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# A Companion to Albert the Great

Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences

*Edited by*

Irven M. Resnick



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Boethius, among Platonists like Nemesius of Emesa. Studies on Albert have generally focused more on the extension of his notion of *Platonici*, and on the presence and doctrinal significance of Neoplatonic sources in his work, than on Plato's philosophy.<sup>212</sup> But the real significance of Platonic/Neoplatonic philosophy in Albert, as suggested above, comes from its providing him with an ontotheological hermeneutics or model of thought.<sup>213</sup> According to the boldest form of this reconstruction, Albert should be understood, not as integrating the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition into a primarily Aristotelian philosophy, but rather as using Aristotelian philosophy to explicate an ontotheological structure that is essentially Platonic/Neoplatonic. This Platonic/Neoplatonic structure or model comprises the entire reality of being, with its transcendent first principle, with the world, proceeding from the divine, in its realization in time, space, and matter, and in its return to its transcendent origin as its goal. When Albert explicates individual segments of this structure, and especially when he seeks to cognize reality on the level of contingency (that is, in time, space, and matter), he gives preference to an Aristotelian philosophy of nature. In principle, however, Albert is open to all scientific traditions and he uses their insights if they fulfill the conditions of his conception of rationality and conformity with the Christian faith.

<sup>212</sup> See Michaud-Quantin, "Les 'Platonici' dans la psychologie de S. Albert le Grand," 194–207; Raymond Klibansky, *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition during the Middle Ages, with a New Preface and Four Supplementary Chapters* (Millwood: 1982), 27–28; Jeremia M.G. Hackett, "Albert the Great. II: Albert and Other Philosophers," in *Handbook of Metaphysics and Ontology*, vol. 1, ed. Hans Burkhardt and Barry Smith (Munich: 1991), 24. For additional bibliographical details see *Albert the Great: A Selectively Annotated Bibliography (1900–2000)*, ed. Irven M. Resnick and Kenneth F. Kitschell, Jr (Tempe, Ariz.: 2004), esp. 324–327. For supplementary information, see Maria Rita Pagnoni-Sturlese, "A propos du néoplatonisme d'Albert le Grand," *Archives de Philosophie* 43 (1980), 635–654; Jan A. Aertsen, "Albertus Magnus und die mittelalterliche Philosophie," *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 21 (1996), 111–128, esp. 120–125, 127; Aertsen, "Über das Schöne"—Alberts des Grossen Kölner Vorlesungen zu Dionysius Areopagita," in *Dombau und Theologie im mittelalterlichen Köln*, ed. Ludger Honnefelder, Norbert Trippen, and Arnold Wolff, Studien zum Kölner Dom 6 (Cologne: 1998), 417–427; Thérèse Bonin, *Creation as Emanation: The Origin of Diversity in Albert the Great's On the Causes and the Procession of the Universe* (Notre Dame, Ind.: 2001); Andreas Bächli-Hinz, *Monotheismus und neoplatonische Philosophie: Eine Untersuchung zum pseudo-aristotelischen Liber de causis und dessen Rezeption durch Albert den Grossen* (Sankt Augustin: 2004); Alain de Libera, *Albert le Grand et la philosophie*; de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*.

<sup>213</sup> For a demonstration of the hermeneutic significance of Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy in Albert's works and his thought, see Henryk Anzulewicz, "Die Denkstruktur des Albertus Magnus"; Anzulewicz, "Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita und das Strukturprinzip des Denkens von Albert dem Grossen."

Now, if Plato and the different Platonic/Neoplatonic sources provided Albert with the worldview that he used as the metaphysical groundwork for his Christian faith, it was nonetheless his encounter with Aristotle (through the Arabic Peripatetic tradition) that furnished him with the necessary categories for expressing and analyzing that worldview in precise logical and metaphysical terms. In order to reach a more complete understanding of the interplay in Albert between Platonism and Aristotelianism, then, we now turn to an examination of Albert's use of Avicenna and the Islamic philosophical tradition, which were the lens through which Albert read Aristotle.

##### 5. ALBERT'S USE OF AVICENNA AND ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Amos Bertolacci

Albert's paraphrase on the *Metaphysics*, written immediately after his preaching of a crusade in the German speaking countries (1263–64) by order of Pope Urban IV, bears no sign of animosity against Islam. On the contrary, as in the case of all of Albert's Aristotelian paraphrases, as well as his previous and later theological works, the *Metaphysica* contains frequent references to a wide array of Muslim philosophers and astronomers, foremost among whom are the authors of the two major Arabic treatments of metaphysics, namely Avicenna (Ibn-Sīnā, d. 1037) and Averroes (Ibn-Ruṣd, d. 1198).<sup>214</sup> Although other works of Avicenna and Averroes are also quoted in the *Metaphysica*, it mainly relies on the *Ilāhiyyāt* ([Science of] *Divine Things*) of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Shifā'* (*Book of the Cure*)—a

<sup>214</sup> The other Arab authors or works explicitly quoted are: al-Ġhazālī (*Abihamidin/Algazel*), Ibn-Bāija (*Maurus Abubacher*), al-Fārābī (*AlFārābīus*), al-Bitrūjī (*Alpetragius*), the *Liber de causis*, and Thābit ibn Qurra (*Thebit ben Chorat*). On the quotations of the still unidentified "Avenzoreth", characterized by Albert as "quidam sacerdotum Arabiae" (Alb., *Metaph.* 1.2.8, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 25, lns. 7–8), see Thomas Ricklin, "Von den 'beatiores philosophi' zum 'optimus status hominis': Zur Entradikalisierung der radikalen Aristoteliker," in *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jan Aertsen and Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 27 (Berlin: 2000), 217–230, esp. 221–222; and Theodor Wolfram Köhler, *Grundlagen des philosophisch-anthropologischen Diskurses im dreizehnten Jahrhundert*, (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters) 1 (Leiden: 2000), 616–619. An overview of the quotations of some of these authors in Albert's works can be found in Ángel Cortabarría Beitia, *Las obras y la filosofía de AlFārābī y Alkindi en los escritos de S. Alberto Magno* (Las Caldas de Besaya: 1954); Beitia, "Literatura algezeliana de los escritos de San Alberto Magno," *Estudios filosóficos* 11 (1962), 255–276; Beitia, "El filósofo Avampace en los escritos de San Alberto Magno," *Estudios filosóficos* 27 (1978), 21–61; Beitia, "Deux sources de S. Albert le Grand: Al-Bitrūjī et al-Battani," *MIDEO* 15 (1982), 31–52; Beitia, "Deux sources arabes de S. Albert le Grand: Thābit b. Qurra et al-Fārghāni," *MIDEO* 17 (1986), 37–52.

very radical and influential reworking of the *Metaphysics*—and on Averroes's *Tafsīr ma ba'd al-ṭabī'a* (*Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*)—the most thorough and detailed exegesis of this work that has survived. Albert knew these works by means of their Latin translations (*Liber de Philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, ca. 1150–75; *Commentarius in Metaphysicam*, ca. 1220–24),<sup>215</sup> with which he became acquainted during his teaching in Paris (ca. 1240–48),<sup>216</sup> and to which he keeps referring repeatedly in his subsequent philosophical and theological works. Avicenna and Averroes are not only the Arab philosophers most frequently quoted by Albert in the *Metaphysica*,<sup>217</sup> but also, compared to the many Greek, Latin, and Hebrew authors mentioned here and there, they are, after Aristotle, the authorities to whom Albert most often refers.<sup>218</sup> Since they are cited not only by name, but also occasionally in an explicitly indeterminate way (“aliqui”, “nonnulli”, etc.), and often—what is most significant—silently, they represent the two real “sources”, together with the *Metaphysics*, of the paraphrase.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>215</sup> Avic., *Liber de philosophia prima*, vol. 1–3; Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, fols. 1–355.

<sup>216</sup> See Anzulewicz, *De forma resultante in speculo*, 5; James A. Weisheipl, “The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great,” in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, 13–51, at 21–28. The references to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in Albert's earliest known treatise (*De natura boni*), written before his teaching in Paris (ibid., 20), do not disclose any particular knowledge of Avicenna's and Averroes's works on metaphysics.

<sup>217</sup> If we consider that the only quotation of Ibn-Bajja in the *Metaphysica* is taken from Averroes (*Long Commentary on the De anima*); that Albert regards al-Ġhazālī as a follower of Avicenna, frequently quoting him together with Avicenna, and occasionally ascribing to him alone doctrines of Avicenna; that al-Fārābī is mentioned only once, together with Avicenna, with regard to a doctrine of this latter; and that al-Bītrūjī and Ṭhābit ibn Qurra are quoted only once about astronomical matters; we realize that Avicenna and Averroes are the main Arabic philosophical sources of the paraphrase. The *Liber de causis* (the object of an independent paraphrase by Albert) exerts a less conspicuous influence on Albert's interpretation of the *Metaphysics*.

<sup>218</sup> Although the explicit quotations of Avicenna and Averroes are as numerous as those of Boethius (*Boetius*), their implicit quotations (only a few of which are recorded in the *Auctores a nobis allegati* of the Cologne edition's indices) are decidedly more frequent. At least two quotations of Boethius recorded in the *Auctores ab Alberto ipso allegati* do not correspond to any explicit attribution by Albert: *In Categorias* 1 (PL 64: 184D); *In Isagogen*, Editio 2, 4.17 (CSEL 48: 280, ln. 14); see Alb., *Metaph.*, Ed. Colon. 16/2, 603.

<sup>219</sup> For a detailed inventory of the different kinds of quotations of Avicenna in Albert's paraphrase on the *Metaphysics*, see A. Bertolacci, “Subtilius speculando: Le citazioni della *Philosophia Prima* di Avicenna nel Commento alla *Metafisica* di Alberto Magno,” *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 9 (1998), 261–339; Bertolacci, “Le citazioni implicite testuali della *Philosophia prima* di Avicenna nel Commento alla *Metafisica* di Alberto Magno: Analisi tipologica,” *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 12 (2001), 179–274. An overview of the influence of Averroes in Albert's works is

In the *Ilāhiyyāt*, Avicenna effects a thorough recasting of the epistemology and content of the *Metaphysics*, with the aim of replacing Aristotle's work with an original elaboration of metaphysics that provides a rigorous and coherent version of this science. This reworking affects all of the main aspects of the “scientific” profile of metaphysics (subject matter, structure, method, relationship with other sciences), and is performed by arranging in a different framework a selection of Aristotle's metaphysical doctrines, to which are added Neoplatonic theories (regarded as Aristotelian), the views of the Peripatetic commentators, and Avicenna's own ideas. Insofar as it is an independent, comprehensive treatise of metaphysics in which the “raw” material of the *Metaphysics* is refined, expanded, and rebuilt upon the Aristotelian epistemology of the *Posterior Analytics*, the *Ilāhiyyāt* can be regarded as a full-fledged original synthesis initiating the “second beginning” of Aristotelian metaphysics in Western philosophy.<sup>220</sup> The *Tafsīr* is a work both stylistically and doctrinally different from the *Ilāhiyyāt*. In it Averroes provides his most comprehensive and detailed exegesis of the *Metaphysics*, much more faithful to Aristotle's text than the interpretation offered in the *Epitome*, and much more extensive and articulated than the account of the *Middle Commentary*. In this respect, the *Tafsīr* represents the first extant exhaustive (though not complete) exegesis of Aristotle's work in the Peripatetic tradition.<sup>221</sup> On the methodological side, it adopts the exegetical technique of the ancient Greek tradition, namely, the literal commentary of Alexander of Aphrodisias and, to a lesser extent, the paraphrase of Themistius, two authors whom Averroes abundantly quotes in his commentary on *Metaphysics* Lam. In their footsteps, Averroes provides a continuous, line-by-line explanation of the text of the *Metaphysics*, with frequent references to the other Aristotelian works, according to the model of “holistic” interpretation of the *Metaphysics* within the *corpus*. On the doctrinal side, the goal is to preserve the original pattern and content of the *Metaphysics* against the modifications

available in Édouard-Henri Wéber, “Les emprunts majeurs à Averroès chez Albert le Grand et dans son école,” 149–179.

<sup>220</sup> See Amos Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics in Avicenna's Kitāb al-Shifā': A Milestone of Western Metaphysical Thought*, (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, Texts and Studies) 63 (Leiden: 2006).

<sup>221</sup> All of the previous commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, both Greek and Arabic, are extant only partially; see Bertolacci, *The Reception*, 136–146.

and—in Averroes's eyes—"corruptions" introduced by modern philosophers, especially Avicenna.<sup>222</sup>

Albert's attitude towards these two paradigmatic and antithetic interpretations of the *Metaphysics* is interesting in many respects. First, historically, it exemplifies the crucial phase of transmission of Arabic metaphysics into Latin, insofar as it documents the process of joint reception of these two fundamental accounts of the *Metaphysics* in one of the earliest, most extensive, and most influential Latin accounts of Aristotle's work. Albert's paraphrase is unique in this respect, since it is the first known example of interpretation of the *Metaphysics* in Latin that relies extensively on both Avicenna's and Averroes's works on the subject. Before Albert, the lines of transmission of the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Tafsīr* remain separate: the Latin reception of Avicenna's metaphysics is witnessed either by theological works or by treatises on specific metaphysical or epistemological topics, whereas the exegesis of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is based almost exclusively on Averroes's model, with a decided neglect of Avicenna's contribution. With Albert, these two lines of transmission start to communicate and interact with one another. Albeit quantitatively different (the use of Avicenna is less extensive than that of Averroes), the recourse to Avicenna and Averroes is qualitatively analogous insofar as Albert accords to both sources an equally important, although distinct, function: Averroes helps to explain the text, Avicenna contributes to its doctrinal enrichment. Thus, the amount of space and degree of attention that Albert devotes to Avicenna and Averroes in the paraphrase is similar to the one accorded to Aristotle: he reports the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Tafsīr* comprehensively, signaling the cases in which the content of these two works is, for some reason, noteworthy. Due to the similarity of the exegetical technique that Albert applies to the texts of Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroes, it is not far-fetched to view his paraphrase not only as an account of the *Metaphysics*, but also, concomitantly, as a kind of "super-commentary", albeit in *nuce*, of the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Tafsīr*.

The joint dependence on the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Tafsīr* is mirrored—and this is the second element of interest—in the style of Albert's paraphrase of the *Metaphysics*, as well as of his other Aristotelian works. Among the

<sup>222</sup> Bibliographical references to the partial translations and studies regarding Averroes's *Tafsīr* can be found in Philipp H. Rosenmann, "Averroes: A Catalogue of Editions and scholarly Writings from 1821 Onwards," *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 30 (1988), 153–221, and, for the following years, in the bibliographical database of the Thomas-Institut of the University of Cologne.

different kinds of exegesis applied to Aristotle's works in history (Alexander of Aphrodisias's literal commentaries, Themistius's paraphrases, Nicholas of Damascus's abridgements, etc.), Albert's Aristotelian works represent a case on their own. They can be defined as "paraphrases with digressions", since they consist of a series of chapters that clarify, by way of paraphrase, the meaning of the text of Aristotle that is being commented upon, intermingled with frequent autonomous chapters (or even whole books) in which Aristotle's doctrines, previously paraphrased, are accounted for anew, according to a different and more thorough way of explanation, are confronted with possible objections, or are clarified by means of the interpretations provided by the commentators.<sup>223</sup> This stylistic peculiarity of Albert's paraphrases is related to Avicenna and Averroes in two respects. Formally, it stems from Avicenna's reworking of Aristotle's writings and from their exegesis by Averroes: in an Avicennian vein, Albert replaces the text commented upon by his own rephrasing of it; in the footsteps of Averroes, he introduces frequent doctrinal parentheses into the continuous, systematic, and detailed interpretation of Aristotle's text.<sup>224</sup> From the point of view of content, in the *Metaphysica*, as well as in the other Aristotelian works, this double register of paraphrases and digressions serves to incorporate the contributions of Avicenna and Averroes. Thus, Albert mainly quotes Averroes's literal exegesis of the *Metaphysics* in sections of explicative paraphrase, whereas he prefers to cite Avicenna's doctrinal developments in the digressions. In this way, the contributions of Avicenna and Averroes are kept separate within two different structural levels of the paraphrase, but are also allowed to interact and to balance each other in the architecture of the work as a whole. In

<sup>223</sup> Scholars tend to define the style of Albert's Aristotelian works simply as "paraphrase", disregarding the essential role played by digressions.

<sup>224</sup> The paraphrastic component of the style of Albert's Aristotelian works is frequently related by scholars to Avicenna's *Shifā'*. The impact of Averroes's long commentaries on Albert's digressions is less underscored. Albeit inspired, in different respects, by Avicenna's and Averroes's formats, Albert's style remains, however, original. His paraphrases are not a radical reworking of Aristotle's text as in Avicenna's *Shifā'*, since they follow rigorously the order of Aristotle's texts (the term "paraphrase" can be applied to Avicenna's and Albert's styles only in different senses). Nor are the digressions merely scattered randomly in the exegesis as in Averroes's long commentaries; they rather constitute a constant and distinct second structural element of Albert's paraphrases. In this respect, Albert's originality stems from its close interaction with the formats of his sources: in his works, the paraphrases modeled on Avicenna assume the running character of Averroes's exegesis, whereas the digressions inspired by Averroes become structurally independent from the explanation of the text, thus mirroring Avicenna's way of replacing Aristotle's text with doctrinal developments that are related to, but independent from, the *littera* of Aristotle.

the case of the *Metaphysica*, the *Tafsīr* represents—to use a metaphor—the “basis” of Albert’s paraphrase, whereas the *Ilāhiyyāt* constitutes its “height” and the *trait d’union* connecting the exegesis of Aristotle’s work with the Neoplatonic speculation of the *Liber de causis*, commented upon by Albert after the *Metaphysics* and regarded by him as an Aristotelian work (albeit not strictly speaking as a work by Aristotle). In other words, the articulated format of Albert’s paraphrase—itsself a kind of synthesis of the exegetical styles adopted by Avicenna and Averroes—allows a use of sources in which the borrowings from Avicenna and Averroes are, at the same time, structurally distinct from, and functionally complementary to, one another.

Third, from the point of view of doctrine, Albert’s attitude toward his two sources is not only receptive, but also critical: in many cases, he rejects particular theories advanced by either Avicenna or Averroes. This critical attitude is already indicative of originality. More interestingly in this regard, the joint reliance on Averroes and Avicenna implies and underscores the presence in Albert’s paraphrase of an elaborate theoretical apparatus by means of which he accounts for and solves the conflict between the metaphysics of these two authors. For Averroes frequently and harshly criticizes Avicenna in the *Tafsīr*, the commentary in which Averroes’s polemic against Avicenna is most recurrent and intensive. On the issues about which Avicenna’s and Averroes’s standpoints prove to be incompatible, Albert adopts a harmonizing strategy, striving to focus on similarities and to sweep away differences. This strategy consists in “hiding”, as much as possible, the dissent: thus, in no place in his *Metaphysics* paraphrase does Albert signal explicitly a disagreement between Avicenna and Averroes.<sup>225</sup> In particular, Albert performs this concealment

<sup>225</sup> In the only place in which Albert explicitly quotes Avicenna while reporting a criticism of Averroes against him (Alb., *Metaph.* 4.1.5, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 166, ln. 74; and 167, lns. 15, 39, 66), Averroes himself is not named; and vice versa, in the only place in which Albert explicitly quotes Averroes while reporting his criticism of Avicenna (*ibid.*, 11.1.8, 470, ln. 33), Avicenna himself is not named. In this regard, the *Metaphysica* represents a special case: it is the only Aristotelian paraphrase in which Albert, despite using the corresponding long commentary of Averroes, does not reproduce explicitly any of the criticisms of Avicenna that he finds there (see, on the contrary, the paraphrase on *Phys.* 1.3.18, and 2.1.10; the paraphrase on the *De caelo* 2.3.5, 2.3.8, 3.2.1, and 3.2.8; the *De causis propr. elem.* 1.2.13; and the paraphrase on the *De anima* 2.3.7, 2.3.33). Since the *Metaphysica* is later than all the aforementioned works, this peculiarity might indicate a sort of evolution of Albert’s attitude towards Averroes’s criticisms of Avicenna. In the last “Aristotelian” paraphrase, on the *Liber de causis*, Albert reports two criticisms of Avicenna by Averroes; see Alb., *De causis et proc. univers.* 1.4.7 and 2.1.12.

of dissent in two main ways. On the one hand, he omits many of Averroes’s criticisms of Avicenna contained in the *Tafsīr*.<sup>226</sup> On the other hand, he reports the remaining criticisms in a modified way: either he presents them as regarding unidentified authors (*quidam, alii*) rather than Avicenna;<sup>227</sup> or he rejects not only the doctrines of Avicenna criticized by Averroes (once again, ascribed to *quidam*), but also the doctrines on account of which Averroes moves the criticisms (ascribed to *quidam alii*);<sup>228</sup> or, finally, he alters the content of these criticisms and shows that they miss the point.<sup>229</sup>

This conciliatory approach is best exemplified by three fundamental doctrines, taken from the three main areas of metaphysics: the doctrine of the subject matter of this discipline within the epistemological part of metaphysics; the doctrine of the primary and most universal concepts (the so-called “transcendentals”) in ontology; and the doctrine of the animation of heavens in philosophical theology. Whereas Avicenna and Averroes disagree on each of these three issues, Albert strives to determine a

<sup>226</sup> The omission, in some cases, is complete: it regards the criticisms occurring in Averr., *Tafsīr* a.15, 46, ln. 18–p. 47, ln. 3 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 35D); a.15, 47, lns. 10–12 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 35E); D.5, 508, lns. 9–11 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 1071); *Tafsīr* Z.31, 882, lns. 17–19 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 181B); *Tafsīr* Z.31, 885, ln. 18–p. 886, ln. 3 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 181I); *Tafsīr* L.8, 1279, ln. 12–p. 1280, ln. 11 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 257E–G); *Tafsīr* L.8, 1282, lns. 8–12 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 257K); *Tafsīr* L.5, 1426, lns. 11–12 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 293K); *Tafsīr* L.6, 1436, lns. 5–6 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 295D); *Tafsīr* L.8, 1442, lns. 14–16 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 297A); *Tafsīr* L.41, 1632, lns. 1–3 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 3241–K); the criticism in *Tafsīr* D.14, 557, lns. 16–19, is not reported in the Latin translation. In other cases, the omission is partial, since Albert reports the argument by means of which Averroes refutes Avicenna’s doctrine, omitting, however, the critical reference to Avicenna: see Averr., *Tafsīr* G.3, 315, lns. 3–9 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 67G) with Alb., *Metaph.* 4.1.4, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 166, lns. 42–51; and Averr., *Tafsīr* D.14, 558, ln. 17–p. 559, ln. 14 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 117C–D) with Alb., *Metaph.* 5.1.11, 234, lns. 37–42.

<sup>227</sup> See Averr., *Tafsīr* L.5, 1267, ln. 15–p. 1268, ln. 3 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 255B) with Alb., *Metaph.* 10.1.5, Ed. Colon. 16/2, 437, lns. 19–27, 33–34; and Averr., *Tafsīr* L.18, 1498, lns. 12–15; (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 304G) with Alb., *Metaph.* 11.1.8, 470, lns. 9–41.

<sup>228</sup> See Averr., *Tafsīr* L.5, 1423, ln. 18–p. 1424, ln. 4 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 293D) with Alb., *Metaph.* 11.1.3, Ed. Colon. 16/2, 462, lns. 73–77 and 81–83. Albert includes possibly also Alexander of Aphrodisias among the *quidam*: see Averr., *Tafsīr* L.5, 1426, lns. 11–12 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 293K).

<sup>229</sup> See Averr., *Tafsīr* G.3, 313, ln. 6–p. 314, ln. 11; 315, lns. 3–9 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 67B–E, G), with Alb., *Metaph.* 4.1.5.

consensus between them. Accomplishing this consensus is laborious. On the first issue, Avicenna's decidedly ontological view ("being *qua* being" is the subject matter of metaphysics) conflicts with Averroes's criticism of Avicenna's thesis that metaphysics proves God's existence and hence does not have God as subject matter, and with Averroes's emphasis on physics as the science deputed to prove God's existence, and on immaterial, divine beings as the subject matter of metaphysics.<sup>230</sup> Contrary to what he does in previous paraphrases,<sup>231</sup> Albert makes no reference to Averroes's criticism; instead, he ascribes to all of the Peripatetics "who speak the truth" a common view according to which "being" is the subject matter of metaphysics.<sup>232</sup> In other works of Albert, the agreement between Avicenna's "ontological" view and Averroes's "theological" perspective is reached in a different way: by appealing with Averroes to a plurality of senses of the "subject" of a science in general, and of metaphysics in particular, according to which both "being" and God can be viewed as the subject of metaphysics in different regards.<sup>233</sup> Instead, in the *Metaphysica*, Albert follows Avicenna in characterizing the universal "being *qua* being" that functions as the subject matter of metaphysics as a type of being that is more common than, and therefore prior to, the mathematical and physical being.<sup>234</sup> Then he calls it *esse simplex* or *esse simpliciter*, adopting

<sup>230</sup> On this topic, and on Averroes's adoption of a more "Avicennian" perspective in his *Long Commentary on the Posterior Analytics* (unknown to Albert), see Amos Bertolacci, "Avicenna and Averroes on the Proof of God's Existence and the Subject-Matter of Metaphysics," *Medioevo* 32 (2007), 61–97.

<sup>231</sup> See Alb., *Phys.*, 1.3.18, Ed. Colon. 4/1, 76, lns. 37–45, quoted above, note 15.

<sup>232</sup> Alb., *Metaph.* 1.1.2, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 4, lns. 51–53, quoted above, note 18. On Albert's standpoint on the issue of whether physics or metaphysics proves God's existence, see the account by David Twetten, "Albert the Great on Whether Natural Philosophy Proves God's Existence."

<sup>233</sup> See Alb., *Ethica*, prologus, n. 4, sol., Ed. Colon. 14/1, 3, lns. 54–80; Alb., *Peri hermenias* 1.1, Borgn. 1, 374a; Alb., *Summa de mir. scient. dei* 1, q. 3.1, Ed. Colon. 34/1, 10, lns. 65–89, quoted above, note 53. Albert's criticism of *quidam Latinorum logice persuasi*, in Alb., *Metaph.* 1.1.2, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 5, lns. 34–58, for propounding a similarly pluralistic consideration of the subject matter of metaphysics sounds as if it is an implicit rejection, in metaphysics and theoretical philosophy, of the interpretative device that Albert himself adopts in ethics, logic, and theology ("sed ego tales logicas convenientias in scientiis de rebus abhorreo, eo quod ad multos deducunt errores," *ibid.*, 5, lns. 47–49, emphasis added).

<sup>234</sup> Alb., *Metaph.* 1.1.1, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 2, lns. 16–18: "Haec autem speculatio est rerum altissimarum... quae sunt esse simplicis differentiae et passiones praeter conceptionem cum continuo et tempore"; *ibid.*, 3, lns. 1–2: "Esse enim, quod haec scientia considerat, non accipitur contractum ad hoc vel illud." For Avicenna's consideration of the universal "being *qua* being" as higher than, and prior to, mathematical and physical being, see Amos Bertolacci, *The Reception*, 125–126.

the terminology employed by Averroes (*huwiyya mutlaqa*) to characterize the "being *qua* being" in the paraphrase on *Metaph.* E.1.<sup>235</sup> And, finally, he interprets it as a divine and absolutely simple reality, along the lines of the fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis*.<sup>236</sup>

On the issue of transcendentals, the targets of Averroes's criticism are Avicenna's famous distinction of essence and existence and his conception of unity: in particular, Averroes rebukes the status of non-essential features that Avicenna ascribes to existence and unity, and his supposed confusion between transcendental and numerical unity, leading to the idea that unity is a quantitative accident of essence.<sup>237</sup> Also in this case Albert seeks an all-encompassing perspective through which both positions can be reconciled. First, he rephrases Averroes's criticism so as to direct it against the mutual relationship of existence and unity (a point against which Averroes's criticism is toothless, since Avicenna and Averroes substantially agree with Aristotle on the real identity and conceptual distinction of "being" and "one"), rather than against the distinction of essence, on the one hand, and existence and unity, on the other (the non-Aristotelian aspect of Avicenna's account).<sup>238</sup> Second, he silently reports Avicenna's doctrine of unity by introducing into it Averroes's distinction of transcendental unity from numerical unity.<sup>239</sup> Finally, he personally proposes a theory according to which existence and unity are joint effects of the essence: in virtue of the peculiar relationship, at once of distinction and connection, which holds between cause and effect, this theory

<sup>235</sup> See Averr., *Tafsir* E.1, 699, ln. 12; 700, ln. 5; 701, lns. 3, 5, and 12 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 144F–H), with Alb., *Metaph.* 1.1.1, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 2, lns. 17, 39, 68, 80, and 91. For *ens simpliciter* and the many senses of *divina*, including the background in Averroes, see above, notes 14, 21, 38, and 40.

<sup>236</sup> Alb., *Metaph.* 1.1.1, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 2, ln. 92–p. 3, ln. 5, translated above, note 21.

<sup>237</sup> See Averr., *Tafsir* G.3, 315, lns. 3–9 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 67G); *Tafsir* D.14, 557, 16–19 (omitted in Latin); *Tafsir* 1.5, 1267, ln. 15–p. 1268, ln. 3 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 255B); *Tafsir* 1.8, 1279, ln. 12–p. 1280, ln. 11 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 257E–G); *Tafsir* 1.8, 1282, lns. 8–12 (Averr., *In libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* fol. 257K).

<sup>238</sup> Alb., *Metaph.* 5.1.4, Ed. Colon. 16/1. See Alain de Libera, "D'Avicenne à Averroès, et retour. Sur les sources arabes de la théorie scolastique de l'un transcendantal," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994), 141–179; Amos Bertolacci, "Albert the Great, *Metaph.* IV, 1, 5: From the *Refutatio* to the *Excusatio* of Avicenna's Theory of Unity," in Aertsen and Speer, *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?* 881–887.

<sup>239</sup> Alb., *Metaph.* 5.1.8, Ed. Colon. 16/1. See Amos Bertolacci, "The Reception of Avicenna's 'Philosophia Prima' in Albert the Great's Commentary on the 'Metaphysics': The Case of the Doctrine of Unity," in *Albertus Magnus 1200–2000: Zum Gedenken nach 800 Jahren; Neue Zugänge, Aspekte und Perspektiven*, ed. Walter Senner and Ludger Honnefelder, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens*, NF 10 (Berlin: 2001), 67–78.

somehow mediates between Avicenna's view of the separation of essence and existence (and unity), on the one hand, and Averroes's endorsement of their identity on the other.<sup>240</sup>

Finally, on the issue of the animation of heavens, Avicenna's position of two movers for each heavenly sphere (the celestial imaginative soul as proximate mover, and the celestial Intelligence as remote mover) is opposed by Averroes in favor of the theory of a single mover, that is, the celestial soul having only intellection and being therefore identical to the celestial Intelligence. In this case, Albert is able to extricate a common position only by dismissing part of the doctrine of one of his two sources; thus, he expressly rejects Avicenna's doctrine that the souls of the celestial spheres have imagination,<sup>241</sup> and his distinction of a proximate and a remote mover of the spheres,<sup>242</sup> and endorses, at least in the *Metaphysica*, a revised version of Averroes's standpoint.<sup>243</sup> Despite their divergences on particular aspects of the doctrine at hand—about the faculties that the celestial souls possess, and the identity or otherness of celestial souls and celestial Intelligences—Albert insistently stresses the existence of a common philosophical view shared by Avicenna, Averroes, and virtually all philosophers: Aristotle, Plato, and all their followers, Albert says, assume the existence of celestial souls, however conceived, deputed to move the heavenly spheres.<sup>244</sup>

<sup>240</sup> See, for example, Alb., *Metaph.* 4.3.4, Ed. Colon. 16/1, 166, lns. 1–15.

<sup>241</sup> Alb., *Metaph.* 11.3.4, Ed. Colon. 16/2.

<sup>242</sup> Alb., *Metaph.* 11.3.5, Ed. Colon. 16/2.

<sup>243</sup> In Albert's paraphrase of the *Liber de causis*, the second aspect of the criticism of Avicenna is abandoned (on account of the distinction that the *Liber* posits between *intelligentia* and *anima nobilis*, analogous to Avicenna's distinction of proximate and remote mover), whereas the first criticism is maintained. On the evolution of Albert's standpoint on this issue, see Twetten, "Albert the Great, Double Truth, and Celestial Causality."

<sup>244</sup> Alb., *Metaph.* 11.2.10, Ed. Colon. 16/2, 495, lns. 4–7, 48–55, 66–69, 76–79, 81–82 (emphasis added): "[O]mnes Peripatetici dixerunt orbis caelorum animas habere, sed quidam dixerunt animas has intellectu et imaginatione et desiderio sive appetitu distingui. . . . Et haec positio antiqua est multorum et magnorum; et hanc Avicenna sequi videtur; fuit autem haec etiam Platonis, ut videtur in dictis suis. Alii autem de his qui posteriores fuerunt, dixerunt, quod caelestes quidem circuli habent animas, sed praeter animas sunt intelligentiae separatae operativae, praesidentes eis. . . . Hanc autem opinionem elegit sequi Algazel et quidam alii de sapientibus Arabum. Et hoc quod hic intendimus accipere, est, quod etiam isti consentiunt in hoc quod caeli sunt animati. . . . Quidam autem praecipui Peripateticorum media inter hos via inierunt et caelos quidem animas habere dixerunt et intelligentias ab ipsis animabus separatas non posuerunt, sed ipsas animas de virtutibus animae nihil habere dixerunt nisi agentem universaliter intellectum et desiderium sive appetitum. . . . isti consentiunt in hoc cum aliis, quod caeli habent animas."

In general, Albert achieves the consensus between Avicenna and Averroes in a subtle way, by means of an interpretation capable of showing that their positions, prima facie mutually incongruent, either do in fact coincide, or represent complementary aspects of the discussed issues, or share the same fundamental elements. This strategy—openly avowed in other Aristotelian paraphrases<sup>245</sup>—is tacitly pursued in the *Metaphysica*. Thus, Albert's dependence on Avicenna and Averroes, together with the antagonism between these authors on many key metaphysical issues, entails a considerable amount of philosophical depth and doctrinal elaboration in Albert's paraphrase. Far from preventing originality, or being the product of a naive syncretism,<sup>246</sup> his endorsement of Arabic metaphysics implies a remarkable degree of creativeness and innovation.

Given this preliminary examination of Albert's conception of metaphysics and its relationship with theology, as well as his use of the Platonic and Arabic sources available to him, let us now turn to the content of Albert's metaphysics properly speaking. Each of the following sections examines a central element of Albert's metaphysical thought: his understanding of the transcendentals in general, universals, being and essence, substance, and causality and the first causes.

## 6. ALBERT'S DOCTRINE ON THE TRANSCENDENTALS

Jan A. Aertsen

### A. Introduction: Transcendentals and Categories

The medieval doctrine of the transcendentals presupposes a recognition of the limits of the order of the categories. In his logical paraphrases, Albert the Great more than once discusses the scope of Aristotle's teaching of the ten predicaments or most general genera. In his paraphrase of the *Categories*, he argues that all predicables must be reduced to or resolved into these highest genera. But he observes that this reduction

<sup>245</sup> See, for example, *De causis propr. elem.* 1.2.13, Ed. Colon. 5/2, 86, lns. 53–54: "It seems to me that one should agree in some respect with both [Avicenna and Averroes]"; *De anima* 2.3.7, Ed. Colon. 7/1, 109, lns. 46–47.

<sup>246</sup> Sten Ebbesen, "Albert (the Great?)'s Companion to the *Organon*," in *Albert der Grosse: Seine Zeit, sein Werk, seine Wirkung*, ed. Albert Zimmermann, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 14 (Berlin: 1981), 89–104, esp. 93: "He [Albert] reveals himself as an amateur . . . in his inclination to blend alternative solutions of one problem so as to have the best of two worlds."

