

The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics

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The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics

edited by

Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci

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On the Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics before Albertus Magnus: An Attempt at Periodization

Amos Bertolacci

Introduction

The Latin Middle Ages are a relatively well-known area of the reception of Avicenna's philosophy.¹ For at least a hundred years, the precise mode of this reception has attracted scholarly attention and raised a lively debate in which different labels involving the name of Avicenna have been proposed to characterize philosophical authors and currents variously indebted to Avicenna's thought. Thus, expressions such as 'Avicennizing Augustinism', 'Latin Avicennism', 'Avicennizing Aristotelianism', etc., are quite common.² This proliferation of labels – in some cases very different from one another – can be taken as a symptom of a still immature stage of research; more positively, however, it also shows the multiplicity of modes and the different areas of the transmission of Avicenna in Latin. Although Avicenna's philosophical writings did not enter the official *curricula* of medieval universities, and were therefore less frequently copied than Aristotle's works, and never commented upon as such (with the exception of some parts of the section of the *Šifā'* on meteorology),³ they were extensively used by philosophers and theologians from the late twelfth century onward. Thus, the temporal scope of their influence surpassed the limits of the

1 I wish to thank warmly Dag Nikolaus Hasse for his insightful remarks on a first draft of the present article.

2 These formulae were coined, respectively, by Gilson, *Les sources greco-arabes*, De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, and Van Steenberghen, *La philosophie au XIII^e siècle*, pp. 451–8. The expression 'Avicennizing Boethianism' is used to designate Gundissalinus' epistemology in Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus*, pp. 89–95.

3 The Latin translation of three excerpts of the fifth section on natural philosophy of the *Šifā'* (taken from chapters I, 1 and I, 5), under the cumulative title of *De mineralibus*, was appended to the Latin translation of Aristotle's *Meteorologica*. For this reason, this was by far the most often copied philosophical text by Avicenna in Latin translation (Kishlat, *Studien*, p. 53, counts 134 mss.; Schmitt, Knox, *Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus*, p. 44, mention 148 codices).

Middle Ages, and reached modern authors such as Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz.⁴

Thus far, studies have focused mainly on the Latin reception of Avicenna's psychology in the *Kitāb al-nafs* of the *Šifā'*, whose translation into Latin (*De anima*) has been critically edited as first in the series *Avicenna Latinus*.⁵ The reception of some other parts of the *Šifā'* available to Latin medieval readers is comparable, in terms of diffusion and impact, to that of the *De anima*,⁶ but an overall study of their influence is still a *desideratum*. Avicenna's metaphysics, as expressed in the *Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Šifā'*, is a case in point: a comprehensive history of the influence of its Latin translation (*Philosophia prima*) in the Middle Ages has yet to be written.⁷ Previous scholarship on the Latin reception of the *Philosophia prima* has provided insightful accounts of the influence of this work on single authors of the second half of the thirteenth and of the fourteenth century, such as Albertus Magnus (d. 1280), Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), Henry of Ghent (d. 1293), John Duns Scotus (d. 1308), and others.⁸ The picture that emerges from these studies, however, is incomplete, if compared with the diffusion of Avicenna's metaphysics both before and afterwards. The present contribution tries to fill the lacuna *a parte ante* by providing a tripartite periodization of the circulation of the *Philosophia prima* in Latin philosophy before the middle of the thirteenth century (§ 1), a detailed analysis of the first of these three periods (§ 2), and an account of the evidence attesting the first diffusion of Avicenna's metaphysics in the University of Paris, shortly before its employment by William of Auvergne (§ 3).

4 On the reception of Avicenna's philosophy after the Middle Ages, see, among other studies, Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, pp. 388–405 ('Proofs of the existence of God as a necessarily existent being in modern European philosophy'); Gaskill, Was Leibniz an Avicennian?; Jolivet, *L'épistémologie de Descartes*; Hasnawi, *La conscience de soi*; Rashed, *Théodicée et approximation*; Hasse, *Arabic Philosophy and Averroism*; Yaldir, *Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and René Descartes* (further bibliographical information on Avicenna and Descartes in Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, p. 80, n. 5).

5 The use of Avicenna's *De anima* by Latin thinkers has been thoroughly investigated by Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*.

6 Whereas the *De anima* is preserved in 50 known manuscripts, the *De animalibus* is attested by 33 codices, the *Philosophia prima* by 25, the *Liber primus naturalium* (chapters I–III, 1) by 22, the *Logica* by 13, and the *De diluviis* by 11 (see d'Alverny, *Notes*; Bertolacci, *A Community of Translators*, and the bibliography quoted therein). On the manuscript dissemination of the *De mineralibus*, see above, n. 3.

7 The overviews of the Latin impact of the *Ilāhiyyāt* in Anawati, *La Métaphysique d'Avicenne*, and Verbeke, *Avicenna's Metaphysics*, are selective and cursory.

8 See in this volume the contributions of Galluzzo, Hasse, Pickavé, Pini and Richardson, and the further bibliography indicated therein.

§ 1 The Influence on Latin Authors until Albertus Magnus: Preliminary Remarks

§ 1.1 The Issue of Continuity

Mainstream scholarship on the reception of the *Philosophia prima* has been governed by two main assumptions. The first is that the earliest significant recipient of this work, around the third or fourth decade of the thirteenth century, is William of Auvergne (d. 1249), who is regarded as a forerunner of the authors of the second half of the thirteenth century who fully display the influence of this work; on this view, Avicenna's *De anima* – whose translation is coeval with that of the *Philosophia prima* – would have influenced Latin culture long before the *Philosophia prima*. This assumption, which can be traced back to 1926, the year of Roland-Gosselin's edition of Thomas Aquinas' *De ente et essentia* and Gilson's first fundamental study on the 'Avicennizing Augustinism',⁹ posits a decided discontinuity between the translation of the *Philosophia prima* around the middle of the twelfth century and its full reception in the second half of the thirteenth. This hiatus has been variously explained. According to some, it was due to the initial resistance of traditional Latin metaphysics to the new Avicennian metaphysics.¹⁰ According to others, it was a consequence of the inner logic of Avicenna's philosophy, in which the theory of knowledge naturally precedes metaphysics.¹¹ According to a further explanation, it reflected a general shift in the cultural climate at the middle of the thirteenth century from more concrete, physiological issues, to more abstract, metaphysical concerns.¹² The

9 In the doctrinal-historical studies on the principle of individuation and the distinction of essence and existence that complement his edition of the *De ente et essentia* of Thomas Aquinas (Introduction, Notes et Études historiques), Roland-Gosselin takes William of Auvergne as the starting point of the Latin reception of Avicenna's metaphysics on these two issues. In *Pourquoi saint Thomas*, conversely, Gilson regards psychology as the doctrinal core of the Latin reception of Avicenna's philosophy from its very beginning. See the frequent references to Roland-Gosselin's aforementioned study in Goichon, *La philosophie d'Avicenne*.

10 Jolivet, *The Arabic Inheritance*, pp. 130–31, remarks that Avicenna's central distinction of essence and existence entered the philosophy and theology of Latin thinkers only in the second half of the 13th century, because until then its adoption was prevented by the key-notion of traditional Latin metaphysics (ultimately deriving from Boethius and instantiated by Gilbert of Poitiers), namely the idea of the complementarity of *quo est* (subsistence) and *quod est* (that which subsists).

11 Goichon, *La philosophie d'Avicenne*, p. 103: 'Chronologiquement la théorie de la connaissance [d'Avicenne] fut la première à influencer la pensée occidentale'; *ibid.*, p. 117: 'Dans l'ensemble, l'étude d'Avicenne philosophe de l'être est postérieure à l'étude d'Avicenne théoricien de la connaissance'.

12 Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, contends that, contrary to Avicenna's *De anima*, the *Philosophia prima* had greater impact in the second half of the 13th century than in the

second assumption of previous scholarship on the reception of the *Philosophia prima* is that the impact of Avicenna's philosophy in general, and of his metaphysics in particular, began to decrease when the Latin translations of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle started to gain success.¹³

These two assumptions look incompatible, since the first posits the starting-point of the Latin reception of Avicenna's metaphysics more or less when the second places the beginning of its decline. In fact, both are in need of some revision. As to the first, whatever the reasons adduced in its support, the thesis of a temporal gap between the translation of the *Philosophia prima*, on the one hand, and its reception, on the other, needs to be complemented by a more documented investigation: the available data show that the translation of this work and its subsequent employment by philosophers and theologians are two steps of a continuous process.¹⁴ The circulation of the manuscripts of the translation confirms this impression.¹⁵ The second assumption, likewise, does not match the available evidence: the diffusion of Averroes' Aristotelian commentaries appears to have prompted not a progressive eclipse of Avicenna's thought in Latin philosophy, but a better grasp of Avicenna's philosophy, an outspoken acknowledgment of its value, and a strenuous defense of Avicenna's positions against Averroes' frequent and harsh criticisms. This attitude emerged

first (p. 225), because at that time the interest of scholars shifted from physiology to more theoretical problems (p. 77).

- 13 Goichon, *La philosophie d'Avicenne*, p. 92: '[Le courant avicennien] s'affaiblit lorsque grandit l'influence d'Averroès'; De Libera, *D'Avicenne à Averroès*, p. 179: 'passé l'âge d'or de la fine du XII^e siècle et de l'augustinisme avicennisant' de la première moitié du XIII^e, Ibn Sinā s'efface devant Averroès'.
- 14 The thesis of an earlier diffusion of Avicenna's *De anima* with respect to the *Philosophia prima* seems to project on history the precedence of the study of the Latin impact of Avicenna's psychology over that of his metaphysics in modern scholarship. The first fundamental study on the Latin reception of Avicenna's *De anima* is Gilson, *Pourquoi saint Thomas*; the diffusion of the *Philosophia prima* has started to be studied later. De Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge*, p. 112, rightly remarks that 'Avicenne a été lu et exploité dès la fin du XII^e [siècle]'.
- 15 The most ancient extant manuscript of the translation dates from the first half of the 13th century (ca. 1240; see Van Riet, *Traduction latine et principes d'édition*, pp. 125*–6*); not being an archetype of the tradition, this codex attests the existence of previous manuscript circulation. The translation of a chapter of the work (III, 5) has circulated earlier, attached to the Latin translation of al-Ġazālī's *Summa*, in a manuscript of the beginning of the 13th century copied in Spain, as well as in four other codices. D'Alverny, *Les traductions d'Avicenne*, pp. 154–5 (followed by Van Riet, *Traduction latine et principes d'édition*, p. 125*, and n. 12), surmises that the five manuscripts that include *Ilābiyyāt* III, 5 (placed at the end of al-Ġazālī's *Summa*) might reproduce a collection of works constituted 'à la source même des traductions', on account of the presence of the same collection in a number of distinct codices (a fact that indicates an ancient common ancestor) and of the heterogeneous character of the collection (a fact that suggests a dependence on the *quaterni* of the *scholares* coming to Toledo from all over Europe).

in the first half of the thirteenth century but continued in different ways also later. The replacement of Avicenna by Averroes as 'Commentator' of the *Metaphysics* and the other Aristotelian writings was gradual¹⁶ and did not imply a total dismissal of Avicenna's philosophy, but only a change in the view adopted toward the latter.

To summarize: in this as in other cases, *historia* – like *natura* – *non facit saltus*: an uninterrupted line of interpreters can be traced, which starts *before* William of Auvergne, and continues *after* the diffusion of Averroes' commentaries. This line begins with the probable translator of the *Philosophia prima* (Gundissalinus) in the second half of the twelfth century, involves significant authors of the very beginning of the next century, such as John Blund and Michael Scot, passes through a series of fundamental figures of the first half of the following century, such as Robert Grosseteste in Oxford and William of Auvergne and Roger Bacon in Paris, and continues with Albertus Magnus and the other main authors of the second half of the thirteenth century.

§1.2 A Three-fold Periodization

The Latin reception of Avicenna's metaphysics presents two main features. First, the *Philosophia prima*, i. e. the Latin translation of the *Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Šifā'*, is the only work of Avicenna by means of which Avicennian metaphysics was transmitted into Latin. Second, the fate of Avicenna's metaphysics in Latin is closely related to the more or less parallel reception of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. These two features are mutually linked: since the *Šifā'*, by Avicenna's own admission, is the *summa* of his in which the endorsement of Peripatetic philosophy is most evident, and the *Ilāhiyyāt* is a reworking of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, it is not surprising that the areas of diffusion of Avicenna's and Aristotle's work came to overlap. Moreover, these two traits are peculiar: they sharply distinguish, for example, the Latin side of the reception of Avicenna's metaphysics from its Arabic counterpart, in which the success of Avicenna's stance is not exclusively linked with the *Ilāhiyyāt* of the *Šifā'*, but is primarily connected with other works, and Avicenna's metaphysics soon replaces, rather than interacting with, Aristotle's work.

16 William of Auvergne, for example, still regards Avicenna as an *expositor* of Aristotle (*De universo* II, 8, in *Opera omnia*, vol. I, p. 690BH: '... et Avicenna post eum [sc. Aristotelem] ... Similiter et alii expositores eiusdem Aristotelis'), and refers often in effect to Avicenna when quoting by name Aristotle (as noticed, among others, by Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, p. 44 and n. 184; Teske, *William of Auvergne's Debt to Avicenna*, pp. 154–5).

The early Latin reception of the *Philosophia prima* is reconstructed here on the basis of the relationship that this work, in its different recipients and uses, holds with Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. On the basis of this criterion, three main modalities of the reception of the *Philosophia prima* before Albertus, roughly corresponding to three chronological phases, can be distinguished. The first phase goes from the second half of the twelfth century, when the *Philosophia prima* was translated, until the beginning of the following century, when the first attestations of its use in European universities occur. This first phase is geographically centered, either directly or indirectly, in the Spanish city of Toledo.¹⁷ The second phase is documented since the beginning of the thirteenth century, whereas the third started around 1240: both phases were institutionally linked, in different ways, with the Universities of Paris and Oxford, although they followed distinct paths until Albertus Magnus.

In the first phase (Gundissalinus; *De causis primis et secundis*; the anonymous treatise published by M.-T. d'Alverny in 1940–1942; Michael Scot's writing on the classification of the sciences¹⁸), the *Philosophia prima* is both quoted and silently reproduced within independent treatises, of which it represents the main text, or one of the main texts, on metaphysics. Recourse to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, on the contrary, is absent or very scanty, since the Latin translations of this work have still a very limited diffusion. Besides Avicenna, the other metaphysical sources are works by Arabs and Jews (al-Gazālī's metaphysics, the *Liber de causis* and Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*), although the Latin metaphysical tradition (Augustine, Boethius, Eriugena) is also influential. In the absence of the metaphysical text *par excellence* (Aristotle's *Metaphysics*), the *Philosophia prima*, on account of its comprehensiveness and articulacy, performs the role of 'vicarious' canonical text. Averroes' *Long Commentary on the 'Metaphysics'* is not yet available.

The second phase (John Blund; Robert Grosseteste; William of Auvergne; Roland of Cremona; Roger Bacon) is marked by the joint consideration of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and Avicenna's *Philosophia prima* by philosophers and

17 It is almost certain that the works of Gundissalinus and Michael Scot belonging to this phase were accomplished in Toledo. On the other hand, the anonymous *Liber de causis primis et secundis* (a work formerly ascribed to Gundissalinus) might have been written either in Toledo or in England (see below, n. 37), whereas the place of composition of the anonymous treatise published by D'Alverny might be either Toledo or Bologna (see below, n. 44). Cultural exchanges between Toledo and the rest of Europe were frequent at the time, as the cases of Gerard of Cremona and Daniel of Morley, among others, witness.

18 The thesis of Vicaire, *Le Porrétains et l'avicennisme*, according to which Avicenna would have influenced the school of Gilbert of Poitiers, is dismissed by Jolivet, *The Arabic Inheritance*, p. 131 and n. 58, pointing out that 'when one finds in a twelfth-century writer an idea or a formula that recall ... Avicenna, one must not immediately assume that he has been influenced by Avicenna'.

theologians in universities. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is now regarded as the main text on the subject, but Avicenna's *Philosophia prima* represents the privileged way of access to Aristotle's work and its main tool of interpretation. Traces of this tendency can be found in Robert Grosseteste in Oxford; its full development occurs, however, in philosophical and theological works produced in Paris. Here, the *Philosophia prima* is frequently mentioned together with Aristotle's *Metaphysics* by masters of arts such as John Blund, and professors of theology such as William of Auvergne, Roland of Cremona and Roger Bacon: all these authors read the *Metaphysics* through the lenses of the *Philosophia prima*. The university of Paris documents a progressive acceptance of Avicenna's work: initially used with no restriction in the arts faculty, as John Blund witnesses, and possibly involved in the Parisian condemnations of 1210 and 1215, the *Philosophia prima* was critically scrutinized, but also widely endorsed, by prime exponents of the faculty of theology such as William of Auvergne and Roland of Cremona, and enthusiastically received, with very few provisos, by Roger Bacon. Averroes' *Long Commentary on the 'Metaphysics'*, on the other hand, once it becomes available, is substantially ignored or even criticized.

The third phase (Roger Bacon's commentaries on the *Metaphysics*; Oxford commentators of the *Metaphysics*)¹⁹ attests the recourse to the *Philosophia prima* within the exegesis of the *Metaphysics*. Averroes' *Long Commentary on the 'Metaphysics'* replaces Avicenna's *Philosophia prima* in the role of authoritative interpretation of the *Metaphysics*. Yet, both in Oxford and in Paris, commentators of the *Metaphysics* continue to refer to the *Philosophia prima*, even though their references to Avicenna are much less frequent and systematic than those to Averroes' *Long Commentary*.

For the sake of brevity, these three phases can be labeled, respectively, '*Philosophia prima* without *Metaphysics*', '*Philosophia prima* and *Metaphysics*', '*Philosophia prima* in the exegesis of the *Metaphysics*'. They correspond *grosso modo* to three literary genres (independent treatises influenced by the format of the translation literature; philosophical and theological works produced in universities; commentaries) and to three modalities of the reception of the *Philosophia prima* (doctrinal endorsement; instrumental use for philosophical and theological purposes; occasional recourse for the explanation of Aristotle). From a sociological point of view, they are linked with different institutional contexts (non-universitarian centers of instruction; faculties of arts and faculties of theology within universities; faculties of arts only). Seen diachronically, they reflect an increasing assimilation of this work: the introduction of the *Philosophia prima* within the doctrinal debate in the first phase is followed by a period of critical evaluation, which allows the use of the main doctrinal points

19 The earliest extant Latin commentaries on the *Metaphysics* date from about 1240.

of this work either in philosophical and theological writings in the second phase, or in the exegesis of the *Metaphysics* in the third phase.

Obviously, the proposed periodization is not perfectly rigorous. The chosen arrangement, however, seems to provide a sufficiently coherent and systematic way of understanding the wide and complicated historical event under consideration.

§ 2 *Philosophia prima* without *Metaphysics*

(Gundissalinus; De causis primis et secundis; Anonymous d'Alverny; Michael Scot)

§ 2.1 The Early Diffusion of the *Philosophia prima* and of the Latin Translations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*

According to a widespread contention, the *Philosophia prima* was known in the Latin world before Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.²⁰ This contention is substantially correct, although it is true with respect to the *diffusion*, rather than the *composition*, of the translations of the works under consideration. The *Philosophia prima* was translated into Latin between 1150 and 1175 in Toledo.²¹ Two Latin versions of the *Metaphysics* were produced before or at the same time of the *Philosophia prima*: the earliest Latin version of the *Metaphysics*, the so-called *Translatio Iacobi sive Vetustissima* by James of Venice (active between 1125 and 1150), and the translation called *Anonyma sive Media*, accomplished by an unknown author of the twelfth century.²² Thus, with regard to their composition, the translation of the *Philosophia prima* is not chronologically prior to that of the *Metaphysics*.

20 De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, p. 10, states that the works of Avicenna translated into Latin were 'un ensemble comme on n'en possédait point d'autre alors, pas même d'Aristote, dont les œuvres physiques et métaphysiques n'arriverent que plus tard et par étapes'; Goichon, *La philosophie d'Avicenne*, p. 90: 'La *Métaphysique* d'Avicenne a été connue un demi-siècle avant celle d'Aristote ... La philosophie d'Avicenne ... était le premier ensemble de doctrine vraiment constitué qui parvint à l'Occident'; De Libera, *Penser au Moyen Âge*, p. 112: 'le texte d'Avicenne est la première grand œuvre philosophique qui soit parvenu en Occident'.

21 See Bertolacci, A Community of Translators.

22 Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in *Aristoteles Latinus XXV* 1–1^a, p. xxvi. The translation called *Vetus*, accomplished before 1230 (when it starts to be quoted), is just a revision of the *Vetustissima* in the form in which this latter is extant (see Vuillemin-Diem, *ibid.*, pp. xxix–xxxii; Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in *Aristoteles Latinus XXV* 3.1, pp. 4–5). Burnett, A Note on the Origins, advances a new hypothesis on the origin of the *Media*: according to him, this translation would have been composed in Antioch, in the second quarter of the 12th century.

If we consider, instead, the diffusion of the translations, the situation is different. At an unknown stage of its early transmission, the *Vetustissima*, originally more encompassing or even complete, underwent the loss of its second part (only the portion corresponding to A–Γ, 4, 1007a31 is fully extant, whereas excerpts of the following books may have survived as glosses in some manuscripts of the *Media*).²³ On the other hand, the more comprehensive *Media* (books A–I, Λ–N) apparently had a limited circulation before the middle of the thirteenth century, when it started gaining diffusion.²⁴ Signs of acquaintance with the *Metaphysics* can be detected in various authors and works of the second half of the twelfth century, but it is difficult to establish whether these quotations (which often do not concern specific passages of the *Metaphysics* or, if they do, do not refer explicitly to this work, or which concern doctrines that occur also elsewhere in the Aristotelian *corpus*) are first-hand or second-hand.²⁵ Even before the translations, Latin scholars could draw information on the *Metaphysics* from the writings of Boethius and the quotations of these latter in subsequent authors (Abelard, *Liber sex principiorum*).²⁶ The lack of a complete Greek-Latin translation of the *Metaphysics* in the first decades of the thirteenth century (due to the incompleteness of the *Vetustissima* and the late circulation of the *Media*) is confirmed by the immediate and wide success of the Arabic-Latin translation of the *Metaphysics* known as *Nova*, namely the collection of lemmata of Aristotle's text taken from Michael Scot's Latin translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary*.²⁷

23 See Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 1–1^a, pp. xxiv–xxv; Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 3.1, p. 3. Since the two manuscripts preserving the *Vetustissima* in its uncontaminated extant form (Avranches, Bibl. Munic., 232; Oxford, Bibl. Bodl., Seld. sup. 24) are of the 12th century, the loss of the second part of this translation probably occurred in this same century ('schon frühzeitig verlorenen vollständigeren Text', Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 3.1, p. 3). Thomas Aquinas might have quoted as *alia littera* (additional translation) in his commentary on the *Metaphysics* some fragments of the lost parts of the *Vetustissima* (see Reilly, *The Alia Littera*).

24 See Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 2, pp. xxv–xxxiv; Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 3.1, pp. 5–7.

25 See Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 1–1^a, pp. xv–xvi; Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 3.1, pp. 31–2. Also the quotation of Aristotle in Gundissalinus' *De divisione philosophiae*, despite its resemblance with a passage of the *Metaphysics*, is taken more probably from the *Physics* (see below, § 2.2).

26 See Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 3.1, pp. 30–31; Speer, *The Hidden Heritage*. Burnett, *The Blend of Latin and Arabic Sources*, pp. 42–3, shows that themes of the *Metaphysics* are echoed in Abū Mašār's *Great Introduction to Astrology* (mid 9th century), translated into Latin by Hermann of Carinthia in 1141.

27 See Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 3.1, pp. 7–8. This translation even contaminated the archetype of all the extant codices of the *Metaphysica media* (see Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in Aristoteles Latinus XXV 2, pp. xxx–xxxii, xlii).

All this implies that for a few decades – from the loss of the second part of the *Vetustissima*, sometime in the second half of the twelfth century, until 1220–1224, the probable date of Michael Scot's translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary* – the *Philosophia prima* might have been the only comprehensive account of Aristotelian metaphysics available to Latin philosophers. Later on, the diffusion of the *Philosophia prima* intersected with the spread of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, known first through the *Translatio nova* and Averroes' *Long Commentary*, then through the *Translatio media*.

§ 2.2 Gundissalinus

The influence of Avicenna on works of Gundissalinus (d. after 1190) such as the *De anima*, and on areas of his thought such as epistemology, has already been noticed.²⁸ The *Philosophia prima* exerted a similar influence on his metaphysics. Gundissalinus is, so to say, 'originally' linked with the Latin transmission of Avicenna's metaphysics: if we accept his traditional identification with Dominicus Gundisalvi, he was responsible, alone or in cooperation with another scholar, for the translation of this work into Latin.²⁹ Thus, it is not surprising to find that at least two of his original works depend visibly on the *Philosophia prima*.³⁰ In the first of these, the *De divisione philosophiae*, the account of metaphysics – both in its themes and its structure – is based on continuous and extensive implicit quotations of *Philosophia prima* I, 1–3, thus reflecting all the main aspects of Avicenna's preliminary characterization of the science of metaphysics.³¹ Since, in this context the silent citations of the

28 Hugonnard-Roche, La classification des sciences; Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, pp. 13–18; Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus*.

29 The distinction of Gundissalinus (or Gundisalvus), author of original works, from Dominicus Gundisalvi, the Latin translator of al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Avicenna, al-Ġazālī and Ibn Gabirol, proposed by Rucquoi, Gundisalvus ou Dominicus Gundisalvi?, is convincingly rejected by Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus* pp. 14–18, and Hasse, *The Social Conditions*, p. 73 and n. 30.

30 Among the other works by Gundissalinus, the *De scientiis* (a treatise on the classification of the sciences probably antedating the *De divisione philosophiae*) is a paraphrase/adaptation (not a bare translation, as sometimes it is portrayed) of al-Fārābī's *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm* (see Hugonnard-Roche, La classification des sciences, p. 41 and nn. 6–8). The *De unitate et uno* relies mainly, on the one hand, on Boethius and Augustine, and, on the other hand, on Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae* (see Jolivet, *The Arabic Inheritance*, p. 135).

31 Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae, apparatus fontium* ad p. 35, 15-p. 42, 17. Jolivet, *The Arabic Inheritance*, p. 136, aptly contends that in this work 'the influence of al-Fārābī persists, but that of Avicenna is much more prominent'. According to A. Fidora, the influence of the *Philosophia prima* in Gundissalinus' account of metaphysics in the *De divisione philosophiae* is limited to the discussion of the subject-

Philosophia prima are occasionally accompanied by equally silent citations of al-Ġazālī's metaphysics,³² we may wonder whether Gundissalinus is not indirectly relying on Avicenna's authority also when, in other parts of the work, he implicitly quotes al-Ġazālī (as main source) together with Avicenna (as complementary evidence).³³ Remarkably, in the account of metaphysics in the *De divisione philosophiae* Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is never quoted.³⁴

matter of this discipline (see Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus*, p. 27, n. 21; p. 129; pp. 141–2, n. 51), whereas Gundissalinus' Latin translation of al-Fārābī's *Iḥṣā' al-ʿulūm* (*De scientiis*) would be the main source of the overall account (see Fidora, *Zum Verhältnis*, p. 72 and n. 16). Although al-Fārābī's *Iḥṣā' al-ʿulūm* lies certainly in the background of *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 1–3 (see Bertolacci, *The Reception*, p. 464 and nn. 114–5), the latter rather than the former seems to be the main and direct source of the account of metaphysics in the *De divisione philosophiae*. For the influence of the *Philosophia prima* on other parts of the *De divisione philosophiae*, see Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus*, p. 155, n. 39.

32 See Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae, apparatus fontium* ad pp. 36–7.

33 *Ibid.*, *apparatus fontium* ad pp. 9–19 (*Prologus*), 20, 3–10 (*Scientia naturalis*).

34 Aristotle is quoted in the prologue of the work, with no explicit mention of the work's title, with regard to the tripartition of theoretical philosophy in physics, mathematics and metaphysics: 'Unde Aristoteles: ideo scienciarum sunt species tres, quoniam una speculatur quod movetur et corrumpitur ut naturalis, et secunda quod movetur et non corrumpitur ut disciplinalis; tertia considerat quod nec movetur nec corrumpitur ut divina' (Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae*, p. 15, 12–15). Neither the *apparatus fontium*, nor the commentary of the edition (pp. 188–90), provides information on the exact provenience of the quotation. This renowned point of Aristotle's epistemology, however, is reported by Gundissalinus differently than in the *Metaphysics*: the idea of corruptibility is totally absent in *Metaph.* E, 1, 1026a13–16, where the objects of the three theoretical sciences are distinguished according to their possession or lack of separation, on the one hand, and motion, on the other. Corruptibility and motion determine, at different levels, the tripartite classification of substances in *Metaph.* Λ, 1, 1069a30–b2, but this classification conveys only an epistemological bipartition (between two branches of physics and metaphysics, to the exclusion of mathematics) rather than a tripartition. Gundissalinus' quotation resembles rather, in a reverse order, Aristotle's tripartition of theoretical sciences in *Phys.* B, 7, 198a29–30, where metaphysics is portrayed as the science of immovable things, mathematics as the science of movable but incorruptible things, and physics as the science of corruptible things (I wish to thank Resianne Fontaine for having brought this point to my attention; cf. Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae. Über die Einteilung der Philosophie*, p. 68, n. 19). This quotation is markedly different from the report of *Metaph.* E, 1, 1026a13–16 in Boethius' *De trinitate* II, p. 8, 5–18, or from the tripartition of the theoretical sciences in Avicenna's *Philosophia prima* and in al-Ġazālī's *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* (Lat. transl. in *Algazel's Metaphysics*, p. 2, 31–p. 3, 32). No specific tripartition of the theoretical sciences occurs in al-Fārābī's *Iḥṣā' al-ʿulūm* or in the treatise *De ortu scientiarum* associated with the name of al-Fārābī in the Latin tradition. The term *disciplinalis* used in the quotation to indicate mathematics echoes the terminology of the Latin translations from Arabic, where this adjective renders two Arabic terms (*riyādī*, *taʿlīmī*) expressing mathematics (see, for example, Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de philosophia prima sive Scientia divina*, I–X, Lexiques, p. 204b). The quotation might therefore be indirect, depending on the Latin translation

In the second relevant work by Gundissalinus, the *De processione mundi* (an original cosmogonical treatise written after 1160), implicit quotations of *Philosophia prima* I, 6–7 can be found in the initial discussion of *necessarium esse* and *possible esse*.³⁵ In this work, neither the *Metaphysics* nor any other Aristotelian writing is referred to, and Avicenna, together with Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*, is the main philosophical authority.³⁶

§ 2.3 *De causis primis et secundis*

The anonymous *De causis primis et secundis et de fluxu qui consequitur eas*, a treatise on the procession of the world from the first causes through successive stages of emanation, dates to the end of the twelfth, beginning of the thirteenth century.³⁷ Its massive dependence on Avicenna is witnessed by its presence (ascribed to Avicenna and under the title *De intelligentiis*) in the 1508 Venetian edition of Avicenna's works. Its editor, R. De Vaux, regarded it as the first and clearest expression of 'Latin Avicennism'.³⁸ M.-T. d'Alverny and J. Jolivet stressed, more recently, its nature of synthesis between Latin authors (Augustine, Boethius and Eriugena, the latter conveying doctrines of Pseudo-Dionysius) and

of an Arabic text. Since the description of mathematics in the quotation applies properly to astronomy, the source of the quotation might be a Latin translation of an Arabic text on astronomy.

- 35 *De processione mundi*, pp. 227–30 (§§ 7–13 of the list of sources, with reference to pp. 126–38 of the edited text; in § 7, the reference to *Philosophia prima* I, 7, 26–37, is in fact to I, 6, p. 44, 24–37). See Jolivet, *The Arabic Inheritance*, pp. 138–40; Soto Bruna, *Estudio filológico*, pp. 34–42. A detailed survey of the sources of the *De processione mundi* is available in *The Procession of the World*; Burnett, *The Blend of Latin and Arabic Sources*, pp. 52–60 and nn. 33–5, has amended the edited text by taking into account a source of the *De processione mundi* previously disregarded (Hermann of Carinthia's *De essentiis*).
- 36 See Jolivet, *The Arabic Inheritance*, p. 139 ('But throughout this treatise the influence of the philosophers plays a major role ... he exploits to the full two rich mines of speculative writing: Avicenna's *Metaphysics* and the *Fons vitae* of Ibn Gabirol'); Soto Bruna, *Estudio filológico*, pp. 81–95.
- 37 On the date, sources and doctrine of this treatise, see De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, pp. 63–80. D'Alverny, *Deux traductions latines*, pp. 129–30, supposes that 'Master Maurice' (d. 1238), archdeacon of Toledo and bishop of Burgos, might have been the author of this treatise, on account of his interest in Islamic theology and the philosophy of Pseudo-Dionysius; later on (d'Alverny, *Une rencontre symbolique*, p. 177), she states that 'les philosophes et théologiens anglais ont quelque responsabilité dans la diffusion du Pseudo-Avicenne, et peut-être dans sa rédaction', since most of the manuscripts preserving the *De causis primis et secundis* are of English origin. See also Jolivet, *The Arabic Inheritance*, pp. 145–6, and Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect*, pp. 210–11.
- 38 De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, p. 12 (see above, n. 2).

Arabic sources, prominent among which is Avicenna.³⁹ The *De causis primis et secundis* reproduces in different extents and contexts, for the most part implicitly, a large amount of the *Philosophia prima*: more precisely, chapters I, 1, II, 4, and III, 1 of its ontological part, and chapters VIII, 7 and IX, 2–5 of its theological part.⁴⁰ Significantly, in its few explicit quotations the *Philosophia prima* is called *Methaphisica* or *Liber de methaphisica*.⁴¹ This expression is applied also to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which, however, is quoted indirectly through al-Fārābī.⁴² The use of the same title for both suggests that the author of the treatise regarded the two metaphysical works of Avicenna and Aristotle as one and the same writing. Remarkably, the theological part of the *Philosophia prima* is quoted jointly with the *Liber de causis*.⁴³

§ 2.4 Anonymous d'Alverny

The anonymous treatise on human nature and man's afterlife that M.-T. d'Alverny discovered in MS Paris, BNF, lat. 3236 A, fols 85^v–87, and published in 1940–42, dates to end of the twelfth century. Its place of composition might be either Spain or Northern Italy.⁴⁴ D'Alverny describes it as 'un des témoins les plus curieux de la conjonction du néo-platonisme arabe avec la culture

39 D'Alverny, *Une rencontre symbolique*; Jolivet, *The Arabic Inheritance*, p. 145.

40 The *apparatus fontium* of the edition is quite accurate, except for a few imprecisions (the reference to *Philosophia prima* II, 3 at p. 105, n. 1, is too vague to be considered a quotation; the same can be said of the reference to IX, 2 at p. 116, n. 2; the two quotations at p. 114, nn. 3–4, refer to c. IX, 5, rather than IX, 2, of the *Philosophia prima*).

41 Ps.-Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de causis primis et secundis*, p. 102, 19; p. 107, 8.

42 'Prima igitur creaturarum est intellectualis, et est intelligentia de qua est sermo apud philosophum in libro de metaphisica' (Ps.-Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de causis primis et secundis*, p. 98, 4–7). De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, p. 98, n. 1, rightly points out that this quotation mirrors a passage of al-Fārābī's *De intellectu et intellecto* ('et hoc est intelligentia quam ponit Aristoteles ... in libro de metaphisica', *Liber Alpharabii de intellectu et intellecto*, p. 126, 393–4, cf. p. 115, 9), corresponding to *Risāla fī l-'aql*, p. 36, 1 (cf. p. 4, 3). The *philosophus* in question, therefore, appears to be Aristotle, not Avicenna, as De Vaux surmises (p. 71; p. 98, n. 1).

43 Ps.-Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de causis primis et secundis*, pp. 108–23 (chapters 6–8), especially p. 110, n. 1; p. 116, n. 1.

44 Whereas the wide array of Arabic sources and the inter-confessional approach point to a Toledan (or Catalan) milieu (see D'Alverny, *Les pérégrinations de l'âme*, pp. 266–7), the frequent medical references, as well as some codicological features of the manuscript in which the work is preserved, indicate Bologna as a possible place of composition (see d'Alverny, *Les traductions d'Avicenne (Moyen Age et Renaissance)*, p. 79; d'Alverny, *Avicennisme en Italie*, pp. 121–2).

chrétienne occidentale'.⁴⁵ The Arabic Neoplatonism reflected in this treatise is represented mainly by Avicenna's *Philosophia prima*, together with al-Ġazālī's metaphysics, the *Liber de causis* and Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*. Among Latin authors, d'Alverny stresses its dependence on Gundissalinus.⁴⁶ In this writing, the *Philosophia prima* is always quoted implicitly, sometimes *ad litteram*, elsewhere *ad sensum*.⁴⁷ To the first category belongs the quotation of the first sentence of *Philosophia prima* IX, 7 at the beginning of the treatise.⁴⁸ The second category includes the similarities with Avicenna's hierarchy of celestial intelligences in *Philosophia prima* IX, 4, his description of God's attributes in VIII, 4–7, and his view of the misery of afterlife in IX, 7.⁴⁹ Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, on the other hand, is never quoted.⁵⁰

This treatise is not the only example of the tendency to conjoin the *Philosophia prima* with Latin metaphysics. D'Alverny points at the existence of other similar, still unedited and uninvestigated, witnesses of the synthesis of Islamic (mainly Avicennian) and Christian Neoplatonism.⁵¹

§ 2.5 Michael Scot

The dependence of Michael Scot (d. 1235 ca.) on Avicenna's works, with particular regard to the *De anima*, has been already documented.⁵² The introduction to philosophy that is fragmentarily preserved in Vincent of Beauvais' (d. 1264 ca.) *Speculum doctrinale* witnesses a wide recourse to the *Philosophia prima*.⁵³ Michael wrote this introduction probably before his

45 D'Alverny, *Les pérégrinations de l'âme*, p. 240.

46 D'Alverny, *Les pérégrinations de l'âme*, pp. 242–3.

47 Avicenna might be one of the 'philosophiae peritissimi' mentioned in the first pages (Anonymous, *Homo, cum in honore esset ...*, p. 282, 11).

48 Anonymous, *Homo, cum in honore esset ...*, p. 282, 8–10.

49 Anonymous, *Homo, cum in honore esset ...*, pp. 291–3, 297, 299; cf. d'Alverny, *Les pérégrinations de l'âme*, pp. 245, 247.

50 Aristotle is mentioned only once as author of the *Liber de causis* (Anonymous, *Homo, cum in honore esset ...*, p. 281, 11–12).

51 D'Alverny, *Une rencontre symbolique*, pp. 178–9, mentions an unedited treatise (MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Lat. 380, fols 21^v-24^r, described in d'Alverny, *Alain de Lille*, p. 220; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 28, fols 74^r-81^v) on the First Cause, the Trinity and the emanation of creatures, in which the account of the Trinity 'utilize largement des terms tirés de la Métaphysique d'Avicenne'.

52 See Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, pp. 23–30.

53 Michael Scot, *Introduction to Philosophy*, fragments 1–6. Thus, the dependence of this work of Michael on Arabic sources, pointed out by Baur (Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae*, pp. 366–7; cf. Van Steenberghen, *La philosophie au XIII^e siècle*, p. 113), can be regarded as a reliance, among others, on Avicenna.

translations of Averroes' long commentaries.⁵⁴ The *Philosophia prima* is quoted not only indirectly, through the citations that Michael finds in his main source, Gundissalinus' *De divisione philosophie*,⁵⁵ but also directly. The four-fold division of metaphysics in fragment 5, for example, is taken directly from *Philosophia prima* I, 2.⁵⁶ In this case, Michael mentions Avicenna explicitly: however, he refers to the metaphysics of both Avicenna and Aristotle ('Hae quattuor partes continentur in metaphysica Aristotelis et Avicennae'), as if the metaphysical views of these two authors were one and the same.⁵⁷ He also adds, accessorially, the names of al-Ġazālī and Ibn Gabirol, together with, but in distinction from, Aristotle and Avicenna ('... et in Algazel et in Avicebronte').⁵⁸ This quotation is significant in many respects. First, it is the first known attestation of a joint mention of Aristotle and Avicenna about a metaphysical doctrine: since, in fact, Michael deals with a doctrine of Avicenna, he shows that he takes Avicenna's metaphysics as representative also of Aristotle's. Second, this is one of the first cases in which other important exponents of Arabic thought, such as al-Ġazālī, are mentioned together with Avicenna on a metaphysical topic. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and al-Ġazālī's summary of Avicenna's philosophy start to be known, but the *Philosophia prima* remains for Michael, as for previous authors, the main text on metaphysics.

54 The absence of any reference to Averroes in these fragments, and their dependence on Gundissalinus, suggest that this work was composed in Toledo in the early period of Michael's career, i. e. before 1220 (cf. Burnett, Michael Scot, p. 105).

55 L. Baur documents the dependence of Michael's works on the *De divisione philosophie* in Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae*, pp. 365–6; see also Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus*, p. 13.

56 Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae*, p. 400, fr. 5; cf. *Philosophia prima* I, 2, p. 14, 68–p. 15, 74 [p. 14, 14–18] (the tripartition of metaphysics in Avicenna's original text is rendered as a quadripartition in the Latin translation). Gundissalinus reports Avicenna's view on the articulation of metaphysics differently (see Gundissalinus, *De divisione philosophiae*, p. 37, 10–17), in accordance with another passage of the *Philosophia prima* (I, 2, p. 16, 2–p. 17, 11 [p. 15, 17–p. 16, 5]). Square brackets refer to the Arabic text.

57 Whereas the explicit quotation of Aristotle in fragment 6 is taken from Gundissalinus, the ones in fragments 1–2 do not derive from the corresponding passages of the *Divisione philosophiae*: since in these passages Gundissalinus implicitly quotes doctrines by Avicenna, Michael might have added the name of Aristotle, on account of the identity of views that he ascribes to Aristotle and Avicenna in the aforementioned passage of fragment 5.

58 No division of metaphysics occurs in al-Ġazālī's *Summa*.

§ 3 The Entrance of the *Philosophia prima* at the University of Paris (John Blund; Prohibitions of 1210 and 1215)

The first evidence at our disposal regarding the second phase of the periodization proposed above comes from masters of arts and professors of theology at the University of Paris during the first two decades of the thirteenth century, who attest the introduction of Avicenna's *Philosophia prima* in the university environment and the recourse to this latter as a complement of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Whereas the exponents of the faculty of arts considered here (John Blund) show a positive attitude towards Avicenna's work, the faculty of theology has probably expressed a veto against the *Philosophia prima*, including it in the first Aristotelian condemnations of 1210 and 1215.

§ 3.1 John Blund

The *Tractatus de anima* of John Blund (1175 ca.–1248) was written in Paris (or in Oxford shortly after the author's stay in Paris) in the first years of the thirteenth century. It is an important witness of the early diffusion of the *Philosophia prima*, since it provides the first signs of its consideration as a complement of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Some of the frequent explicit mentions of Avicenna in this work are quotations of the *Philosophia prima*, of which both the ontological (I, 1, I, 5, II, 1) and the theological part (IX, 2) are cited.⁵⁹ Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, on the other hand, is never referred to directly. In two cases Blund mentions not only Avicenna, but also the title of his work. These mentions are revealing, for in both cases the doctrine quoted is the same – i. e. the classification of substances, including the soul, at the end of *Philosophia prima* II, 1 – but the cited work of Avicenna, namely the *Philosophia prima*, is differently described: in one case, Blund calls it *Metaphysica*, as it was called in the *De causis primis et secundis*;⁶⁰ in the other case, by contrast, he portrays it as a 'commentary' (*commentum*) on the *Metaphysics*.⁶¹ This latter is one of the first

59 See, besides the quotations reported in the following footnotes, also those occurring in John Blund, *Tractatus de anima*, § 13 (*Philosophia prima* IX, 2, p. 387, 12–13 [p. 455, 10–14]), § 18 (*Philosophia prima* I, 2, p. 10, 6–8 [p. 9, 59–62]), § 85 (*Philosophia prima* I, 5, p. 29, 5–6 [p. 31, 2–3]).

60 John Blund, *Tractatus de anima*, § 316, p. 85, 26–p. 86, 1: 'ut dicit Avicenna in *Metaphysica*'. See above, n. 41.

61 John Blund, *Tractatus de anima*, § 32, p. 9, 12–13: 'Ab Avicenna habemus in commento *Metaphysice* ...'. In another passage, Blund ascribes a *commentum prime philosophie* to both Avicenna and al-Gazālī (see John Blund, *Tractatus de anima*, § 101, p. 27, 28–9: 'sicut testatur tam Avicenna quam Algazel in commento prime philosophie'). Although it reveals awareness of the doctrinal similarity of al-Gazālī's *Summa* with respect to

known attestations in Latin philosophy of the consideration of Avicenna's *Philosophia prima* as a commentary on the *Metaphysics*. In the *Tractatus*, Blund establishes an identical relationship of commentary-text commented upon between Avicenna's and Aristotle's *De anima*; in this context, Avicenna is also named *Commentator*.⁶² The term *commentum* in Blund's *Tractatus* does not mean a work providing the literal exegesis of another, but a writing recasting in a different form, and therefore 'explaining', the doctrine of another.⁶³ Thus, whereas the first quotation considered here is reminiscent of the phase in which Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was substantially absent from the philosophical scenario and replaced with Avicenna's metaphysics, the second quotation indicates that the *Metaphysics* starts circulating in the University of Paris at the beginning of the thirteenth century and that scholars grasp the doctrinal affinity between it and the *Philosophia prima*, regarding this latter as a sort of 'companion' to Aristotle's work. Significantly, in a few cases of joint quotation of Aristotle and Avicenna, the doctrine at stake is phrased according to Avicenna's text, rather than Aristotle's.⁶⁴ However, apart from this and other scattered statements, the actual use of the *Philosophia prima* in Paris as a tool for the interpretation of the *Metaphysics* at the turn between the twelfth and the thirteenth century remains undocumented.

§ 3.2 The Prohibitions of 1210–1215

Furthermore, the two interdictions of the teaching of Aristotle at the University of Paris in 1210 and 1215, if attentively examined, attest that in the second decade of the thirteenth century Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is viewed as distinct from Avicenna's *Philosophia prima*, and that this latter is considered as a commentary on the former. In this regard, the interdictions mark the transition from the first to the second phase of the Latin reception of Avicenna's work.

The first prohibition – issued by the council of the ecclesiastic province of Sens, held in Paris in 1210 under the lead of Peter of Corbeil – bans lectures on

Avicenna's works (cf. the joint quotation of Avicenna and al-Ġazālī also in § 13), the ascription is puzzling, since the reference is to Avicenna's and al-Ġazālī's psychology (doctrine of vision), rather than metaphysics.

62 See the *loci* mentioned by Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, p. 20, n. 41.

63 See the remarks in Hasse, *Avicenna's 'De anima'*, p. 20. Blund's consideration of Avicenna's *De anima* as a commentary on Aristotle's text may have influenced his view of the relation of Avicenna's *Philosophia prima* vis-à-vis Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

64 See, for instance, John Blund, *Tractatus de anima*, § 18: 'Praeterea. Ab Aristotele et ab Avicenna habemus quod subiectum physici est corpus mobile in quantum ipsum est subiectum motus et quietis'; *Philosophia prima* I, 2, p. 10, 6–8 [p. 9, 59–62]: 'Dico autem quod suum subiectum scientiae naturalis est corpus ... in quantum est subiectum motui et quieti'.

‘Aristotle’s physical books’ (*libri Aristotelis de naturali philosophia*) and the ‘commentaries’ (*commenta*) thereupon.⁶⁵ Five years later, the renewed prohibition – introduced in the university statutes of 1215 by the delegate of the Pope, Robert of Courçon – clarifies the range of the books of Aristotle under interdiction (mentioning not only the physical but also the metaphysical books), and describes differently the literary genre of their forbidden explanation, speaking of ‘summaries’ (*summae de eisdem*).⁶⁶ By comparing the first with the second prohibition, two noteworthy differences emerge. One is that Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* is mentioned only in the second prohibition, not in the first. The other is that the writings associated with Aristotle’s works are named *commenta* in the first prohibition, *summae* in the second.

Since the second prohibition is formally the renewal of the first, the precisions that it introduces can be either clarifications of, or additions to, the previous interdiction. Thus, with regard to the first difference we have noticed, the second prohibition appears to clarify the scope of the books of Aristotle being interdicted, imprecisely reckoned in the first ban: it makes clear that the ‘physical books’ of Aristotle are to be taken in a wide meaning and include also the metaphysical writings of the Philosopher.⁶⁷ This being the case, the *commenta* on the physical books of Aristotle mentioned in the first prohibition include in all likelihood also ‘commentaries’ on the *Metaphysics*. On the other hand, with regard to the second difference, it is less clear how the *summae* in the second prohibition relate to the *commenta* in the first. One possibility is that both expressions refer to the same writings, differently described: we know, for example, that the title of *summa* (as well as those of *compendium* or *tractatus*) was used since the twelfth century by masters of logic to designate explanations

65 *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. I, p. 70, § 11: ‘... nec libri Aristotelis de naturali philosophia nec commenta legantur Parisius publice vel secreto ...’.

66 *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. I, pp. 78–9, § 20: ‘Non legantur libri Aristotelis de methafisica et de naturali philosophia nec summe de eisdem ...’.

67 Although it cannot be excluded that the *Metaphysics* gained popularity in the University of Paris only after 1210, the historical evidence at our disposal suggests that it was already included in the first prohibition. Grabmann, *I divieti ecclesiastici*, p. 44, aptly notices that the first prohibition rests on a division of philosophy in *rationalis*, *naturalis* and *moralis*, in which the *philosophia naturalis* encompasses also metaphysics. At pp. 11–12, Grabmann reports a text of William Brito, mentioning, with regard to the first prohibition, the interdiction of *libelli quidam ab Aristotele, ut dicebatur, compositi, qui docebant metaphysicam*. This text is recorded among the witnesses of the first Latin diffusion of the *Metaphysics* by Vuillemin-Diem, Praefatio, in *Aristoteles Latinus XXV* 1–1^a, p. xvi (Sharpe, *A Handlist*, p. 756, § 1998, places Brito’s activity towards the end of the 13th century, rather than at its beginning, as Vuillemin-Diem does). The many respects in which Brito’s report differs from the actual text of the proscription are evidenced by Grabmann, *ibid.*

of Aristotle's works.⁶⁸ Another possibility, by contrast, is that the *summae* in the second prohibition are not the same as the *commenta* in the first: since the second prohibition informs us of the existence of *summae* not only of Aristotle's books, but also of the writings of masters such as David of Dinant, Amalricus of Bene and 'Mauricius Hispanus' (whoever this latter may be),⁶⁹ one might take the *summae* in question to be abstracts and summaries of the works of Aristotle and the other condemned authors, made by professors of the faculty of arts in order to escape the limitations imposed by the proscription of 1210.⁷⁰ If this is the case, however, it seems difficult to identify the *summae* with the *commenta*.

Coming to Avicenna, scholars generally agree that both the *commenta* and the *summae* mentioned in the prohibitions can be identified with the Latin translations of the *Šifā'*.⁷¹ This point of view is, with some provisos, acceptable. The term *commenta* in the first prohibition very likely designates the Latin translations of Avicenna, for three reasons. First of all, the consideration of the *Šifā'* as intimately connected with Aristotle's *corpus*, by being its derivation, complement or explanation, is shared by the first Latin translators of Avicenna⁷²

68 See the evidence discussed in Hasse, *Der mutmaßliche Einfluss*.

69 'Non legantur libri Aristotelis de metaphisica et de naturali philosophia nec summe de eisdem aut de doctrina magistri David de Dinant, aut Almarici heretici aut Mauricii hyspani' (*Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. I, pp. 78–9, § 20; emphasis added).

70 This hypothesis is advanced by Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant*. The counter-argument of Grabmann, *I divieti ecclesiastici*, p. 30, namely the fact that no coeval abbreviation of Aristotle's texts is extant, does not seem conclusive. Daniel of Morley (d. 1210 ca.), in his famous polemical report on the status of teaching in the university of Paris towards the end of the 12th century, mentions the habit of studying jurisprudence by means of summaries (*sub compendio*) rather than on the original texts (Daniel of Morley, *Philosophia*, p. 212).

71 De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, pp. 45–52; Grabmann, *I divieti ecclesiastici*, pp. 49–51; d'Alverny, *Les pérégrinations de l'âme*, p. 242; Van Steenberghen, *La philosophie au XIII^e siècle*, p. 85; Van Riet, *La traduction latine*, p. 54*; Elamrani-Jamal, *La réception*, pp. 34–5; Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle*, p. 94 and n. 20. The initiator of this interpretative tendency, R. De Vaux, points at the compatibility between the literary genre of the *Šifā'* and the terms *commenta/summae*, in order to include Avicenna's works in the condemnations and corroborate in this way the hypothesis of the existence of a 'heretical' Latin Avicennism, condemned by Parisian theologians. Grabmann, *I divieti ecclesiastici*, pp. 49–50 (cf. pp. 12–13), adds further evidence to De Vaux's arguments, namely the reference to Spain and Toledo (place of composition of the Latin translations of Avicenna) that can be found in the report of the Parisian condemnations in the *Speculum ecclesiae* of Gerald of Wales (1146–1226); on this author, see Sharpe, *A Handlist*, pp. 134–7 (§ 350).

72 Several significant examples can be adduced. (1) In the Prologue of the Latin translation of Avicenna's *Liber de anima*, Avendauth portrays this work as a book that, in the most complete form (*plenissime*), gathers and replaces what Aristotle says in his *De anima* and *De sensu et sensato* (Avendauth mentions also the pseudo-Aristotelian *De intellectu et intellectu*): 'Habetis ergo librum ... ex arabico translatum: in quo quidquid Aristoteles

and is widespread at the time.⁷³ Secondly, an author active in Paris a few years before the condemnations like John Blund expressly portrays Avicenna's *De anima* and *Philosophia prima* as *commenta* of, respectively, Aristotle's *De anima* and the *Metaphysics*, as we have seen. Thirdly, the commentaries *par excellence* on Aristotle's works, namely Averroes' long commentaries, cannot be the *commenta* referred to in the 1210 prohibition, since they were translated into Latin only later (around 1220–1235).⁷⁴ Thus, the *Philosophia prima* is quite probably alluded to in the first prohibition as *commentum* on the *Metaphysics*. The *summae* in the second prohibition, on the other hand, do (or do not) designate the *Šifā'*, depending on whether they are (or they are not) the same as the

dixit in libro suo de anima et de sensu et sensato et de intellectu et intellecto, ab auctore libri sciatis esse collectum; unde, postquam, volente Deo, hunc habetis, in hoc illos tres plenissime vos habere non dubitetis' (Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de anima*, p. 4, 21–5). On the Latin translation of the *De intellectu* of Alexander of Aphrodisias, see Burnett, *Arabic into Latin: the Reception of Arabic Philosophy into Western Europe*, p. 392 and n. 11. (2) Likewise, Alfred of Sareshel prolonged Aristotle's meteorology with the mineralogy contained in chapters I, 1 and I, 5 of Avicenna's corresponding section, thus revealing an acute perception of the Aristotelian inspiration of the *Šifā'*, especially if he regarded these chapters as written by Avicenna rather than by Aristotle himself (according to Otte, *Alfred of Sareshel's Commentary*, Alfred did not know Avicenna's authorship of these two chapters, a suggestion discarded by Mandosio, Di Martino, *La Météorologie d'Avicenne*, pp. 413–15). Significantly, Alfred commented not only on Aristotle's *Meteorology*, but also on Avicenna's aforementioned chapters, and described Avicenna as imitator of Aristotle and as the second most important philosophical authority after the Stagirite ('imitator Aristotelis precipuus, immo ipso Aristotele excepto, philosophorum maximus', Alfred of Sareshel, *Commentary*, p. 50, 18–19). (3) Michael Scot's translation of Avicenna's reworking of Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, *De partibus animalium* and *De generatione animalium* followed later his translation, from Arabic, of these three Aristotelian works (as a single unit, with the title *De animalibus*). It is reasonable to suppose that, after having translated Aristotle's works on zoology, Michael wanted to provide, with the translation of the part of the *Šifā'* on this topic, its interpretative tool. (4) By inserting the Latin translation of fragments of the rhetoric of the *Šifā'* into his Arabic-Latin translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, also Hermann the German aimed at clarifying the obscurities of the Arabic text of Aristotle's work (see d'Alverny, *Notes*, pp. 339, 347). On account of all this evidence, it is safe to conclude that the first translators of the *Šifā'* 'intended to provide Western scholars with a commentary on Aristotle's works' (D'Alverny, *Translations and Translators*, p. 451).

73 See De Vaux, *Notes et textes*, p. 10: 'Et cet ensemble [des traductions d'Avicenne] passait pour être un commentaire autorisé – le meilleur, mieux: le seul – de toute la philosophie aristotelicienne'; Goichon, *La philosophie d'Avicenne*, p. 90: 'Celui-ci [i.e. le *Šifā'*] passait pour un commentaire'; Van Steenberghen, *La philosophie au XIII^e siècle*, p. 173: 'les paraphrases d'Avicenne ont servi d'instrument de travail aux premiers exégètes d'Aristote, jusqu'au jour où elles ont été détrônées par les commentaires littéraires d'Averroès'; Soto Bruna, *Estudio filológico*, p. 38: 'Este ultimo [i.e. el *Šifā'*] fue considerado en su momento como un comentario de la propia *Metafísica* de Aristóteles'.

74 Denifle contends the contrary in *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. I, p. 71, n. 15.

commenta in the first prohibition. Also apart from stylistic considerations (the term *summa* fits the literary format of the *Šifā'* quite well, and it is even contained in the title of the Latin translation of al-Ġazālī's *Maqāsid*, i. e. *Summa theoricæ philosophiæ*), it is not impossible to take the occurrence of *summae* in the second prohibition as referring to the *Šifā'*.⁷⁵

Thus, it seems safe to conclude that the *Philosophia prima* entered the *curriculum* of the faculty of arts of the University of Paris some time before 1210, playing there the role of an authoritative text to be read together with the *Metaphysics* in order to convey its interpretation. The quotations of the *Philosophia prima* in John Blund fit into this scenario.⁷⁶ Together with the *Metaphysics* and the other writings of Aristotle, Avicenna's work must have aroused the suspicion and alarm of the members of the faculty of theology, who promoted the condemnations of 1210 and 1215 in front of the ecclesiastic authorities. This is confirmed *a posteriori*. When the prohibitions lose their validity, and Aristotle's writings were 'rehabilitated' in Paris in 1231, the *Philosophia prima* regained its role of interpretive tool of the *Metaphysics*. The Parisian 'Guide of the Student' of 1230–1240, for example, reveals a certain silent influence of Avicenna in metaphysics.⁷⁷ The authors active in Paris in the fourth decade of the thirteenth century will rely massively on the *Philosophia prima*, providing the first known attestations of the use of this work no longer without, but together with the *Metaphysics*.

75 In this prohibition, the term *summae* might have two different interrelated connotations: one indicating the explanatory summaries of Aristotle's books on metaphysics and natural philosophy, in accordance with the attested practice of naming *summae* the exegetical works produced within the faculty of arts (see above, n. 68); another designating more specifically the abridgements of the teaching of the masters involved in the condemnation. In its first meaning, the term *summae* would encompass the *Šifā'*.

76 Other works written in the faculty of arts of the University of Paris at the beginning of the 13th century – like the surviving fragments of the *Quaternuli* of David of Dinant, condemned in 1210 – show acquaintance with the *Metaphysics*, but no significant recourse to the *Philosophia prima* (see Anzulewicz, *Person und Werk des Davids von Dinant*; Anzulewicz, *David von Dinant*, pp. 81, 90). Vuillemin-Diem, *Zum Aristoteles Latinus*, p. 30, remarks, however, that the extant fragments of David's *Quaternuli* 'repräsentieren zweifellos nur einen sehr kleinen Teil aus der verlorenen wissenschaftlichen und literarischen Produktion Davids'.

77 See De Libera, *Structure du corps scolaire*, p. 75: 'Cette conception du système de la métaphysique comme science [dans la Guide] n'est pas étrangère à la présentation de la *prima philosophia* dans la *Métaphysique du Šifā'* d'Avicenne'.

Conclusion

The stage of the Latin reception of the *Philosophia prima* that antedates William of Auvergne is quite rich and interesting. Several authors and works are involved, and virtually the entire *Philosophia prima* is taken into account. Historically, this initial phase connects the period of the translation of the *Philosophia prima* in the second half of the twelfth century with its employment by theologians in Oxford and Paris from the third decade of the following century onward. Doctrinally, the reception of the *Philosophia prima* in this early phase is worth considering. On the one hand, it is still, in a way, immature, since it mainly consists in the repetition, often silent, of Avicenna's views on scattered topics, rather than in their critical evaluation and theoretical refinement. On the other hand, however, authors focus on some crucial points of Avicenna's metaphysics: this is the case of chapter I, 6 of the *Philosophia prima* (the distinction of necessary and contingent, and of necessary *per se* and necessary in virtue of something else) in Gundissalinus' *De processionem mundi*; and of chapter I, 5 (the idea of 'existent' as first intelligible) in John Blund's *Tractatus de anima*. Thus, distinctions and doctrines that are central in Avicenna's metaphysics, and provide evidence of the endorsement of Avicenna's thought in later authors, are already at stake in this early stage. More than its features, the very existence of this stage is significant. It attests that the transmission of Avicenna's metaphysics into Latin represent a historical and doctrinal continuum.

Future research will have to investigate whether the absence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* at this early stage is just accidental, or rather is causally linked with the diffusion of the *Philosophia prima*. The *Metaphysics* is occasionally mentioned by Latin authors at this stage, but knowledge of it remains little more than virtual. The fact that two Latin translations of the *Metaphysics* were made in the twelfth century, but underwent a partial loss or remained unexploited until later, calls for an explanation. One might think that interest in metaphysical issues at this stage was, in general, not too strong. But one might also surmise that the success of the *Philosophia prima* somehow prevented the diffusion of the *Metaphysics*, by providing a metaphysical system that was regarded by Latin scholars as more coherent and complete than Aristotle's. These are questions that wait to be answered. The fact remains that Avicenna's *Philosophia prima* seems to have spread in Latin philosophy before and, initially, without the *Metaphysics*.

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