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ARTICLE



Ibn Sīnā, “Commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Λ 6–10”

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ABSTRACT

This is the first English translation of Ibn Sīnā’s (Avicenna) Commentary on Chapters 6–10 of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Λ. It is significant as it is one of only a small number of surviving commentaries by Ibn Sīnā and offers crucial insights into not only his attitudes towards his predecessors, but also his own philosophical positions — especially with regard to the human intellect’s connections to God and the cosmos — and his attempt to develop a distinctive mode of commentary.


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Introduction

Background and aims

All commentaries reveal as much, if not much more, about the commentator as they do about their object. (Something similar, to be sure, also holds true of translations). This is particularly acute in the case of Ibn Sīnā’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, of which the section on Chapters 6–10 of Book Λ is all that survives. Indeed, the present text is one of only a very small handful of Ibn Sīnā’s surviving works that can reasonably be said to belong to the commentary genre at all. As such, it at once reveals crucial aspects of his view of the Aristotelian tradition and also testifies to a highly distinctive mode of commentary. This mode contrasts with his more extensive engagement with predecessors – Aristotle above all – which more often take the form of discussions interspersed thematically throughout his enormous corpus, especially in the philosophical summae in which he lays out the Avicennan system and upon which his reputation as a philosopher largely rests.¹

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¹The two most influential of these summae are the *Healing* (*aš-Šifā*) and *Pointers and Reminders* (*al-Išārāt wa-t-tanbihāt*), but the *Salvation* (*an-Najat*) is also important, especially for Ibn Sīnā’s relation to the Aristotelian tradition. Besides his status as a philosopher, Ibn Sīnā was and remains equally renowned

Ibn Sīnā's commentary on *Metaphysics* Λ 6–10 was originally part of *The Book of Fair Judgement* (*Kitāb al-inṣāf*), a larger work composed in the later part of his life, around 1028–9 AD/420 AH, while he was living in Isfahan and employed as adviser to the local ruler 'Alā' ad-Dawla. Most of the *Fair Judgement* was almost immediately lost during the siege of that city the following year. However, based on the existing fragments as well as descriptions of the text by Ibn Sīnā and others, we know that the work attempted to present a comprehensive summa of his own views via commentary on Aristotle. Working systematically through the portions of the Aristotelian corpus available in Arabic translation, he would compare alternative interpretations and play the role of the fair judge to which the work's title alludes.² The objective of the *Fair Judgement* was thus not only to settle the true meaning of the Aristotelian text, but also to determine and record what Ibn Sīnā himself considered to be the correct answer to the philosophical questions at hand.³ Indeed, the text translated here is at times as much an argument *with* Aristotle as it is a commentary *on* Aristotle's text. Though his admiration for 'the first teacher' (*al-mu'allim al-awwal*) is unambiguous, Ibn Sīnā also does not hesitate to find fault with weak arguments, unclear language, or false conclusions.⁴

Ibn Sīnā's text thus distinguishes itself from conventional modes of commentary in both the Greek and Arabic traditions. While he largely follows Aristotle's text sequentially, he does not break the text into a series of lemmata followed by interpretation, opting instead for a blurrier division between text

for his medical treatises, especially the comprehensive *Canon of Medicine* (*Qanūn fi aṭ-ṭibb*), which remained a standard textbook for centuries both in what Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, called the "Balkans-to-Bengal Complex" (in many parts of which, to this day, Ibn Sīnā's name and image can be found on innumerable pharmacies, hospitals, doctors clinics) as well as in European universities.

²That is not to say that he pretends to be a *disinterested* judge. The basic division animating the *Fair Judgement* was between 'Westerners' and 'Easterners', categories that correspond respectively to the Baghdad peripatetics (e.g. Abu Biṣr Mattā, named at Chapter 7, §10, p. 14 of the present work) on the one hand and Ibn Sīnā's own preferred approach both to reading Aristotle and to philosophy generally on the other (referenced at Chapter 10, §26, p. 27). Ibn Sīnā lays out this basic division in the preface to an otherwise-lost work entitled *Easterners*, as well as in the prologue to the *Healing* (both passages are translated in Gutas, *Avicenna*, 34–47). Particularly relevant to the *Commentary on Metaphysics Lambda* are the very many similar references to "Easterners" and "Eastern philosophy" in the *Marginal Glosses on De Anima* (Badawi, *Aristotle*, 75–116), a work very similar in both content and form to the commentary. The notion of an 'Oriental' philosophy has been bound up in the question of Ibn Sīnā's alleged sufism (see note 8 below) as early as Ibn Ṭufayl (1105–85 AD/499–580 AH). See also Nallino, "Filosofia 'orientale'"; Gardet, "Le problème"; Massignon, "Les influences"; Massignon, "Philosophie orientale"; Pines, "Philosophie orientale"; Gutas, "Ibn Ṭufayl"; Gutas, "Avicenna's Eastern Philosophy"; and Gutas, *Avicenna*.

³For a detailed account of the *Fair Judgement*'s history and contents, see Gutas, *Avicenna*, 144–155.

⁴For example, he unambiguously claims that Aristotle is mistaken at Chapter 9 §22, p. 22 regarding whether the intellect tires. However, as Marc Geoffroy, Jules L. Janssens, and Meryem Sebti point out in the introduction to their 2014 edition (*Commentaire*, 18–19), on the whole, Ibn Sīnā does tend to remain "loyal" to Aristotle by offering a charitable interpretation of the text while simultaneously faulting him for a lack of clarity (e.g. Chapter 8, §16, p. 18; Chapter 9 §24, p. 23). In contrast, he is much more likely to reject other authors outright (e.g. Themistius at Chapter 9, §22, p. 22 and especially Abū Biṣr Mattā at Chapter 7 §10, p. 15).

and commentary. Moreover, he directly quotes the text only relatively seldom. Yet to describe this work as a simple paraphrase of Aristotle would also be unsatisfactory: Ibn Sīnā's aim is to use the form of commentary as a medium through which both to express his own views and to communicate with Aristotle as live interlocutor, rather than as a tool to produce ostensibly neutral or objective reconstructions of Aristotle's arguments.⁵

Subject-matter, content, and themes

This distinctive form of commentary frees Ibn Sīnā from the need to be a completist – he no longer needs to remark, however perfunctory, on each and every line of the text. What he does focus on thus become revelatory of his own philosophical preoccupations as well as his distinctive positions and views. This specific mode of engaging with the text of the *Metaphysics* – one might term it dialogic – also allows Ibn Sīnā to stray quite far from the Aristotelian *ipsissima verba*.

Among the most distinctive aspects of the commentary is Ibn Sīnā's preoccupation with criticizing attempts to establish the necessary existence of God (or the first principle⁶) 'by means of motion'. Instead of the proto-cosmological argument that the regular and eternal motion of the heavens entails a single, separate, immaterial, and unchanging first principle, Ibn Sīnā insists on the need for an emanationist scheme of the sort introduced in the Greek neo-Platonic synthesis and later widely adopted in Islamic philosophy. More specifically, however, he uses his engagement not only with Aristotle, but also other commentators, named and unnamed, as an opportunity to articulate and argue for his own philosophical theology, according to which God is conceived of as necessarily existing in Himself while all other beings derive their more attenuated form of necessity from this divine source. Equally distinctive is Ibn Sīnā's attention to Aristotle's brief and notoriously cryptic remark at *Meta.* Λ 7, 1072b3 that God causes motion "as the object of love/eros" (Ar.: *ka-l-ma' šūq*; Gr.: *hōs erōmenon*), a phrase that has been the subject of continuous – and indeed contentious – debate in the ensuing 2,400 years. Whatever Aristotle may have meant by the line, this gesture toward an amorous cosmology and an erotic theology provides Ibn Sīnā with an opportunity to sketch his own vision of how 'love' plays a central role in metaphysical-cum-cosmological explanations – a theme that recurs throughout his corpus, including not only in his *Letter on Love*, but also in key sections of the *Healing, Salvation*, and *Pointers and Reminders*. For both Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, love (Ar. *'išq*; Gr. *erōs*) is not limited to human

⁵See Bertolacci, *Reception*, for an extensive study of Ibn Sīnā's relationship to the *Metaphysics*.

⁶I.e. Aristotle's prime unmoved mover, which Ibn Sīnā equates unhesitatingly with his own conception of God, using many of the standard names from Islamic philosophical theology – the Real First, the First Cause etc. – as well as the standard Quranic epithets and honorifics although notably never his own coinage for referring to God, viz. as the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*).

beings. Indeed, when it comes to divine love, it is the heavenly bodies and their intellects that are the greatest theophiles. Nevertheless, the use of the paradigmatic human phenomenon of love is reflective of broader considerations regarding human beings' place within an emanationist cosmology. (Take, for instance, how humans' way of life is compared with God's 'life' in Λ 7 and how human intellect is compared with divine intellect in Λ 9). Despite the incomparably higher degree of perfection enjoyed by God, both Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā remain concerned with the ways human beings have meaningful similarities with the divine. For both, then, the general metaphysical project of describing a cosmic hierarchy of substances is also a tacit philosophical anthropology.⁷

Details of the translation and text

In translating Ibn Sīnā's commentary, I have tried to strike the usual balance between linguistic fidelity and readability, attempting to make the text's arguments and claims intelligible while avoiding both oversimplification and tendentious smoothing over of ambiguities. This poses particular challenges in a text whose language, already replete with technical terms, is often highly compressed.

This has meant taking a degree of freedom particularly when it comes to the syntax of the original.⁸ At the same time, however, I have generally tried to maintain consistent translations for philosophical terms, with exceptions made for the sake of readability. I have also avoided, to a certain extent at least, the use of some familiar terms derived from the scholastic tradition, which for many readers are likely to impede rather than increase legibility. (For example: 'existing essence' as opposed to 'haecceity' for *anniya*⁹ at Chapter 8 §18, p. 17; 'individual essence' instead of 'quiddity' for *māhiyya* at Chapter 10 §26, p. 23). Perhaps most notably, I have largely eschewed the traditional terminology of 'mover' and 'moved'. Unlike its Arabic (and Greek) counterparts, the English verb 'to move' has the unfortunate ambiguity of meaning both to *be* in motion (Ar. *taḥarraka/taḥarruk*; Gr. *kineisthai*) and to *set* in motion (Ar. *ḥarraka/taḥrik*; Gr. *kinein*). I have thus opted for locutions like 'to cause motion/the cause or motion/etc.' for the latter and 'to be in

⁷Given Ibn Sīnā's focus on the human-divine relation, his commentary on *Meta. Λ* is an important piece of evidence in the long-running debate about his relation to sufism in particular and to mysticism in general. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to this text, with the exception of a brief section in Rapoport ("Sufi Vocabulary", 185). The literature on Ibn Sīnā and sufism is too extensive to list here. However, for recent 'anti-mystical' arguments, see various texts by Dimitri Gutas (especially "Intellect", "Empiricism", and *Avicenna*) as well as Janssens, "Ibn Sīnā". For a recent 'pro-sufi' argument that Ibn Sīnā has more than a merely superficial affinity with mysticism see 'Āmir, *at-Taṣawwuf*. See also p. 2n2 supra.

⁸In contrast, for example, to the more literal French translation offered by Geoffroy, Janssens, and Sebti in their 2014 edition. My hope is that the two translations might be used productively alongside one another by readers with access to both.

⁹See p. 17n26 infra.

motion/that which is in motion/etc.’ for the former, with the hope that gains in clarity will make up for loss in brevity.

The translation is based on the critical edition by Marc Geoffroy, Jules Janssens, and Meryem Sebti, published along with a French translation in 2014. The editors draw on the two extant manuscript witnesses to the text as well as indirect sources, notably Uṣṭaṭ’s translation of the *Metaphysics*, which is preserved in Ibn Ruṣd’s commentary and is the primary version of Aristotle’s text used by Ibn Sīnā (though he also appears to have had access to one or more additional Arabic translations.) Where my translation is based on alternative readings – from the MSS or ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Badawī’s 1947 collection *Aristū ‘inda l-‘Arab* – this is indicated in the notes.

Ibn Sīnā’s text, as we possess it, is not only a fragment of a larger, now lost, work, but also the product of a later editorial intervention in the period immediately following his death. The bulk of the text is presented in the form of quotations of Ibn Sīnā, gathered and introduced by an anonymous editor-cum-copyist. Many sections thus start with multiply embedded quotations: “*He said*: ‘Then he says that ...’”, meaning “*Ibn Sīnā said*: ‘Then Aristotle says that ...’”. I have attempted to preserve this multilayered paratext by presenting the unnamed editor’s direct words in *italics*. The quotations of Ibn Sīnā, which make up the vast majority of the text, are set in plain type within single quotation marks. When Ibn Sīnā quotes the *Metaphysics* directly, the text is set in double quotation marks and is underlined, with Bekker numbers provided in parentheses.¹⁰

The paragraph numbers – which do not follow the chapter divisions – follow those in the 2014 edition’s Arabic text, which are based on numbering present in the margins of one of the MSS (the French translation modifies these slightly). Transliteration of Arabic terms follows the usual conventions, with *jīm* represented by *j*, not *ǧ*. Proper names are capitalized and the definite article is written connected by a hyphen – when the latter precedes a ‘sun letter’ the transliteration reflects the assimilated *lām* (e.g. *al-iṣārāt* but *at-tanbīhāt*). Inflectional endings are omitted in transliteration except when part of a longer phrase or required for understanding.

The following abbreviations are used in the translation and notes:

- GJS: Marc Geoffroy, Jules L. Janssens, and Meryem Sebti, eds. and trans. *Commentaire sur le livre Lambda de la Métaphysique d’Aristote (chapitres 6–10): Šarḥ Maqālat al-Lām (faṣl 6–10) min Kitāb Mā ba‘da al-ṭabī‘a li-Aristūṭālīs (min Kitāb al-Inṣāf)*, Paris: Vrin, 2014.
- Badawī: *Aristū ‘inda al-‘Arab*, Cairo: Maktabat an-nahḍa al-miṣriyya, 1947.
- Goichon: A.-M. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d’Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne)*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938.

¹⁰In their edition, Geoffroy et al. attempt to comprehensively identify all quotations from the *Metaphysics*, even those that are only one or two words. As these will be of primary interest to more philologically inclined readers with access to the Arabic original, I have opted to include only more substantive quotations.

Translation

Commentary on Chapter Lām of Aristotle's Metaphysics

From the Book of Fair Judgement:

'In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate. I place my trust in the Powerful and the Wise and I rely on him. *Commentary on the Letter Lām* by the Foremost Scholar Abū 'Alī Ibn Sīnā.'

[On Chapter 6]

S1 *He [Ibn Sīnā] says: 'His [Aristotle's] purpose in saying that "if all substances were corruptible, then everything would be corruptible" (1071b5–6) is to establish the substance separate from matter.'*

Turning to the subject of time and its eternity, he [IS] then says: 'How could before and after be conceived in things whose before and after differ? For such things do not exist together in terms of before and after except in a time or with a time. And if time – which is a certain affection (infī'āl), or number, or measure of motion – is continuous, then motion is necessarily continuous, since time is either a motion or something that depends on motion and exists along with it.'

He [IS] says: 'Then he [A.] says that positing an agent who does not act despite having the potential to act will be of no use [for explaining] the continuity of motion (ittiṣāl al-ḥaraka) or the emanation of existence. And how could something which does not have even the potential to act, like the Platonic forms, be of any use? (For they are useless either for [emanating] existence or for causing motion.) And a thing cannot produce a continuous emanation if it acts while something potential is mixed with its essence. Therefore it cannot be a principle for continuously causing motion (at-taḥrik al-mutaṣṣil):'¹¹

'Someone might say that potentiality is prior to actuality because everything that acts has the potential to act, "but not everything with potential acts, and so potentiality is prior" (71b23–24). But if we hold that potentiality precedes actuality, then it becomes necessary that all entities (*huwiyyāt*) be non-existent at some moment. Indeed, that which is absolutely potential is, and remains, non-existent. How, then, could something pass from potentiality into actuality if there were nothing that is already actual? For simple elemental matter cannot move itself and neither can form alone (e.g. carpentry) make it into something determinate.¹² Actuality, then, is prior to potentiality.'

¹¹Or, *ad sensum*, "for causing continuous motion".

¹²Directly contrasting with Aristotle's Greek text at 1071b29: "matter itself cannot move itself, but the art of carpentry can". This is likely due to Ibn Sīnā's use of Uṣṭaṭ's translation, which reads "simple elemental matter (*al-'unṣur*) does not move itself and nor does the art of carpentry". (See also GJS, 82n15). For

§2 ‘Since there is to be generation and corruption, there must proceed a multiplicity of actions. And multiple actions cannot proceed from the One insofar as He is one. A single action, which produces preservation, must then proceed from His essence. And multiple actions must proceed from Him accidentally – according to proximity to and distance from Him and conformity with and deviation from Him – such that He brings about preservation essentially and brings about difference (*iktilāf*) accidentally, which comes about by what is preserved.’¹³

§3 ‘The action [that produces] difference comes about either: (1) through another motion which preserves difference and which follows in a certain manner upon the first motion or (2) through this [first] motion itself such that this motion preserves order essentially and renews [the order’s differing] states and dimensions accidentally.’

‘An example of the first manner is that what is in motion in accordance with the first motion (*al-mutaḥarrīk al-ḥarakat al-ulā*) only causes preservation and contains no principle akin to difference, like the motion of the ninth sphere, while the other motion is preserved by the first motion and itself gives rise to difference, as with the motion of the sphere of the zodiac and what is beneath it.’¹⁴

‘And as he [A.] says, the action that produces differences issues forth either from an action other than the first, permanent, one or from it directly. The first is thus [in either case] most eminent: that is to say, the permanent action is the most excellent.’

‘As for the co-existence of eternity and difference – such that the order of difference and its cycles are continuous and that there is both difference and continuity in difference – this is brought about by both causes: the permanent cause and the differentiating cause.’

§4 ‘Thus, it is clear that if motions took place in a manner different than this, there would be confusion regarding how we ought to search for principles. For there is indeed none other than the kind we have been searching for.’

[On Chapter 7]

‘And as for another kind of principle, if there were one that were neither a principle of preservation nor of difference, things would then come from

Aristotle, the form existing in the mind of the carpenter acts upon the raw materials, transforming them into a specific object. IS is emphasizing the need to take into account the prior properties of the matter that allow it to receive the form.

¹³Lit. “that is subsumed under preservation” – i.e. difference arises to the nature of the various things that are preserved. GJS (46): “qui est subordinée à la preservation”.

¹⁴The outermost sphere in the Ptolemaic system (the *primum mobile*), beyond that of the fixed stars. The “sphere of the zodiac” is the eighth sphere containing the fixed stars.

nothingness and darkness. Moreover, there is no need to assume anything that would imply such a principle (i.e. to assume that the motions are different than we have said), since there is something eternally and ceaselessly in motion and whose existence does not depend on intellectual discourse or proofs (*al-qawl wa-l-istidlāl al-‘aqli*) but rather on sensory activity – an existence not potential but actual.’

§5 *He [IS] then reproaches Aristotle and the commentators, saying: ‘It is shameful to get at the Real First (*al-ḥaqq al-awwal*) by means of motion and of the fact that He is a principle of motion, since this makes it more difficult to conceive of Him a principle of essences. Indeed, many [commentators] (*al-qawm*) do not go beyond mentioning that he [A.] establishes that He is a cause of motion (*muḥarrrik*) and not that He is also a principle of existence. Indeed, it is inconceivable for motion to be the path toward establishing the Real One (*al-aḥad al-ḥaqq*), who is the principle of all existence.’*

‘We thus say that the fact that they make the first principle a principle of the sphere’s *motion* does not entail that they make it a principle of the sphere’s *substance*.’

‘We also say that their position that the motion of the sphere is truly necessary without beginning or end is one whose consequences need to be examined further.’

‘We thus say that they have not established (1) that the existence of body of the sphere is necessary in itself; nor (2) that if it does exist, it necessarily has motion; nor (3) that if it did not have some motion, its essence would be null (*baṭala*).’

‘Rather, they say that since the sphere exists and since it is, in fact, in motion, its motion necessarily has no beginning. They thus make the eternity of motion depend on its *already* existing. The necessity of [the sphere] being perpetually in motion is thus based on it having motion. But this does not require that it must necessarily have motion no matter what (*kayfa kāna*), such that, should we assume it to exist but do not know if it has ever been in motion, it need not have either eternal *or* non-eternal motion. This makes it clear that the someone who attempts to establish the sphere’s motion in this way fails both to establish a cause that brings its [the sphere’s] essence into being (*mūjid*) as well as to explain how its matter and its form proceed from this cause.’

‘All in all, it would be strange if (1) there were an eternal object of desire (*muštahan*) from which another thing receives (*mutaqabbilin*) [motion], and if (2) for this reason, it were necessary that the receiver remain eternally in motion – (2a) despite [the receiver] being finite in power and (2b) without another cause being added to this – unless there were another cause: an emanation by which the object of love (which is the aim) becomes a principle of influence and activity and then, at a second level, because of its influence

(*mā yu' attir*), becomes a principle of longing (*šawq*) and desire *qua* object of love (*ma' šūq*.)

'Moreover, how could a lover (*'āšiq*) whose power is finite gain anything from the existence of its eternally subsisting object of love if it [the lover] only loves it [the object],¹⁵ without there being some relationship between them in addition to love (*'iṣq*)?'

'It would also be strange if this thing were a cause neither of the body of the heaven nor of its soul but nevertheless played the role of an object of love for its soul, which could only happen once the soul already existed. The link between the two of them is precisely this.'

'In addition, this thing is said to be a cause of the soul of the heaven without being prior to it. One might then ask: in what manner it is a cause for the body of the heaven and in what manner it is a cause for its soul such that, when the two of them are in existence, it plays the role of object of love for the soul of the lover of the heaven and causes its body to be in motion for all time?'

'Moreover, how is it possible for a thing to intellectually grasp the First if it subsists in a body and is accidentally in motion with it? For this thing will come to have parts due to its body's parts changing places. Indeed, we have already demonstrated that such an intelligible – or indeed any intelligible which is intellectuated – is to be considered as something other than its impression in matter.'

'Things like this reveal their idiocy, their confusion, their incapacity, and how far they are from grasping the truth.'

He [IS] said: 'Then he [A.] says that the "First is most suitable and fitting (*murtaḍā wa-malā'im*)" (72a35).¹⁶ In other words this First, whom we already said was first in the intelligible order, is suitable in that He is in His essence such that He cannot have a real perfection unless it belongs to Him essentially. Indeed, real perfection *is* perfection that is appropriately suited to Him. And he uses 'fitting' to indicate that he is reaffirming what he referred to earlier using the expression 'choiceworthy in itself' (*muḵtār bi-dātihī*). His 'fittingness' consists in the fact that the influence each thing receives from Him is fitting for it – whether it is natural or animal (*nafsāniyan*) or intellectual. For each thing receives something according to its ability from the excellence of His being. And there is a certain degree of resemblance in

¹⁵The Arabic text is syntactically ambiguous between (1) the lover only loving the object of love or (2) the object of love only loving the lover. GJS (50) opt for (2): "Quel bénéfice l'amant dont la puissance est finie tirera-t-il de ce que son Aimé, lui qui subsiste éternellement, l'aime seulement, s'il n'y a entre eux une relation autre que d'amour?" However, I have opted for (1) since there is been no mention of a reciprocal love between the First and the universe in the present text (though Ibn Sinā does argue for this explicitly in *Letter on Love* S7) and because the opposition between lover and object of love suggests the directionality in (1).

¹⁶The translation used by IS departs rather significantly from the Greek, which reads: "The first is always best or analogous to the best". (*kai estin ariston aei ē analogon to prōton*).

what each thing receives from Him, starting with a thing's mere existence and ending in its utmost ability to take on the perfections of existence, until it reaches power and knowledge – though these are mere shadows of the perfections of His essence and His attributes! – and receives His reality in an intellectual manner. His divinity is thus imprinted in the substance of the receiver and this impression varies in its excellence depending on the rank of the receivers; the strongest in grasping Him are the most similar to Him in His grasping himself.'

56 'Multiplicity (*al-kuṭra*) occurs among generated beings (*al-mutakawwīnāt*) because, for some of them, the necessitating cause is the First in Himself, while for others the First is not a cause in Himself but only through an intermediary. As he [A.] says, multiplicity occurs because some things immediately come about from Him, while others immediately come about from things other than Him, though all things ascend toward Him.'

57 *He [IS] said:* 'Then he [A.] says that what we have described is thus "a *cause of motion (muḥarrīk)* but is not *in motion and exists in actuality*" (72b7–8) and that what is in motion due to this cause also exists in actuality. It is therefore necessary that He be untouched by any alterity (*ḡayriyya*), that is to say by any difference in state. For when states are renewed, the differences of states necessarily give rise to movement in respect of place. And thus, differences in state cannot affect that which does not move in respect of place.'

58 'He [A.] then says that (1) insofar as He causes motion because He is in Himself the "object of love" (72b3) and (2) insofar as what is in motion has a disposition for being affected in a manner that entails motion, the influencer and what is influenced are united by their respective conditions. And insofar as this is so, acting and being affected (*al-fi'l wa-l-infi'āl*) must be necessary, including when it comes to those capacities tied to rationality. Acting and being affected are thus both necessary – a generous necessity with a noble existence, for the order of the universe (*nizām al-kull*) depends on it. And by 'necessity' we do not mean necessity of compulsion or a necessity which must be inherent to the thing in question, but rather necessity in the sense that it is not possible for it to exist in any other manner.'

59 'This way of putting things does *not* mean that the heavens and their motion are in themselves necessary, *nor* that it is impossible for them to be otherwise than they in fact are. Rather, they are necessary only in light of the aforementioned condition. Indeed nothing, considered in itself and with no reference towards what it receives from the Real First (*al-ḥaqq al-'awwal*), exists necessarily, but only possibly. Moreover, were it conceivable for the relation between things and the Real First to be broken, all things

would be annihilated and nullified. For considered in themselves, all things are null and “perishable except the Face”¹⁷ of the Real First, the Real in Himself, the one who clothes other things with the Reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of their existence – exalted be His power!

§10 ‘Some people think that this necessity is necessary by itself, and do not distinguish between what is conditionally and what is truly necessary. They thus say things like the following: “I said to *Abū Biṣr [Mattā]*,¹⁸ ‘Since [the heavens] are necessarily what they are, what role is there for the First Cause?’ And he said, ‘The endurance (*dawām*) of motion’.”

§11 ‘But this is impossible, for the role of the Real First is that necessity comes from Him and that, in itself, nothing else possesses necessity. The fact that they claim that necessity belong to things in themselves but that endurance belongs to them from something else indeed demonstrates their foolishness. This necessity – which [supposedly] belongs to things in themselves – thus does not guarantee endurance unless it is derived from something else. It would indeed be remarkable for there to be a motion whose necessity did not guarantee its endurance and which would not be necessary with regards to the course of its motion. There would thus be a motion that exists independently of the cause of its motion. On the contrary: motion, its existence, the necessity of this existence when it exists, and the endurance of this existence all depend on the causes of motion. And we make sure not to render¹⁹ God the Most High solely a cause of motion. Rather, He is the source of *being* for all substances that are capable of motion, and not simply of the *motion* of the heavens.’

‘For He is the First and He is the Real and He is the principle of the essence of all substances. And all things except Him are necessary through Him and attain necessity by the link which necessarily obtains between Him and each thing.’

§12 *He [IS] said*: ‘He [A.] then says, “On an origin (*badw*) like this, then, depend the heavens” (72b13–14). This means on a First thing and on a principle (*mabdaʿ*) like this: one and simple; intelligible in Himself, whether He is intellected by anything other than Himself or not; Pure Good; beloved by the universe though it is not directly aware of Him.’

¹⁷A reference to a Qurʾanic verse (Q 28:88).

¹⁸The Baghdadi Christian peripatetic philosopher and translator (c. 870–940AD/257–328AH), who did many of the earliest Arabic translations of Aristotle and taught Fārābī, among others.

¹⁹“We make sure not to render ...” reading *narfaʿ uhu an ʿan najʿ aluhu* with Badawi (26). GJ (54) interpret the verbs, which are unpointed in the MSS. (*يجعله عن أن يرفعه*) as third person, *yarfaʿ uhu an ʿan yajʿ aluhu*, with Aristotle as the implied subject. “[Aristote] exempte Dieu d’être posé seulement comme cause du mouvement”.

‘Necessity flows forth from Him into things and existents thus have necessity from His power and from the power of His authority, which strips any authority from the absolute privation that belongs to other things. Either (1) He prevents this privation entirely, from beginning to end, or (2) a capacity to exist comes about due to Him – existence which is facilitated by the receptivity of passive things due to their preparation. On an origin like this, then, depends this universe.’

‘By ‘dependence’ (*ta’liq*) he means that the essence [of the universe] is sustained by Him and by His omnipotence, not merely that its motion comes from Him. For this would be something unworthy of Him. For even though motion does also come from Him, it is not fitting for Him to be limited to this, as those commentators would have it.’

§13 ‘Themistius does get this right insofar as he makes clear that the First Principle intellects Himself and then intellects all things through Himself; He thus intellects the intellectual world in an instant, with no need to move from one intelligible to another. Themistius also grasps that He does not intellect things as objects independent of Himself, which He would then intellect through themselves, as we do with sensory objects. Instead, He intellects them through His own essence. Moreover, the reason that His existence must be that of an intellect is not due to the existence of the intellects, in which case it would be *their* existence that would render Him an intellect. In fact, it is the other way around. Themistius then says that there would be nothing noble if the First had something that brought Him to completion, regardless of whether the objects of His intellection were one or many.’

§14 ‘Aristotle says that “Nature is like a sound state (*ḥāl ṣāliḥa*) for us ...” (72b14–15). He then uses this to indicate how such an origin, who intellects His own essence and the perfection and nobility of His reality, rejoices and takes pleasure in His essence, even though He is too great for us to ascribe to him any passive pleasure. Instead, it should be called delight or something else. For the magnificence and the lofty splendors of His essence doubtless belong to Him essentially and He doubtless grasps these.’

‘Indeed, the meaning of pleasure when it comes to the objects of sense perception is nothing but the same feeling of what is fitting and perfect that arises insofar as these are felt to be and truly are such. For how great must be His fundamental grasp of real and final perfection! How great must it be, given that the delight we take in grasping the Real is indescribable! How great it is, if the Real is like the Real as we grasp Him – we who are separated from Him, caught up in the pursuit of needs external to what befits our essential reality and that which makes us truly human beings.’

‘We thus say that we can sometimes – despite our weakness at conceiving powerful intelligibles and though we are submerged in corporeal nature – move along a difficult and furtive path until contact (*ittiṣāl*) with the Real First manifests itself to us, which is like wondrous happiness for a very short time. And yet “He is in this state eternally, which is not possible for us” (72b15–16). For we are embodied and cannot glimpse this flash of divine lightning except momentarily and surreptitiously.’

“Pleasure, then, is actuality for Him” (72b16): actual Being with no passivity and nothing other than a perfect grasp; that is, actual Being for grasping only that which is fitting. This is why we take pleasure in being awake – for it is a sort of grasping – and in sensation insofar as it is active rather than idle. Understanding and conceiving, moreover, are pleasurable in themselves because they are a complete life – indeed, life is, as it were, the capacity for these. And hope and memory are both pleasurable due to understanding. For hope makes us grasp that which is potential as if it were existing, and in this state we take pleasure in imagining it. Memory – or recollection – of delightful things makes it as though they were present. As for understanding, we take pleasure in it for itself alone.’²⁰

‘He [A.] then says, “As for the kind of understanding that is in itself superior, this is understanding of that which is in itself most excellent” (72b18). And that which understands itself (which is the essence of the intellect when it acquires the intelligible) indeed “becomes intelligible, in a state as though it were touching it the intelligible” (72b21–22). The intellect and that which intellects and the intelligible only become one through the relation of the thing’s essence to itself. For here, the essence is one, namely the intelligible form. Similarly, one might say that the intelligible form belongs to this singular essence – in other words, the essence of the intelligible form is no different from the single essence insofar as it is in itself intelligible.’

‘Then he [A.] said that “it would be wondrous if the Divine were always in the state that we sometimes are in – and all the more wondrous if He were in a better state. And this is indeed the state He is in” (72b24–26).’

§15 ‘This amounts to him [A.] saying that it would be extremely wondrous and most magnificent even the First had no delight in his essence *other* than the capacity we have for delighting in Him when we apply the utmost of our intellectual effort to [grasping] His omnipotence – refusing all natural objects of love and attending to the Real insofar as He is Real, we cutting ourselves off from nullities insofar as they are null – and delight in Him and in our essence insofar as it makes contact with Him and if this ability were to continue eternally. But if there were something *greater* than

²⁰Cf. the definitions of love in the *Letter on Love* §1 and *Pointers and Reminders* viii.18.

this that lasted eternally, or something incommensurate with it, this would be all the greater still and even more magnificent!’

§16 ‘Then he [A.] says “And He is life” (72b26). That is, He is alive in His essence and is perfect because He grasps all things in actuality, and He pervades all things with His power. The life that we possess, meanwhile, is only called life when it is combined with a meager capacity for perceptually grasping things and for causing motion. But in His case, ‘life’ refers to the complete existence in actuality of the intellect. This is what the intellect is; and more particularly it is the intellect which in its essence intellectually apprehends (*yata’ aqqal*) each thing in its essence.’²¹

‘Then he [A.] says, “And thus He is life and continuous unceasing eternity” (72b29–30) which is to say that He is alive in His essence and subsists in His essence. “For this, indeed, is the Divine” (72b30).’

[On Chapter 8]

‘Then he [A.] investigates whether there is one or more than one separate and immaterial cause of motion (*muḥarrrik*). He says (1) that if there are multiple motions (*ḥarakāt*) and (2) that if a single cause of motion corresponds to a single thing in motion (*mutaḥarrrik*), then the number of separate causes of motion will necessarily correspond to the [number of] things eternally in motion.’

‘But he does not make it clear why it must be—when it comes to things whose motion is due to a cause like the object of desire—that this cause must be specific to each particular motion. Instead, he takes this for granted.’

‘He then concludes on the basis of what he said previously that there is some multiplicity in separate substances insofar as they are ordered as first or second.’

§17 *He [IS] says that*, ‘this may be true, but it does not follow clearly from what he says. Indeed, what he says does not rule out the possibility of a separate cause of motion which causes motion like the object of desire nor of numerous things being in motion because of it. He should rather have found the cause that makes this necessary.’

‘And as for his talk of “being ordered as first and second”, (73b2) if he means by ‘ordering’ that some causes of motion are the causes of others, this is not clear from what he says. What he says necessitates in a merely subsidiary manner that there are multiple separate causes of motion. But he does not succeed in making clear either:

²¹ ... that which *in its essence* intellectually apprehends each thing *in its essence*”: reading “... *‘allaḍī min ḍātihi yata’ aqqal kulla šay’ in min ḍātihi*”, with ms. Q and Badawi (28). GJS (61) excise the second *‘min ḍātihi*’ and translate “... *intellige toute chose à partir de son essence*”, which results in what seems like a somewhat unnecessary ambiguity.

(1) how these are related to the Real First as regards to their existence
or

(2) how they are related to one another:

(2a) are they are simultaneous (*ma'an*) in their essences, such that none of them depends on another?²² Or ...

(2b) do they all depend together [on one common thing]? Or ...

(2c) do they depend [on one another] according to an ordering?'

'And one ought to know²³ that, in this gentleman's²⁴ opinion, each sphere has a separate cause of motion with unlimited power, which causes motion in the same manner as objects of desire.'

'Moreover, one ought to consider that the object of desire is not the principle of motion nor is it that which is responsible for motion. There is rather something else: a thing that causes motion insofar as it loves Him and desires to have contact (*ittiṣāl*) with Him or to imitate (*taṣabbuh*) Him, or to attain (*nayl*) Him, or something else desirable. This is the cause of motion in the sense of a principle of motion that guarantees motion. And this is doubtless the form of the heavenly body, which has perception and is therefore a soul, since the body itself, qua body, cannot be in motion by itself. For if we granted that it were in motion by itself, it would not be able to grasp an intelligible object, whether it desired it intellectually or only in a manner that resembles intellectual desire.'

'Regarding Aristotle's account, he thus appears to hold (1) that there are causes of motion which act *qua* separate objects of desire and (2) that there are causes of motion internal to the heavenly bodies, which act insofar as they desire to imitate these separate causes of motion.'

§18 'Then he [A.] seeks the number of causes of motion via the number of motions of the spheres (which was not apparent during his time, but has become so only since then).²⁵

'He then sets out to clarify that the First Principle is one by means of the fact that the world is one. He thus holds that when there is agreement in definition, any plurality is due to a plurality in material elements.'

'Then he says that "as for what belongs to the First Being (*al-anniyya al-ūlā*)" – that is, the First Reality of the Real First – "it has no elements, for it is complete" (74a35), because it is an existing essence (*anniyya*), subsisting

²²I.e. that none is prior or posterior to any other.

²³'One ought to know ...': reading *yu'raf*, with Badawi (29). GJS (65) read *ta'rif* ('il te faut savoir'), though IS does not otherwise address his reader directly in the second person in this text. The MSS. omit the point on the first letter: معرف.

²⁴Literally 'the man' (*ar-rajul*) – likely meant to connote respect (See GJS, 98n6), though may also be intended sarcastically, just as the above translation, 'gentleman', can also be read with a sarcastic inflection.

²⁵A reference to Aristotle's uncertainty at Λ 8, 1074a1–14 regarding the precise number (either 47 or 55) of spheres and their movers.

in actuality, untouched by potentiality.²⁶ “The First Cause of motion is thus One in account and in number” (74a36). In other words, His account (i.e. the expression that explains His name) is one and He is also one in number. That is, He has a single essence in which two essences have no part.’

§19 ‘And after saying that the cause of motion of this heaven is one, he says that the heaven is necessarily one. For if there were multiple heavens, they would have multiple principles. And this is inadmissible, since there is, on the contrary, only a single principle. This makes clear that “there is only a single heaven” (74a31). And, once it is developed and completed, this account is true and powerful.’

[On Chapter 9]

§20 ‘He [A.] then starts in on some of the divine attributes – may His greatness be exalted – and says that there is difficulty in understanding how this principle exists in Himself and in intellecting Himself. “For were He not in actuality intellecting, then what would He have that is honorable?” (74b17–18) – which is to exist at the height of perfection? Instead, He would be in a state like our state when asleep. And, if He intellected particular things, these things would be prior to Him and He would thus be constituted by what His essence intellected. His substance in itself, in its power and its nature, would thus be to receive the intelligibles of particular things. And hence there would be something potential in His nature, since He would be perfected by something external to Himself – such that if this external thing did not exist, He would not have an idea of it (*ma’ nā*) and would be deprived of it. What would belong to Him – in His very nature and considered in Himself and independently of anything else – would be to lack intelligibles. (But on the contrary, it is also part of his nature for these to belong to *Him*, otherwise they would not exist at all.) Considered in Himself, He would thus be mixed with contingency and potentiality, even were we to assume that He remained always existent in actuality. For what is most excellent and perfect would not belong to Him in His essence, but rather through something else. His perfection would thus come from the thing He intellects, and if this thing did not exist, He would not intellect it.’

²⁶The usual sense of *anniya* for Ibn Sinā refers to a thing insofar as it concretely exists – *haecceity* as opposed to *ipseity*, in the traditional scholastic terminology. GJS (64), by contrast, translate *anniya* here as ‘ipseité’ based on Uṣṭāṭ’s use of the term to render A’s *to ti ên einai*. By eschewing the scholastic terms I hope to capture something of both senses, i.e. the essence *qua* existent, reinforcing its characterization as ‘subsisting in actuality’ in the next clause.

See Goichon, sv. *anniyya* and R.M Frank, “Origin”.

§21 ‘He [A.] presents this topic in similar terms: he says that, “moreover, if His substance is intellect and intellecting”(74b21),²⁷ this is so either (1) because He intellects His own essence or (2) because He intellects something else. And, if He intellected something else, He would not, according to the definition of His essence, be anything other than something relative to what He intellects.’

‘But would it be appropriately excellent and majestic for His intellection, considered in itself, if some states in which He intellected things other [than Himself] were better for Him than certain other states in which He did not? Or would it rather be better for Him not to intellect than to intellect?’

‘The former option is impossible for Him. That is, it is impossible that it could be better for Him to intellect something other than Himself than to intellect that which He possesses in Himself, given that He is in Himself a thing that necessarily intellects. For His excellence and perfection would then derive from things other than Himself.’

‘Is it impossible, then, for Him to intellect things other than Himself? For in Himself and according to His own particular rank of existence, He cannot be considered from a perspective outside of Himself, so exceedingly great is His rank. He needs nothing outside of Himself and He does not change, whether the change be temporal or a change in which His essence receives an influence from anything else. For even if this thing were eternal in time, its essence would nevertheless be lower in essential rank. Indeed, one must not accept that He changes in any way at all, since His transformation could only be for the worse and never the better – for any rank other than His own is lower than His. Indeed, anything He could receive or by which He might be qualified would be inferior to Him and would be something connected to motion, particularly if it were temporally posterior to Him. This is just what he [A.] means by “change toward that which is bad” (74b27).’

§22 ‘Moreover, he [A.] is incorrect in maintaining that “continuous intellection is tiring for the intellect” (74b29). Indeed, he forgot that he said himself that the material intellect *increases* in its power by intellecting and that, in its substance, it does not tire. Rather, it tires due to what it requires from the passive intellect (*al-‘aql al-munfa‘al*) and the passive intellect’s instruments. And he does not claim that the human soul is in actuality an intellect. Moreover, when a thing is perfected, it need not become fatigued and tired. Tiredness is an injury that only occurs because of a departure from [a thing’s] natural state, which only comes about when there are successive motions contrary to its natural aims.’

²⁷The Arabic translation of the *Metaphysics* diverges significantly from the Greek, which presents “intellect” (Ar: *‘aql*, Gr: *nous*) and “intellection” (Ar: *‘an ya‘qil*, equivalent to the more common *ta‘aqqul*; Gr: *noesis*). See also Goichon s.v. *ta‘aqqul*) as alternative candidates for the substance of the first principle, not equivalents. See also GJS, 103n4.

‘As for that which is fitting²⁸ – pure pleasure in which there is nothing contrary whatsoever – its repetition need not be tiring. Nor is what Themistius says true: he says that an intellect is untiring only because it intellects its own essence, just as a thing does not tire from loving its essence. But it is not because a thing intellects its essence or something other than its essence that it tires or does not tire. Instead, it does not tire because there is no contrary to anything in the substance of the one intellecting.’

§23 ‘Then he [A.] says: what is truly noble is therefore not that essence which is in potentiality nor is it that intelligible which is taken to be best and most suitable. For the former is a movement toward actuality and the latter is a grasp of external intelligibles: traces of the low and ignoble would thus be present at the utmost point of nobility. But all this is impossible. It may rather be correct that, in Himself, He intellects His essence within the bounds of His essence. For there are “many more things that it is better not to perceive than to perceive” (74b32). And thus it is not best to intellect any chance thing in all cases, but rather “to intellect His own essence” (74b33).’

§24 ‘I [IS] say that the gentleman²⁹ would be claiming something impossible if he meant that it would be better for Him to intellect only His essence. For if He truly intellects His essence at the core of what it really is (*‘alā kunhi mā hiyya ‘alayhi*), He intellects in actuality what in itself follows upon His essence and intellects that His essence is a principle [of other things]. He must then fully intellect all that there is³⁰ – otherwise he would not intellect His essence at the core of what it is.’

‘However, he [A.] is correct if he means that His intellection is above all the intellection of His essence, and that He intellects other things through His essence. For other things are not the cause of His being an intellect. Rather, the fact that He is essentially an intellect is the cause of other things. But he ought to have indicated this and not kept quiet about it.’

He [IS] said: ‘One should also not take for granted that it is better not to perceive some things than to perceive them. In fact, this is an extremely vulgar way of speaking.’

‘Then he says: “Indeed he intellects His essence, since He is most powerful” (74b33–4). I say that he appears to have this view and to express it by saying that He intellects other things through His essence and indeed *because* He intellects His essence. And this is the case because Aristotle determined that He intellects His essence, which is what he was searching

²⁸See also Ch. 7, §5, p. 11 *supra*.

²⁹See n24 *supra*.

³⁰Or “the universe” (*al-kull*).

for – though he left aside what was probably his own view, namely that He intellects other things through His essence – and did not discuss it.³¹ And when he says “since He is most powerful,” he means that He intellects His essence because He is the best of all things. And He has no deficiency insofar as His essence is perfected through itself, but [He would have some deficiency were it perfected] through something else.’

‘He [A.] then says: “He intellects intellection (*ya’qil at-ta’ aqqul*)” (74b34), which means that He intellects His essence and intellects that it is in actuality something intellecting.’

§25 ‘He [A.] then points out that there is no distinction in Him between the intellect, the one who intellects, and the intelligible, though this claim does not entail the doctrine that the intellect and the intelligible and the one who intellects are one in *all* instances.’

‘Then he [A.] says: “if His intellecting and His being intellected were different, then which of these two states would be best?” For on the surface, “being intellected and intellecting are indeed not the same” (74b36–8). But this is not true – or at least it need not be like this in all instances. It should not be taken for granted that being intellected and intellecting are distinct in all cases.’

‘Rather, for a thing to be intellected is for its form not to be distinct from an immaterial thing, while for it to be intellecting is for it to *be* the form of an immaterial thing that is not distinct from it. And when this thing [which is intellected] is the essence [of that which intellects], its being intellected is the same as its intellecting. And when this thing is *not* its essence, then that which is intellected and that which intellects would be different things.’

‘Now as for the intellect, it is not a third thing in this case. Rather, it is a third thing only in cases where that which intellects and that which is intellected are different things. In such cases, the intellect is something other than the three of them together. The reason for this is because ‘intellect’ can mean:

- (1) The substance of the essence whose nature is to intellect, but which is in its essence an intellect only in relation to that which comes about in it in addition to its essence, which intellects.
- (2) The relation itself of this essence to that which it intellects.
- (3) The power and dispositions of this essence.

But whichever one of these is meant, the intellect differs from what it intellects in cases where it intellects something other than its own essence. And no concrete thing (*šay’ bi-‘aynihi*) exists in a thing that intellects its own essence, except in the sense that this thing truly intellects a truth which encompasses all necessity and possibility.’

³¹This sentence is found two paragraphs later in the MSS, following the sentence ending “... one in all instances”. I follow GJS in transposing it to its current location.

‘Then he [A.] says that things are not so. Rather, when it comes to intellection of this sort,³² the state of intellection and that of being intellected are one and the same.’

[On Chapter 10]

‘He [A.] then aims to clarify how the universe is ordered (*al- ḥāl fi tartīb al-kull*) with regard to what is most excellent and best and with regard to just order (*an-niẓām al-‘adl*).’

‘He then explains what he means by this: namely that we must examine and learn what the Good – that is, the existence of the artisan, and “that which is noble in the nature of the whole” (75a11) – is like. Is the Good separate, as some think, or does it exist in the essences being ordered. Or is it one genus with two species – separate and mixed together? We know that this good ordering (*at-tartīb al-jayyid*) possesses good order (*an-niẓām al-jayyid*) and contains a principle as its primary element. Moreover, this principle “does not exist on account of the ordering but rather the ‘army’ and the whole ordering exist on its account” (75a17).³³

526 ‘Then he [A.] says: “all things” in the nature of the universe “are indeed ordered in some way” (75a18), though this is not an ordering of equality (*tartīb al-musāwā*). For the state of wild animals is not like that of birds, and neither of their states is like that of plants. Yet, despite this, they are not entirely separate – isolated and cut off from one another with no contact or relation between them. Instead, despite these differences there is continuity as well as a unifying relation that joins the universe with the First Origin (*al-aṣl al-awwal*) – which is the principle from which generosity and order emanates in accordance with the ability of each thing in the nature of the universe to be ordered toward Him.’

‘Then he [A.] explains what he means by the ordering of nature in the universe being like the ordering of the household: namely that the freemen and masters are not at liberty to do everything haphazardly. Instead, they have to act in ways particular to them that depend on the order [of the household]. The slaves and servants (and the dogs and cats), meanwhile, only share in the formers’ activities to a small degree: most of what they do is instead haphazard and exists outside a sustained ordering. Yet despite this, the principle for each one of them derives from the household as a whole. (This principle is namely the master of the household.)

³²Viz. God’s intellection.

³³Not a direct quotation from any known Arabic translation. The mention of the army is a very telegraphic reference – from which we can infer that Ibn Sinā was writing for an audience well-acquainted with the text of the *Metaphysics* – to Aristotle’s comparison of the relation between the separate good and the good contained within the order of the cosmos to the relation between a general and his army.

It is like this in nature as well. There are first parts, sovereign and precious, which have specific actions, like the heavens – as well as that which sets them in motion, governs them, and takes precedence over them. There are also lowly and lesser regions, where most things occur haphazardly, mixed with nature and volition. Yet even here the course in every case is toward a single point.’

‘Then he [A.] says that the principle of each of these parts is like this and is the foundation for its way of being and for what it is capable of taking on (*iḥti-māluhu*). Beings of the highest rank are able to approach what is most excellent, while the second rank is below this, and the third (that of the heavenly bodies) is lower still. And our rank is below all of these. For when things are not capable of taking on [good]properties, this is not due to Him who provides and emanates existence, but rather because each individual essence (*māhiyya*) of each of these things can only clothe itself with existence and perfection in this way. This is why frailty, deformity, and illness occur as a consequence of the necessity of deficient matter, which does not receive the form in both its first and its second perfection. Instead, it either does not receive it at all or receives its first perfection but not the second. The complete and perfected version of this discourse is to be sought in the *Easterners*.’³⁴

‘Then he [A.] says – correctly – that if we do not approach things in this manner, we will end up stuck in the same confusions where our predecessors ended up. He then enumerates the doctrines of the dualists and deems them false.’

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³⁴See p. 2n2 supra.

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