

AVERROES AND ARISTOTLE'S PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY

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Prolegomena to an Annotated Translation of Averroes's
*Greater Commentary on Book V of the Metaphysics**

In each of Averroes's *Greater Commentaries* on Aristotle, at least three different components are distinguishable: one, the Aristotelian text, which occurs, two, in an Arabic translation typically made by some Syrian Christian during the ninth or tenth centuries A.D., and is, three, accompanied by the explanations of the twelfth-century Commentator from al-Andalus. A single page from a *Tafsīr* thus spans a period of one and a half millenia of Aristotelianism, and in the confluence of its elements it joins words written by authors from largely differing religious, philosophical, and linguistic backgrounds.

In this article, I propose to shed some light on the variety of aspects of research into Averroes's *Greater Commentaries* reflecting this multiplicity of origin. My goal is to convey an idea of the range of questions faced by the modern translator and commentator of the *Greater Commentaries*.

With this aim to give a generalizable account of the perspectives for research on Averroes's *Greater Commentaries*, the *Tafsīr* on *Metaphysics D* is particularly suitable instance. Ibn Rushd's explanation of Aristotle's Philosophical Dictionary, a treatise explicitly devoted to problems of philosophical terminology, can indeed be regarded as a uniquely ideal object for a discussion concerning methodological questions of philosophical research in a cross-cultural perspective. But the reasons for this choice will be looked at somewhat more closely later in the article.¹

As an introduction, some remarks on Aristotle's Philosophical Dictionary itself in its most outstanding characteristics might not be superfluous. A knowledge of Aristotle's text as seen through the eyes of more recent interpretations is a useful background for assessing the philosophical merits or shortcomings of Ibn Rushd's commentary.

I. "FOCAL MEANING" IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY

If from all the controversial discussions Werner Jaeger has stirred up with his epoch-making suggestions about Aristotle's development as a philosophical thinker,² if from these discussions one lesson has emerged that is now commonly agreed upon, it is that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is not so much a homogeneous composition as a collection of sometimes only loosely connected treatises on metaphysical subjects from different periods of the author's development. Whether it was Aristotle himself who arranged these treatises in the order we are used to today,³ or some later follower of his, maybe his editor Andronicus, does not concern us here. Yet there is one point in the ancient tradition of the *Metaphysics* which is highly interesting with regard to the Philosophical Dictionary. Diogenes Laërtius, who published his famous list of Aristotle's works in the third century A.D. yet betrays a pre-Andronican knowledge of the Philosopher's writings, does not mention the *Metaphysics* or, indeed, any writing from whose title we could reasonably surmise that it is identical with one of the fourteen books we know as the *Metaphysics*: with the exception of the Philosophical Dictionary. In the pages of his *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* we find a treatise in one book entitled "Peri tōn posachōs legomenōn ē kata prosthesin," *About that which is said in many ways or according to a complement*.⁴ Aristotle himself several times refers to a treatise of his with the title "Peri tōn posachōs" and so there is little doubt that Diogenes Laërtius gives us the correct title of *Metaphysics D*.

That which is said in many ways is a fitting heading for its subject-matter. *Metaphysics D* is a book of thirty chapters, each devoted to the analysis of the meaning of a term essential to metaphysics, such as *principle*, *cause*, *being*, *substance*, and so on. One, and perhaps the most basic, result of this analysis is that nearly all the philosophically relevant terms prove to be highly ambiguous, which, in consequence, means that they must not be employed uncritically by

the philosopher. The task Aristotle therefore addresses in his Philosophical Dictionary is to distinguish the various concepts a single term can express, and he does so by means of *prostheseis*, that is, complements or determinants joined to the simple expression in order to make it unambiguous; in the course of this distinction, he often sorts out a particular meaning which is adopted as the primary one in philosophical discourse.

So far, it might seem that the function of the Philosophical Dictionary could be defined as mainly a critical one: to prevent philosophical analyses being spoilt by the woolliness of equivocal terms. Aristotle's intention is, however, more ambitious. For the technical meanings he sorts out for the philosopher's use are not arrived at in an arbitrary way but methodically, and the methodological lines followed in this procedure of clarifying the philosophers' language are, themselves, founded on basic assumptions concerning the nature of truth.

Averroes in his commentary gives us some preliminary idea of the underlying principles that guide the selection of central meanings in the Philosophical Dictionary. The following remarks are taken from the very beginning of his *Tafsīr* on D:

His (that is, Aristotle's) intention in this treatise is to distinguish the meanings of the words according to the concepts which are looked into in this science, and they (that is, the words) have in this science the status which the object of the art has in the art. And these words are said with reference to a single thing, [but] in different respects. (. . .) And as this science, according to its first intention, looks into the principles of being in so far as it is being, in what follows he first begins to distinguish of how many concepts this word (that is, *principle*) is predicated, in order to make the first [concept] evident, from which this word is derived for all the other [concepts]. (475, 2–5 and 476, 8–11)⁵

In this Introduction Averroes points out that the relations between the ambiguous word and the concepts it signifies are not all of the same order, but differ in terms of priority and posteriority: there is a "first" concept denoted primarily by the ambiguous term, whereas others are only derivatively designated by that word. Moreover, even the derivative meanings bear some resemblance to the primary one, to that "single thing" which keeps the related concepts together.

Aristotle himself calls those expressions which, though on the face of it merely ambiguous, stand for concepts that can be affiliated to a central meaning, *pros hen kai mian tina physin legomena*, "terms that are said with reference to a single thing and to one nature."⁶ Modern interpreters have referred to the phenomenon as "focal meaning" or "henonymy," terms coined

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¹See section IV., 20f.

²See especially his *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Metaphysik des Aristoteles* (Berlin 1912) and *Aristoteles. Grundle-*

gung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung (Berlin 1923).

³An opinion still held by many scholars, see, for example, Horst Seidl's remarks in his commentary on the *Metaphysics: Aristoteles' Metaphysik, Erster Halbband: Bücher I (A) – VI (E)*, 2nd ed. (Hamburg 1982) LXIV.

⁴See P. Moraux, *Les listes anciennes des ouvrages d'Aristote* (Louvain 1951) 73f.

⁵References to the Arabic text of the *Metaphysics* and Ibn Rushd's *Tafsīr* are, for brevity's sake, by page and line only of Bouyges's edition: Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba'd al-Tabī'at. Deuxième volume: Livres DAL, HE, ZAY, HHA', TTA'* Beirut 1942, 3rd ed. 1983). Cf. on the passage quoted R. Arnaldez, "Ibn Rushd," *El*,² vol. III, 909–920 (917).

by G.E.L. Owen and K. Oehler, respectively.⁷ The standing examples of *pros hen legomena* in Aristotle are *medical* and *healthy*; for seemingly the uses of, say, *healthy* in “a healthy man,” “healthy air,” and “healthy skin” are merely instances of ambiguity, a healthy man being someone who *is in* good health, whereas healthy air could be defined as likely to *cause* good health and, finally, healthy skin is only a *sign* of good health. But note that in our definitions of the term *healthy* in its various uses, one element remains constant: all the uses of *healthy* have to be defined with reference to health itself, health therefore being the *pros hen*.

Focal meaning has its paramount importance in First Philosophy, the science of being *qua* being, where it secures the possibility of a universal science of the general principles of being despite the equivocity of this term.⁸ The value of determining focal meanings for other important expressions used in philosophical discussions, as it is done in the Dictionary on the basis of a set of recorded mostly every-day uses, requires an additional explanation. But we can only sketch it out here very briefly. For Aristotle, the consensus of speakers which becomes manifest in their every-day use of certain terms reflects their knowledge of the world in a way heuristically extremely valuable. In such untechnical uses, experiences shared by every speaker of a given language become accessible, and this constantly renewed unanimity as to how a phenomenon is viewed and interpreted is held by Aristotle to be an invaluable indicator of truth itself.⁹

II. THE ARABIC VERSION OF *METAPHYSICS* D

1. Authorship

Surprisingly little is known about the translator who rendered the Philosophical Dictionary into Arabic sometime during the ninth century A.D. From the two main surviving sources, we can ascertain his name, which books of the *Metaphysics* he actually translated, and also that he had some vague connection with the circle of the philosopher al-Kindī (c. 800–?866 A.D.).

⁶See, for example, *Metaphysics* IV, 2, 1003 a 33f.

⁷G.E.L. Owen, “Logic and metaphysics in some earlier works of Aristotle,” *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century*, ed. I. Düring, G.E.L. Owen (Göteborg 1960) 163–190 (169). Aristoteles, *Kategorien*, trans. and comm. K. Oehler, *Aristoteles, Werke in deutscher Übersetzung*, ed. H. Flashar, vol. 1, 1, 2nd ed. (Berlin 1986) 198.

⁸The controversial discussions linked with this issue are outside the scope of this article. But see “classics” on the subject: G.E.L. Owen’s “Logic and metaphysics” (n. 7 above) and H. Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum Aristotelis-*

chen Materie-Begriff (Berlin, New York 1971), especially 327–337.

⁹See, for example, *Nicomachean Ethics* X, 2, 1172 b 36ff.: “For we say that which every one thinks really is so; and the man who attacks this belief will hardly have anything more credible to maintain instead.” (Ross’s translation) On the status accorded to the analysis of language by Aristoteles and his views on the *consensus omnium* see K. Oehler, *Antike Philosophie und byzantinisches Mittelalter* (Munich 1969) 95–145, 234–271.

¹⁰See M. Bouyges, Averroès, *Tafsīr Mā ba’d at-Ṭabī‘at*: Notice (Beyrouth 1952, 2nd ed. 1973) CXVI, CXXXIXf.

The first of the two sources is a marginal note in the *unicum* manuscript in the University of Leiden library containing the Arabic text of the *Metaphysics* along with Ibn Rushd’s *Tafsīr*. (The text of the *Metaphysics* does not survive independently.¹⁰) This note at the very beginning of the manuscript specifies the authors of the Arabic versions of the *Metaphysics*; and after attributing translations of single books to two authors it says that

as for the whole of it, which the Qāḍī (that is, Averroes) commented upon, it is the translation of Asṭāt — except the treatise marked by the large alif (that is, *Met. A*). And the last [treatise] which is by Asṭāt is the treatise “lām” (that is, *Met. L*).¹¹

What we learn from this annotation is that the Arabic version of the *Metaphysics* Averroes used in his commentary is for the most part the work of a translator by the name of “Asṭāt” — with the exception only of A, but, we must hasten to add, also a (II), the translation of which is identified by another marginal note as the work of Ishāq ibn Ḥunain, and the first seven and a half chapters of L, which are taken from the lemmata of Alexander of Aphrodisias’s commentary in its Arabic version.¹²

Further information of Asṭāt’s activity as a translator of the *Metaphysics* is furnished by Ibn al-Nadīm’s famous *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, the tenth-century catalogue of authors and their compositions he made for the benefit of his father’s bookshop. In the paragraph dealing with Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, Asṭāth — the form in which his name appears in the *Fihrist* — is reported to have translated the *Metaphysics* “for al-Kindī.”¹³ It is well-known that al-Kindī commissioned translations of Greek philosophical texts that interested him, and this accords well with and lends probability to the account given in the *Fihrist*.¹⁴

It is now generally taken for granted that “Asṭāt” or “Asṭāth” or even, with a different vocalization of the first alif, “Usṭāt”/“Usṭāth” is the Arabic transliteration of the Greek “Eustathēs.” We therefore have to picture Asṭāt as a translator of Greek origin, and as a Christian like so many translators of Greek philosophical texts in the ninth century.

Eustathēs’s translation of the *Metaphysics* has been described by its masterly editor, Maurice Bouyges, as giving him an “impression défavorable.”¹⁵ Although there are striking differences in the quality of the various books and even within a single book, some chapters appearing to be more ably translated than others, a closer look at the Philosophical Dictionary and its linguistic peculiarities in the Arabic will, it is hoped, enable us to verify Bouyges’s judgment.

2. Techniques of Translation

The general style of Eustathēs’s Arabic rendering of *Metaphysics* D makes

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it a typical case of a literal or word-for-word translation. We have to bear in mind that this fact does not disqualify Eustathēs's skills as a translator. For our modern attitudes towards what can be considered an appropriate approach to translating are, as Sebastian Brock has put it, "blatantly in contradiction"¹⁶ to the antique and medieval ideals of *verbum-e-verbo* translation, which can, of course, not be judged by other standards. In fact, if the literal translation technique was not forced upon the translator by his lack of knowledge of either of the two languages involved in the translation process, it might have been chosen deliberately for reasons of greater accuracy or due to the prestige of the source language which the translator tried to mirror in the literalness of his rendering.¹⁷ An element that not infrequently goes hand in hand with translations which copy the word order of the original is the use of etymological considerations in the attempt to convey the meaning of a term from one language to the other as exactly as possible. Both adherence to the syntax of the Greek text and to the etymology of its technical terms are features of Eustathēs's Philosophical Dictionary. Some examples will illustrate this.

a. Literal Translation

Aiming at a literal translation, the translator is faithful to the Greek text in two respects: he clings to the word order of the original as far as the syntactic structure of Arabic permits, and endeavors to give an equivalent for every word—even if this might lead to unidiomatic constructions. For example, 1022 a 10–12 (Bekker)/628, 9f. (Bouyges):

hōste phaneron hoti hosachōs te
fa-idhan qad tabayyanu annahu ʿala qadr ʿiddat anwāc Ø

Hence, it is evident that corresponding to the number of kinds

hē archē legetai, tosaoutachōs kai to peras,
al-ibtidā bi-ʿiddatihā tuqālu al-nihaya

¹¹The edition of this text is in Bouyges's Notice LVI.

¹²See Bouyges, Notice CXXVIII–CXXXII.

¹³Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel, vol. 1 (Leipzig 1872, reprinted Cairo 1964) 251.

¹⁴See A. Badawi, *La transmission de la Philosophie grecque au monde arabe*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1987) 26–32.

¹⁵Bouyges, Notice CLVI.

¹⁶S. Brock, "Aspects of Translation Technique in Antiquity," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979) 69–87 (70).

¹⁷See Brock 73–75.

¹⁸My own English translations of Eustathēs's Arabic have in this article the purpose of conveying to the non-Arabist an impression of the correspondence between the Greek and the Arabic wordings. In view of this aim, their unidiomatic style is, it is hoped, justified.

of the beginning to the number | is said the limit,
of them

aiḍan kai eti pleonachōs
wa- akthar minhā aiḍan

too, and more numerous- moreover.¹⁸
ly than they,

Only the changed positions of the equivalents of *legetai* (*tuqālu*), *kai* and *eti* (*aiḍan*) are concessions to Arabic usage in this sentence; on the other hand, the link between the two parts of the sentence by *hosachōs* . . . *tosautachōs* is perfectly natural in the Greek, while "bi-ʿiddatihā," being superfluous and slightly odd in the Arabic, is only there to mirror the Greek structure.

The following passage exemplifies some of the techniques applied to the literal translation of both morphologically and syntactically more complex texts. Note especially how the verbal adjective construction with *diaireton* is transformed into a relative sentence, as is the morphologically composite *enyparchonta*. This seems to indicate that Eustathēs was well acquainted with some of the methodological skills required for a *verbum-e-verbo* rendering. 1020 a 7f./594, 3f.:

Poson legetai to diaireton eis
yuqālu kammīya alladhī yatajazza 'u fi
It is "quantity" that which is divisible into
called

enyparchonta hōn hekateron ē hekaston
ashyā' hiya fihi wa-li-kull wāḥid minhā au aḥadi hā
things that are and every single one¹⁹ or every one
in it of which of which

① ②
ṭab^c an yakūna wāḥidan mā kai tode ti . . .
wa-hādhā al-shay' . . .

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has the nature that it is a certain and 'this thing',
'one'

① ②
... pephyken einai.

... aidan
... too.

To round off the picture of literal translation in the Philosophical Dictionary, I must remark that even in the *verbum-e-verbo* rendering insertions meant to clarify Aristotle's text or to complement elliptical phrases occur throughout; they do not, however, alter the overall impression of the text where passages of less literal style remain exceptions.

b. Etymological Translation

By "etymological translation" I mean that a term is not translated in its contextual or technical sense but traced back to a more basic lexical meaning. Also, morphologically composite expressions may be split up, their components being translated separately.

A good example of an etymological translation without this analysis is that of *sylogismos*, "sylogism." Its equivalent in Eustathēs's translation is "jāmiCa" (for example, 498, 4; 517, 2). This correctly becomes "congregatio" in Michael Scotus's Latin version of the Philosophical Dictionary (for example, 82, 14; 99, 27 in Ponzalli's edition²⁰). What has happened is that Eustathēs has translated *sylogismos* "naively," that is, he has not treated it as a technical term derived from *sylogizomai* but instead goes back to the basic sense of *syllēgō*, "to bring together, collect." This is exactly the meaning of the Arabic verb "jamaCa" from which "jāmiCa," "sylogism," is derived.

We might mention in passing that "jāmiCa" for *sylogismos* is not an original creation of Eustathēs's; it originated with one of the earliest translators, Ibn al-Muqaffā' (d. 757).²¹ Later, Arabic philosophers would prefer "qiyās" as an indigenous and less eccentric equivalent for *sylogismos*.

²⁰The exact meaning of *hekateron*, "each of two," has obviously escaped Eustathēs.

²¹Averrois in *librum V Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Commentarius*, ed. R. Ponzalli (Berne 1971).

²²See S. M. Afnan, *A Philosophical Lexicon in Persian and Arabic* (Beirut 1969) 53.

²³Owen Wright tells me, however, that "al-ladhī bi-al-kull" is not uncommon as a technical term in Arabic writings on music.

²⁴Ibn Rushd for this reason usually gives "ḥadd" as a paraphrase when the text of the *Metaphysics* has "kalima" in the sense of

"definition"; see, for example, 538, lff. Cf. H. Daiber, *Aetius Arabus: die Vorsokratiker in arabischer Überlieferung* (Wiesbaden 1980) 21f.

²⁵See L. Gardet, "hayūlā," *EP*, vol. III, 338–340.

²⁶In the Latin tradition, the parts into which Averroes divides the Aristotelian texts in his commentaries are called the "textūs." A chapter in our modern editions may fall into several of these.

²⁷See H. Daiber, *Aetius Arabus* (n. 23 above) 28–61.

Sometimes, as I said, a complex lexical item is broken up into the constituent parts of its meaning, each morpheme being translated separately. This technique accounts for cases such as "alladhī bi-al-kull" for *to dia pasōn*, "octave," which literally means "that which is in/by means of the whole" (see 481, 4; 488, 8). This instance of morphological analysis is the result of Eustathēs's equating *to* with *alladhī*, *dia* with *bi*, and *pās* with *kull*, which is, looked at from the perspective of the simple parts, perfectly acceptable. The combination, however, makes sense only in the Greek, while remaining unintelligible in the Arabic. For this, we have Ibn Rushd's evidence, for from his perplexed commentary we see that he was at a loss as to the intended meaning of "alladhī bi-al-kull."²²

An example of a more successful application of etymological analysis is "bi-nau^c mushāarakat al-ism," literally "in the manner of the sharing of the noun," for *homonymōs* (see for example, 1019 b 9/579, 10). Not without skill, the adverbial ending *-ōs* is paraphrased "in the manner of" ("bi-nau^c"), *homos* becomes "sharing" ("mushāraka"), and *onoma* is translated by "ism," "noun."

c. Alternative Techniques for the Translation of Technical Terms

Etymologizing is not the only technique Eustathēs employs for the rendering of technical terms or other more difficult lexical items; it is not even the one that prevails among the other methods, which may be termed "synonymous translation," "semantic extension," and "transliteration."

Synonymous translation hardly needs being dwelt upon, as the replacement of a Greek expression by a synonymous word in the Arabic is what translation in the vast majority of cases is essentially about. When, for example, *kinēsis* is changed into the Arabic "ḥaraka," this is because "ḥaraka" is already well-established in the intended meaning of *motion*.

Not so in the case of "kalima," "word," which is understood to carry the entire meaning of *logos* by the Arabic translators and philosophers; but the Arabic root is clearly overcharged semantically in this function: "kalima" meaning *logos* is a Graecism and an instance of semantic extension.²³

Lastly, there are the transliterations, such as "hayyūlā" and "mūsīqūs," which reveal in their very letters that they are modelled upon the Greek *hylē* and *mousikos*, respectively. Hayyūlā even became surprisingly popular among Arab philosophers and theologians and is still in use in the modern Arabic language of today.²⁴

At the end of this short survey of translation techniques in the Philosophical Dictionary, Bouyges's judgment remains still to be justified: in what way, then,

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is the impression we get from the Arabic version of *Metaphysics* D “défavorable”?

3. Mistranslations in the Arabic Dictionary

The answer, which can of course be proved only very insufficiently here by an example or two, is that Eustathēs’s translation is—beyond mere clumsy literalness in its style—seriously flawed by mistakes. Admittedly, some of the *textūs*²⁵ are more accurately translated than others (for example, T. 18 and T. 33). In general, however, the mistranslations are extremely numerous, some slight, others distorting the text or making it unintelligible. It is not possible here to go into a classification of the mistakes and their possible causes;²⁶ but two excerpts from garbled texts will illustrate the point.

a. 1022 a 14 and 16f./631, 3 and 5f

What Aristotle wants to say in the following lines is that *kath’ ho*, “in virtue of which,” is predicated of “that in which an attribute directly resides, its matter or substratum.”²⁷ As an example he states the relation between color and surface, for the surface is what in the first instance is necessary for the existence of colors:

to kath’ ho legetai pollachōs ...
alladhī bi-dhātihi yuqālu ‘alā anwā’ kathīra

That which is by itself is said in numerous ways ...

hena de en hō prōtō
wa-bi-nau^c ākhar alladhī fīhi yukawwanu al-shay’ awwalan

and in another way (it is predicated of) that in which is brought the thing first into being

pephyke gignesthai, hoion to chrōma en tē epiphaneia.
bi-al-ṭab^c , mithlā al-laun fī al-saṭḥ

by nature, as the color in the surface.

The point Aristotle makes is spoilt in the Arabic version of the text, and this is due to the fact that Eustathēs has for some unfathomable reason translated *kath’ hauto*, “in virtue of itself,” throughout the chapter under consideration. So the surface confusingly becomes an instance of something which is in virtue of itself and this in some relation to color. In his commentary, Averroes only manages to make sense of the sentence by transposing the parts of this relation, taking the color as that which is “by itself” in the surface. He even comes quite close to Aristotle’s original meaning when he explains that colors primarily require a surface for their existence, whereas they are not “by themselves” in solids, that is, only derivatively insofar as solids presuppose surfaces (see 632, 15–633, 3).

b. 1023 a 17f./650, 5f.

It is an imperfect lexical knowledge of ancient Greek that explains Eustathēs’s misleading translation of large parts of Aristotle’s chapter on *echein* (*textus* 28).

Echein in ancient Greek means not only *to have* but also, amongst other senses, *to hold*. But Eustathēs is not aware of the latter signification, maybe because the contemporary Greek lexica, which he probably had at his disposal, excluded some of the classical meanings of *echein*.²⁸

eti ① ② to kōlyon
wa-aiḍan yuqālu lahu li-al-māni^c

Moreover, “it has” is said for that which stops (something)

kata tēn hautouhormēn ti kineisthai ē
fi i^ctimādihi an yahwiya shay’ au

in its intention that something falls down or

pratein echein legetai touto auto, ...
an yaf^cala shay’an. ② ① ∅

does something.

Echein, so Aristotle says, can in one of its meanings be paraphrased as “to

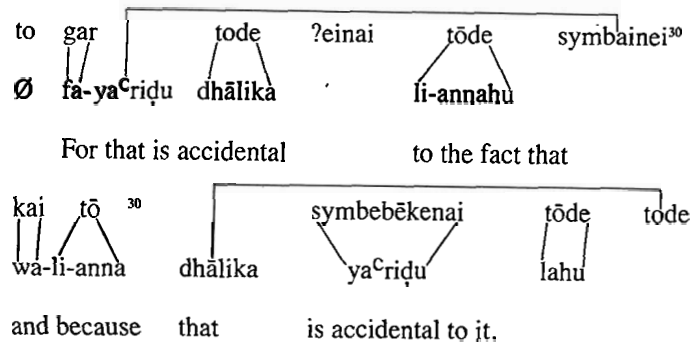
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prevent a thing from moving" or doing something "according to its own impulse"²⁹—but this paraphrase applies only, of course, to *echein* in the sense of "to hold." The main mistake in the Arabic is that it takes *echein* to mean "to have," wherefore the whole passage becomes nonsensical. But again, Averroes tries to make the best of what he has and in the commentary explains that what hinders something from falling down or from moving must be interpreted as its carrier. Aristotle wanted to say, his Commentator elucidates, that the carried thing "has" a carrier (see 653, 13ff.).

4. Distortions Due to Textual Corruption

It is not always the translator who has to take the blame for the unsatisfactory condition which considerably mars large parts of the Arabic Philosophical Dictionary. When the Arabic text diverges from the wording or sense of the Greek it is in many cases due to the fact that Eustathēs's translation is based on a corrupt reading already present in the Greek, as in the following example. *Metaphysics* 1017 a 12f. reads *to gar tōde einai tōde sēmainei to symbebēkenai tōde tōde*. But the Arabic only has the terribly garbled *fa-ya^criḍu dhālīka li-annahu wa-li-anna dhālīka ya^criḍu lahu*. For that is accidental to the fact that and because that is accidental to it (sic) (552, 6f.).

This translation cannot possibly be interpreted as based upon the same Greek text which we have in our modern editions. It may be conjectured that Eustathēs has read the following:



The conjecture *symbainei* instead of *sēmainei* accounts for the appearance of the

²⁹Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. A revised text with introduction and commentary, e.d., W.D. Ross, vol. I (Oxford 1924) 333.

²⁸Cf. Daiber, *Aetius Arabus* (n. 23 above) 55 and D. Gutas, "The present state, and future tasks, of Graeco-Arabic studies: remarks apopos H. Daiber's *Aetius Arabus*," *Journal of*

the Royal Asiatic Society 1982, 113–123 (116).

²⁹Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, ed. Ross (n. 27 above) 338.

³⁰For the conjectures *symbainei* and *kai tō* see Bouyges's "readings phi," *Notice* CLXIV.

³¹See Bouyges, *Notice* CLXXVII.

first "ya^criḍu," "is accidental"; consequently, a dative being required as the object of *symbainō*, one *tōde* was changed into *tōdē*—the two misreadings condition each other—, which explains the preposition "li" in the Arabic. A *kai* must have intruded into the text to give rise to "wa," "and," and finally, "li," equivalent to the Greek dative, betrays *tō symbebēkenai* instead of *to symbebēkenai*.

5. The Arabic Translation as a Source for Textual Criticism of the Greek Manuscripts

The preceding paragraphs have acquainted us with the poor state in which the Arabic version of the *Metaphysics* often presents itself to the modern reader. It might, therefore, seem paradoxical to claim that Eustathēs's translation of the Philosophical Dictionary could help to emend our editions of the Greek text. Up to this point, the Arabic has been looked at very much from the perspective of the Greek, which served as an indispensable background for the scrutiny of Eustathēs's translation. The change of viewpoints now required calls for some justification.

Eustathēs, so Ibn al-Nadīm observed in his bibliography, made his translation of the *Metaphysics* "for al-Kindī," who flourished in the first half of the ninth century. Provided Ibn al-Nadīm's information is correct, this means that Eustathēs's translation represents a stage in the transmission of the *Metaphysics* one century before our oldest Greek manuscript, which is from the beginning of the tenth century.

Yet apart from mere historical priority another feature of the Arabic tradition would probably make a scrutiny of the textual evidence it provides worth the classical philologists' while: there is no consistent agreement between the variant readings in the Arabic and either of the two independent traditions the Greek manuscripts represent. And it can also be excluded that Eustathēs's translation is a result of collating manuscripts from the two families.³¹ The Arabic version thus apparently stands for a third tradition of its own, hitherto neglected by the editors.³²

Lastly, the Arabic translation of the Philosophical Dictionary is based on a Greek manuscript not yet transliterated into minuscule, as are the oldest preserved Greek texts. So we may expect textual variants between the Greek and the Arabic which stem from different readings of an uncial text.³³

Still, the caveats must not be disregarded. We always have to face the possibility that the Arabic text is based on corrupt readings; that a passage has been mistranslated; or that the translator has added a word or phrase. Hence, I should not want to maintain that the Arabic tradition alone could normally

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testify against the Greek—and a look at Bouyges's list of assumed readings of the Greek underlying Eustathēs's version of the *Metaphysics* (his "readings phi") I think confirms this view.³⁴ Nevertheless, a collation of the Greek with the Arabic tradition could prove useful at least in corroborating readings present in the Greek but perhaps hitherto rejected.

In the following example, a comparison of two seemingly contradictory Greek variants with the Arabic may well lead to admitting them both into the text (1022 b 20f./641, 4):

eti	ta megethē	(tōn)	{ symphorōn ① hēdeōn ②	EJΓ, and so forth. A ^b
fa-inna	ciṣām	ā-āfāt①	wa-ā-ladhdhāt②	
For	great	harmful	and	joyful
kai	lypērōn	pathē	legetai.	
wa-ā-muḥzināt		tuqālu	munfaʿilāt	
and	grievous things	are called	"affections."	

The Arabic shows that *symphorōn* and *hēdeōn* are not to be regarded as alternative readings; Eustathēs must have read both of them in his manuscript, whereas in the later Greek traditions which the groups EJΓ and A^b represent one or the other of them has been dropped out in the process of transmission. Even such a comparatively small emendation demonstrates sufficiently that future editors of the *Metaphysics* cannot pass over the Arabic version.

III. AVERROES ON ARISTOTLE'S PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY

1. The Structure of the Greater Commentary on the *Metaphysics*

It is hardly necessary here to emphasize the historical importance of Averroes for the reception of Aristotelian philosophy in the West. The influence

³²Maurice Bouyges indicated the value of the Arabic for establishing the Greek text in a short article of his entitled "La critique textuelle de la *Métaphysique* d'Aristote et les ciennes versions arabes," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph* 27 (1947–48) 145–152. In this paper, he voiced his criticism of the guidelines Jaeger had proposed to follow in his edition of the *Metaphysics*. Jaeger, however, forwent the chance of profiting from Bouyges's suggestions and in his 1957 edition barely justified his disregard of the Arabic tradition (see *Aristotelis Metaphysica*, ed. W. Jaeger [Oxford 1957] xx). Cf. also R. Walzer,

"On the Arabic Versions of Books A, a, and Λ of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*," *Greek into Arabic* (Oxford 1962), 114–128.

³³See P. Thillet, "Remarques et notes critiques sur les traductions arabes du livre Λ de la *Métaphysique* d'Aristote," *Association Guillaume Budé, Congrès de Lyon 8–13 septembre 1958* (Paris 1960) 114–125 (115f.).

³⁴See Bouyges, *Notice* CLXI–CLXXV.

³⁵See F. Van Steenberghen, "Le problème de l'entrée d'Averroès en occident," *Convegno internazionale: L'Averroismo in Italia* (Roma, 18–20 aprile 1977) (Rome 1979) 81–89.

of Averroes's *Greater Commentary on the Metaphysics* on European Scholasticism began when it was translated into Latin around 1230, very probably by Michael Scotus.³⁵ And Ibn Rushd's prestige as a, or rather, the Commentator of Aristotle extended well into the Renaissance, a fact impressively evidenced by the numerous fifteenth- and sixteenth-century printed editions of Aristotle's works accompanied by Averroes's explanations.³⁶

These take, in his *Greater Commentaries*, the form of a sentence-for-sentence elucidation of Aristotle's teaching in the more or less satisfactory version(s) Averroes had at his disposal. The Commentator would divide the whole of the text into convenient parts, the *textūs*.³⁷ He would quote an entire *textus*, then set out to comment on it, normally proceeding sentence by sentence and again quoting at length the words actually under consideration in the lemmata.³⁸ Sometimes a lemma is shorter than usual: that may be because Averroes deems an expression exceptionally difficult. It will then, even if perhaps consisting of merely a word or two, be cited independently and dealt with in detail.

There is a general introduction to each book of the *Metaphysics* (we had the opportunity to look at an excerpt from the Introduction to the Philosophical Dictionary at the beginning of this paper).

Averroes uses very stereotyped sentences to link his commentaries not only on the individual *textus*, but also when a change of subject occurs within them or when Aristotle attends to another aspect of the same matter. The common pattern of these sentences is often: "After looking into X, he (that is, Aristotle) begins to look into Y and says: (lemma)."

Another aspect that should not be missed out in a description of the *Greater Commentaries* are Averroes's digressions, in which he takes some issue in the lemma as a starting-point for observations on his own account. Among these digressions are interesting remarks concerning the problems of translating philosophical terminology, remarks Ibn Rushd makes for example apropos of Eustathēs's rendering of *to on* by "al-huwiyya."³⁹ The Commentator did not, of course, read Greek and therefore had to rely entirely on the context for assessing the adequacy of the translation. In the case just mentioned, he feels a discrepancy between the sense of the Arabic "huwiyya" known to him and its obvious contextual meaning of "individual being." It is not surprising that Averroes should think some explanation is required for this, as he considers "huwiyya" an abstract noun formed from the pronoun "huwa," "he" or "it," among whose syntactic functions in Arabic is that of the copula. Hence, "huwiyya" would be expected to designate the abstract act or fact of being rather than the individual being. What Ibn Rushd did not know is that "huwiyya" is likely to have entered

into the translators' lexicon from the Syriac, where the meaning of "hāwyā," the word of which "huwiyya" is thought to be a transliteration, is tantamount to *to on*.⁴⁰ But even if Averroes's explanation may be inadequate here, the interest he takes in justifying expressions whose problematic nature he ascribes to their being translations from the Greek and his weighing up of the advantages and disadvantages of different translations demonstrate his awareness of the difficulties arising from philosophizing "cross-culturally."

Further proof of this consciousness is furnished by the occasional comments Averroes offers on the quality of the transmitted text, which sometimes include conjectures of his own. In the *textus* on "having," for instance, a passage has been distorted in such a way that the example meant to illustrate the text actually contradicts it. On this, Averroes remarks that "this statement occurs thus, but the example in it is not consistent with the statement" (652, 7).

Another example of textual criticism in Averroes's commentary on the Philosophical Dictionary is his proposal of an emendation in the first chapter, which is on the meaning of *archē*, "principle" or "beginning." Here, Aristotle's sentence

"Beginning" means (. . .) that from which, *not* as an immanent part, a thing first comes to be . . . (1013 a 7; the translation is Ross's)

in Averroes's manuscript reads corruptly as

. . . that from which the thing is first brought into being and which is in it.

Averroes recognizes the mistake and emends the text, explaining that in the manuscript occurs "and which is in the thing," but the most obvious [explanation] is that it is an error and that it must be read "and which is not in the thing" (478, 9f.).

Ibn Rushd then continues, discussing the remote possibility that the rejected reading might not be corrupt and also offers an interpretation of what Aristotle could have meant in that case.

Occasionally, Averroes leaves single phrases from the text without commentary—perhaps partly owing to what Bouyges has aptly termed a "distraction du Commentateur,"⁴¹ but I take these omissions as partly an *argumentum e silentio* for a critical attitude on Ibn Rushd's part towards the reliability of the text.

⁴⁰See C. B. Schmitt, "Renaissance Averroism Studied through the Venetian Editions of Aristotle-Averroes (with Particular Reference to the Giunta Edition 1550-2)," *Convegno internazionale* . . . (n. 35 above) 121-142.

⁴¹See n. 25 above and Bouyges, *Notice* CLIII.

⁴²In Michael Scotus's Latin translation, the lemmata are, as everybody knows, given in an abbreviated form only.

³⁹For the following, see 557, 5-558, 6. As passages dealing with Arabic terminology were, naturally, of little interest to the Latin reader, they are omitted in Michael Scotus's translation.

⁴⁰See G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus. Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio theologica in arabischer Übersetzung* (Beirut, Wiesbaden 1973) 82.

All in all, the impression we get from the structure of the *Greater Commentaries* is that of a rigid literary form. It is this rigidity of form that enables Averroes to deal with very large amounts of text and commentary in a well-organized and orderly fashion; but the pattern of *textus*, preliminary remark, lemma, commentary, lemma, commentary, and so on until the next *textus* is not without a certain monotony.

2. Ibn Rushd's Commentary on the Philosophical Dictionary: Some Remarks on Its Philosophical Value

While we have found the procedure Ibn Rushd adopts in his commentary on the Philosophical Dictionary and, in fact, in all his *Greater Commentaries*, particularly stringent formally, this does not always hold true with regard to the way he deals with the contents of Aristotle's teaching. But in this he is perhaps only a faithful follower of the Philosopher.

At the beginning of this article I pointed out the one methodological feature which can be considered characteristic of the Philosophical Dictionary. It is the search for "focal meanings" behind the seemingly haphazard and divergent every-day use of expressions. In many cases, Aristotle explicitly refers to the focal meaning as that "common to all" or as "the primary and strict sense," and so forth, but he does not always do so. We should expect a commentator who stresses the central function of henonymy in D as unequivocally as Averroes does to add as a complement a discussion of the *pros hen* where it is missing in Aristotle, even if he did this, for example, only to note the difficulties in determining a focal meaning. But in fact, very little attention is paid to the primary senses of the analyzed expressions, and it is only when Aristotle does so himself that Averroes cares to mention them in passing. This betrays a lack of methodological consistency.

At this point, however, and before voicing any further judgments on the merits and demerits of Averroes's commentary, we must, lest we judge unhistorically, briefly call to mind the historical situation to which the Commentator belongs. The reception of Aristotelian metaphysics by the Arabs is characterized by the notoriety of the *Metaphysics* for its extreme difficulty, and in relation to this, numerous anecdotes are told.⁴² About Averroes himself the story is related that his efforts to make Aristotle more accessible to the Arabic-speaking scholar were brought about by the caliph himself complaining to him about his own unsuccessful endeavors to penetrate Aristotle's works.⁴³ And, alas, we have examined some scraps of the *Metaphysics* in the Arabic translation and know the terminological and grammatical shortcomings of the text Averroes had of the Philosophical Dictionary. In this light, his pioneering and

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painstaking sentence-for-sentence commentary must be regarded as an impressive achievement. This remains true, even if a large number of pages in the *Tafsīr* are devoid of philosophical interest for the modern reader who seeks to understand Aristotle simply because they comment on a distorted text or Averroes has been led astray by the translation.⁴⁴

IV. Translating Ibn Rushd's *Tafsīr* on the Philosophical Dictionary

As one result of the preceding discussion, it should have become obvious how much the issues which research on Averroes's *Tafsīr* of the Philosophical Dictionary has to cope with are interwoven with problems of Graeco-Arabic translation and, in particular, translation of terminological expressions. Problems of this kind will not only accumulate and be felt most strongly in the rendering of a treatise in which terminology itself is the subject-matter, but this concentration and explicitness of terminological difficulties might also serve as a key to their understanding by the Arabist. For here we have the chance to compare the original meaning of a technical term in the Greek language as described by Aristotle, the Arabic translation and Averroes's understanding of it. We can study what alterations of meaning a term underwent in the process of translation and commentary and the possibility mainly linguistic reasons for them. Furthermore, research on Ibn Rushd's philosophy has no solid basis without an accurate knowledge of the sense of the terms he employs. Therefore, for the study of Ibn Rushd's philosophy as well as of Arabic Aristotelianism in general a translation of the *Tafsīr* on *Metaphysics D* with commentary seems an essential desideratum. In regard to this important task, I should like to raise two final methodological points.

1. Textus Versus Lemma

We are already acquainted with the textual structure of Averroes's *Tafsīr*: a *textus* from the *Metaphysics* is first quoted in full, then cited again in suitable portions in the lemmata of the commentary. The actual wording of *textus* and lemma sometimes diverges slightly, but this is not a problem which shall concern us here.⁴⁵ However, it is essential for the translator to be aware that Eustathēs's understanding of the translation, which we will often be able to infer by reading the Arabic on the background of the Greek, and Ibn Rushd's interpretation of it as reflected in the commentary might occasionally differ.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Bouyges, *Notice*, CXLIII.

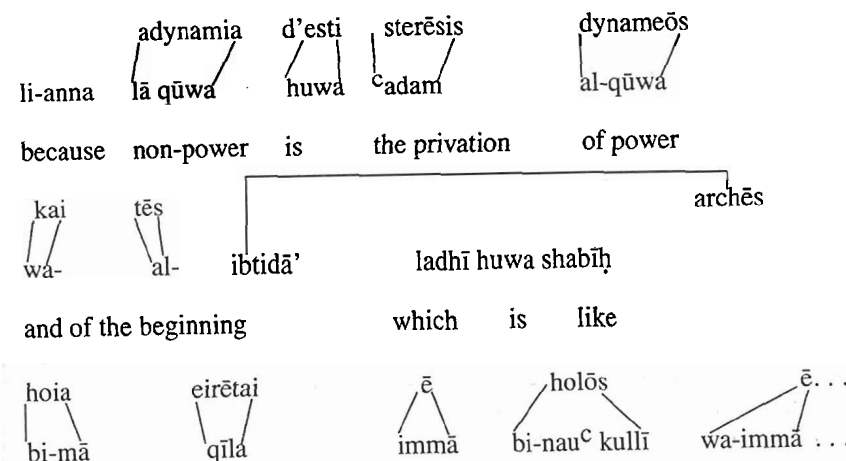
⁴⁵About his experiences with the *Metaphysics*, Avicenna, for example, tells us in his autobiography: "I read the *Metaphysics*, but I could not comprehend its contents, and the author's object remained obscure to me, even when I had gone back and read it forty times and had got to the point where I had memorized it. In spite of this, I could not understand

it nor its object, and I despaired of myself and said, 'This is a book which there is no way of understanding,'" (*The Life of Ibn Sīnā. A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation* by William E. Gohlman [Albany, NY 1974] 33).

⁴⁶See E. Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, *Œuvres complètes de Ernest Renan*, ed. Henriette Psichari, vol. III (Paris 1949) 9–365 (33f.).

This is most evident when in the lemmata phrases which belong together in the Greek and, hence, in Eustathēs's rendering are taken to be independent syntactically and thus divided (or when the opposite occurs). In other cases, it is exclusively from Ibn Rushd's commentary that we know he must have vocalized or interpreted the text contrary to what may be assumed to have been the translator's original intentions. The modern translator has to take this situation into account by rendering *textus* and lemma independently and in each case according to Eustathēs's and Averroes's respective interpretations.

There are numerous examples of this in the Philosophical Dictionary, one of which is the following (1019 b 15ff./580, 6f.):



that which has been mentioned, either in an absolute way or . .

In Aristotle, *holōs* modifies the preceding sentence as a whole, specifying the possible ways of privation; and this is certainly what Eustathēs intended the Arabic text to mean, too. But Averroes divides the sentence into two in his lemmata and comments correspondingly (587, 14–16 and 588, 1f.):

And his statement "because non-power is the privation of power" means: because badness comes only of non-power, and non-power is the privation of power. And his statement "and the beginning which is like that which has been mentioned is either in an absolute way or (. . .)" means: and by the beginning which is like that which we have mentioned (I mean that of which power and non-power are predicated) either the universal concept is signified . . .

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Thus in Averroes the Arabic equivalent of *holōs* (and what follows) is taken as predicate of "beginning," and we have to alter our translation of the lemma in order to allow for this interpretation of the sentence.

2. Once again, Translation Techniques

Finally, let us consider which translation technique best suits a modern-language rendering of the Philosophical Dictionary in Arabic, and of Averroes's commentary on it. I should like to maintain that, for Eustathēs's text, a literal, *verbum-e-verbo* translation is the most appropriate method. The decisive reason is that any *sense-e-sensu* translation would inevitably be incapable of conveying into a modern language the peculiar style of the Arabic mirroring of the Greek. A translation aiming at stylistic fluency would have to view clumsy or occasionally even ungrammatical constructions as an irritating inconvenience rather than what they are historically: invaluable evidence of the techniques and difficulties involved in the transmission of Aristotelianism to the Arabs. But while it is desirable for a modern-language translation itself to mirror the mirroring qualities of the Arabic and the etymologizing translation of (technical) terms, it should avoid extending its literalness to syntactic structures which are perfectly normal in the Arabic while odd in the receptor language; for this, again, would draw a misleading picture of the texts which the reception of Aristotle's philosophy had to rely upon among the Arabs. The translation therefore has to differentiate between peculiarities of Eustathēs's style and structural properties of the language. Also in accordance with this principle, Averroes's commentary, written in sound and regular Arabic, would best be translated into sound and regular English, that is, it would best be translated *sensus-e-sensu*.

V. CONCLUSION

Averroes's *Greater Commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and on the Philosophical Dictionary in particular, is a most rewarding if exacting object of research. First of all, we need a translation conveying an adequate picture of the Arabic version of the *Metaphysics*. For there can be no proper understanding of the Commentator and his place in the history of philosophy if his efforts are not seen on the background of the condition in which the *Metaphysics* was handed down to him. But a close comparison of the Arabic version with its Greek original will not only reveal its shortcomings, it offers the philologist at the same time the opportunity to emend our editions of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

⁴⁵Cf. R. Hoffmann, "Übersetzungsbedingte Verständnisprobleme im Grossen Metaphysik-Kommentar des Averroes," *Aristotelisches Erbe im arabisch-lateinischen Mittelalter*, ed. A. Zimmermann (Berlin, NY 1986) 141–160.

⁴⁶See Bouyges, *Notice*, CXLIII.

⁴⁷See H. Diab, *Aetius Arabus* (n. 23 above) 90, for a brief discussion of whether the translator's understanding of his work is authoritative.

Finally and may be above all, the *Greater Commentary* on the *Metaphysics* is still a storehouse of intelligent suggestions for the interpretation of Aristotle's metaphysical doctrine.

Almost 800 years after his death, the task of evaluating Ibn Rushd lies yet before us.