

# A Companion to the Latin Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics

*Edited by*

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## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
<i>Fabrizio Amerini and Gabriele Galluzzo</i>	
Latin Medieval Translations of Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	19
<i>Marta Borgo</i>	
The Commentator: Averroes's Reading of the <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	59
<i>Matteo di Giovanni</i>	
Avicenna's and Averroes's Interpretations and Their Influence in Albertus Magnus .....	95
<i>Amos Bertolacci</i>	
English Commentaries before Scotus. A Case Study: The Discussion on the Unity of Being .....	137
<i>Silvia Donati</i>	
Aquinas's Commentary on the <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	209
<i>Gabriele Galluzzo</i>	
Giles of Rome's Questions on the <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	255
<i>Alessandro D. Conti</i>	
Five Parisian Sets of Questions on the <i>Metaphysics</i> from the 1270s to the 1290s .....	277
<i>Sten Ebbesen</i>	
Alexander of Alessandria's Commentary on the <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	315
<i>Fabrizio Amerini</i>	
The Questions on the <i>Metaphysics</i> by John Duns Scotus: A Vindication of Pure Intellect .....	359
<i>Giorgio Pini</i>	
Jandun's Question-Commentary on Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	385
<i>Roberto Lambertini</i>	

Three Franciscan Metaphysicians after Scotus: Antonius Andreae, Francis of Marchia, and Nicholas Bonet .....	413
<i>William O. Duba</i>	
John Buridan's Commentary on the <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	495
<i>Femke J. Kok</i>	
Paul of Venice's Commentary on the <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	551
<i>Alessandro D. Conti</i>	
Fifteenth-Century Parisian Commentaries on Aristotle's <i>Metaphysics</i> .....	575
<i>Paul J.J.M. Bakker</i>	
Bibliography .....	631
List of Manuscripts .....	665
Index of Names .....	667

AVICENNA'S AND AVERROES'S INTERPRETATIONS AND  
THEIR INFLUENCE IN ALBERTUS MAGNUS

Amos Bertolacci

The commentary on the *Metaphysics* was part of Albertus Magnus's (d. 1280) overall project of divulging philosophy to Latin readers by explaining each of Aristotle's works, a project whose realization took about 20 years (ca. 1250–70).<sup>1</sup> This commentary is exceptional in many respects: it is one of the first commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, if not the very first, written outside a university or a *studium* of a religious order;<sup>2</sup> it relies on a seldom-used Graeco-Latin translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (the *Metaphysica Media*);<sup>3</sup> and it is formally a sort of hybrid between a *sententia* and a *commentum per quaestiones*.<sup>4</sup> As a further aspect of originality, this commentary also displays an unprecedented use of Arabic sources. Albertus wrote it as a retired bishop in the Dominican Kloster of Würzburg between 1264 and 1267, after having preached a crusade in the German-speaking countries (1263–64), following the order of Pope Urban IV.<sup>5</sup> The idea of a war against the Muslims, preached by the *episcopus*

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<sup>1</sup> See James A. Weisheipl, "The Life and Works of St. Albert the Great," in: James A. Weisheipl, ed., *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences. Commemorative Essays 1980* (Toronto, 1980), pp. 13–51, esp. 27; and "Albert's Works on Natural Science (*libri naturales*) in Probable Chronological Order," in: *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences*, pp. 565–77; Irven M. Resnick, "Albert the Great: Biographical Introduction", in Irven M. Resnick, ed., *A Companion to Albert the Great. Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences* (Leiden-Boston, 2013), pp. 1–11. The philosophical commentaries by Albertus are often called "Aristotelian," even though they include also commentaries on pseudo-Aristotelian (*De causis et proprietatibus elementorum*, *De plantis*, *Liber de causis*) and non-Aristotelian works (Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Boethius's *De divisione*, *Liber sex principiorum*), as well as original works by Albertus (such as *De natura loci*, *De nutrimento et nutribili*, *De intellectu et intelligibili*, and *De natura et origine animae*).

<sup>2</sup> See Weisheipl, "The Life and Works," p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> See *Metaphysica lib. I–X, XII–XIV. Translatio Anonyma sive "Media,"* ed. Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem, AL XXV 2 (Leiden, 1976), pp. xxxi–xxxii.

<sup>4</sup> The most accurate analysis of the style of Albertus's Aristotelian commentaries is provided by Olga Weijers, "The Literary Forms of the Reception of Aristotle. Between Paraphrase and Philosophical Treatise," in: Ludger Honnefelder, Rega Wood, Mechthild Dreyer, & Marc-Aeilko Aris, eds., *Albertus Magnus und die Anfänge der Aristoteles-Rezeption im lateinischen Mittelalter. Von Richard Rufus bis zu Franciscus de Mayronis* (Münster i. W., 2005), pp. 555–84.

<sup>5</sup> See Weisheipl, "Albert's Works on Natural Science," p. 576; Weisheipl, "The Life and Works," pp. 39–40; and Kennet F. Kitchell Jr. & Irven M. Resnick, transl., *Albertus Magnus On Animals. A Medieval "Summa Zoologica"* (Baltimore-London, 1999), pp. 1–17.

*calceatus* Albertus for sheer obedience to the pope's command and immediately abandoned after the pope's death, is totally alien, on the cultural side, to Albertus as a theologian and a philosopher: the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*—like all other Aristotelian commentaries of Albertus, as well as his previous and later theological works—contains frequent references to a wide array of Arab philosophers and astronomers, foremost among whom are Avicenna and Averroes, the authors of the two major treatments of metaphysics in Arabic.<sup>6</sup> The fact that Albertus relies on Muslim authors is in no way exceptional, since a similar dependence is common, in different amounts and degrees, to many other medieval Latin philosophers and theologians. What is peculiar to Albertus is the modality of his reception of Arabic sources, in terms of breadth and depth: some Arab authors whom he quotes in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, for

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On Albertus's stay in Würzburg, see Thomas Beckmann & Adolar Zumkeller, *Geschichte des Würzburger Augustinerklosters von der Gründung im Jahre 1262 bis zu Gegenwart* (Würzburg, 2001), pp. 4–5, and the bibliography reported there.

<sup>6</sup> An overview of the Greek, Latin, Arab, and Jewish authors nominally quoted in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, with special attention to Avicenna and Averroes, is provided in: Amos Bertolacci, "A New Phase of the Reception of Aristotle in the Latin West: Albertus Magnus and His Use of Arabic Sources in the Commentaries on Aristotle," in Ludger Honnefelder, ed., *Albertus Magnus und der Ursprung der Universitätsidee. Die Begegnung der Wissenschaftskulturen im 13. Jahrhundert und die Entdeckung des Konzept der Bildung durch Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 2011), pp. 259–76, 491–500. Albertus's receptivity towards Arabic authors is even more remarkable, if we consider that he shares some anti-Islamic prejudices current in Medieval Latin culture, regarding both the theological positions and the moral customs of this foreign religion: see, for example, the virulent attack against the *lex Machumeti*, inspired by Eustratius of Nicaea's ("Commentator") considerations, in: Albertus's *Super Ethicam Commentum et Quaestiones*, VI, 2, ed. Wilhelm Kübel, 2 vols., in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 14.1 (Münster i. W., 1968–72), vol. 2, p. 405.69–74, and against Mohammed himself as master of falsity and baseness in the Commentary on the *Politics*, VI, 6, ed. Auguste Borgnet, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 8 (Paris, 1891), p. 608a. According to Gianfranco Fioravanti ("*Politia Orientalium et Aegyptiorum*. Alberto Magno e la *Politica* aristotelica," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di Lettere, Storia e Filosofia* 9 [1979], 195–246, esp. 245, n. 17), Albertus adds to the traditional anti-Islamic *querelle* original accusations, resumed by later authors. In Albertus's Commentary on the *Politics*, the aversion against Islam connects with a very low consideration of the ethical and political habits of Oriental communities (see the aforementioned passage, as well as VIII, 6, p. 803, both discussed in Fioravanti, "*Politia Orientalium*," pp. 195, 244). Albertus is, of course, perfectly aware of the Arabic origin of both Avicenna and Averroes (see, for example *De XV problematibus* I, ed. Bernhard Geyer, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 17.1 (Münster i. W., 1975), p. 32.69–71: "Et quem Graeci sapientes [intellectum] possessum, eundem Arabum philosophi Avicenna, Averroes, Abubacher et quidam alii adeptum esse dicebant"). Thomas Aquinas's general attitude towards Islam has been outlined by Jean Pierre Torrell, "Saint Thomas et les non-chrétiens," *Revue Thomiste* 106 (2006), 17–49, esp. 34–42; a similar comprehensive investigation of Albertus's approach is still a desideratum.

example, are otherwise unknown;<sup>7</sup> more specifically, the “what,” “where,” and “how” of Albertus’s use of Avicenna and Averroes seems to represent an unique case in Latin metaphysics.<sup>8</sup>

Although they are portrayed as stemming from Albertus’s intention of “remaking Aristotle to the benefit of Latin scholars” or “making Aristotle intelligible to Latins,”<sup>9</sup> the Aristotelian commentaries of Albertus are programmatically meant, by the author’s own frequent admissions, to report in an objective way the positions of the Aristotelian school (the Peripatetics) rather than of Aristotle himself.<sup>10</sup> Now, in addition to

<sup>7</sup> I deal with the mysterious “Avenzoreth” whom Albertus quotes in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, an author never mentioned before or after Albertus, arguing with its possible identity with Abū ‘Alī ‘Isā Ibn Zur‘a (d. 1008) in Amos Bertolacci, “Albertus Magnus and ‘Avenzoreth’ (Ibn Zur‘a, d. 1008): Legend or Reality?” *Micrologus XXI* (2013): *The Medieval Legends of Philosophers and Scholars*. Proceedings of the International Colloquium *Les légendes des savants et philosophes (Moyen Âge et Renaissance)*, Tours, 16–18 septembre 2010, ed. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani & Jean-Patrice Boudet (Florence, 2013), pp. 369–96.

<sup>8</sup> A complete inventory of the different kinds of quotations of Avicenna is available in Amos 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, and “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. Some particularly relevant quotations of Averroes are discussed in Amos Bertolacci, “The Reception of Averroes’ Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* in Latin Medieval Philosophy until Albertus Magnus,” in: Ludger Honnefelder, Hannes Möhle, & Susana Bullido del Barrio, eds., *Via Alberti. Texte—Quellen—Interpretationen* (Münster, 2009), pp. 457–80. The Arabic background of Albertus’s Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, with special focus on Avicenna and Averroes, is the topic of two other papers of mine: “From Athens to Buḥārā, to Córdoba, to Cologne,” in: Vescovini & Hasnaoui, eds., *Proceedings of the Colloque International SIHSPAI (Florence, February 2006)*, pp. 217–34, and “Albert’s Use of Avicenna and Islamic Philosophy,” in: Irven M. Resnick, ed., *A Companion to Albert the Great. Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences* (Leiden-Boston, 2013), pp. 601–11.

<sup>9</sup> Albertus’s original formula in *In Physicam*, I, 1, 1 (“Cum autem tres sint partes essentielles philosophiae realis, quae, inquam, philosophia non causatur in nobis ab opere nostro, sicut causatur scientia moralis, sed potius ipsa causatur ab opere naturae in nobis, quae partes sunt naturalis sive physica et metaphysica et mathematica, nostra intentio est omnes dictas partes facere Latinis intelligibiles,” ed. Paul Hossfeld, 2 vols., in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 4 [Münster i. W., 1987], vol. 1, p. 1.43–49) underwent a scholarly distortion reconstructed in Amos Bertolacci, “La divisione della filosofia nel primo capitolo del Commento di Alberto Magno alla *Fisica*: le fonti avicenniane,” in: Giulio d’Onofrio, ed., *La Divisione della Filosofia e le sue Ragioni. Lettura di testi medievali (VI–XIII secolo)* (Cava de’ Tirreni, Salerno, 2001), pp. 137–55, esp. 137–38.

<sup>10</sup> Just to limit the inventory of such statements to the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, see *In Metaphysicam*, III, 3, 11, ed. Bernhard Geyer, 2 vols., in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 16 (Münster i. W., 1960), vol. 1, p. 151.48–49: “nos hic suscepimus vias Peripateticorum declarare”; *ibid.*, VII, 5, 3, p. 378.41–42: “nunc enim non suscipimus explanare nisi dicta et opiniones Peripateticorum”; *ibid.*, XI, 1, 9, p. 473.92–93: “Haec autem omnia dicta sunt

regarding them as outstanding philosophers in their own right,<sup>11</sup> Albertus gives Avicenna and Averroes a place of privilege among the *Peripatetici*, more precisely among the most recent members of the school (*Peripatetici novi* or *posteriores*).<sup>12</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that the metaphysical works of Avicenna and Averroes are extensively used in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*. Among occasional quotations also of other works of Avicenna and Averroes, this commentary mainly depends on the *Ilāhīyyāt* ([*Science of*] *Divine Things*) of Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Šifā'* (*Book of the Cure*)—a very radical and influential reworking of the *Metaphysics*—and on Averroes's *Tafsīr mā ba'd al-ṭabī'a* (*Long Commentary on the*

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secundum opinionem Peripateticorum, quia nec in his nec in aliis in hac via philosophiae dicimus aliquid ex proprio, quia propriam intentionem, quam in philosophia habemus, non hic suscepimus explanare"; *ibid.*, XI, 2, 1, p. 482.23–29: "In his autem quae deinceps dicemus, nemo arbitretur, quod aliquid dicamus de nostra intentione, sicut nec diximus in aliquo librorum naturalium, sed tantum declarabimus opiniones Peripateticorum de istis substantiis, relinquentes aliis iudicium, quid verum vel falsum sit de his quae dicunt"; *ibid.*, XI, 2, 3, p. 486.68–70: "hoc non est praesentis negotii, in quo non suscepimus nisi Peripateticorum positiones exponere"; *ibid.*, XI, 3, 7, p. 542.20–23: "non suscepimus in hoc negotio explanare nisi viam Peripateticorum"; *ibid.*, XIII, 2, 4, p. 599.61–66: "Hic igitur sit finis disputationis istius in qua non dixi aliquid secundum opinionem meam propriam, sed omnia dicta sunt secundum positiones Peripateticorum. Et qui hoc voluerit probare, diligenter legat libros eorum, et non me, sed illos laudet vel reprehendat." The so-called "disclaimers" by Albertus, namely his contentions of being simply an expositor of alien views on sensible doctrinal points, are preliminary investigated by James A. Weisheipl, "Albert's Disclaimers in the Aristotelian Paraphrases," *Proceedings of the Patristic, Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference* 5 (1980), 1–27.

<sup>11</sup> *De causis proprietatum elementorum*, II, 1, 1, ed. Paul Hossfeld, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 5.2 (Münster i. W., 1980), p. 90.55–57: "Et in hoc concordant excellentes in philosophia viri, Aristoteles et Ptolemaeus et Avicenna et Messealach et plures aliorum"; *In Phys.*, V, 1, 8, vol. 2, p. 417.7–8: "Hoc autem non placet Averoi et aliis praecipuis de secta Peripateticorum"; *ibid.*, IV, 3, 4, p. 266.83–85: "Propter quod respondent viri illustres in philosophia, Avicenna, Alexander, Themistius et Averroes, Theophrastus et Porphyrius [...]."

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *In De anima*, III, 2, 12, ed. Clemens Stroick, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 7.1 (Münster i. W., 1968), p. 194.10–12: "In hac autem sententia nobiscum conveniunt et Averroes et Avicenna et plures alii Peripateticorum"; *De natura et origine animae* I, 1, ed. Bernhard Geyer, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 12 (Münster, 1955), p. 1.12–13: "Huc usque de animalium membris et generatione et natura et accidentibus determinata sunt, quaecumque a Peripateticis invenimus scripta, Aristoteles videlicet, quem praecipue sectuti sumus, et Theophrasto et Avicenna"; *In Met.*, III, 3, 4, pp. 143.98–144.3: "Sicut enim de talibus dixerunt Peripatetici formis, Porphyrius et Alexander et Avicenna, essentialiter sunt qualitates virtutem substantiae habentes"; *In De Causis*, I, 3, 2, ed. Winfried Fauser, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 17.2 (Münster i. W., 1993), p. 36.62–64: "Multi autem Peripateticorum in primo negabant esse voluntatem, Aristoteles scilicet, Theophrastus, Porphyrius, Avicenna et Averroes"; *In Phys.*, II, 2, 12, vol. 1, p. 118.26–28: "Ego autem magis consentio novis Peripateticis et concordo cum Alexandro et Themistio et Averroi et Porphyrio et multis aliis [...]."; *ibid.*, VIII, 2, 9, vol. 2, p. 607.15–17: "Quidam autem ex posterioribus Peripateticis ex quadam difficultate seducti sicut Avicenna et Algazel et Moyses Aegyptius et quidam alii dixerunt. [...]" (see also *ibid.*, V, 1, 8, vol. 2, p. 417.7–8; above, note 1)

*Metaphysics*)—the most thorough and detailed exegesis of this work that has survived.<sup>13</sup> Albertus knew these works by means of their Latin translations (*Liber de Philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, ca. 1150–75; *Commentum in Metaphysicam*, ca. 1220–24),<sup>14</sup> with which he got acquainted during his teaching in Paris (1243ca.–48)<sup>15</sup> and to which he kept on referring massively in his subsequent philosophical and theological works. Avicenna and Averroes, i.e., the authors of *Ilāhiyyāt* and *Tafsīr*, are not only the Arab philosophers most frequently quoted by Albertus in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*: if compared to the many Greek, Latin, and Hebrew authors occasionally mentioned, they are also, after Aristotle and Plato, the authorities to whom he refers most frequently. They are cited in three different ways: by name; in an explicit indeterminate way (under the rubrics “aliqui,” “nonnulli” etc.); and silently, this last mode of quotation being the most indicative of Albertus’s reliance on Avicenna and Averroes. In all these three different respects, Avicenna and Averroes are the post-Aristotelian authors to whom Albertus most often and extensively refers. In other words, they represent the two real “sources,” together with the *Metaphysics*, of the commentary.

Some general lessons can be immediately derived. First, by instantiating the case of a man of the Church who, as a Christian bishop, obeys the pope’s order of supporting a war waged against the Muslim infidels, and also, as a scholar, uses abundantly in his works Arabic

<sup>13</sup> Avicenna, *Al-Šifāʾ, al-Ilāhiyyāt (1)*, ed. Ğürġ Š. Qanawatī, Saʿīd Zāyid, al-Hayʾa al-ʿamma li-šūʿn al-maṭābīʿ al-amīriyya (Cairo, 1960); *Al-Šifāʾ, al-Ilāhiyyāt (2)*, ed. Muḥammad Yusuf Mūsā, Sulaymān Duniyā, & Saʿīd Zāyid, al-Hayʾa al-ʿamma li-šūʿn al-maṭābīʿ al-amīriyya (Cairo, 1960); Averroes, *Tafsīr mā baʿd aṭ-ṭabīʿa*. Texte arabe inédit établi par Maurice Bouyges s.j., 4 vols. (Beirut, 1938–48).

<sup>14</sup> Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de Philosophia prima sive Scientia divina I–X*, ed. Simone Van Riet (Leuven, Louvain-la-Neuve-Leiden, 1977–83); Averroes Latinus, *Aristotelis Metaphysicorum libri XIII. Cum Averrois Cordubensis in eosdem Commentariis* [=Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics*], in: *Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis* (Venice, 1562), vol. VIII, fols. 1–355. On the Latin translations of Avicenna, see Amos Bertolacci, “A Community of Translators: The Latin Medieval Versions of Avicenna’s Book of the Cure,” in: Constant J. Mews & John N. Crossley, eds., *Communities of Learning: Networks and the Shaping of Intellectual Identity in Europe 1100–1500* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 37–55; on those of Averroes, see Dag N. Hasse, *Latin Averroes Translations of the First Half of the Thirteenth Century* (Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, 2010). In what follows, the *Tafsīr* will be quoted indicating: the book of the *Metaphysics* and the section of Averroes’s exegesis (for instance: Λ, 5 = Book Λ, commentum 5); the number of pages and lines of the Arabic edition (for instance: pp. 1420.6–1421.16); between square brackets, the indication of the folia of the Juncta edition of the Latin translation and their sections (for example: [fol. 292K–M]).

<sup>15</sup> See Weisheipl, “The Life and Works,” pp. 21–28. The references to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* in Albertus’s earliest known treatise (*De Natura boni*), written before his teaching in Paris (*ibid.*, p. 20), do not evidence any particular knowledge of Avicenna’s and Averroes’s works on metaphysics.

writings of Muslim authors, Albertus well exemplifies the two-faced attitude of the western medieval world towards Islam (clash of religions, on the one hand, positive dialogue in the field of culture and in the perspective of the common Greek heritage, on the other).<sup>16</sup> Second, by commenting on the *Metaphysics* according a Graeco-Latin translation of Aristotle's text, the *Translatio Media*, while at the same time depending massively on Averroes and Avicenna, known for the interpretation of Aristotle's work by means of Arabic-Latin translations, Albertus provides a glaring example of how unhistorical is any attempt to dissect the living reality of medieval Peripatetism: he creates a fictive divide and opposition between the process of transmission of Aristotle's works from Greek into Latin and the concomitant tendency to interpret the Aristotelian *littera* with the help of the exegesis developed in the Arabo-Islamic philosophical context.<sup>17</sup> Equally instructive, on more specific grounds, is Albertus's *modus operandi* in the reception of his two main Arab sources, once it is systematically investigated.

The Commentary on the *Metaphysics* offers a particularly profitable vantage point for studying Albertus's attitude towards Arabic metaphysics.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, for this commentary he could dispose of both Avicenna's and Averroes's major accounts of metaphysics in Latin translation. Only in the case of the Commentary on the *Physics* and the *De Anima* he found

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<sup>16</sup> The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to Albertus's attitude towards Judaism: on the one hand, he was involved in the Parisian condemnation of the *Talmud* of 15 May 1248 (on which see Weisheipl, "The Life and Works," pp. 26–27); on the other hand, in the shortly posterior Aristotelian commentaries, he positively quotes many Jewish philosophers.

<sup>17</sup> Sylvain Gouguenheim (*Aristote au Mont-Saint-Michel. Les racines grecques de l'Europe chrétienne* [Paris, 2008]) notoriously holds the opposite view.

<sup>18</sup> The amount and degree of Albertus's reliance on Arab authors and works in his commentaries on Aristotle's *corpus* is unequal and differs from case to case, depending on the source at his disposal. Before a general view of his reliance on Arabic philosophy in the Aristotelian commentaries can be assessed, detailed accounts of the sources inspiring each of these commentaries are needed. Martin J. Tracey ("Albert's Readings of Aristotle's Moral-Philosophical Treatises on Pleasure vis-à-vis Three Recent Perspectives on his Thought," in: Walter Senner et al., eds., *Albertus Magnus 1200–2000. Zum Gedenken nach 800 Jahren: neue Zugänge, Aspekte und Perspektiven* [Berlin, 2001], pp. 311–25), for example, remarks that Albertus used theological authorities and relied on the very text of Aristotle in his ethical commentaries, against those (most notably Alain de Libera) according to whom Albertus kept the fields of philosophy and theology distinct from one another and mainly drew from post-Aristotelian Peripatetic authorities. In this regard, Albertus's two commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for which he had at his disposal only Averroes's Middle Commentary on Aristotle's work, are scarcely comparable, for instance, to his commentary on the *De anima*, for which he could use both Avicenna's reworking and Averroes's Long Commentary thereupon.

himself in such a favorable situation.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, Avicenna and Averroes upheld two alternative formulations of metaphysics, in terms of style (paraphrase vs. literal commentary), attitude towards Aristotle (free adaptation vs. faithful endorsement), and doctrine (inclusion of non-Aristotelian views vs. strict adherence to the Peripatetic tradition); moreover, Averroes frequently and harshly criticizes Avicenna in the *Tafsīr*, the commentary of his in which his constant polemic against Avicenna reaches its climax.<sup>20</sup> Faced with this manifest disagreement between his main sources, Albertus adopted a very original strategy—both historically significant and theoretically demanding—namely, the effort of *synthesis*. This harmonization was an arduous path to follow, since it required a profound understanding of Avicenna's and Averroes's standpoints and an intelligent disclosure of a "third way" in the interpretation of the *Metaphysics*, in terms of approach, style, and doctrine.

In Part I below I will sketch the nature and content of *Ilāhiyyāt* and *Tafsīr*, showing their pivotal role in determining the historical, stylistic, and doctrinal specificity of Albertus's commentary; in this first part, I will devote greater attention to Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt*, since a full-fledged analysis of Averroes's *Tafsīr* is offered by the contribution of Matteo di Giovanni in the present volume. Next, in Part II, I will provide an account of the criticisms of Avicenna contained in Averroes's *Tafsīr*, briefly describing their main trends. Finally in Part III below I describe the harmonizing strategy that, faced with these criticisms, Albertus adopts in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*.

## I

### I.1. Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt*

In the *Ilāhiyyāt*, Avicenna mounts a thorough recasting of the epistemology and content of the *Metaphysics*, with the aim of replacing Aristotle's work with a full-fledged original elaboration in which metaphysics may finally receive a complete, coherent, and rigorous treatment, thus

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<sup>19</sup> In the commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo*, Albertus had at his disposal Averroes's Long Commentary on the *De Caelo*, but he mainly used the pseudo-Avicennian *Liber Caeli et Mundi*, rather than Avicenna's original part of the *Šifā'* corresponding to Aristotle's *De Caelo* (see Ps.-Avicenna Latinus, *Liber Celi et Mundi*, ed. Oliver Gutman [Leiden, 2003], p. xvii). This part of the *Šifā'* was known to him only through the quotations by Averroes.

<sup>20</sup> In Averroes's Long Commentary on *De anima*, in contrast, the points of opposition towards Avicenna are scanty.

becoming properly a science. This reworking invests all the main aspects of the epistemological profile of metaphysics (theme, structure, method, relationship with other sciences) and is performed by arranging in a different framework a selection of Aristotle's metaphysical doctrines, to which the views of the Peripatetic commentators, Neoplatonic theories regarded as Aristotelian, and Avicenna's own ideas are added. Avicenna also pays considerable attention to the philosophical underpinnings of Islamic religion and to the opinions of Muslim theology having philosophical relevance. Insofar as it is a comprehensive treatise of metaphysics in which the "raw" material of the *Metaphysics* is refined, expanded, and reconstructed according to a precise epistemology (that of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*), the *Ilāhiyyāt* can be regarded as a second "edition" or second "beginning" of Aristotelian metaphysics in Western philosophy.<sup>21</sup>

Avicenna's reworking of the *Metaphysics* in the *Ilāhiyyāt* is outlined in Table 1. Two radical aspects of innovation are noteworthy. First, Avicenna changes the "form," i.e., the scientific profile, of the *Metaphysics* (point A). Accordingly, he modifies also its "content," namely, the disposition and doctrinal purport of the single books (point B). The changes regarding the "form" affect four main areas: the theme of metaphysics, its structure, its method, and its relationship with the other sciences. The content of the *Metaphysics*, for its part, is reworked by means of a different arrangement of its books and by its integration with the subsequent metaphysical speculation, both Greek and Arabic.

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<sup>21</sup> On Avicenna's recasting of the epistemological profile and the material content of the *Metaphysics* in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, see Amos Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's "Metaphysics" in Avicenna's Kitāb al-Šifā': A Milestone of Western Metaphysical Thought* (Leiden, 2006). Scholars increasingly acknowledge Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* as the real "second beginning" of Aristotelian metaphysics (see, for example, Andreas Speer, "Das 'Erwachen der Metaphysik.' Anmerkungen zu einem Paradigma für das Verständnis des 12. Jahrhunderts," in: Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, Alexander Fidora, & Andreas Niederberger, eds., *Metaphysics in the Twelfth Century. On the Relationship among Philosophy, Science and Theology* (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 17–40, esp. 19: "Die arabische Philosophie, allen voran Avicenna müsste man wohl nennen, wenn man beispielweise von einem zweiten Anfang der Metaphysik im eingangs genannten Sinne reden wollte, der sich am Modell des aristotelischen Metaphysikentwurfs orientiert"). It cannot be coincidental that the authors and works about which this formula has been used in recent scholarship (Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, "zweite Anfang/Wiederbegründung der Metaphysik," in Ludger Honnefelder, "Der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik. Voraussetzungen, Ansätze und Folgen der Wiederbegründung der Metaphysik im 13./14. Jahrhundert," in: Jan P. Beckmann & Ludger Honnefelder, eds., *Philosophie im Mittelalter: Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen* (Hamburg, 1987), pp. 165–86; and Gundissalinus, "zweite Anfang der aristotelischen Philosophie," in Alexander Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus. Voraussetzungen und Konsequenzen des zweitens Anfangs der aristotelischen Philosophie in 12. Jahrhundert* [Berlin, 2003]) depend significantly, in different respects, on Avicenna.

TABLE 1. *Outline of Avicenna's Ilāhiyyāt*

Avicenna, <i>Ilāhiyyāt</i>	Sources	
<b>(A) Form:</b>		
(1) <b>Theme:</b> existent is the subject-matter; God and the ultimate causes are the goal; existent and God are immaterial realities		
(2) <b>Structure:</b>		
Ontology species of existent (OntologyS)	Henology species of one-many (HenologyS)	(1)–(4) Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i> ; <i>Met.</i> Γ, 1–2; E, 1 Alexander of Aphrodisias,
properties of existent (OntologyP)	properties of one-many (HenologyP)	Commentary on <i>Met.</i> Λ al-Fārābī, <i>On the Goals of Aristotle's Metaphysics</i> (<– Ammonius Son of Hermeias?)
causes of existent (OntologyC/Theology)		
(3) <b>Method:</b> apodictic, analytical, non-dialectical		
(4) <b>Relationship with other sciences:</b> metaphysics grounds the proper principles of logic, natural philosophy, mathematics (and practical philosophy)		
<b>(B) Content:</b>		
(i) Prolegomena (I, 1–4): subject-matter, goal, utility, rank, name, and division of metaphysics. Introduction (I, 5–8): existent and the other primary concepts; Necessary Existent in Itself/possible existent in itself; the axioms	(i) <i>Met.</i> Γ and E, 1 Greek Prolegomena al-Fārābī, <i>Survey of the Sciences</i>	
(ii) OntologyS (II–III): categories (substance, quantity, quality, relation) OntologyP (IV–VI): prior and posterior, potency and act, perfect and imperfect, whole and part; universal and particular; cause and effect	(ii) <i>Met.</i> Z-H, Θ	



of “one *qua* one,” called in the table, respectively, Ontology and Henology. The horizontal layers are given by the species, properties, and causes of “existent” and “one.” Ontology is the first and main axis, since it concerns the subject-matter of metaphysics: it displays a three-fold distinction in species, properties, and causes of “existent” according to which metaphysics rests primarily on a sequence of three parts (OntologyS, OntologyP, and OntologyC). OntologyC is also a Theology, since the first cause of “existent” is God. Henology is a complementary and shorter axis: it encompasses a treatment of the species of “one” and “many” (HenologyS) and an analysis of their properties (HenologyP). The culmination of metaphysics is OntologyC/Theology, which Avicenna portrays as the “seal” of this discipline.

In comparison with Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the method of the *Ilāhiyyāt* is both more apodictic (i.e., more dependent on rigorous proofs such as demonstrations) and, conversely, less dialectical. On the one hand, Avicenna clarifies the status and limits of metaphysics as a demonstrative science, reworks the arguments of Aristotle's writing in syllogistic form, and pays considerable attention to the truth and certainty of the premises of arguments. In the same vein, he complements the recourse to demonstrations with procedures that we can call “analytical,” like proofs by division, terminological distinctions, and classifications. On the other hand, he endeavors to reduce the importance and visibility of the dialectical procedures adopted by Aristotle. Thus, he places the doxographies of Books A, M, and N in an appendix to Henology, rather than at the beginning and at the end of the work as in the *Metaphysics*, and quotes only a few aporias of Book B in different places of the *Ilāhiyyāt*, always connecting them with their solution.

More coherently and systematically than in Aristotle, metaphysics, according to Avicenna, is the apex of the system of sciences. In Avicenna's classification of the sciences, and in its concrete realization in the *Šifā'*, metaphysics functions as a *regina scientiarum* that ascertains the principles of all the other sciences, which therefore become not simply interconnected but also hierarchically ordered. The scientific principles assessed by metaphysics are, on the one hand, the logical laws common to all the sciences (the axioms) and the universal concepts that every science uses without discussing them (the primary concepts such as “existent,” “thing,” “necessary,” and “one”). On the other hand, metaphysics clarifies the principles that are proper to each of the sciences and regard their specific subject-matters, i.e., the epistemological hypotheses of the distinct sciences. Thus, metaphysics proves the very existence and mode of existence of the subject-matters of the other sciences (like the existence

and way of existence of universals and categories with regard to logic, of matter and form with regard to natural philosophy, of discrete and continuous quantity with regard to mathematics). *Metaphysics* provides this foundation primarily and directly to the three branches of theoretical philosophy (logic, natural philosophy, and mathematics), indirectly to the disciplines subordinated to these latter (the foundation of practical philosophy lies in the discussion of prophecy at the end of *OntologyC*).

Considered collectively, the quotations of the *Metaphysics* in the *Ilāhiyyāt* (taken from various Arabic translations of Aristotle's work and corresponding to different techniques) show both an extensive use of this work and a radical recasting of its content. Avicenna quotes, in different ways, all the books of the *Metaphysics* (apart, perhaps, from K), but according to an order that is strikingly different from their original disposition in Aristotle's work. Thus, Book A is quoted by Avicenna not at the beginning of the *Ilāhiyyāt* but at the end of *Henology*. Chapters 1–2 of Book a are transferred even "further," namely, to *OntologyC/Theology*, in conjunction with Chapters 6–10 of Book Λ. The fate of Book Γ is opposite: it is not "postponed" but, rather, placed in the forefront of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (*Prolegomena* and *Introduction*). Chapter 1 of Book E inspires, together with Book Γ in its entirety, some themes of the *Prolegomena*. Chapters E 2–4, in contrast, lay in the background of some minor points of the *Introduction* and *OntologyS*. The doctrine of Book Z (and, to a lesser extent, of Book H) is used in the treatment of substance in *OntologyS*, in the treatment of the universals in *OntologyP*, and in the treatment of material and formal causes, still in *OntologyP*. A comprehensive summary of Book Θ occurs in the analysis of potentiality and actuality within *OntologyP*. Book I is the main source of *HenologyP*. Chapters 6–10 of Book L are quoted, as the continuation of α, 1–2, within *OntologyC/Theology*. Books M and N, finally, are quoted together with Book A at the end of *Henology*. Other books of the *Metaphysics*, rather than ordered differently, are "scattered." Thus, Avicenna refers to some aporias of Book B in distinct places of the *Introduction*, *OntologyP*, and *OntologyC/Theology*. Likewise, several terminological distinctions deriving from Book Δ serve (sometimes with critical remarks) as linguistic preliminaries to the treatment of various issues in all the parts of the *Ilāhiyyāt* preceding *OntologyC/Theology* (*Prolegomena*, *Introduction*, *OntologyS-HenologyS*, *OntologyP*, and *HenologyP*). In general, we can say that Avicenna's reworking of the content of the *Metaphysics* consists in enucleating three main "poles" around which the books of this work can be grouped: the epistemological pole (*Prolegomena* and *Introduction*), given by Books Γ and E, 1; the

ontological-henological pole (OntologyS-P and HenologyS-P), constituted primarily by Z–H, Θ, and I, in which B plays a “trouble-shooting” role, Δ provides the semantic preliminaries to the discussion, and A–M–N serve as a doxographical complement; and the theological pole (OntologyC/Theology) constituted by α 2 and Λ 6–10.

Avicenna's reshaping of the epistemological profile of the *Metaphysics* derives from three main sources: first, the Aristotelian *corpus* (the model of science presented in *Posterior Analytics* and *Metaphysics* Γ and E 1, above all); second, the Greek commentators of Aristotle (especially Alexander of Aphrodisias); and third, the Arab interpreters of Aristotle (*in primis* al-Fārābī, who might depend in this not only on Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius, whom he quotes, but also on a lost essay by Ammonius Son of Hermeias on the goals of Aristotle's works, lost in Greek but mentioned by Arabic sources). OntologyC/Theology is the section of the work in which the integration of non-Aristotelian material in the content of the metaphysics is more clearly visible. Thus, the connection of chapter α 2 with chapters Λ 6–10 within this section derives ultimately from al-Kindī's way of understanding the content of the *Metaphysics*. Moreover, OntologyC/Theology is expanded by means of Alexander of Aphrodisias's and Themistius's works on metaphysics, pseudo-Aristotelian, in fact Neoplatonic, metaphysical works (*Theologia Aristotelis* and *Liber de Causis*), and the theological sections of some original works by al-Fārābī. Finally, in the examples, terminology, themes, and opinions of OntologyC/Theology there can be detected an attempt to show the affinity of metaphysics with Islamic religion.

### I.2. Averroes's *Tafsīr*

The *Tafsīr* is, both stylistically and doctrinally, the counterpart of the *Ilāhiyyāt*.<sup>22</sup> Of Averroes's three commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, it is by far the most comprehensive and detailed, being much more faithful to Aristotle's text than the *Epitome* and much more extensive and articulated than the *Middle Commentary*. Its historical importance is evident: since all the previous commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, both Greek and Arabic,

<sup>22</sup> Bibliographical references to the partial translations and studies regarding Averroes's *Tafsīr* can be found in Philip H. Rosemann, “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.

are incompletely preserved, the *Tafsīr* represents the first extant overall (although not complete) exegesis of Aristotle's work in the Peripatetic tradition.<sup>23</sup> On the methodological side, its aim is to resume the exegetical technique of the Greek ancient tradition, namely, the literal commentary of Alexander of Aphrodisias and, to a lesser extent, the paraphrase of Themistius, two authors whose exegesis of *Met. Λ* Averroes abundantly quotes in his commentary thereupon. On their footsteps, Averroes provides a punctual and continuous explanation of the text of the *Metaphysics*, with frequent references to the other Aristotelian works, according to a model of "holistic" interpretation of the *Metaphysics* and of its role within the *corpus*. On the doctrinal side, its goal is to preserve the original pattern and content of the *Metaphysics* against the modifications and—in Averroes's eyes—"corruptions" introduced by modern philosophers, *in primis* Avicenna. From this point of view, the *Tafsīr* can be regarded as the culmination of an anti-Avicennian *crescendo* in Averroes's commentaries: starting with the early Epitome (ca. 1260), whose style and doctrine are still dependent on Avicennian models, despite the occasional criticisms of Avicenna that it displays; passing through the substantially "neutral" middle commentary, in which Averroes adopts an objective attitude towards Aristotle's text, without discussing extensively the subsequent metaphysical tradition; this ascending polemical line culminates in the *Tafsīr*, whose second main purpose, complementary to the explanation of Aristotle's text, is just the dismissal of Avicenna's metaphysics.

### I.3. *The Specificity of Albertus's Commentary in the Light of Its Arabic Background*

Albertus'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. Albertus's commentary is unique in this respect, since it is the first known example of interpretation of the *Metaphysics* in Latin that relies

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<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the Greek commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, see Concetta Luna, "Les commentaires grecs à la Métaphysique," in: Richard Goulet, ed., *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques. Supplement* (Paris, 2003), pp. 249–58; Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's "Metaphysics,"* pp. 136–42.

massively on *both* Avicenna's and Averroes's works on the subject. Before Albertus, the lines of transmission of the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Tafsīr* had followed separate paths: 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 the *Metaphysics* is based almost exclusively on Averroes's model, with a much narrower recourse to Avicenna's contribution.<sup>24</sup> With Albertus, for the first time, these two lines of transmission merge and interact. Albertus accords to both authors an equally important, although distinct, function: Averroes provides the exegetical tools to explain the text; Avicenna contributes to its doctrinal enrichment. Consequently, the amount of space and degree of attention that Albertus devotes to Avicenna and Averroes in the commentary 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 Albertus applies to Aristotle's, Avicenna's, and Averroes's texts, it is not far-fetched to view his commentary on the *Metaphysics* also 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 format of Albertus's commentary on the *Metaphysics*, adopted also in his other Aristotelian commentaries. Among the 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.), Albertus's commentaries represent a case on their own. They can be defined "paraphrases with digressions": they consist of chapters that clarify, by way of paraphrase, the meaning of Aristotle's text, intermingled with autonomous chapters in which the doctrine of the text previously paraphrased is either accounted for anew differently and more thoroughly, or is confronted with possible objections, or is compared with

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<sup>24</sup> I have outlined the main trends of the Latin reception of Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* until Albertus Magnus in Amos Bertolacci, "On the Latin Reception of Avicenna's *Metaphysics* before Albertus Magnus: An Attempt at Periodization," in: Dag N. Hasse & Amos Bertolacci, eds., *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics*. Proceedings of the Conference held at Villa Vigoni (Menaggio, Como), 2–6 July 2008 (Berlin, 2012), pp. 197–223.

different opinions on the same topic.<sup>25</sup> This stylistic peculiarity makes Albertus's commentaries a sort of conflation of the two most widespread models of Aristotelian exegesis in the Middle Ages, namely, the *sententia* and the *commentum per quaestiones*. It is the task of future research to ascertain whether this twofold nature of Albertus's commentaries may be related genetically to Avicenna and Averroes<sup>26</sup> and, if so, to determine the amount of Albertus's originality in the adoption of Arabic exegetical formats.<sup>27</sup> What is certain is that in the Commentary on

<sup>25</sup> Scholars tend to define the style of Albertus's Aristotelian commentaries simply as "paraphrase," disregarding the essential role played by digressions: see, for example, Bernardo C. Bazán, "13th Century Commentaries On *De anima*: From Peter of Spain To Thomas Aquinas," in: Gianfranco Fioravanti, Claudio Leonardi, & Stefano Perfetti, eds., *Il commento filosofico nell'Occidente latino (secc. XIII–XV). The Philosophical Commentary in the Latin West (13–15th centuries)*. Atti del colloquio Firenze-Pisa, 19–22 Ottobre 2000 (Rencontres de Philosophie Médiévale) 10 (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 119–84, esp. 168–74 ("Albertus Magnus: Eclectic Commentaries by Way of 'paraphrase'"); likewise, Weijers, "The Literary Forms of the Reception of Aristotle," p. 577, selects Albertus's commentary on the *De anima* as representative of the genre "Paraphrase." This one-sided view has some impact on the consideration of Albertus's originality: Alain de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique: Albert le Grand* (Paris, 2005), p. 53, for example, contends that "la forme littéraire de son activité philosophique—la paraphrase—se prête moins que d'autres à l'esposé de vues originales."

<sup>26</sup> In an Avicennian vein, Albertus replaces the text commented upon by his own rephrasing of it; in the footsteps of Averroes, he uses frequent doctrinal parentheses in the continuous, systematic, and detailed interpretation of Aristotle's text. In scholarly literature, the paraphrastic component of the style of Albertus Magnus's Aristotelian commentaries is frequently related to Avicenna's *Šifā'*: see, for instance, Sten Ebbesen, "Late-Ancient Ancestors of Medieval Philosophical Commentaries," in: *Il commento filosofico nell'Occidente latino*, pp. 1–15, esp. 9: "[Albert] may have been somewhat influenced by Themistius's paraphrase of the *Posterior Analytics*, but the main inspiration surely came from elsewhere (Avicenna)"; Cristina d'Ancona, "Commenting on Aristotle: From Late Antiquity to the Arab Aristotelianism," in: Wilhelm Geerlings & Christian Schulze, eds., *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter. Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung* (Leiden-Boston-Cologne, 2002), pp. 201–51, esp. 204, 246: "one is led to wondering if the paraphrastic approach of Albert has something to do with Avicenna's own favorite (albeit not exclusive) way of dealing with authoritative texts ... the favorite approach of Albert the Great to Aristotle's work is paraphrase, no doubt thanks to the influence of the Latin Avicenna on him"; de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, p. 17: "la paraphrase de style avicennien." The possible impact of the style of Averroes's long commentaries on Albertus's digressions has not been taken into account.

<sup>27</sup> Albeit possibly inspired, in different respects, by Avicenna and Averroes, Albertus's style remains, however, original. His paraphrases are not a free reworking of Aristotle's text as in Avicenna's *Šifā'*, since they follow rigorously the order of Aristotle's *littera* (the term "paraphrase" can be applied to Avicenna's and Albertus's styles only in different senses). Nor are the digressions randomly scattered in the exegesis, as they are in Averroes's long commentaries, but instead they constitute a stable second structural element of Albertus's commentaries. In this respect, one might envisage in Albertus's commentaries a sort of mutual interaction of the formats of his Arabic sources: in his commentaries, the paraphrases modeled on Avicenna assume the running character of Averroes's

the *Metaphysics*, as well as in other commentaries, this double register of paraphrases and digressions allows the incorporation of Avicenna's and Averroes's contributions: Albertus mainly quotes Averroes's literal exegesis of the *Metaphysics* in the explicative paraphrases, whereas he prefers to cite Avicenna's doctrinal developments in the digressions. In this way, the contributions of Avicenna and Averroes remain separate within two different structural levels of the commentary, but they can also interact and balance each other in the overall architecture of the work. Of Albertus's commentary on the *Metaphysics*, the *Tafsīr* represents—so to say—the “basis,” whereas the *Ilāhiyyāt* constitutes the “height” and the trait-d'union connecting the exegesis of Aristotle's work with the Neoplatonic speculation of the *Liber de causis* (a work upon which Albertus comments after the *Metaphysics* and which he regards as an Aristotelian oeuvre, albeit not *stricto sensu* a work by Aristotle). In other words, the articulated format of Albertus's commentary—itself 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, Albertus tries to solve and overcome the conflict between the views of these two authors on many issues regarding metaphysics. This tendency is most visible in the case of the doctrine of the primary and most universal concepts (“existent,” “thing,” “one,” “necessary,” etc.), the so-called “transcendentals,” of which recent studies have remarked the centrality in Latin medieval philosophy in general and Albertus Magnus in particular, as well as the seminal role of the discussions of this topic in Arabic philosophy.<sup>28</sup> In the case of

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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 Aristotelian *littera*.

<sup>28</sup> For a general account of the impact of this doctrine in various authors and periods of Latin philosophy, see Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought. From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters) 107 (Leiden-Boston, 2012); Ludger Honnefelder, *La Métaphysique comme science transcendente* (Paris, 2002); Luisa Valente, “*Ens, unum, bonum*: elementi per una storia dei trascendentali in Boezio e nella tradizione boeziana del XII secolo,” in: Stefano Caroti, Ruedi Imbach, Zenon Kaluza, Giorgio Stabile, & Loris Sturlese, eds., “*Ad Ingenii Acutionem*.” *Studies in Honour of Alfonso Maierù* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 2006), pp. 483–545; Sabine Folger-Fonfara, *Das “Super”-Transzendente und die Spaltung der Metaphysik. Der Entwurf des Franziskus von Marchia* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters) 96 (Leiden-Boston, 2008). Although the relevance of this doctrine should not be overemphasized (see the cautious remarks in Jorge J.E. Gracia, “Critical Study. Medieval

Albertus's commentary on the *Metaphysics* and its Arabic sources, the theory of transcendentals is crucial in several respects. To start with, this theory has a paramount importance in Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt*. In this work, the scattered statements on transcendentals that can be found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* are transformed into a comprehensive framework that allows an overall rebuilding of metaphysics as a science. Thus, in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, "existent" is shown to be the subject-matter of metaphysics, the relationship between "thing" and "existent" conveys the fundamental distinction of essence and existence, the treatments of "existent" and "one" are the two main axes along which metaphysics is structured, and around the concept of "necessary" is centered the discussion of God's nature and His distinction from all other beings.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the transcendentals are the issue of metaphysics about which Averroes in the *Tafsīr* disagrees most decidedly with Avicenna: the recurrent and harsh criticisms that he addresses in his commentary to this aspect of Avicenna's metaphysics, especially if compared with less frequent and severe critiques regarding other topics, make clear that he aims to demolish Avicenna's metaphysical system by resolutely attacking its theoretical cornerstone. Finally, whereas in other cases when, faced with a tension between Avicenna and Averroes, Albertus decidedly takes one side or the other or rejects

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Philosophy and the Transcendentals: Aertsen's Characterization of Medieval Thought and Thomistic Metaphysics," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 64/2 [1997], 455–63), scholars generally agree in regarding it as one of the pivotal theories of medieval thought. On the importance of the Arabic discussion of primary concepts for the genesis of the Latin doctrine of transcendentals, 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), 141–79, esp. 142 and note 2; Jan A. Aertsen, "Avicenna's Doctrine of the Primary Notions and its Impact on Medieval Philosophy," in: Anna Akasoy & Wim Raven, eds., *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages. Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 21–42. On the key role played by this doctrine in Albertus Magnus, see Jan A. Aertsen, "Die Frage nach dem Ersten und Grundlegenden. Albert der Große und die Lehre von den Transzendentalien," in: *Albertus Magnus 1200–2000*, pp. 91–112; "Die Umformung der Metaphysik. Die mittelalterliche Projekt der Transzendentalien," in: Johannes Brachtendorf, ed., *Prudentia and Contemplatio. Ethik und Metaphysik im Mittelalter. Festschrift für G. Wieland zum 65. Geburtstag* (Paderborn-Munich-Wien-Zürich, 2002), pp. 89–106, esp. 94–96; Carlo Gabbani, "Le proprietà trascendentali dell'essere nel *Super Sententiarum* di Alberto Magno," *Medioevo* 28 (2003), 97–138; Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, p. 303, n. 35, and p. 307.

<sup>29</sup> See Amos Bertolacci, "'Necessary' as Primary Concept in Avicenna's Metaphysics," in: Gianfranco Fioravanti & Stefano Perfetti, eds., *Conoscenza e contingenza nella tradizione aristotelica medievale* (Pisa, 2008), pp. 31–50; and "The Distinction of Essence and Existence in Avicenna's Metaphysics: The Text and Its Context," in: Felizitas Opwis & David C. Reisman, eds., *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 257–88.

the views of both, in the case of the doctrine of transcendentals he seeks a more encompassing perspective through which both positions can be reconciled. Albertus's "solution" of the antinomy opposing Avicenna to Averroes on transcendentals can be taken as a glaring example of his mastering of the Arabic philosophical heritage.

## II

Against the background of a wider polemic ranging over the entire *corpus* of Aristotelian commentaries written by Averroes—in which most of the nominal quotations of Avicenna are critical; criticisms can be found indifferently in commentaries on logic, natural philosophy, or metaphysics, regardless of the time of composition of the different exegetical works, since the early epitomes until the late long commentaries; and attacks are more frequent in Averroes's long commentaries than in the middle commentaries or the epitomes, due to the wider frame of this exegetical format—the dissent towards Avicenna concerns natural philosophy and metaphysics more than logic. Within the commentaries on the *philosophia realis*, then, the debate focuses not so much on psychology but, rather, in an ascending order, on cosmology (*De caelo*), on the foundation of natural philosophy (*Physics*), and, above all, on metaphysics.<sup>30</sup> The higher frequency of critical quotations of Avicenna in the Epitome and Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* with respect to the Epitome and Long Commentary on the *Physics* reveals that metaphysics is the crucial field in the clash between Averroes and Avicenna. The *Tafsīr* represents the peak of this tendency.

The following table reports the criticisms of Avicenna's metaphysics that can be found in the *Tafsīr* and the way in which Albertus reproduces them, or the cases in which he omits them, in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*.

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<sup>30</sup> An overview of criticisms of Avicenna in Averroes's commentaries is provided in Amos Bertolacci, "The 'Andalusian Revolt Against Avicennian Metaphysics': Averroes' Criticism of Avicenna in the commentaries on Aristotle," in: David Wirmer, ed., *Proceedings of the Conference From Cordoba to Cologne: Transformation and Translation, Transmission and Edition of Averroes's Works, Cologne, 25–28 October 2011* (Berlin-New York, forthcoming).

TABLE 2. *Averroes's Criticisms of Avicenna in the Tafsir and Their Reception in Albertus*

Averroes	Doctrine criticized	Remarks by Averroes	Avicenna	Albertus, <i>Met.</i>
(1) α, 15, pp. 46.18–47.4 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 35D; [1966], p.77.25–8)	[i] A man can be generated from earth, [ii] as a mouse is (an instance of the denial of a necessary link between specific forms and their matters)	In this and many other mistakes, Avicenna was influenced by the Aš'ariyya, "if he [indeed] held it [i.e., this doctrine] and did not disparage it"	[i] <i>Ma'ādīn wa-Ātār 'ulwiyya</i> [= <i>De diluviis</i> ], II, 6, pp. 76.15–79.6; [ii] <i>Cp. Ḥayawān</i> [= <i>De animalibus</i> ] XVII, 1, p. 419.9–10	om.
(2) α, 15, p. 47.10–12 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 35E; [1966], p. 78.37–38)	Many followers of Avicenna ascribes to him the denial of the absence of plenum, void and time outside the world, and the denial of the existence of beings that are incorporeal, non-spatial and atemporal.	This ascription is false		om.
(3) Γ, 3, pp. 313.6–314.11 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 67B–E)	"One" and "existent" signify attributes superadded to the thing's essence.	Avicenna made this error despite his familiarity with the Aš'arite theologians, who held a different position.	<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> I, 5, pp. 31.10–11; 32.3; III, 2, pp. 95.15–17; 97.4–5; 103.9; III, 3, pp. 106.12–13, 15; 109.10; 110.2–3, 4–5; V, 1 <i>passim</i> ; VII, 1, p. 303.9–10	IV, 1, 5, pp. 166.74, 167.15, 39, 66 ("Obicit enim contra hoc <b>Avicenna</b> dicens, quod [...]"; "Haec et similia inducit <b>Avicenna</b> pro se"; "Et hoc forte attendit <b>Avicenna</b> [...]"; "Et facile est [...] excusare dicta <b>Avicennae</b> [...]")

TABLE 2 (*cont.*)

Averroes	Doctrine criticized	Remarks by Averroes	Avicenna	Albertus, <i>Met.</i>
(4) Γ, 3, p. 315.3–9 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 67G)	A thing is one in virtue of an entity superadded to its essence		<i>Ibid.</i>	IV, 1, 4, p. 166.42–51 (Albertus anonymously resumes the argument that Averroes directs against Avicenna)
(5) Δ, 5, p. 508.9–11 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 107I; [1971], p. 92.43–46)	The metaphysician demonstrates the existence of nature, whereas the natural philosopher takes it for granted from the metaphysician		<i>Samā'</i> [= <i>Liber primus naturalium</i> ] I, 5, pp. 30.6–7; 31.5–6	om.
(6) Δ, 14, p. 557.16–19 (om.)	“Existent” is a derivative name and signifies an accident		<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> I, 5, pp. 31.10–11; 32.3; III, 2, p. 103.9	om.
(7) Δ, 14, pp. 558.17–559.14 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 117C–D; [1971], pp. 130.83–131.94)	Derivative names, like “white” signify primarily the subject (i.e., the thing that is white) and secondarily the accident (i.e., whiteness)		<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> III, 2, pp. 109.17–110.3	V, 1, 11, p. 234.37–42 (Albertus anonymously resumes the thesis that Averroes opposes to Avicenna); V, 2, 6, p. 243.36–42 (Albertus resumes the argument that Averroes directs against Avicenna; “sicut dicit Averroes”)

TABLE 2 (*cont.*)

Averroes	Doctrine criticized	Remarks by Averroes	Avicenna	Albertus, <i>Met.</i>
(8) Z, 31, p. 882.17–19 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 181B)	All forms of the sublunary world come from the Agent Intellect (Giver of Forms)	Themistius appears to share the same opinion, whereas Alexander [of Aphrodisias] agrees with Aristotle.	<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> IX, 5, p. 413.8–11; IX, 5, p. 411.9; <i>Kawn wa-fasād</i> [= <i>De gen. et corr.</i> ] 13, p. 187.3, 14, p. 190.14, 16; <i>Afʿāl wa-infiʿālāt</i> [= <i>De actionibus et passionibus qualitatū primarum</i> ] II, 1, p. 256.10 <i>Ibid.</i>	om.
(9) Z, 31, pp. 885.18–886.3 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 181I)	The majority [of philosophers] ( <i>al-qawm</i> ) went against them [i.e., against Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias] on this [i.e., the issue of spontaneous generation], since they did not understand Aristotle's demonstration in this place, nor did they grasp its truth. This is surprising not only in the case of Avicenna, but also in the case of Abū Naṣr [al-Fārābī], since in his book on the two philosophies [of Plato and Aristotle], he seems to be hesitant in this matter.	The majority inclined towards the doctrine of Plato, since it is an opinion similar to what the theologians of our religion believe in this matter.		om.

TABLE 2 (*cont.*)

Averroes	Doctrine criticized	Remarks by Averroes	Avicenna	Albertus, <i>Met.</i>
(10) I, 5, pp. 1267.15–1268.3 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 255B)	The numerical “one” is a genus of all categories, since it signifies an accident common to them		<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> III, 1, p. 95.15–17	X, 1, 5, p. 437.17–27, 31–35 (“ <b>quidam</b> fuerunt qui dixerunt [...] et hoc non est verum”) om.
(11) I, 8, pp. 1279.12–1280.11 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 257E–G)	“Existent” and “one” signify an item superadded to the essence		<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> I, 5, pp. 31.10–11; 32.3; I, 8, p. 48.5; III, 2, p. 95.15–17; 97.4–5; 103.9; III, 3, pp. 106.12–13, 15; 109.10; 110.2–3, 4–5; V, 1 <i>passim</i> ; VII, 1, p. 303.9–10 om.	om.
(12) I, 8, p. 1282.8–12 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 257K)	If “existent” and “one” were synonyms of “thing,” the statement “the thing is one” would be false			om.
(13) Λ, 5, pp. 1423.18–1424.4 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 293D)	Since Avicenna takes the state- ment “no science demonstrates its own principles” in an absolute sense, he believes that the meta- physician clarifies the existence of the principles of sensible sub- stance, and that the natural phi- losopher takes for granted from the metaphysician the existence of nature		<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> I, 2, p. 14.2–3; II, 3, p. 78.14; III, 7, p. 139.12–13; VI, 5, p. 294.4–5; <i>Samāʿ</i> I, 5, pp. 30.6–7; 31.5–6	XI, 1, 3, p. 462.73–77, 81–83 (“Nec est dicendum, sicut <b>quidam</b> dixerunt [...] Nec etiam est dicendum, sicut <b>quidam alii</b> dixerunt”)

TABLE 2 (*cont.*)

Averroes	Doctrine criticized	Remarks by Averroes	Avicenna	Albertus, <i>Met.</i>
(14) Λ, 5, p. 1426.11–12 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 293K)	The obscurity of Alexander [of Aphrodisias]’s statement (p. 1420, 8–10), according to which the metaphysician demonstrates the principles of the existents, whereas the physicist admits their existence, misled Avicenna		<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> I, 1–2 <i>passim</i>	om.
(15) Λ, 6, p. 1436.5–6 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 295D)	Averroes recalls quotation (14)		See above (14)	om.
(16) Λ, 8, p. 1442.14–16 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 296D)	The proof of the existence of first matter does not pertain to natural philosophy		<i>Samā’</i> I, 2, p. 16.17–18; pp. 17.20–18.2	om.
(17) Λ, 10, p. 1447.15–16 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 297A)	Matter in potency is present in all bodies		<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> II, 2, p. 67.12–13	om.
(18) Λ, 18, pp. 1498, 12–15 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 304 G)	Avicenna is among those who think that the agent that creates the forms and places them in matter is immaterial and is called Giver of Forms	The belief in the creation of forms is common to the advocates of the Giver of Forms and to Jewish, Christian and Muslim theologians	<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> IX, 5, p. 413.8–11	XI, 1, 8, p. 470.9–41 (“ <b>alii</b> sunt qui dicunt [...] secundum eam [sc. hanc opinionem], ut dicit Averroes [...] multa impossibilia sequi videntur ad hanc opinionem”)

TABLE 2 (*cont.*)

Averroes	Doctrine criticized	Remarks by Averroes	Avicenna	Albertus, <i>Met.</i>
(19) Λ, 41, p. 1632.1–3 (Averroes Latinus [1562], fol. 324I–K)	“Necessary” can be divided into “necessary by itself” and “necessary in virtue of something else”	According to Averroes, the situation in which a thing is possible by itself, and necessary in virtue of something else, is limited to the heavenly movement	<i>Ilāhiyyāt</i> I, 7, p. 47.10–19; VI, 3, p. 277.4–6.	om.

Some of these criticisms have been discussed in previous studies.<sup>31</sup> Others still wait a systematic investigation. Most of them, albeit not all, have a (more or less precise) correspondence in Avicenna’s *Ilāhiyyāt*. Averroes emerges, first of all, as a competent and careful reader of Avicenna: he questions Avicenna’s authorship of doctrine 1, for example, and discards doctrine 2 as not authentic. If we exclude quotation 2, which does not contain any criticism, all the other 18 quotations are critical. Even a cursory glance at the gathered data evidences that Averroes’s attack against Avicenna’s metaphysics is radical, involving all the main aspects of Avicenna’s account of this discipline. The polemic invests not only—directly—Avicenna’s view of the internal organization and function of metaphysics in the system of knowledge, as well as some of its key metaphysical doctrines, but also—incidentally—its method (not sufficiently

<sup>31</sup> On criticism 1, see Amos Bertolacci, “Averroes against Avicenna on Human Spontaneous Generation: The Starting-Point of an Enduring Debate,” in: Anna Akasoy & Guido Giglioni, eds., *Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath. Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe* (Dordrecht, 2013), pp. 37–54. On criticisms 8, 9, and 18, see Gad Freudenthal, “The Medieval Astrologization of Aristotle’s Biology: Averroes on the Role of the Celestial Bodies in the Generation of Animate Beings,” *Arabic Science and Philosophy* 12 (2002), 111–37 (repr. in Gad Freudenthal, *Science in the Medieval Hebrew and Arabic Traditions* [Aldershot, 2005], n. XV); Dag N. Hasse, “Plato arabico-latinus: Philosophy—Wisdom Literature—Occult Sciences,” in: Stephen Gersch, Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, & Pieter T. van Wingerden, eds., *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages. A Doxographic Approach* (Berlin-New York, 2002), pp. 31–64, esp. 42–45; Dag N. Hasse, “Spontaneous Generation and the Ontology of Forms in Greek, Arabic and Medieval Latin Sources,” in: Peter Adamson, ed., *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception* (London-Turin, 2007), pp. 150–75, esp. 159.

apodictic and unable to account properly for Aristotle's doctrines) and sources (Alexander of Aphodisias, Themistius, and Fārābī among Peripatetic authors, but also Neoplatonic emanationism and Islamic theology). The doctrines mainly criticized by Averroes belong to the three main areas of Avicenna's metaphysics: the epistemological account of this discipline provided in the Prolegomena of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (the theory according to which metaphysics provides the epistemological foundation of natural philosophy, by proving the assumptions of this latter, like the existence of nature, of prime matter, of the hylomorphic composition in bodies, and so forth); the analysis of the primary concepts in ontology, unfolded in treatises I, 5–8 and II–VII of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (the distinction of essence and existence, and the idea that existence—and consequently oneness—is a non-essential feature of things, as well as the related distinction of what is necessary by essence, and what is contingent by essence and necessary on account of something else); and the cosmology and philosophical theology in which the *Ilāhiyyāt* culminates (the doctrine of emanation of forms from the heavenly intelligences in the sublunary world). In all evidence, Averroes aims to demolish Avicenna's metaphysics, in order to preserve and restore Aristotle's metaphysical system.

The doctrine of transcendentals is the metaphysical doctrine of Avicenna that Averroes most frequently and harshly criticizes in his *Tafsīr*. Criticisms of this doctrine are recurrent, extensive, and disdainful: the dissent with Avicenna is repeated, almost in the same terms, in different places of the work (criticisms 3–4, 6–7, 10–12), it is long and articulated (especially in criticism 3), and it is mixed with expressions of amazement and scorn.

### III

Albertus is not only receptive with regard to Avicenna and Averroes but also original. His originality surfaces apparently when he rejects particular theories of either Avicenna or Averroes, as happens quite often. Less visibly, but more interestingly, the joint reliance on Averroes and Avicenna underscores a further aspect of originality, since it shows the presence in Albertus's commentary of a theoretical apparatus, ideated by Albertus himself, by means of which he solves the conflict between the metaphysics of these two authors. For Averroes frequently and harshly criticizes Avicenna in the *Tafsīr*, the commentary of his in which the polemic against Avicenna is most recurrent and intensive. Now, on the issues about which Avicenna's and Averroes's standpoints are at odds, Albertus adopts a

harmonizing strategy, striving to focus on similarities and to dispense with differences. This strategy consists in “hiding,” as much as possible, the dissent, and it has material, stylistic, and doctrinal aspects.

Due to this articulated strategy, the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* represents a noteworthy case: it is the only Aristotelian commentary in which Albertus, despite using the corresponding Long Commentary of Averroes, does not reproduce explicitly (i.e., naming both Avicenna and Averroes) any of the criticisms of Avicenna that he finds in his source. Conversely, it is also the only Aristotelian commentary of this kind in which Avicenna and Averroes are never said to be in agreement on a certain position.<sup>32</sup> In other words, despite his reticence, Albertus is deeply aware of the dissent that he tries to conceal. This concealment of dissent concentrates on a precise theoretical area, namely, the doctrine of the primary and most universal concepts (the so-called “transcendentals”) in ontology, which Albertus rightly individuates as a crucial aspect of the confrontation between Avicenna and Averroes.

### III.1. *The Material Strategy: “Omitting Part of the Dissent”*

On the one hand, Albertus does not deal with all the criticisms of Avicenna contained in the *Tafsīr* but omits many of them.<sup>33</sup> More precisely,

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<sup>32</sup> See, in contrast, *Super Porphyrium de V universalibus*, II, 6, ed. Manuel Santos Noya, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 1.1A (Münster i. W., 2004), p. 33.60–61: “Adhuc autem Averroes et Avicenna dicunt, quod [...]”; V, 6, p. 99.49–50: “Et haec est sententia tam Avicennae quam Alfarabii, et est sententia Averrois”; VIII, 8, p. 134.32: “Cuius causam dicunt Avicenna et Averroes”; *In Phys.*, I, 3, 3, vol. 1, pp. 41.17–18; 43.73–74: “Si forte aliquis velit sequi Avicennam et Averroes in solutione quaestionis [...] De solutione autem Avicennae et Averrois patet, qualiter intelligatur, si quis eam velit sustinere”; *ibid.*, II, 1, 4, vol. 1, p. 81.9–10: “Ad secundum autem respondet Avicenna et videtur consentire Averroes [...]”; *ibid.*, IV, 3, 4, vol. 1, p. 266.83–85: “Propter quod respondent viri illustres in philosophia, Avicenna, Alexander, Themistius et Averroes, Theophrastus et Porphyrius [...]”; *ibid.*, V, 1, 3, vol. 1, p. 407.26–27: “Averroes et Avicenna assignant tertiam [rationem]”; *ibid.*, p. 407.51–53: “duorum philosophorum, Avicennae et Averrois, ratio adiungetur”; *ibid.*, p. 408.5: “sicut dicunt Avicenna et Averroes”; *In De Caelo*, I, 1, 11, ed. Paul Hossfeld, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 5.1 (Münster i. W., 1971), p. 30.47–50: “Et haec est sententia duorum philosophorum, scilicet Avicennae in *Sufficientia caeli et mundi* et Averrois in libro de essentia orbis”; *ibid.*, II, 1, 2, p. 107.57–60: “Haec autem [...] hic dicta sunt secundum sententiam Avicennae et Averrois et aliorum philosophorum”; *De natura loci*, 1, 4, ed. Paul Hossfeld, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 5.2 (Münster i. W., 1980), p. 7.6–9: “[...] patet veram esse sententiam, quam tres philosophi communiter tradunt, Avicenna videlicet et Averroes et Moyses Aegyptius [...]”; *In De anima*, III, 2, 12, p. 194.10–12: “In hac autem sententia nobiscum conveniunt et Averroes et Avicenna et plures alii Peripateticorum”; *In De Causis*, I, 3, 2, p. 36.62–64: “Multi autem Peripateticorum in primo negabant esse voluntatem, Aristoteles scilicet, Theophrastus, Porphyrius, Avicenna et Averroes.”

<sup>33</sup> Completely omitted are criticisms 1, 5, 8–9, 11–12, 14–17, and 19. Criticism 6 is absent in the Latin translation of the *Tafsīr*. Reference 2 is not, strictly speaking, a criticism.

he reports only six of the 17 critical references to Avicenna that he can read in the Latin translation of the *Tafsīr* (i.e., nearly one-third).

From the point of view of content, the six criticisms reported by Albertus, although few in quantity, are nonetheless representative of the main areas of Avicenna's metaphysics and of Averroes's dissent towards it: they concern the epistemology of metaphysics (criticism 13), the theory of the primary concepts in ontology (criticisms 3–4, 7, 10), and the doctrine of emanation of forms from the Agent Intellect in philosophical theology (criticism 18). Quantitatively, Albertus accords a decided preference to the second area of dissent, since Averroes's critique of Avicenna's doctrine of transcendental "being" and "one" is resumed by Albertus in four of the overall six criticisms he takes into account.

This kind of material strategy is somehow at work also in Albertus's previous Aristotelian commentaries: not all the criticisms of Avicenna that one finds in Averroes's Long Commentary on the *Physics* or the *De Caelo*, for example, are resumed in Albertus's own commentary thereupon. But the proportion of the criticisms reported by Albertus with regard to those available to him appears to be decidedly lower in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* with respect to previous commentaries: in the Commentary on the *Physics*, for example, the first of the entire series, Albertus reports nine of Averroes's 18 criticisms of Avicenna; in the Commentary on *De Caelo*, likewise, written immediately after that on the *Physics*, he reports four of Averroes's seven criticisms. In both cases, the criticisms reported are no less than half of the entire set, whereas in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* they are approximately one-third, as we have seen. Moreover, one notices in previous commentaries a certain tendency by Albertus to *increase* the number of criticisms: thus, he adds by his own initiative further polemical references to Avicenna, extending to this latter criticisms originally targeted by Averroes against other authors (such as Ibn Baǧǧā);<sup>34</sup> or he repeats twice, in one and the same commentary, a criticism of Avicenna made only once by Averroes;<sup>35</sup> or he reports in previous commentaries criticisms of Avicenna that Averroes posits in the

<sup>34</sup> *In Phys.*, IV, 2, 7, vol. 1, p. 247.59–61: "Propter haec et his similia dicit Averroes deceptum esse Avempace, et Avicennam per consequens relinquitur condeceptum"; in the corresponding place of Averroes's Long Commentary on the *Physics*, only Avempace is mentioned. In *In De anima* II, 3, 33, the *altercatio* among Alexander, Themistius, and Avicenna, on the hand, and Averroes, on the other, does not correspond to any criticism of Averroes against Avicenna.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *In Phys.*, IV, 1, 13, vol. 1, p. 226.30–51, with *ibid.*, V, 1, 8, vol. 2, pp. 416.65–417.61; cf. *In De Caelo*, III, 2, 1, p. 221.3–6, with *ibid.*, III, 2, 8, p. 241.14–15, 22–26, 44–45.

*Tafsīr*.<sup>36</sup> In all these respects, Albertus's inclination to report, and therefore underscore, the dissent between Avicenna and Averroes appears to have decreased over time.

### III.2. *The Stylistic Strategy: "Disguising the Dissent"*

On the other hand, in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* Albertus reports the criticisms that he selects without stating explicitly that, on the issue under discussion, Averroes is criticizing Avicenna. As a matter of fact, Albertus never mentions Avicenna and Averroes together in connection with Averroes's criticisms: the names of Avicenna and Averroes occur explicitly only in three of the six aforementioned criticisms, and never together (four times the name "Avicenna," all in the context of criticism 3; twice the name "Averroes," once in the second occurrence of criticism 7, and once in criticism 18). In this way, no reader of Albertus's Commentary on the *Metaphysics* lacking a direct knowledge of Avicenna's and Averroes's original works would be able to guess a disagreement between the two Arab authors simply on the basis of Albertus's report.

This concealment of dissent is performed in three main ways. In some cases, Albertus reports the criticism as such (namely, as an argument directed by someone against someone else), without mentioning Avicenna and Averroes, however, as, respectively, the target and the source of the criticism but referring to *either* of them or to *none* of them: more specifically, either he presents the criticism as coming from Averroes, but as regarding in general a group of unidentified authors (*alii*) rather than Avicenna in particular (criticism 18);<sup>37</sup> or he disguises the identity of both the target and the source of the criticism by means of expressions like *quidam* and *quidam alii* (criticism 13).<sup>38</sup> In a second series of cases, Albertus

<sup>36</sup> The contrast of opinions between Avicenna and the *plures sapientium* (p. 102.29) and *plurimi Peripateticorum* (p. 103, 5) in *In Phys.*, II, 2, 3 seems to reflect criticisms 13 and 18 of Averroes's *Tafsīr*.

<sup>37</sup> The omission of Avicenna's name in the report of this criticism is intentional, since elsewhere Albertus ascribes the doctrine in question expressly to Avicenna (see *De unitate intellectus*, 2, ed. Alfons Hufnagel, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, t. 17.1 [Münster, 1975], p. 2.61–64), and at the beginning of the digression in which it occurs (*In Met.*, XI, 1, 8, p. 468.51–55) he describes the phenomenon of spontaneous generation with examples taken from Avicenna ("mures ex terra [...] serpentes parvi de capillis mulierum," *Ma'ādīn wa-Ātār 'ubwīyya*, II, 6, p. 77.3–4 [p. 307.7–8]) and Averroes ("apes ex carnibus vaccarum et vespae magnae citrinae ex carnibus equorum," *Tafsīr*, Λ, 18, p. 1492.5–6 [fol. 303G]). In this case, Albertus assimilates the doctrine of Avicenna criticized by Averroes with that of Plato, previously expounded and refuted (pp. 468.62–469.25).

<sup>38</sup> Albertus includes possibly also Alexander of Aphrodisias, together with Avicenna, among the *quidam*: see *Tafsīr*, Λ, 5, p. 1426.11–12 [fol. 293K].

reports only the target of Averroes's criticism, omitting its source: thus, he presents the Avicennian doctrine criticized by Averroes as a more or less erroneous position held by Avicenna himself (criticism 3) or by *quidam* (criticism 10), but he does not ascribe the criticism of this doctrine to anyone (be he Averroes or someone else); he rather discards the Avicennian doctrine in question, more or less decidedly, by means of considerations that, though deriving from Averroes, are presented as his own. Conversely, Albertus occasionally ascribes the argument in question to Averroes, but he does not specify its target (second occurrence of criticism 7). In a third series of cases, finally, Albertus totally deprives Averroes's criticism of its polemical character and simply adopts the argument by means of which Averroes refutes Avicenna's doctrine: in these cases, he omits any indication of the existence of a target and a source of the argument in question (criticism 4; first occurrence of criticism 7).

It does not seem coincidental that the most elliptical ways of reporting the criticisms (the second and the third ways just recalled) regard entirely and exclusively the doctrine of transcendentals. Albertus seems to consider this doctrine as the most sensible area of dissent opposing Avicenna and Averroes and that which is most in need of rescue from a radical divergence between the two Arab authorities.

Also in this regard, the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* is markedly different from all previous Aristotelian commentaries, in which Albertus does not hesitate to recall explicitly, even many times in one and the same commentary, the contrast of opinions between Avicenna and Averroes, speaking openly of a *dubitatio* and a *quaestio* determined by their opposition and of an *altercatio*, a *contradictio*, a *reprehensio*, a *redargutio*, and even a *persecutio* launched against Avicenna by Averroes, with some kind of negative moral representation of the latter's animosity against Avicenna.<sup>39</sup> In previous commentaries, the majority of criticisms are

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<sup>39</sup> See *Super Ethicam*, I, 6, vol. 1, p. 26.29–46: “Sed contra hoc videtur esse, quod dicit Avicenna . . . Et sic tantum est verum dictum Avicennae; unde etiam Commentator de hoc dicto arguit ipsum”; *In Phys.*, I, 3, 18, vol. 1, p. 76.17–36: “[. . .] compositum esse compositum ex materia et forma accipit physicus a metaphysico, sicut bene dicit Avicenna, et tamen reprehendit eum de hoc Averroes, cum sua reprehensio non careat reprehensione. Compositio enim dupliciter consideratur [. . .]. Et ideo Avicenna non est reprehensibilis [. . .]”; *ibid.*, p. 76.37–45: “Est autem et alia reprehensio, qua reprehendit Averroes Avicennam, minus congrua. Dicit enim Avicenna verum, cum dicit non idem esse quaesitum in aliqua scientia et suppositum, deum autem et substantias sive formas separatas esse quaesitas in prima philosophia et ideo non vere suppositas in ipsa et ideo non esse subiectum primae philosophiae, quod nescio, quare Averroes reprehendit, cum ipsum sit necessarium, quod dixit Avicenna”; *ibid.*, II, 1, 3, vol. 1, p. 85.1–14: “Huic autem sententiae contrarie nititur

reported by Albertus in this “dramatic” way, with the two main characters on the stage: cases in which the confrontation is avoided, since only one of the two antagonists, or none of them, is explicitly mentioned, are much less frequent.<sup>40</sup> Indicative of Albertus’s attempt to conceal the dissent in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* is the fact that some criticisms of Avicenna in Averroes’s *Tafsīr* are resumed explicitly in previous Aristotelian commentaries by Albertus, with reference to both Avicenna’s and Averroes’s names, whereas in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* they are reported anonymously.<sup>41</sup> The same applies to some criticisms of Avicenna stemming from other commentaries by Averroes, which are resumed with mention of both Avicenna and Averroes in the corresponding commentary by Albertus, whereas in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* they include the explicit mention only of Avicenna.<sup>42</sup>

This inclination to hide the dissent might be somehow causally related to Albertus’s tendency to refer less frequently to Averroes and Avicenna as *auctoritates* in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* than in previous

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Averroes, eo quod ubique Avicennam persequitur, dicens [...]. Sed vera solutio est [...]; *ibid.*, II, 1, 10, vol. 1, pp. 93.37–94.13: “Ad hoc autem dixit Averroes, cuius studium fuit contradicere semper paribus suis, quod Avicenna his rationibus concedit, quod physicus non considerat de materia prima, sed de quadam materia. Et arguit in contrarium sic [...]. Sed Averroes, si voluisset, potuisset de facili vidisse, quod materia prima est duplex [...]. Et sic patet perspicue, qualiter nulla est falsitas in verbis Avicennae”; *ibid.*, V, 1, 8, vol. 2, pp. 416.65–417.61; *ibid.*, VIII, 2, 10, vol. 2, pp. 612.65–613.25: “Sed hoc non videtur esse verum secundum Averroem [...]. Et ideo reprehendit Avicennam [...]. Et hanc reprehensionem ego non iudico convenientem generaliter” (see Hasse, “Spontaneous Generation,” p. 163); *ibid.*, VIII, 4, 5, vol. 2, p. 649.42–63: “[...] sumit Averroes occasionem, quod reprehendit Avicennam [...]. Et haec reprehensio non est rationabilis [...]”; *In De Caelo*, I, 3, 4, pp. 63.61–65.7; *ibid.*, II, 3, 5, p. 151.52–65: “Et utitur tali modo loquendi Averroes reprehendens Avicennam [...]. Et hoc dictum absurdissimum est [...]. Et hoc idem dicit Averroes in libro suo, quem vocat *De natura et substantia orbis*, contradicens sibi ipsi”; *ibid.*, II, 3, 8, pp. 160.30–161.2: “Est autem sciendum hic esse altercationem Averrois contra Avicennam [...]. Est autem ista redargutio secundum nos omnino irrationabilis, quia opinamur Avicennam veritatem dixisse, et quod ipse [sc. Averroes] dicit de dextro et sinistro, non totam dicit rationem Avicennae [...] quod dicit orbis super idem centrum omnes constitui, ipse hoc dicit sine probatione, [...] et ideo Averroes errat graviter et sequentes inducit in gravem errorem [...]. Quod autem dicit, quod si celestia sint eiusdem naturae in genere et diversae in specie, sequitur ipsa esse generabilia: omnino falsum est [...]”; *ibid.*, III, 2, 1, p. 221.3–6; *ibid.*, III, 2, 8, p. 241.14–45; *De causis proprietatum elementorum* I, 2, 13; *In De anima*, II, 3, 33, pp. 145.65–146.32.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, *In Phys.*, II, 2, 3, where Avicenna is explicitly mentioned, whereas Averroes is inserted in the group of the *plurimi Peripateticorum*.

<sup>41</sup> On criticism 7 in the *Tafsīr*, cf. *Super Ethicam*, I, 6, vol. 1, p. 26.29–46: “Sed contra hoc videtur esse, quod dicit Avicenna [...] Et sic tantum est verum dictum Avicennae; unde etiam Commentator de hoc dicto arguit ipsum,” with *In Met.*, V, 1, 11, p. 234.37–42.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *In De Caelo*, I, 3, 4, pp. 63.61–65.7 (see also *In De Causis*, I, 4, 7, p. 53.3–69; II, 1, 12, p. 74.75–80), with *In Met.*, XI, 2, 34, p. 526.27–43; *ibid.*, XI, 3, 4.

commentaries, apparently a sign of his increasing assimilation of the Arabic philosophical heritage.<sup>43</sup> But it is unlikely that this greater independence from Avicenna and Averroes as philosophical sources can alone explain the absence of any explicit report of the criticisms of the former by the latter in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*. In all likelihood, a precise decision on Albertus's part is also involved.

### III.3. *The Doctrinal Strategy: "Eliminating the Dissent"*

From the point of view of Albertus's doctrinal preferences, three cases can be set apart. (i) Either Albertus endorses the standpoint of Averroes, whom he names, and discards Avicenna's position, which he ascribes to *alii* ("Giver of forms," criticism 18); (ii) or he rejects both the doctrine of Avicenna criticized by Averroes (ascribed to *quidam*) and the doctrine of Averroes (ascribed to *quidam alii*) on account of which this latter criticizes Avicenna (relationship metaphysics-natural philosophy, criticism 13); (iii) or he subscribes to Averroes's anti-Avicennian stances and arguments—saying that Averroes is right (criticism 7), that Avicenna's position, ascribed to *quidam*, is wrong (second occurrence of criticism 10), or anonymously adopting Averroes's stance (criticism 4; first occurrence of criticism 10)—but he also preliminarily shows that the position of Avicenna (whom this time he names) is not substantially different from the right one, namely, from the position of Averroes (whom he does not name), and can therefore be saved and justified (criticism 3). To put it schematically: according to Albertus, in the first case Avicenna is wrong and Averroes is right; in the second case, they are both wrong; in the third case, they are both right. Only in the first case is the dissent effective: in the other two, it is either made irrelevant (both alternatives are wrong) or eliminated (the contrast is more apparent than real). The last case regards the doctrine of transcendentals, which is the area of dissent on which

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<sup>43</sup> In the Commentary on the *Physics*, one encounters 76 mentions of the name "Avicenna" (or "Albuali") and 60 mentions of the name "Averroes" (or "Commentator"); in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, the mentions of "Avicenna" and "Averroes" are, respectively, 26 (grouped around 17 quotations) and 32 (grouped around 23 quotations). In the Commentary on the *Physics*, the titles of the corresponding works of Avicenna (*Sufficiencia*, I, 3, 12, p. 60.67; II, 2, 12, p. 117.55; IV, 1, 10, p. 220.63) and of Averroes (*Commentum Physicorum Aristotelis*, VIII, 1, 11, p. 572.3–4) are mentioned, whereas in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* the title of no work of Avicenna or Avicenna is mentioned. These data are the provisional result of an ongoing revision of the entries regarding Avicenna and Averroes in the Indices "Auctores ab Alberto ipso allegati" in the critical editions of the commentaries on *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.

Albertus focuses; it is the most interesting case, not only on account of the frequency of resumptions on Albertus's part but also from a theoretical perspective. I am going to analyze it more in detail in the following section.

With regard to previous commentaries, three differences are noteworthy. First, the strenuous defense of Avicenna against the criticisms of Averroes and the consequent accusations of error, irrationality, and inconsistency launched against Averroes, found in the Commentary on the *Physics* and in the Commentary on the *De Caelo*, are absent in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*.<sup>44</sup> In this latter, we encounter only an *excusatio* of Avicenna, and Averroes is never declared wrong in opposition to him. Second, in previous commentaries, Albertus sided with Averroes against Avicenna more rarely, agreeing with him hesitantly and with qualifications.<sup>45</sup> In the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* the situation is reversed, since Albertus, whenever he resumes a criticism, always agrees with Averroes against Avicenna (apart from the case in which he agrees with neither of them) and places the qualifications ("facile est excusare dicta Avicennae si quis subtiliter dicta sua respiciat") on Avicenna's side. Third, in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*, the effort to create a doctrinal consensus between Avicenna and Averroes takes place differently. In previous commentaries, Albertus arrived, at best, at some sort of compromise between the contrasting positions of his two main sources, by agreeing *partly* with both, on the basis of some distinction that was capable of accommodating both stances.<sup>46</sup> If he contended that both Avicenna and Averroes,

<sup>44</sup> *In Phys.*, I, 3, 18, vol. 1, p. 76.17–36; *ibid.*, p. 76.37–45; *ibid.*, II, 1, 3, vol. 1, p. 85.1–14; *ibid.*, II, 1, 10, vol. 1, pp. 93.37–94.13; *ibid.*, VIII, 2, 10, vol. 2, pp. 612.65–613.25; *ibid.*, VIII, 4, 5, vol. 2, p. 649.42–63; *In De Caelo*, II, 3, 5, p. 151.52–65; *ibid.*, II, 3, 8, pp. 160.30–161.2 (texts quoted above, n. 39). This anti-Averroes attitude explains a sentence like "Averroes multas haereses dicit; unde non oportet, quod sustineatur," said by Albertus in support of Avicenna's position on the immortality of the individual human soul in *Super Ethicam*, VI, 8, vol. 1, p. 453.63–65.

<sup>45</sup> *In Phys.*, V, 1, 8, vol. 2, p. 417.37–40: "Et hoc [sc. Averrois dictum] videtur esse concedendum. Tamen res subtilis est haec et magna indigens consideratione. Et videtur hoc [sc. Avicennae dictum] non esse verum"; *In De Caelo*, I, 3, 4, pp. 63.61–65.7: "Sed tamen in hac materia intellectus sunt diversae sententiae Peripateticorum [...]. Et illa quidem quae est Aristotelis [...] est, quod intelligentia sit forma caeli [...]. Et in hanc sententiam omnimodo convenit Averroes [...] Avicenna autem et Theodorus parum ab ista declinant opinionem. Dicunt enim [...] caeli esse duplicem motorem, animam videlicet et intelligentiam, et intelligentiam esse extra et animam intra [...]. Haec autem sententia non videtur conveniens [...]. Erit autem alius locus de his latius tractandus" (emphasis added).

<sup>46</sup> *In Phys.*, II, 1, 3, vol. 1, p. 85.1–14: "Huic autem sententiae contrarie nititur Averroes, eo quod ubique Avicennam persequitur, dicens quod simpliciter est impossibile demonstrare naturam esse, sicut dicit Aristoteles. Sed vera solutio est, quod de natura movente

despite the apparent opposition, in fact upheld one and the same thesis, this was, according to Albertus, Averroes's fault; Albertus reproached him for holding a certain thesis against Avicenna in a certain commentary but of professing a thesis totally compatible with Avicenna elsewhere, thus contradicting himself and creating a verbal rather than a real contrast.<sup>47</sup> The strategy at work in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* is different: here Albertus points to an inner congruence, rather than a mechanical juxtaposition, between Avicenna's and Averroes's doctrines, declaring that a deep and subtle investigation is necessary for the former but also—as we are going to see—for the latter.

The first two differences appear to indicate that Albertus progressively adhered to Averroes's anti-Avicennian doctrinal positions.<sup>48</sup> But the third difference indicates that Avicenna remained for Albertus an indispensable help for understanding the doctrine of the Aristotelian *corpus*.

#### III.4. *Albertus's Elaboration of Avicenna's and Averroes's Positions on Transcendentals*

The three aforementioned strategies look interrelated: among the various criticisms of Avicenna by Averroes, Albertus concentrates on those pertaining to the transcendentals, omitting most of the others; he reports

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sive motore duplex potest esse quaestio, una quidem an sit [...] sicut dicit Avicenna. Alia autem quaestio est an differat a mobili [...] sicut ab Aristotele invenitur"; *ibid.*, II, 2, 3, p. 103.35–37, 73–77: "Nos autem dicimus [...] quod utraque istarum opinionum vera est secundum aliquem modum [...]. Et ideo quantum ad essentiam [...] verum dicit Avicenna [...] sed quantum ad esse verum dicunt alii [...]"; *De causis proprietatum elementorum*, I, 2, 13, p. 86.53–54: "Videtur autem mihi, quod utrique secundum aliquid consentiendum sit"; *In De anima*, II, 3, 7, p. 109.46–47 (on color): "Nos autem quantum intelligere possumus, utrosque [sc. Avicennam cum Avempace, et Averroem cum Alexandro] secundum aliquam partem verum dicere arbitramur."

<sup>47</sup> *In De Caelo*, III, 2, 1, p. 221.3–6: "Et istud in suis libris tradunt Avicenna et Averroes, licet in *Caelo et mundo* Averroes contradicere videatur Avicennae, et est sua contradictio in verbis tantum." This statement is clarified later (*ibid.*, III, 2, 8, p. 241.14–15, 22–26, 44–45): "Propter quod etiam Averroes impingit crimen Avicennae... In commento autem *Libri peri geneseos* Averroes sensit cum Avicenna [...] et ideo si Averroes hic contradicit Avicennam, ipse contradicit sibi ipsi. ... et non est secundum rem contradictio aliqua inter istos duos viros. [...]"

<sup>48</sup> On the topic of criticism 18, for example, Albertus shows in the Commentary on the *Physics* a more equanimous attitude than in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics*: see *In Phys.*, II, 2, 3, vol. 1, p. 103.35–37, 73–77: "Nos autem dicimus [...] quod utraque istarum opinionum vera est secundum aliquem modum [...]. Et ideo quantum ad essentiam [...] verum dicit Avicenna [...] sed quantum ad esse verum dicunt alii. [...]" One must take into account, however, that in this passage of the Commentary on the *Physics* Albertus explicitly mentions Avicenna.

these criticisms while abstaining, as much as possible, from referring nominally (or at all) to Avicenna and Averroes, in order to allow himself the liberty of reworking the content of these criticisms; finally, he reformulates the doctrines on which these criticisms revolve, in order to establish a precise harmony between Avicenna's and Averroes's positions. Let us observe more closely how this harmonization is performed.

On the issue of transcendentals, Averroes targets primarily Avicenna's famous distinction of essence and existence and his conception of unity. In particular, he rebukes the status of non-essential features that Avicenna ascribes to existence and unity and Avicenna's supposed confusion between transcendental and numerical unity, leading to the idea that unity is a quantitative accident of essence.<sup>49</sup> On both topics, Avicenna's position looks less antithetic to Aristotle's than Averroes would like, and more nuanced than in the Vulgate version widespread in modern scholarship (where he is credited with the so-called theory of the "indifference" of existence towards essence, against his avowed thesis that essence can never be deprived of—and therefore be indifferent to—existence);<sup>50</sup> Albertus, however, might have been unaware of this inner consonance of Avicenna with Aristotle, since the Latin translation of the *Ilāhiyyāt* multiplied the very few hints to the accidental character of existence that one finds in Avicenna's original text, and at the same time occulted some references to its essential character.<sup>51</sup> In any case, faced with this conflicting scenario, Albertus seeks a more encompassing perspective through which both positions can be reconciled. His strategy consists of three steps. First, he selects in the pivotal criticism 3 one of the two main targets of Averroes's attack. In particular, he gives priority to Averroes's polemic against Avicenna's conception of the mutual relationship of existence and unity (a point on which Averroes's criticism is inoffensive, since Avicenna and Averroes substantially agree with Aristotle on the real identity and conceptual distinction of "being" and "one"), substantially neglecting Averroes's polemic against Avicenna's doctrine of the distinction of essence, on the one hand, and existence and unity, on the other (the real non-Aristotelian aspect of Avicenna's account). Accordingly, Albertus rephrases Averroes's text so as to make the first issue the only reason for dissent

<sup>49</sup> Criticisms 3–4, 6–7, 10–12.

<sup>50</sup> See Bertolacci, "The Distinction of Essence and Existence."

<sup>51</sup> I deal with this topic in Amos Bertolacci, "The Reception of Avicenna in Latin Medieval Culture," in: Peter Adamson, ed., *Interpreting Avicenna. Critical Essays* (Cambridge, Eng., 2013), pp. 242–69.

between Avicenna and Averroes, with the effect of rescuing Avicenna from Averroes's attack.<sup>52</sup> Second, he silently reports Avicenna's doctrine of unity, in which some confusion between transcendental and numerical unity can effectively be found, by introducing in it Averroes's distinction of these two kinds of unity.<sup>53</sup> To this distinction Albertus adheres both explicitly (second occurrence of criticism 7) and implicitly (first occurrence of criticism 7); on its basis he discards Avicenna's position attributed to the *quidam* in criticism 10. Finally, Albertus personally proposes a theory according to which existence and unity are joint effects of the essence, viewed as their cause: in virtue of the peculiar relationship of, at the same time, distinction and connection that links cause and effect, this theory somehow mediates between Avicenna's view of the separation of essence, on the one hand, and existence and unity, on the other, and Averroes's endorsement of their identity.<sup>54</sup> This view of the causal role of essence with respect to existence and unity allows Albertus to maintain Avicenna's standpoint on essence and existence that grounds other fundamental Avicennian theories, which Albertus endorses in the Commentary on the *Metaphysics* and repeats in other Aristotelian commentaries of his, for example, the doctrine of *ens* as the subject-matter of metaphysics and the doctrine of universals, as scholars have aptly noticed.<sup>55</sup> But this view also incorporates Averroes's position on the non-accidental relationship of existence and unity with respect to essence, which Albertus silently adopts (criticism 4).

Albertus's reception of Avicenna's and Averroes's stances on the doctrine of transcendentals is somehow the hallmark of his attitude towards

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<sup>52</sup> *In Met.*, V, 1, 4. See de Libera, "D'Avicenne à Averroès"; Amos Bertolacci, "Albert the Great, *Metaph.* IV, 1, 5: From the *Refutatio* to the *Excusatio* of Avicenna's Theory of Unity," in: Jan A. Aertsen & Andreas Speer, eds., *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter? Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie der S.I.E.P.M. 25. bis 30. August 1997 in Erfurt* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia) 26 (Berlin-New York, 1998), pp. 881–97.

<sup>53</sup> *In Met.*, V, 1, 8. 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*, pp. 67–78.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, *In Met.*, IV, 1, 4, p. 166.1–15.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, *In Met.*, I, 1, 2, *in globo*, and *Super Porphyrium de V universalibus*, II, 8, p. 38.10–18: "Omni enim tempore verum est quod homo est animal, sive homo sit sive non sit, et quod animal est corpus animatum et quod corpus animatum est substantia. Sed ex hoc non sequitur: 'ergo corpus animatum est ens secundum actum.' Et ideo dicit Avicenna in primo libro *Logicae* suae quod esse et ens accidit ei quod est. Verum enim est hominem esse animal, sive aliquod animal sit sive non sit, et accidit ei esse vel non esse." Other texts of this kind are mentioned in de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique*, pp. 245–64.

the metaphysics of the two Arab masters, as described above: it masterfully joins material strategy (it operates a selection among the various tenets of Averroes's polemic), stylistic strategy (it rests on a well oriented reformulation of Avicenna's and Averroes's texts), and doctrinal strategy (insofar as a common theoretical background of their dissent is sought).

### CONCLUSION

In line with his philosophical project in the Aristotelian commentaries, Albertus assumes the unity of Peripatetic philosophy in general and of Peripatetic metaphysics in particular. For Albertus, Peripatetic metaphysics is essentially the account of this discipline transmitted by Avicenna and Averroes in the footsteps of Aristotle and his ancient commentators: therefore, in the face of Averroes's radical criticism of Avicenna's metaphysics, and consistent with his use of the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Tafsīr* as the two main tools for the interpretation of the *Metaphysics*, Albertus shows that these two writings are complementary elements of a single, coherent, albeit multifaceted, metaphysical project, rather than two incompatible accounts of Aristotle's work. In other words, since Albertus understands his object of inquiry (in the present case, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*) and presents it to his audience by means of the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Tafsīr*, Avicenna's and Averroes's versions of the *Metaphysics* in these two works cannot be, for him, irreducibly antithetical to one another.

The idea of a conflict between Avicenna and Averroes pervades Latin philosophy from the 13th century onwards, taking as its starting point and amplifying Averroes's criticisms.<sup>56</sup> This contrast becomes associated with alternative cultural institutions (the Avicennian sympathies of the theologians vs. the Averroean allegiance of the masters of arts)<sup>57</sup> and disciplinary fields (the "physician" Avicenna vs. the "commentator" Averroes);<sup>58</sup> it assumes religious connotations (the "pious" Avicenna vs. the "atheist" Averroes), corroborated by pseudoepigraphical writings (the ps.-Avicennian *Epistula ad Sanctum Augustinum* vs. the ps.-Averroean

<sup>56</sup> On the *fortuna* of Averroes's criticism of Avicenna's doctrine of unity in Latin philosophy, see de Libera, "D'Avicenne à Averroès."

<sup>57</sup> See Étienne Gilson, "Avicenne en Occident au Moyen Age," *Archives d'Histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 34 (1969), 89–121, esp. 95.

<sup>58</sup> One of the most famous attestations of this *topos* can be found in Dante's *Commedia* (*Inferno*, IV, 143–44).

*Tractatus de tribus impostoribus*);<sup>59</sup> it inspires fictive biographical tales reporting these two thinkers as murdering one another;<sup>60</sup> and it finds vivid expressions in iconography (the “prince” or “king” Avicenna vs. the Averroes defeated by Christian theologians).<sup>61</sup> The same opposition governs the school struggles of the late Middle Ages (the Avicennism of the Scotists vs. the Averroism of the Thomists)<sup>62</sup> and passes to Renaissance philosophy: thus Pietro Pomponazzi (d. 1524) disputes, in defense of Avicenna, with the Averroist Agostino Nifo (d. 1538) on human spontaneous generation, whereas a few decades later Jacopo Zabarella (d. 1589) gives an extreme anti-Avicennian spin to Averroes’s doctrine of elementary mixture.<sup>63</sup> In this light, the *editio princeps* of Avicenna’s *Philosophia*

<sup>59</sup> See, respectively, Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, “Survivance et renaissance d’Avicenne à Venise et à Padoue,” in: Agostino Pertusi, ed., *Venezia e l’Oriente fra tardo Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Florence, 1966), pp. 75–102, esp. 75–85 (repr. in M.-T. d’Alverny, *Avicenne en Occident* [Paris, 1993], n. XV); and Ernest Renan, *Averroes et l’Averroïsme: essai historique* (Paris, 1852), pp. 209–15.

<sup>60</sup> See d’Alverny, “Survivance et renaissance,” pp. 80–83. At p. 83 of this study, d’Alverny reports a version of the legend, contained in a decree of Pietro Barozzi, bishop of Padua, of May 1489, according to which Avicenna would have succeeded in killing Averroes before being brought to death himself by this latter’s poison. Dag N. Hasse (“Averroes in the Renaissance,” *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 69 [2002]. Supplement: *Averroes Latinus. A New Edition* [Bibliotheca] 4, pp. xv–xviii, esp. xvii) takes the world chronicle (*Supplementum chronicarum*, Venice 1486) by Giacomo Filippo Foresta (o: Foresti) da Bergamo (1434–1520) to be the immediate source of Barozzi’s report. Cf. Dag N. Hasse, “King Avicenna: The Iconographic Consequences of a Mistranslation,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 60 (1997), 230–43, esp. 234 and note 22; Yahya (J.) Michot, “Avicenna’s *Almahad* in 17th Century England: Sandys, Pococke, Digby, Baron, Cudworth et alii,” in: Nevzat Bayhan, Mehmet Mazak, & Hattat Süleyman, eds., *Ülulararasi Ibn Sîna Sempozyumu Bildiriler 22–24 May 2008, Istanbul. International Ibn Sina Symposium Papers*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 2009), vol. 2, pp. 299–318, esp. 305 and note 28.

<sup>61</sup> A survey of the images of the *princeps* Avicenna is available in Hasse, “King Avicenna”; see also the illuminations portraying Avicenna in prayer and inspired by the Holy Spirit described by Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, “Avicennism en Italie,” in: *Oriente e Occidente nel Medioevo: Filosofia e Scienze*. Atti del Congresso Internazionale, 9–15 aprile 1969 (Atti dei Convegni Lincei) 13 (Rome, 1971), pp. 117–39 (repr. in d’Alverny, *Avicenne en Occident*, n. XVI), pp. 130–31, and Table A. For the various representations of the “haeretic” Averroes, defeated by Thomas Aquinas in this latter’s *triumphi*, see Johannes Zahlten, “Disputation mit Averroes oder unterwerfung des ‘Kommentators.’ Zu seinem Bild in der Malerei des Mittelalters und der Renaissance,” in: Andreas Speer & Lydia Wegener, eds., *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia) 33 (Berlin-New York, 2006), pp. 718–44.

<sup>62</sup> See Gilson, “Avicenne en Occident au Moyen Age,” p. 110 and n. 16.

<sup>63</sup> On Nifo’s and Pomponazzi’s resumption of the contrast between Avicenna and Averroes on spontaneous generation, see Hasse, “Spontaneous Generation,” 170–72. On Zabarella’s tendentious report of Averroes’s theory of the four elements’ mixture, see Heidrun Eichner in *Averroes’ Mittlerer Kommentar zu Aristoteles’ ‘De generatione et corruptione,’* ed. Heidrun Eichner (Paderbon-Munich-Wien-Zürich, 2005), p. 144.

*prima* (1495) can be taken as a sign of the reaction of some professors of Padua with Scotistic sympathies, against the Averroism otherwise dominating this university.<sup>64</sup> Albertus is certainly aware of the distance separating Avicenna from Averroes, and in his first Aristotelian commentaries (especially those on *Physica* and *De Caelo*) indulges in the *topos* of their antinomy. In his more mature commentaries, however, his attitude evolves, and rather than insisting on their differences, he tries to establish a “harmony” between the two Arab masters. The Commentary on the *Metaphysics* shows this tendency with particular clarity. Albertus’s harmonizing strategy appears to have been successful and influential on later authors, as subsequent commentaries on the *Metaphysics* attest: the *media via* between Avicenna and Averroes on the issue of spontaneous generation, pursued in Thomas Aquinas’s commentary on the *Metaphysics*, for example, is probably indebted to Albertus’s analogous stance on the issue.<sup>65</sup> In this light, it seems hardly coincidental that later commentaries on the *Metaphysics* depend on Albertus and, at the same time, use jointly Averroes’s and Avicenna’s contributions.<sup>66</sup>

To do philosophy by creating harmony among opposite philosophical views is the mandatory task of philosophers in times of crisis. This was the case of Porphyry and later Neoplatonists, with regard to Plato and Aristotle, in Greek ancient philosophy when Christianity started to prevail; and of al-Kindī, with respect to Peripatetism and Neoplatonism, at the beginning of Arabic philosophy and the transplantation of the Greek heritage in Islamic society.<sup>67</sup> The same aspiration to philosophical consistency seems also to characterize Albertus Magnus, with regard to the two main Arab interpreters of the *Metaphysics*, Avicenna and Averroes, at the time of the first entrance of the “new”—so to say—Aristotle into Latin in the 13th century. The crisis in his case is the effect of the opposition and resistance of traditional Latin philosophy against a foreign world-view that was rooted in a pagan master, Aristotle, and intimately linked to a heretic

<sup>64</sup> This hypothesis is discussed by d’Alverny, “Survivance et renaissance,” pp. 88–89.

<sup>65</sup> See Dag N. Hasse, “Arabic Philosophy and Averroism,” in: James Hankins, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, Eng., 2007), pp. 113–36, esp. 127.

<sup>66</sup> See the remarks on Alexander of Alexandria (d. 1314) in Fabrizio Amerini, “Thomas Aquinas, Alexander of Alexandria, and Paul of Venice on the Nature of Essence,” *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 15 (2004), 541–89.

<sup>67</sup> The examples might in fact be multiplied, up to the point that someone speaks of “perennial attraction for philosophers and interpreters alike” exerted by the projects of harmonization (Rachel Barney, “Simplicius: Commentary, Harmony, and Authority,” *Antiquorum Philosophia* 3 [2009], 101–20, esp. 177).

religion, Islam. Albertus seems to be perfectly aware that the endorsement of Arabic philosophy marks an unbridgeable distance between his own interpretation of Aristotle and that of previous and contemporary Latin philosophers, who are still unaware of, or consciously hostile to, Arabic sources. His feelings of *horror* in front of the *deliramenta Latinorum* can be explained in this way.<sup>68</sup>

The originality and innovation that recent scholarship is evidencing in other attempts of harmonization in the history of philosophy and science<sup>69</sup> can also be found, *mutatis mutandis*, in Albertus Magnus's commentary on the *Metaphysics*. In the light of the present analysis, this commentary appears to be a *unicum* and an epoch-making work in Latin philosophy, on historical, textual, and doctrinal grounds, insofar as it is the first specimen of exegesis of the *Metaphysics* in which Avicenna's and Averroes's contributions are integrally reproduced and sufficiently elaborated to

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<sup>68</sup> See, for example, *Super Porphyrium de V universalibus*, VII, 2, pp. 117.41–46, and 118.46–47: “Sic igitur Arabes philosophi hanc Porphyrii reprehendunt accidentis descriptionem. Ad haec quidam Latinorum finxerunt quasdam responsiones, quas quia deliramenta reputamus, de eis nullam facimus mentionem ... dicendum quod deliramentum est in veritate quod dicunt Latini. [...]” Significantly, the title of *De Memoria et reminiscencia* I, 1, in which a harsh polemical reference to the *Latini* occurs (*De Memoria et reminiscencia*, I, 1, ed. Auguste Borgnet, in: Alberti Magni *Opera Omnia*, vol. 9 [Paris, 1890], p. 97b: “Quia autem, ut mihi videtur, omnes fere aberraverunt Latini in cognitione harum virtutum quas memoriam et reminiscenciam appellamus [...] ideo primo volumus ponere planam de memoria sententiam Peripateticorum, antequam Aristotelis sententiam prosequamur”), is: “Et est digressio declarans intentionem Avicennae et Averrois de memoria.” Likewise, the Peripatetic position that Albertus defends against the *Latini* in *In Met.*, I, 1, 2 (pp. 4.51–53; 5.34–49): “Ideo cum omnibus Peripateticis vera dicentibus dicendum videtur, quod ens est subiectum in quantum ens [...]. Sunt autem quidam Latinorum logice persuasi, dicentes deum esse subiectum huius scientiae [...] et huiusmodi multa ponunt secundum logicas et communes convenientias, et hi more Latinorum, qui omnem distinctionem solutionem esse reputant, dicentes subiectum tribus modis dici in scientia [...]. Sed ego tales logicas convenientias in scientiis de rebus abhorreo, eo quod ad multos deducunt errores” [a passage discussed in Bertolacci, “The Reception of Averroes,” pp. 470–75]) is that of Avicenna and Averroes. Kurt Flasch (“Albert der Große: Öffnung zur arabischen Welt,” in Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Die Geburt der “Deutschen Mystik” aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* [Munich, 2006], pp. 67–85, esp. 68) makes clear that Albertus's reception of Arabic philosophy is the counterpart of his criticism of previous Latin authors.

<sup>69</sup> With regard to Simplicius, see Barney, “Simplicius”; and Han Baltussen, “Simplicius and the Subversion of Authority,” *Antiquorum Philosophia* 3 (2009), 121–36 (with further bibliography quoted). A harmonizing tendency can be detected also in Avicenna's zoology with regard to Aristotle's biology and Galen's medical theory; see Remke Kruk, “Ibn Sīnā on Animals: Between the First Teacher and the Physician,” in: Jules Janssens & Daniel de Smet, eds., *Avicenna and His Heritage*. Proceedings of the International Colloquium *Avicenna and his Heritage*, Leuven-Louvain-la-Neuve, 8–11 September 1999 (Leuven, 2002), pp. 325–41, esp. 332; and F. Sanagustin, *Avicenne (XI<sup>e</sup> siècle), théoricien de la médecine et philosophe—Approche épistémologique* (Damascus, 2010).

be transformed into a new system of metaphysics. One might venture to say that, whereas Duns Scotus's conception of metaphysics as *scientia transcendens* derives primarily from Avicenna, Albertus conceives of metaphysics in similar terms as a discipline centered on the doctrine of transcendentals, but, differently from Scotus, he depends on both Avicenna and Averroes for the construction of the theoretical building whose cornerstone is the *transcendentia*. To explain this uniqueness, one might adduce the peculiar historical phase in which Albertus lived: before him the impact of the wide array of Averroes's commentaries translated into Latin was still incipient and their massive content still undigested; after him, conversely, the influence of Avicenna started to decline and to be mediated either by Averroes, as in the case of Thomas Aquinas, or by previous receptors of Avicenna, as in the case of Duns Scotus through Henry of Ghent. In other words, one might say that only at the time of Albertus could the recourse to Arabic metaphysics in Latin philosophy avoid the risk of being one-sided, as it was both before and after him, with a prevalence of Avicenna earlier and of Averroes later. But the fact that Albertus Magnus stays at the cross-point of these two lines of reception, one descending, the other ascending, and that the full "maturity" of Latin philosophy with respect to the Arab heritage in its entirety coincides with his lifespan and figure, cannot be coincidental: it is due, to a large extent, to the genius of our author.