy") of the principles of the other sciences¹². This corresponds to another of the secondary goals of the *Metaphysics* in the *Fī Aḡrād*, as we have seen. To explain how these different characterizations of the goal of the *Metaphysics* in Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary relate to each other is not our task here. What is important to notice is the striking similarity between the account of the goal of the *Metaphysics* in the *prolegomena* of Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary and its treatment in the *Fī Aḡrād*.

Third, Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary on the *Metaphysics* takes into account not only the general goal of the *Metaphysics*, but also the goals of some of the single books of this work. This happens in the case of books B, Γ and E, namely three of the seven books that the commentary, in the form in which it is extant, embraces. The goal of these books is the first thing mentioned in the introduction to them.

Text 3

[a] (137,13-14) «Then [i.e. after books A and α] the goal (σκοπός) of the present book, namely of B, is to raise difficulties with regard to first philosophy».

[b] (222,6-7) «The goal (σκοπός) of the present book [i.e. Γ] is to solve many of the difficulties mentioned in the second [book], namely in B».

[c] (358,4-5) «The goal (σκοπός) of Aristoteles in [book] E is to speak about being *per accidens*».

Even though the description of the goal of books B, Γ and E is only partially similar in Ammonius/Asclepius' commentary and in the *Fī Aḡrād*, the fact that both works devote considerable attention to this issue represents another significant similarity between them.

Fourth, section [1.3] of the *Fī Aḡrād* contains an undetermined reference to previous philosophers that can be regarded as an allusion to Ammonius.

¹⁰ ASCLEPIUS, *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Libros A-Z Commentaria*, ed. Hayduck, 395,1-2; 397,5-6.

¹¹ The goal of the *Metaphysics* is portrayed in this way also at 143,15-16.

¹² The same idea occurs at 5,29-32.

Text 4

[a] «Furthermore, the Ancients do not have (*lā yūḡad li-l-qudamā'*) any discussion aimed at explaining (*kalām fī šarḥ*) this book [i.e. the *Metaphysics*] as it is, contrarily to what happens with the other books [by Aristotle].

[b] If such a discussion can be found, it is the incomplete one concerning treatise “L” by Alexander [of Aphrodisias], and the complete one [concerning the same treatise] by Themistius.

[c] As to the other treatises, either they have not been explained, or [their explanation] has not been preserved,

[d] as one might think by seeing in the books (*kutub*) of the Posterior Peripatetics (*al-muta'ahḥirīna min al-maššā'iyīna*) that Alexander had commented upon the book [i.e. the *Metaphysics*] in its entirety».

In [a], al-Fārābī states that no complete commentary on the *Metaphysics* by “the Ancients” (*al-qudamā'*) is available in Arabic. The expression “the Ancients” refers to the Ancient Greek commentators, as it becomes clear in [b], in which the commentaries by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius on *Metaphysics* Λ are mentioned as extant in Arabic. In [c], al-Fārābī maintains that either these Ancient Greek commentators have not commented on the *Metaphysics* in its entirety, or that their commentaries have not been preserved. The latter alternative is corroborated by [d], which is the relevant part of Text 7 for our purposes.

In [d], al-Fārābī states that the inspection of certain “books” (*kutub*) of the “Posterior Peripatetics” (*al-muta'ahḥirīna min al-maššā'iyīna*) attests that Alexander of Aphrodisias had, in fact, commented upon the whole *Metaphysics*. Four remarks are in order. First, al-Fārābī had direct access to the books in question, since he maintains to have read them (“as one might think by seeing ...”). Second, these books are independent treatises on metaphysics rather than commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, since they are named “books” (*kutub*), not “discussion aimed at explaining” (*kalām fī šarḥ*), i.e. commentaries, as in [a]. Third, the authors of these books, namely the Posterior Peripatetics, are later than the “Ancients”, i.e. Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius, and are Greek philosophers, since they are witnesses of a part of Alexander’s commentary not translated or not extant in Arabic. Fourth, these independent treatises on metaphysics of the Posterior Peripatetics must have contained many references to Alexander’s commentary on the *Metaphysics* such as: “In his commentary on *Metaphysics* A, Alexander says that ...”, or: “In his commentary on *Metaphysics* α, Alexander says that ...” etc., from which it could be inferred that the scope of Alexander’s commentary was broader than book Λ.

All these indications converge on Ammonius. For some of his works on metaphysics were known to al-Fārābī, like the treatise on Aristotle’s doctrine of God as artificer (i.e. efficient cause) of the world, quoted and portrayed as well-known

in the *Kitāb al-Ġam*¹³; he was posterior to Alexander and Themistius; and he made extensive use of Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on the *Metaphysics*, as his own commentary on the *Metaphysics* witnesses¹⁴. On account of this evidence, it can be inferred that Ammonius is one of the Posterior Peripatetics envisaged by al-Fārābī in [d].

Once Ammonius is placed in the background of al-Fārābī's *Fī Aġrād*, it is also possible to ascertain more precisely the work by Ammonius on which al-Fārābī's essay directly depends. This work is not Ammonius' commentary on the *Metaphysics*, since this commentary was not translated into Arabic, and it is not mentioned by al-Fārābī in [1.3] (= Text 4) among the commentaries on the *Metaphysics* he had access to. Probably it is not Ammonius' treatise on Aristotle's doctrine of God as artificer of the world either, since this treatise, extant neither in Greek nor in Arabic, appears to be an essay on a specific metaphysical doctrine, rather than a general introduction to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* like the *Fī Aġrād*.

¹³ ABŪ NAṢR AL-FĀRĀBĪ, *L'harmonie entre les opinions de Platon et d'Aristote. Texte arabe et traduction*, ed. F.M. Naġġār / D. Mallet, Institut Français de Damas, Damascus 1999, 135,1-2: «Ammonius is the author of a treatise specifically devoted to recording the statements of these two sages [i.e. Aristotle and Plato] on establishing [the existence of] the Artificer; on account of its celebrity we are dispensed from mentioning it» (*wa-li-Amūniyūsa risālatun mufradatun fī dīkri aqāwili hādayni l-ḥakimayni fī ṭibāṭi l-ṣāni'ī istaġnaynā li-ṣuhratihā 'an ihḍārihā iyyāhā*). Al-Fārābī's mention of the well-known nature of Ammonius' treatise might suggest that he is referring to the doxography widely circulating in the Arab world under the name of Ammonius (see RUDOLPH, *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios* cit.; I wish to thank Cristina D'Ancona for having brought this possibility to my attention). However, the treatise by Ammonius quoted by al-Fārābī appears to be a different one, namely the one mentioned by Simplicius in his commentaries on the *Physics* and the *De Caelo* (ed. H. Diels [CAG X], 1363,8-12 [ad *Phys.* 321 b]: «[...] My teacher Ammonius wrote a whole book offering many proofs that Aristotle thought God was also an efficient cause of the whole cosmos [...]»), engl. transl. in R. SORABJI, *Infinite Power Impressed: The Transformation of Aristotle's Physics and Theology*, in R. SORABJI [ed.], *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence*, Duckworth, London 1990, 184-185; ed. J.L. Heiberg, CAG VII, 271,18-21 [ad *De Cael.* 486 a 32]), and by the *Fihrist* (*Al-Nadīm, Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel / J. Rodiger / A. Müller, 2 vols., Leipzig 1871-1872, 253,21-22: "Book of the commentary on Aristotle's doctrines on the Artificer" [*Kitāb sarḥ maḍāhib Aristālis fī l-ṣāni'*]). For the pseudo-Ammonian doxography deals with many more authors than Plato and Aristotle, conveys a disparaging view of Aristotle, and does not contain the doctrine ascribed by al-Fārābī to Ammonius. On the other hand, immediately before the aforementioned quotation of Ammonius, al-Fārābī attributes to Aristotle the doctrine that God is the efficient cause ('illa fā'ila) of the universe, the main tenet of Ammonius' treatise, according to Simplicius. Ammonius is quoted even earlier in the *Ġam*, in a logical context (87,3-4). In this quotation, Ammonius is portrayed as preceding, rather than following, Themistius. But this lack of chronological exactness does not necessarily imply that al-Fārābī is not referring to Ammonius Son of Hermeias, as Naġġār and Mallet propose (they think that he might be referring to Ammonius Saccas, teacher of Plotinus).

¹⁴ Alexander's commentary is quoted in the exegesis of all the books commented upon by Ammonius/Asclepius, except E. On the influence of Alexander's commentary on the *Metaphysics* on Ammonius/Asclepius', see C. LUNA, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise et Syrianus comme sources du commentaire d'Asclépius*, in EAD., *Trois études sur la tradition des commentaires anciens à la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, Brill, Leiden 2001, 99-186. WISNOVSKY, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* cit., 108, regards al-Fārābī's attempt at reconciling the Aristotelian notion of "potency" (*quwwa*) and the Neoplatonic notion of "perfect" (*tāmm*) in [2.2] and [2.6] as a sign of dependence upon Ammonius.

The work by Ammonius which lies behind al-Fārābī's treatise is probably the part concerning the *Metaphysics* of a general introduction to Aristotle's *corpus*, which, albeit not extant in Greek or Arabic, is mentioned in the Arabic bibliographical literature.

Significantly, among the works by Ammonius the Arabic historical sources report a book whose title is strikingly similar to that of al-Fārābī's *Fī Aġrād*. This represents a fifth piece of evidence to prove that Ammonius is the source of the *Fī Aġrād*. In the entry devoted to Ammonius, the *Fihrist* mentions – after Ammonius' Aristotelian commentaries and his essay on Aristotle's doctrine of God as artificer – the following book:

Text 5

«Book on the goals (*fī aġrād*) of Aristotle in his books (*fī kutubihī*)»¹⁵.

Unfortunately, this work by Ammonius is not extant either in Greek or Arabic. From its title we can surmise that it was a general introduction to the Aristotelian *corpus*, elucidating the goals (and possibly also the other preliminary issues) of each of Aristotle's works.

Now, the title of this essay is remarkably similar, both in the sequence of its elements and in its terminology, to the title of al-Fārābī's *Fī Aġrād* (see Text 1). The only difference between the two titles concerns their last element and points to a different scope of investigation of the two works: whereas Ammonius' essay ranges over all the Aristotelian *corpus* (“in his [i.e. Aristotle's] books”), al-Fārābī's *Fī Aġrād* focuses on a specific work by Aristotle, i.e. the *Metaphysics*. On account of this evidence, it would not be far-fetched to assume that al-Fārābī's *Fī Aġrād* reproduces, or is inspired by, the part of this essay by Ammonius dealing with Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Should this be the case, then Ammonius' essay would be not only the source of the *Fī Aġrād*, but also – together with Ammonius' treatise on Aristotle's doctrine on God as artificer – one of the “books” (significantly in the plural) of the Posterior Peripatetics mentioned by al-Fārābī in Text 4 [d].

In front of these five pieces of evidence attesting the dependence of al-Fārābī's *Fī Aġrād* on Ammonius' metaphysics, there is one main reason that can be advanced in order to prove the contrary. This is the fact that Ammonius knew the *Metaphysics* in its entirety, whereas al-Fārābī was unaware of some of its books, like A and N. It could be argued, therefore, that a work by Ammonius cannot be the source of *Fī Aġrād*, since in this case al-Fārābī would have known and

¹⁵ AL-NADĪM, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel / Rodiger / Müller, 253, 22: *kitāb fī aġrādi Aristāliša fī kutubihī*.

presumably mentioned the books of the *Metaphysics* that, on the contrary, he ignores. This line of reasoning, however, is not conclusive. First, even though Ammonius comments upon book A in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, and in the *prolegomena* of this same commentary maintains that the *Metaphysics* consists of fourteen books (from A until N), rejecting the view of those who ascribe A not to Aristotle, but to Pasicles of Rhodes¹⁶, he also adopts a less inclusive numbering of the books of the *Metaphysics*, by calling B “second” book, instead of third, and Γ “third”, instead of fourth¹⁷. Second, even assuming that the work by Ammonius representing the source of the *Fī Agrād* encompassed all the books of the *Metaphysics*, al-Fārābī might have reworked the indications that he found in Ammonius' work adapting them to the extent that the *Metaphysics* had in the Arabic translation accessible to him, i.e. the translation by Uṣṭāṭ missing books A and N. In other words, the different scope of the *Metaphysics* in Ammonius' essay and the *Fī Agrād* does not necessarily exclude the dependence of the latter upon the former; it could rather show that al-Fārābī was original in using Ammonius' metaphysics as his source.

To summarize: In the light of its literary genre (an introduction to the *Metaphysics* modeled on the *prolegomena* literature of Late Antiquity), some of its doctrines (the investigation of God as the main goal of metaphysics, metaphysics as the universal science of existent *qua* existent, the fact that the principles of the particular sciences are proved by metaphysics), its theme (an investigation of the goal of the *Metaphysics* and of the goals of its single books), some of the authors referred to in it (the Posterior Peripatetics) and the range of its possible sources (Ammonius' treatise on the goals of Aristotle's works, mentioned in the *Fihrist*), al-Fārābī's *Fī Agrād* can be envisaged as dependent on Ammonius' metaphysics.

The reliance of al-Fārābī's *Fī Agrād* on Ammonius' metaphysics needs further corroboration. The first question to be answered is how wide was the diffusion of Ammonius' treatise in the Arabic tradition¹⁸, and, more specifically, its relation with the last part of al-Kindī's *Risāla fī Kammiyyat kutub Aristātālīs* (*Treatise on*

¹⁶ ASCLEPIUS, *In Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Libros A-Z Commentaria*, ed. Hayduck, 4,18-22.

¹⁷ 222,7; 223,11.

¹⁸ The *Fihrist* does not say that this treatise was translated into Arabic. Al-Fārābī acquaintance with it would imply the existence either of an Arabic translation unknown to Ibn al-Nadīm or of some kind of intermediate source. On al-Fārābī's dependence on Alexandrian philosophy, see D. GUTAS, *Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy: A Milestone Between Alexandria and Baghdad*, «Der Islam», 60 (1983), 231-267, D. GUTAS, *Al-Fārābī and Greek Philosophy*, in E. YARSHATER (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. IX, 1999, 219-223, D. GUTAS, *The 'Alexandria to Baghdad' Complex of Narratives. A Contribution to the Study of Philosophical and Medical Historiography among the Arabs*, «Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale», 10 (1999), 155-193 and P. VALLAT, *Fārābī et l'école d'Alexandrie. Des prémisses de la connaissance à la philosophie politique*, Vrin, Paris 2004.

the Number of Aristotle's Books), in which the “goals” (*agrād*) of Aristotle's books are expounded¹⁹, with only a few lines though devoted to the *Metaphysics*²⁰. Should the pieces of evidence presented here be confirmed by future research, we would be in presence of one important, and unknown so far, *trait-d'union* between the Greek and the Arabic tradition of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The historical significance of this connection cannot be overemphasized.

The *Fi Agrād*, and its presumed source in Ammonius, is built upon the doctrines of some books of the *Metaphysics*, primarily Γ. The entire part [2] of the *Fi Agrād* depends on Γ, as al-Fārābī himself acknowledges in the description of Γ in [3.3]. More in general, al-Fārābī's conception of the content and structure of metaphysics, and his explanation of how philosophical theology belongs to metaphysics, come from Γ, 1-2²¹.

3. *Fi Agrād*: Influence on Avicenna

The *Fi Agrād* had a strong impact on the subsequent reception of the *Metaphysics* in Arabic. Averroes' Prologue to *Metaphysics* Λ, for example, appears to depend on this treatise²². As to Avicenna, in a famous passage of the Autobiography he acknowledges his debt towards this treatise for his understanding of the *Metaphysics*²³. The *Fi Agrād* influenced Avicenna's conception of the epistemological

¹⁹ M. GUIDI / R. WALZER, *Studi su al-Kindī I: Uno scritto introduttivo allo studio di Aristotele*, Bardi, Roma 1940 («Memorie della R. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filosofiche», ser. VI, vol. VI, fasc. V), 399-403, 414-419 (chapters VIII-XII), 418. In the introduction, Guidi-Walzer [1940] do not deal with the sources of this part of al-Kindī's treatise. With regard to Abū l-Farāğ ibn al-Ṭayyib, who mentions the “goals” of Aristotle's books on natural philosophy, HEIN, *Definition und Einteilung der Philosophie* cit., 276, states that «es bleibt zu untersuchen, welchen Vorbildern er hierbei möglicherweise folgt».

²⁰ GUIDI / WALZER, *Studi su al-Kindī I: Uno scritto introduttivo allo studio di Aristotele* cit., 403,8-11, 418; English translation in GUTAS, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* cit., 244.

²¹ See A. BERTOLACCI, *La ricezione del libro Γ della Metafisica nell'Ilāhiyyāt del Kitāb al-Šifā' di Avicenna*, in V. CELLUPRICA / C. D'ANCONA / R. CHIARADONNA (a cura di), *Aristotele e i suoi esegeti neoplatonici. Logica e ontologia nelle interpretazioni greche e arabe* (Atti del convegno internazionale, Roma, 19-20 ottobre 2001), Bibliopolis, Napoli 2004, 180-181, 200-202.

²² In AVERROÈS, *Tafsir ma ba'd at-Tabi'at*, ed. Bouyges, 1395,11-1405,15, Averroes shapes his explanation of Alexander's introduction to Λ along the lines of the *Fi Agrād*: he provides a general outline of the contents of metaphysics (1395,11-1397,4), followed by a description of the single books (1397,5-1405,3). Furthermore, while describing the single books, he sometimes mentions their specific “goal” (*garād*), as in the case of book Λ (1401,2). For the theological discussion in Λ as Aristotle's “primary intent” (*qaṣduhū al-awwal*) or “aim sought for” (*gāya maqṣūda*) or “primary goal” (*garāduhū al-awwal*) in the *Metaphysics*, see 1404,4-5; 1404,12.

²³ See A. BERTOLACCI, *From al-Kindī to al-Fārābī: Avicenna's Progressive Knowledge of Aristotle's Metaphysics according to his Autobiography*, «Arabic Sciences and Philosophy», 11 (2001), 257-295.

profile of the *Metaphysics*, with particular regard to its subject-matter and goal, structure and relationship with the other sciences²⁴. In the present section, I wish to point to some passages of the *Ilāhiyyāt* which are quotations/paraphrases of texts of the *Fī Aḡrād*. These passages occur in the second and third chapter of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (I, 2-3), a part of this work in which also Avicenna, like al-Fārābī, faces some of the *prolegomena* issues. They concern fundamental topics such as the role of existent *qua* existent as the subject-matter of metaphysics, the function of metaphysics as the discipline that certifies the principles of the other sciences, the classification of the things taken into account by metaphysics according to their different relation with matter, and the name of metaphysics. In the following table, I focus on the last of these quotations/paraphrases.

Table 1

<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> , I, 3, 21,12-22,10; 24,1-2 [24,45-25,65; 27,2-4]	<i>Fī Aḡrād</i> 35,19-36,2 [2.5]
[a] As to the name of this science, it is “[science] of metaphysics” (<i>fīmā ba’da l-ṭabī’a</i>) ²⁵ .	Therefore it [i.e. the present science] should be called “metaphysics” (<i>‘ilm mā ba’da l-ṭabī’a</i>).
[b] [Avicenna elucidates the meaning of <i>ṭabī’a</i> and <i>ba’da</i> in the aforementioned name].	
[c] As to the name that this science deserves when it is considered in itself, it is “science of what is before nature” (<i>‘ilm mā qabla l-ṭabī’a</i>),	... then this science is loftier than the science of nature and [comes] after the science of nature.
[d] since the things investigated in this science are, in themselves and on account of [their] universality (<i>bi-l-‘umūm</i>), before nature.	Since these things are not proper to natural objects but are loftier than them in universality (<i>‘umūman</i>) ...
[e] However, someone could say that the pure mathematical things investigated in arithmetic and geometry are also before nature (especially number, for it does not depend at all on nature for its existence, since it may exist not in nature), and [that], therefore, arithmetic and geometry are necessarily science of what is before nature.	Although mathematics is loftier than the science of nature – since its subject-matters are abstracted from matter –

²⁴ See BERTOLACCI, *The Structure of Metaphysical Science* cit., and Id., *La ricezione del libro Γ* cit.

²⁵ Reading *fīmā* instead of *mā*.

<p>[f] What ought to be said against this objection is that, as far as geometry is concerned, [...] it is known that its subject-matter is not separate from nature in subsistence. [...]</p> <p>[g] Hence arithmetic takes number into account only in so far as number possesses the consideration that it has when it is in nature.</p>	<p>it ought not to be called “metaphysics”. For its subject-matters are abstracted from matter in imagination [only], not in existence. As to existence, they do not exist except in natural things.</p>
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In this passage of *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 3, Avicenna reproduces some of al-Fārābī’s considerations about the name of metaphysics. In [a] and [b], Avicenna indicates the same name that also al-Fārābī proposes, i.e. “metaphysics”, literally: “what is after nature”. Then, in [c] he adds a second name, i.e. “science of what is before nature”, which is absent in al-Fārābī, but which corresponds to what al-Fārābī states about the superiority of metaphysics over natural philosophy. Moreover, in [d] Avicenna justifies this second name by means of considerations that are similar to those that al-Fārābī uses to explain the name “metaphysics”, i. e. the universality of the things that metaphysics takes into account. Finally, in [e]-[g] Avicenna dismisses the claim of the two branches of mathematics (i.e. arithmetic and geometry) to be “metaphysics”, along the lines indicated by al-Fārābī, even though al-Fārābī refers to mathematics in its entirety, whereas Avicenna distinguishes the case of geometry ([f]) from that of arithmetic ([g]).

Avicenna’s reception of the *Fī Aḡrād* is not limited to the *Ilāhiyyāt*. The influence of this treatise by al-Fārābī is clearly visible, for example, in the metaphysical part of the *Naḡāt*²⁶. Also in this case, the dependence regards the very beginning of Avicenna’s work, i.e. its Introduction.

²⁶ IBN SİNÄ, *Al-Naḡāt min al-ḡarq fi baḥr al-ḡalālāt*, ed. M.T. Dānišpazūh, Dānišgah Tehran, Tehran 1985.

Table 2

<i>Naḡāt</i> , Metaphysics, Introduction, 493, 2-13	<i>Fi Aḡrād</i>
[a] We say that each of the natural sciences and the mathematical sciences examines the state of some existents only. The other particular sciences do the same. None of them investigates the states of the absolute existent, its attributes and its principles.	[2.1] Particular sciences are those whose subject-matters are some existents or some imaginary objects, and whose investigation regards specifically the accidents that are proper to them. [Examples of natural science, geometry, arithmetic and medicine follow]. None of them investigates what is common to all existents.
[b] It is evident, therefore, that there is a science which examines the condition of the absolute existent, its attributes which pertain to it by itself, and its principles.	[2.2] Universal science, on the other hand, investigates the thing that is common to all existents (like existence and oneness), its species and attributes, the things which are not proper accidents of any of the subject-matters of the particular science (like priority and posteriority, potency and act, perfect and deficient, and similar things) and the common principle of all existents, namely the thing that ought to be called by the name of God – may His glory be exalted.
[c] Since God the Most High, by unanimous consensus, is not principle of a caused existent to the exclusion of another, but He is principle of caused existence [<i>li-l-wuḡūdi l-ma'lūli</i> ; “of the caused existent”, <i>li-l-mawḡūdi l-ma'lūli</i> ?] in an absolute way, there is no doubt that the divine science is this science.	[2.4] The divine science ought to belong to this [universal] science, because God is a principle of the absolute existent, not of one existent to the exclusion of another. That part [of the universal science], then, which contains providing the principle of the existent ought to be the divine science.
[d] This science, therefore, examines the absolute existent, and ceases from articulating [it] where the other sciences start. In this science, hence, is contained the clarification of the principles of the other sciences [which are] particular.	[2.6e] [Each one of these] is branched out and divided, until the subject-matters of the particular sciences are reached and [consequently] this science ends. In it the principles of all the particular sciences and the definitions of their subject-matters are clarified.

The Introduction of the metaphysical part of the *Naḡāt* is a kind of selective summary of part [2] of the *Fī Aḡrād*. Avicenna reproduces sections [2.1], [2.2], [2.4] and [2.6e] of al-Fārābī's treatise, and in some cases, as in [c] and [d], his account amounts to a paraphrase, similar to its source in terminology and syntax²⁷. The only relevant doctrinal difference between the two texts regards section [c]: whereas in al-Fārābī the divine science, i.e. philosophical theology, is a part of metaphysics, in Avicenna it is presented as identical to metaphysics itself. Avicenna explains elsewhere (for instance in *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 2) that metaphysics is divine science because its subject-matter, i.e. the existent *qua* existent, is an immaterial reality preceding both physical and mathematical existence. Thus, even though metaphysics has the existent *qua* existent as its subject-matter, it is divine science in so far as its subject-matter is something immovable and separate, as Aristotle establishes in *Metaphysics* E, 1. In this way, Avicenna harmonizes al-Fārābī's "ontological" perspective on metaphysics with al-Kindī's "theological" one.

4. Conclusion

Al-Fārābī's *Fī Aḡrād* is an articulated overview of the *Metaphysics*, which provides both a description of the epistemological profile of the science of metaphysics and a comprehensive account of the specific contents of the *Metaphysics* (§1). Related to the commentatorial tradition of Greek Antiquity (Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius, but also – more importantly – Ammonius Son of Hermeias, §2), it deeply influenced Avicenna's conception of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, as Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* and other metaphysical works of his witness (§3).

If the investigation of the sources of the *Fī Aḡrād* accomplished in §2 is correct, to the three channels of diffusion into Arabic of the Greek tradition of the *Metaphysics* already known a fourth one can be added: besides the Arabic translations of the *Metaphysics* itself, of some of the Greek commentaries on this work, and of the descriptions of the *Metaphysics* in the Greek surveys of the Aristotelian *corpus* or in the classifications the sciences, there is evidence for an Arabic version (i.e. al-Fārābī's *Fī Aḡrād*) of a Greek *introduction* to the *Metaphysics* (the part dealing with the *Metaphysics* of Ammonius' treatise *On the Goals of Aristotle in His Books*). This fourth channel is different from, and more affluent than, the other three on account of its larger scope: whereas the other three either fo-

²⁷ In section [b], Avicenna does not call metaphysics "universal science", as al-Fārābī does in [2.2]. This expression, however, occurs in other works by Avicenna and is somehow presupposed by the mention of the "particular sciences", with regard to the disciplines other than metaphysics, in [a] and [d].

cus on book Λ (the Arabic translations of the *Metaphysics*), or are limited to this book (the Arabic translations of the commentaries on the *Metaphysics*), or convey an image of the *Metaphysics* that is reducible to it (the Arabic versions of the surveys of the Aristotelian *corpus* and the classifications of the sciences), al-Fārābī's *Fi Aḡrād* – and Ammonius' introduction to the *Metaphysics* which is probably its source – encompasses the *Metaphysics* in its entirety.

With some differences and adjustments, Avicenna's conception of metaphysics depends primarily and immediately on al-Fārābī, and indirectly on Ammonius.

