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THE TWICE-REVEALED AVERROES*

By HARRY A. WOLFSON

AVERROES was revealed twice to European philosophy: first in the thirteenth century and then in the sixteenth century. In my talk this afternoon I shall try to recall to our minds the circumstances which had led to each of these revelations and to discuss the problems which they each gave rise to.

I shall first take up the revelation in the thirteenth century.

In the second half of the eighth century, for reasons which need not here be gone into, a fervid activity of translating works on philosophy from the Greek into Arabic was started in Islam. It lasted for about two and a half centuries. During that time, among the many works translated, were almost all the works of Aristotle and many of his Greek commentaries. The study of these translations led to original writings on philosophy, beginning with the works of al-Kindi (d. 820) and ending with those of Averroes (d. 1198). Most of these philosophic works written originally in Arabic consisted of independent systematic treatises; but those of Averroes consisted mainly of commentaries on Aristotle. Of these commentaries, five were written in three forms, known as Long, Middle, and Epitome; ten only in two forms, Middle and Epitome; two only in the form of the Epitome; and one only in that of the Middle.¹ In addition to these, there are many short treatises by Averroes on special topics in Aristotelian philosophy,² among them his treatise *De Substantia Orbis*,³ his *Quaestiones in Physica*,⁴ and his lost *Treatise on the Prime Mover*.⁵ Without counting these short treatises on

* Delivered at the annual meeting of the Fellows of the Mediaeval Academy of America, on 29 April 1960.

¹ Cf. M. Bouyges, "Inventaire des textes arabes d'Averroès," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph, Beyrouth*, VIII (1922), 13 ff.

² Cf. Steinschneider, *Die hebräischen Übersetzungen*, §§91-107.

³ Edited, translated, and annotated by Prof. Arthur Hyman and to be published in the *Corpus Commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem*.

⁴ Edited, translated, and annotated by Dr Helen Tunik Goldstein and to be published in the *Corpus*.

⁵ Cf. H. A. Wolfson, "Averroes' Lost Treatise on the Prime Mover," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XXII, 1 (1950-51), 683-710.

special topics and also the doubtful commentary on *De Plantis*, and counting *Parva Naturalia* as one, there are thirty-eight commentaries of Averroes on Aristotle.

With the Christian reconquest of Toledo in 1085, a school of translators from the Arabic into Latin was established there shortly after 1130 under the patronage of its archbishop. Before the close of the century, certain Arabic translations of Aristotle and of Greek commentaries on Aristotle, as well as of original Arabic works on philosophy, were translated from the Arabic into Latin.⁶ These translations created a demand for other translations from the Arabic. And so in the second decade of the thirteenth century, less than twenty years after the death of Averroes, there began a systematic attempt to translate his commentaries into Latin. The translators who dedicated themselves to this task were Michael Scot and Hermann the German. Both of them had started their work in Toledo and then, either both or only Michael, drifted into the court of Frederick II, the then patron of translations from the Arabic. Within a period of thirty-nine years (1217–1256), they produced translations of four of the five Long commentaries, those on the *Physica*, *De Caelo*, *De Anima*, and *Metaphysica*. These contained also Latin translations of the Arabic translations of the Greek text of Aristotle, according as they were quoted in these commentaries of Averroes. They produced also translations of the Middle commentaries on *Rhetorica*, *Poetica*, *De Caelo*, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, and *Ethica Nicomachea*; and also a translation of the Epitome of *Parva Naturalia*.⁷ To these two translators may be added a third one, William of Luna, a contemporary of theirs, who translated Averroes' Middle commentaries on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, the *Categories*, and *De Interpretatione*;⁸ and also his Middle commentaries on *Analytica Priora* and *Analytica Posteriora*.⁹

The reception of these translations of Averroes' commentaries by Christian philosophers may be described by a term currently in vogue as ambivalent.¹⁰ They praised him as commentator but damned him as theologian. For Averroes occasionally, in his exposition of Aristotle on innocuous problems of philosophy, digresses to pay his respect to certain touchy problems of religion. Already in the thirteenth century, while he was hailed by William of Auvergne (1228–1249) as "the most noble philosopher" (*philosophus nobilissimus*),¹¹ by St Thomas as "the Commentator" (*Commentator*),¹² and by Dante as "he who made the grand commentary (*il gran commento*)," ¹³ he was decried by all of these, as well as by others,

⁶ Cf. Steinschneider, "Die europäischen Übersetzungen aus dem Arabischen," *Sitzungsberichte d. Wiener Akademie*, cxi (1905), 1–84, under "Gerard von Cremona" (pp. 16 ff.) and "Johannes Hispalensis" (pp. 40 ff.).

⁷ *Ibid.*, under "Hermannus Alemannus" (pp. 32 f.) and "Michael Scotus" (pp. 55 ff.).

⁸ *Ibid.*, under "Wilhelmus de Lunis apud Neapolim," p. 80.

⁹ Cf. G. Lacombe, *Aristoteles Latinus*, I, pp. 101–2, 207–10.

¹⁰ Cf. Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroïsme*, 2nd ed. (1861), pp. 205 ff.

¹¹ *II De Universo* ii, 8 (op. 1574, p. 851, col. 2). ¹² *Sum. Theol.* i, 3, 5 obj. 2.

¹³ *Inferno* iv, 144. The expression *gran commento* does not simply mean the Great or Long Commentary as distinguished from the "Middle" Commentary or "Epitome," for in the translations of that time these distinctions were not stressed.

for certain heretical views. Special books were written against him and time and again was he publicly condemned. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, Giles of Rome, in his work, *Errores Philosophorum*, devotes a special chapter to the errors of Averroes.¹⁴

I should like to discuss some of these errors, and to discuss them not for their own sake, as problems of philosophy and theology, but rather as examples illustrating two predicaments, the predicament of language and the predicament of the apperceptive mass, which every student of the history of the transmission of ideas so often encounters in the course of his studies. The manner in which Averroes was received by the Schoolmen is a good illustration of these two predicaments. Transferred as he was from the Arabic world with its Islamic background to the Latin world of mediaeval Christianity, Averroes' vocabulary and pronouncements often invoked in the minds of his new readers associations and meanings springing from an accumulated mass of knowledge quite different in origin and composition. For our purpose here I have selected the first three statements contained in the first of the twelve errors which Giles of Rome found in Averroes.

Here is one statement. To quote: "Because he reviled all law, as is clear from book II of the *Metaphysics* and also from book XI, where he reviles the law of the Christians, that is our Catholic law, and also the law of the Saracens, because they maintain the creation of the universe and that something can be produced out of nothing."

The statement is verbally correct. In his commentary on the *Metaphysics* XII, Comm. 18, in the 1574 Junta edition of Aristotle's works, vol. 8, p. 305 F, Averroes explicitly says that "the *Loquentes* of the three laws which exist today" believe in creation *ex nihilo*, and that he rejects it. It is also true that the *Loquentes* of the three laws or religions maintained creation *ex nihilo*. In Christianity, Patristic and Scholastic philosophers maintain it. Jewish philosophers of the Arabic period, for the most part, describe creation as being *ex nihilo*. In Islam one of the early creeds, the Fikh Akbar II, which may have originated in the middle of the tenth century, says in Article 5: "Allah has not created things from a pre-existing thing."¹⁵ Still, Giles' statement that Averroes, by his denying creation *ex nihilo*, was reviling the Muslim religion just as he was reviling the Christian religion, is not an accurate statement, for the status of the belief in creation *ex nihilo* in Islam was different from that in Christianity and consequently for a Muslim at the time of Averroes to have denied creation *ex nihilo*, as it was rigidly understood in Christianity, and to substitute for it another theory of creation, was not the same as for a Christian at the time of Giles of Rome to come out with such a denial and to substitute for it another theory of creation.

Let us briefly analyze the problem of creation as it emerges from the discus-

¹⁴ Cf. *Giles of Rome: Errores Philosophorum*, edited by Josef Koch and translated by John O. Riedl (1944).

¹⁵ Cf. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, pp. 94, 190.

sions of this problem in the Arabic philosophic literature. The problem falls into three parts.

First, irrespective of the question whether the present world existed as it now is from eternity or whether it had come into existence after it had not existed, there is the question whether the world is self-sufficient and causeless or whether it is in some sense dependent upon a cause. The answer, on the basis of the Koran, is that the world is dependent upon a cause, whom the Koran calls God and who is described as Creator.

Second, there is the question whether a Muslim is bound to accept the chronology of the Hebrew Scripture, whereby the age of the present world can be determined by adding to the Christian era either 3760 years, according to the Jewish reckoning, or 5503 years, according to the Patristic reckoning, or 4004, according to Archbishop Ussher's reckoning.¹⁶ The answer is no. The Hebrew scriptural chronology is not mentioned in the Koran, and so a Muslim may believe that the present world is old millions of years. But the Koran does mention that Adam was the first man, and so a Muslim must believe that all mankind is descendant from one man. Accordingly, one of the Twelve Shiite Imams is reported to have said that "millions of Adams passed away before our father Adam" and the Sufis are reported to have said that "forty thousand years before our Adam there was another Adam."¹⁷ Mas'ūdī, speaking for Islam in general, declares that religious philosophers among the Muslims say that "demonstrations may establish the creation of the world" as well as the belief that "the beginning of men is from Adam" but that "it is impossible for us to determine and count up the years," adding that "God has informed us in His Book that He created Adam . . . but He has not furnished us any information with regard to the extent of time that has elapsed since then."¹⁸

Third, there is also the question whether in the Koran there is an explicit mention of creation *ex nihilo*. The answer is no. Quite the opposite, the Koran says something to the effect that God created the heaven out of smoke (41: 10). Thus as early as the ninth century the question whether the world was created *ex nihilo* or out of a preexistent matter appeared in Islam, as I have shown,¹⁹ under the guise of the discussion of the philosophic problem whether the "nonexistent" is "nothing" or "something," and as late as the twelfth century there was still a discussion as to the meaning of the "smoke" out of which according to the Koran, God created the heaven. Zamakhsharī says that the smoke proceeded from the waters under the throne of God, which throne was one of the things created before the heavens and the earth.²⁰ Averroes, however, uses this verse to prove that the heavens were created from something eternal.²¹

¹⁶ Cf. my paper, "The Veracity of Scripture in Philo, Halevi, Maimonides, and Spinoza," *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (1950), pp. 622 ff.

¹⁷ Quoted by Muhammad Ali in his *Translation of the Holy Quran* (Lahore, 1928), p. lxxv.

¹⁸ Mas'ūdī, *Les Prairies d'Or*, iv, 110–111 (texte et traduction par C. Barbier de Meynard, 1865).

¹⁹ "The Kalam Problem of Nonexistence and Saadia's Second Theory of Creation," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, N.S., xxxvi (1946), 371–391.

²⁰ Quoted by Sale in a note to his translation of the Koran 41: 10.

²¹ *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, p. 13, ll. 11–12 (ed. M. I. Müller, under the title of *Philosophie und Theologie von Averroes*, 1859; German translation, 1875).

Orthodox Islam, indeed, decided in favor of creation *ex nihilo* and the phrase *ex nihilo* became standardized, but, standardized though it became, it was interpreted differently, so that a philosopher like Alfarabi, who believed that the world was eternally emanated from the essence of God by the will of God, described that belief of his as a belief in creation *ex nihilo*.²² And it can be shown, I think, that, while orthodox Islam would reject Alfarabi's interpretation of *ex nihilo*, it would not brand it as heretical. For this I can cite no better authority than Algazali, the great champion of Muslim orthodoxy. In his discussion of the problem of creation, Algazali argues especially against those who believe in the eternal emanation of the world from God by necessity, and it is this view which is branded by him as being "in opposition to the religion of Islam."²³ He does not discuss the view of the eternal emanation of the world from the will of God and, though he would undoubtedly reject it on the ground of its assertion of the coeternity of the world with God, but his rejection of it, as his rejection of the coeternity of the world with God in general, would be on purely philosophic grounds.²⁴ This leniency on the part of Muslim orthodoxy toward such a conception of the coeternity of the world with God is based, I venture to suggest, upon a conception of eternity in its relation to God which is distinctive of orthodox Islam. Eternity, to Muslim orthodoxy, is not a property which is peculiar to God alone, and consequently not everything that is eternal must *ipso facto* be God. It is on this ground that orthodox Islam, despite its insistence upon the absolute unity of God, could justify its belief in the reality of eternal attributes existing in God. It is also on this ground that orthodox Islam, while rejecting the belief in an eternal world, even when conceived of as depending upon the will of God for its existence, could still tolerate such a belief and not consider it as inconsistent with the belief in the absolute unity of God.

As for Averroes, he rejects, indeed, the view that the world is coeternal with God in the sense that it is eternally emanated from God. To him, the world is coeternal with God in the sense that it is eternally moved by God. But this its being eternally moved by God is described by him in religious terms as being eternally "created" (*mukdath*) by God and, while he disagrees with the orthodox conception of creation *ex nihilo*, he still uses this expression as a description of his own view, insisting that he uses that expression in its right meaning.²⁵ Similarly, while he denies creation as an act of divine will in the sense in which orthodoxy uses that expression, he still uses that expression as a description of his own view, insisting, again, that he uses it in its right meaning.²⁶ On logical grounds, I imagine, Algazali would have rejected this view of Averroes, but, on strictly religious grounds, he would have no objection to it. And what is true of "the law

²² Cf. my paper, "The Meaning of *ex nihilo* in the Church Fathers, Arabic and Hebrew Philosophy, and St. Thomas," *Mediaeval Studies in Honor of J. D. M. Ford* (1948), p. 358.

²³ *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* III, (ed. Bouyges, 1927) §2, p. 96, ll. 1-4 and III, §16, p. 102, l. 13 (English translation in *Averroes: Tahafut al-Tahafut*, by Simon van den Bergh (1954), pp. 87 and 96).

²⁴ *Ibid.* III, §§17-28, p. 103, l. 4-p. 109, l. 14 (English, pp. 96, 97, 98-99, 99-100, 101, 102).

²⁵ *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* III, (ed. Bouyges, 1930) §§34-38, p. 162, l. 7-p. 165, l. 3. (English, pp. 96-97, 97-98.).

²⁶ *Ibid.* III, §§23-24, p. 157, l. 11-p. 158, l. 12 (English, pp. 93-94.).

of the Saracens," Islam, is true also of the third of "the three laws," Judaism, with regard to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.²⁷

The situation in Christianity was different. Whatever reference or allusion there is in the New Testament to the creation of the world, it reflects the Old Testament teaching. In the Old Testament story of creation, there is no explicit statement that creation was *ex nihilo*. Still the Fathers from the earliest times insisted upon creation *ex nihilo*. The proof-text upon which they base their view is II Maccabees vii. 28. But that proof-text does not say that God created heaven and earth ἐκ μηδενός, that is, "out of nothing;" it says that God created them ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων, "out of things nonexistent," and, as in philosophic Greek οὐκ ὄν or μὴ ὄν may mean matter, the proof-text quoted may mean that created heaven and earth out of pre-existent matter.²⁸ The Fathers of the Church, however, had a good theological reason for insisting upon creation *ex nihilo*. The doctrine of the Trinity, which from the earliest time maintained the equality of the first two persons as God and which gradually came to maintain the equality of all the three persons as God, required the denial of the existence of anything coëternal with the triune God. For the belief in the equality of all the three coëternal persons as God meant to the Fathers that eternity spells deity and hence that nothing which is not God could be eternal. It is by this argument that Tertullian rejected the belief in the creation of the world out of a pre-existent eternal matter as urged by Hermogenes.²⁹ It is for this reason, too, I imagine, that Johannes Scotus Erigena, who interpreted *ex nihilo* to mean that the world was created from the essence of God, to whom alone can be applied the negation of all that can be spoken of or thought of,³⁰ while he speaks of the world as having been eternally in the Word of God, makes it clear that he does not mean this visible world of ours, for, with regard to this visible world of ours, the world of changing qualities and quantities and all the other accidents, he says explicitly that it had a temporal beginning.³¹

And so, when Giles of Rome says that Averroes by his belief in the eternity of the world reviled not only the Christian religion but also the Muslim religion, he was passing judgment upon Averroes from an apperceptive mass which is peculiarly Christian and was not shared by Muslim thinkers.

Here is a second statement by Giles of Rome. To quote again: "These vituperations are to be found also in the beginning of book three of the *Physics*, where he holds that some people, because of the contrary habit (*consuetudinem*) of the Laws, deny self-evident principles, such as the principle that nothing can be produced out of nothing."³² What Giles is here accusing Averroes of saying may

²⁷ Cf. my *Philo*, I (1947), pp. 302-303, 324, and my paper, "The Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic Theories of Creation in Halevi and Maimonides," *Essays in Honour of Chief Rabbi, the Very Rev. Dr. J. H. Hertz* (1942), pp. 427-442.

²⁸ Cf. *art. cit.* above (n. 19), p. 379.

²⁹ *Adversus Hermogenem*, ch. 4.

³⁰ Cf. *art. cit.* (above n. 22), pp. 357-358.

³¹ *De Divisione Naturae* III, 15 (Migne, P.L., CXXII, 665-666).

³² *In XII Metaph.*, Comm. 18, p. 304 F.

be restated as follows: "Some people," namely the *Loquentes* of the three religions, to whom, as we have seen, he ascribes elsewhere the belief in creation *ex nihilo*, have arrived at this belief because of their "habit" to follow their respective "laws," and thus, believing as they do in creation *ex nihilo*, they deny the self-evident principle of *ex nihilo nihil fit*.

The reference here to "book three of the *Physics*" should be, as has been pointed out by the editors Koch and Riedl, "book three of the *Metaphysics*," referring to a passage in Averroes on *Metaphysics* II, Comm. 14, p. 34, I-K, which is a comment on Aristotle in *Metaphysics* II, 3, 995a, 3-6.

Let us see what Aristotle says in that passage, what Averroes means in his comment on it, and what Giles makes of that comment.

In the original Greek text, Aristotle says: "How great a force habit (*σύνηθες*) is, the laws (*οἱ νόμοι*) make manifest, for in the law the fanciful and the childish, through force of habit, have more influence than our knowledge of them."

Averroes, in his comment on this, says as follows: "And this happens not only in the laws (*in legibus*) but also in the primary notions (*prima cognita* = τὰ πρῶτα νοήματα), as it happens to men who for the first time heard the science of the *Loquentes*, for those *Loquentes*, on account of habit (*propter consuetudinem*) deny the nature of being and truth and deny also necessity in existence and assume that everything is possible."

I shall try to show that Giles misunderstood the meaning of two expressions used in this comment of Averroes. First, he misunderstood the meaning of the expression *in legibus*. Second, he misunderstood the meaning of the expression *prima cognita*.

Let us first take up his misunderstanding of the expression *in legibus*.

The term *lex* in the Latin translation of Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* stands for the following two Arabic words:

(1) *millah* 'religion.' This use of *lex* occurs in such expressions as "opinio Loquentium in nostra lege et lege Christianorum"³² and "Loquentes trium legum quae hodie quidem sunt."³³

(2) *nāmūs*, which is only a transliteration into Arabic characters of the Greek *νόμος* 'law.' This use of *lex*, in its plural form *leges*, occurs in the Latin phrase *in legibus*, which translates the Arabic *fī al-nawāmīs*,³⁴ which in turn reflects the Greek *οἱ νόμοι*³⁵ in the original passage of Aristotle, upon which Averroes commented in the passage now under consideration. Quite evidently the Latin *in legibus* in Averroes comment is used in the sense of "laws" and not in the sense of "religions."³⁶

Giles, however, misled by the frequent use of the term *leges* in the Latin translation of Averroes in the sense of "religions," took it in this passage also to

³² *Ibid.*, p. 305 F.

³⁴ In *II Metaph.*, Text. 14, p. 34 I (Arabic, *Tafsīr mā ba'd al-ṭabī'at*, ed. Bouyges, 1938, p. 43, l. 1).

³⁵ *Metaph.* II, 3, 995a, 4.

³⁶ Comment 14 of the Latin translation under discussion is not a translation of the corresponding Comment 14 in the published Arabic text (pp. 43-44). It is an abridgment of it. But the term *nāmūsiyyah* occurs in the Arabic original (p. 43, l. 9).

mean religions, and hence he takes this passage of Averroes as a gibe against those whom he elsewhere calls "the *Loquentes* of the three laws which exist today."

Let us now take up his misunderstanding of the meaning of Averroes' expression *prima cognita* 'primary notions.'

What Averroes means by "the primary notions" and by his statement that "the *Loquentes*, on account of habit deny the nature of being and truth and deny also the necessity in existence and assume that every thing is possible" may be established by passages, all available to Latin readers, which expound the Kalam's denial of causality and its explanation of the regularity in the succession of events observed in nature as being due to what they call habit ('*adah, consuetudo*')³⁷ — a view with which we have now all become acquainted through Hume's argument against causality.³⁸ Averroes, in his refutation of this view, argues that the denial of causality would lead to a denial of "the nature of being"; but, he continues, it is "self-evident," that is, it is a "primary notion," that each existent thing has "a nature."³⁹ From all this it is quite evident, then, that when Averroes says here that the *Loquentes*, on account of "habit," denied the "primary notion" and denied also the "nature of being," the reference is to their denial of causality and not to their affirmation of creation *ex nihilo*. On this point, it may be noted, all the Schoolmen, including Giles himself, with the only exception of Nicolaus of Autrecourt, agree with Averroes in rejecting the view of the *Loquentes*.

And so, because of his misunderstanding of the allusions in the text of Averroes, Giles found heresy in a statement of his, which, if he had understood it properly, he would have applauded.

And here is a third statement in Giles' condemnation of Averroes. To quote once more: "And what is worse, he derisively dubs us and other upholders of the law *Loquentes*, as if to say babblers and people who are moved [to talk] without reason."

No reference to any passage in Averroes, where this alleged error of his is to be found, is given by Giles. The reference, as has been suggested,⁴⁰ is undoubtedly to a passage in Averroes on *Metaphysics* III, Comm. 15, p. 55 B, which bears upon a text in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* III, 4, 1000a, 5 ff.

Let us then see what Averroes actually says in his comment on that text of Aristotle.

In the text which occasioned Averroes' comment, Aristotle raises the question whether the principles of perishable things and imperishable things are the same or different. He quotes the opinion "of the school of Hesiod and the theologians (*θεολόγοι*)."

³⁷ The most likely source from which Schoolmen could have learned of the *Loquentes*' explanation of causality by "habit" (*consuetudo*) is the Latin translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* I, 73 (72), Propositions 6 and 10.

³⁸ Cf. my paper, "Causality and Freedom in Descartes, Leibnitz, and Hume," *Freedom and Experience. Essays Presented to H. M. Kallen* (1947), pp. 108 f.

³⁹ *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Phys. I (xvii), §5, p. 520, l. 9–p. 521, l. 2 (English, p. 318).

⁴⁰ Cf. n. 41, on p. 17, of Koch and Ridel's edition of *Errores Philosophorum*.

and the theologians as having "thought only of what was plausible to themselves, but treated us with disdain" or as "using words which are familiar to themselves, yet what they have said . . . is above our comprehension." Now in the Arabic translation of the text of Aristotle quoted by Averroes the Greek expression πάντες ὅσοι θεολόγοι is rendered by a phrase which should be literally translated into Latin by "omnes qui loquuntur in rebus divinis, i.e., all those who speak of matters divine."⁴¹ The Latin translation, however, instead of "omnes qui loquuntur in divinis" uses the expression "omnes loquentes in divinis."⁴² Then also in Averroes' comment on the text, the Arabic should be translated into Latin to read "intendit per *ei qui loquuntur in divinis* ei qui loquuntur sermonem extra intellectum hominis." Instead, the Latin translation reads: "intendit per *loquentes in Divinis* loquentes sermonem extra intellectum hominis" (p. 55 B). Now the change from *ei qui loquuntur* to *loquentes* is significant. For the term *loquentes*, through the Latin translations of the works of Averroes and Maimonides, became a technical term referring to the Muslim theologians known as the Mutakallimūn. Moreover, the term *Loquentes* was extended by Averroes to include both Jewish and Christian theologians, as when, for instance, he speaks of "the *Loquentes* of the three laws which exist today" (*Loquentes trium legum, quae hodie quidem sunt*)⁴³ or "the *Loquentes* in our law and the law of the Christians" (*Loquentes in nostra lege et lege Christianorum*).⁴⁴ Similarly Maimonides extends the meaning of *Loquentes* to include "the sages of the [Christian] Greek *Loquentes*" (*scitae a sapientibus Graecorum Loquentium*).⁴⁵ And so the statement of Averroes in his comment on Aristotle, which in its original Arabic is merely a reproduction of Aristotle's characterization of Greek myth-makers, was misunderstood by Giles and taken to refer, as he says, to "us and other upholders of the law," that is to say, to Christian, Muslim, and Jewish theologians. It is interesting to note that a similar mistake is made by Renan when he says that in "*Met.* XII, Cap. vi" (1071b, 27=Averroes, Text. 30, p. 314 H; Comm. 30 p. 315 E), θεολόγοι is translated by Averroes "*Motecallemin*" [= *Loquentes*].⁴⁶ The Latin translation there of that Greek term is actually "*Loquentes in Divinis*," which does not mean the Muslim "*Motecallemin*."

Besides this misunderstanding, which is due to the predicament of language, this passage of Giles contains another misunderstanding, which is due to the predicament of the apperceptive mass.

When Giles came upon Averroes' reference to the *Loquentes* of the Christians, he naturally associated these *Loquentes* with the Fathers of the Church. Consequently, when he came upon Averroes' references to "our *Loquentes*" or "the *Loquentes* of the Saracens" or "the *Loquentes* of the three laws," he assumed that the position of the *Loquentes* in Islam was similar to that of the Church Fathers

⁴¹ Arabic of Averroes, *In III Metaph.*, Text. 15, p. 247, l. 2.

⁴² Latin, *ibid.*, Text. 15, p. 54 C.

⁴³ *In XII Metaph.*, Comm. 18, p. 305 F.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 304 F.

⁴⁵ *Deux seu Director dubitantium aut perplexorum* I, 70, fol. XXIX v, ll. 4-5 (Paris, 1520).

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, n. 2 on pp. 104-105.

in Christianity. When, therefore, he thought that Averroes derisively dubbed the *Loquentes* babblers and people who speak without reason, he naturally described him as one undermining the authority of the upholders of both these two religions. But here is where Giles was mistaken: he viewed an internal squabble in Islam from a Christian perspective. The position of the *Loquentes* in Islam is not the same as that of the Church Fathers in Christianity. The Church Fathers are those who formulated the fundamental Christian doctrine during the first six Oecumenical Councils. It was they who purged Christianity of the various heresies, and they are constantly cited by the later mediaeval Schoolmen in whatever question of faith that may come up. The term "Holy Fathers," which was first applied by St Basil to the traditional 318 representatives of the Church who assembled at Nicea, was subsequently applied to all those representatives of the church who flourished to about the middle of the eighth century. Nothing like it is the position of those called *Loquentes* in Islam. If there is any body of religious authorities in Islam corresponding to the Church Fathers in Christianity, it is those who are referred to as the *aṣḥāb*, "the companions" of the Prophet, and the *tabi'yyūn*, "the followers," and the *salaf*, "the ancients." All these are distinguished from the *Mutakallimūn*, the so-called *Loquentes* of the Latin translations from the Arabic. By the time of Averroes, the *Mutakallimūn* were spoken of as being of two kinds. There were the Mutazilite *Mutakallimūn* and there were the Ash'arite *Mutakallimūn*. The former were condemned as heretical. As for the latter, while by the time of Averroes they were already established as the exponents of orthodoxy, they did not gain that recognition, without having first been attacked by orthodoxy. The term "*Mutakallimūn*" did not mean to the Muslims at the time of Averroes what the term "Fathers of the Church" meant to Christians. And so when Averroes, as a Muslim, spoke rather derogatorily of the *Loquentes*, he was unlike a Christian of the same period who would speak derogatorily of the Church Fathers.

So much for the first revelation of Averroes.

Taking now up the second revelation, let us again begin by reminding ourselves of the circumstances which have brought about this second revelation.

Despite the repeated condemnation of Averroes for his real or imaginary heresies, his commentaries were widely read and studied and copied. Moreover, they were imitated. The very same persons who damned him for his heresy—Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and even Giles of Rome—followed his example and wrote commentaries on Aristotle in his style and manner; and they constantly quoted him. These new commentaries on Aristotle by Schoolmen, despite their freedom from religious error, did not replace Averroes. They only created a greater interest in Aristotle, and with it in Averroes. By the fourteenth century Averroes came to be recognized as the Commentator *par excellence*, and this reputation he continued to enjoy during the fifteenth century.⁴⁷ Then a

⁴⁷ Cf. Renan, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

boost came for the commentaries of Averroes from a source unexpected. Nicolaus Leonicus Thomaeus, a celebrated Greek scholar who taught Aristotle at Padua, publicly declared that, with the exception of the Greek commentators, Averroes was the most admirable (*exquisitissimus*) interpreter of Aristotle.⁴⁸ Then also, a way was found of removing the sting of heresy from the works of Averroes. In 1495 Niphus published an edition of Averroes' works fringed with antidotal notes. All this led to a demand in the sixteenth century for a complete translation of Averroes.

But by that time, in Europe, it was hard to find copies of the original texts of Averroes commentaries. Huet (1630–1721) quotes Scaliger (1540–1609) as saying that there was no Arabic copy of Averroes in Europe and that he saw only the various Latin translations, which by that time already existed in print. Huet then adds:⁴⁹ “But I myself have seen an Arabic Averroes, which was formerly brought hither, out of the East, by Postellus; and which one would wonder that Scaliger would never hear of, who was his intimate friend and correspondent in learning.” The Arabic Averroes referred to is Averroes' Middle Commentary on the *Organon*, now in Leyden,⁵⁰ which contains besides the six books of the *Organon* also the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, thus eight of Averroes' thirty-eight commentaries. Since that time, it may be remarked, research in European libraries has discovered one copy each of the Middle Commentary on *De Caelo* and the Long Commentary on *Metaphysics*, again in Leyden, and two copies of the Epitome of the *Organon*, one in Paris and one in Munich, but both of them are in Hebrew characters.

Besides the scarcity of the original Arabic texts of Averroes in Europe, there were at that time in Europe very few people who could translate Arabic philosophic texts. Fortunately, the Jews, who had been expelled from Muslim Spain with the coming of the Almohades at about the middle of the twelfth century, carried with them the works of Averroes to the new countries where they found refuge, Northern Spain and Southern France. Some of these Arabic works, transliterated into Hebrew characters, are still to be found in European libraries. Then, less than a century later, in 1232, these Arabic works of Averroes began to be translated into Hebrew, and in the course of ninety years all of his commentaries, with the possible exception of two, were translated into Hebrew. It is through Latin translations from these Hebrew translations that Averroes revealed himself again to European philosophy. In the eleven-volume Junta edition of Aristotle's works in Latin (Venice, 1574–75), which contains also Latin translations of Averroes' commentaries and of some of his other works, of the thirty-

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 385–86.

⁴⁹ Pierre Daniel Huet, *De Claris Interpretibus*, p. 185, which is the second part of his *De Inpretatione Libri Duo* (1860).

This quotation and also quotations in notes 50, 51, 52 below are from Pierre Bayle's *Dictionary Historical and Critical* (*Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*), I, 552–556 (London, 1734). The quotations as well as the references have been checked and, whenever necessary, revised. For this quotation see Bayle, p. 552, n. 83.

⁵⁰ Cf. Bouyges, *op. cit.* (n. 1 above), p. 10, No. 5.

eight of these commentaries twenty-eight are translated from the Hebrew, and three of them, those of the Middle commentaries on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, *Categories*, and *De Interpretatione*, replaced the older translations made directly from the original Arabic by William of Luna, which were published in Cominus de Tridino's 1560 edition of the works of Aristotle.⁵¹ Similarly, his other works contained in the Junta edition, namely, *De Substantia Orbis*, *Destructio Destructionum*, and *Epistola de Intellectu* were translated from the Hebrew, though of some of these works there existed older translations made directly from the Arabic. Of chapters 57–59 of *Colliget* V the new translation from the Hebrew is printed by the side of the older Latin translation from the Arabic.

The reception with which Averroes was now met after his second revelation was of a different kind. The old cry of heresy no longer came from the Schoolmen. A new cry was now raised by the Hellenists, questioning the usefulness of Averroes' commentaries. Two conflicting views were expressed. Here are representative examples. On the one hand, the Spanish scholar, Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540) said:⁵² "He has gained the name of Commentator, though he is very far from explaining his author Aristotle or deserving that title. This would have been too great a task for one of an extraordinary genius, much more for him who had but a moderate one, nay, to say the truth, a mean one. For what qualifications had he for undertaking a commentary on Aristotle? He had no knowledge of antiquity, nor of its several doctrines and sects with which Aristotle everywhere abounds." He then goes on to point at certain errors made by Averroes. But, on the other hand, the German scholar Gerhard Johann Vossius (1577–1649) said:⁵³ "He was called the Commentator *par excellence*, who, without knowing anything of Greek, penetrated so felicitously into the mind of Aristotle."

These are wholesale condemnation and wholesale praise. A more judicious opinion is given by Bartholomaeus Keckermann (1571–1609), who made a special study of Averroes' works on the *Organon*. He says:⁵⁴ "In the *Posterior Analytics*,⁵⁵ it appears, Averroes has performed an excellent work, and such as deserves to be immortal. The *Epitome of Logic*,⁵⁶ which he wrote [not in the form of a run-

⁵¹ So also the Latin translations of the Middle Commentaries on the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, in both the de Tridino and the Junta edition, are those made from the Hebrew, instead of the older translation made from the original Arabic by Hermann the German.

⁵² Joannes Ludovicus, *De Causis Corruptarum Artium* V, 3, in *Opera Omnia*, VI (1785), 192 (Bayle, p. 552, n. 5).

⁵³ Gerhard Johann Vossius, *De Philosophia et Philosophorum Sectis*, Liber II (1657), p. 90 (Bayle, p. 552 c).

⁵⁴ Cf. Keckermann, *Systema Systematum*, Part I: *Recognita Logica*, Tract. II, Cap. 2, No. 32 (1613), p. 17 (Bayle, p. 558, n. 87).

⁵⁵ Of the *Posterior Analytics* there are three Latin translations of the greater part of Book I and two translations of the rest of the work, all of them made from the Hebrew and all of them printed in parallel columns, taking up a volume of 568 folios in the Junta edition of 1574–75. The Arabic text is not extant.

⁵⁶ This refers to Averroes' *Epitome of the Organon*, which contains Porphyry's *Isagoge* at the beginning and the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* at the end.

ning commentary on a text], is most praiseworthy for many reasons, and his *Logic*⁵⁷ is extraordinary (*quaesita*). None of the ancient interpreters seem to hit the sense of Aristotle so happily as this Arabian."

I am not going to debate the question whether Averroes was not often wrong in his interpretation of Aristotle. One may readily admit it. But so were his Greek commentators, Alexander, Themistius, and Simplicius, also often wrong in their interpretations of Aristotle and, to judge by reviews that appear in learned journals on every new book on Aristotle, commentators on Aristotle are still often wrong. Many years ago, on the basis of my studies of Averroes' commentaries and the Hebrew supercommentaries on them, I arrived at this conclusion: "Contrary to the prevalent opinion among students of the history of philosophy, the translations of Aristotle both in Arabic and Hebrew have preserved to a remarkable degree not only clear-cut analyses of the text of Aristotle's works but also the exact meaning of the terminology and forms of expression. The literalness and faithfulness with which the successive translators from one language into another performed their task, coupled with a living tradition of Aristotelian scholarship, which can be shown to have continued uninterruptedly from the days of the Lyceum through the Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew schools of philosophy, enabled [mediaeval readers] to obtain a pretty accurate knowledge of Aristotle's writings. That knowledge, to be sure, was traditional and one-sided, but the tradition upon which it was based, like the various traditional interpretations of the Bible text before the rise of independent critical scholarship, was clear and definite and suffered comparatively little corruption."⁵⁸ The more I followed the history of the transmission of philosophy through translations the more firmly convinced I became of the continuity of an oral tradition accompanying every translation, which served as a sort of oral commentary upon each translation, explaining all the new shades of meanings that were imported into the words of the language of the translation from the language from which they were translated.

Perhaps I could best illustrate this point by a concrete case study. As subject for this case study I shall take a passage of a Latin translation made from the Hebrew translation of one of the commentaries of Averroes — a passage which deals with a problem involving certain technical terms in Greek and certain constructions peculiar to Greek, which are untranslatable into Arabic. I shall act as a sort of supercommentator on Averroes' commentary. First, I will introduce the problem dealt with in the passage in question. Then I will quote the passage in Latin, followed by an English translation. Finally, in my exegesis I will explain what I have done in my translation and why I have done it.

The passage which I have selected is from Averroes' *Epitome of the Organon*. The Latin text is from the Junta edition of 1574-75. The underlying Hebrew text is from an edition of the Hebrew of the *Epitome of the Organon* published at

⁵⁷ This probably refers to Averroes' *Quaesita varia in Logica* and *Epistola Una*, translated from the Hebrew, which in the Junta edition follows the *Epitome in Libros Logicae Aristotelis*.

⁵⁸ Cf. my *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle* (1929), p. 7.

Riva di Trento in 1559. The Arabic text has not yet been published, but it is extant in two manuscripts in Hebrew characters. I have purposely made no effort to secure a photostat of the Arabic text, as I wanted to use this case study also as a test of how far one could go in translating and interpreting texts of Averroes on the basis of the Latin and Hebrew translations where no Arabic texts are extant.

Here is the introductory statement concerning the problem dealt with in the passage to be quoted from Averroes:

From several places in his writings we gather that Aristotle distinguishes between the following three forms of logical propositions:

- (1) ἔστι τυφλὸς ἄνθρωπος, Man is blind⁵⁹
- (2) οὐκ ἔστι δίκαιος ἄνθρωπος, Man is not just.⁶⁰
- (3) ἔστιν οὐ δίκαιος ἄνθρωπος, Man is not-just.⁶¹

Ammonius, on the basis of certain statements in Aristotle, describes these three types of propositions respectively as "privative" (στερητική), "negative" (ἀποφατική), and "indefinite" (ἀόριστος),⁶² the last of which, through a mis-translation of Boethius,⁶³ is known in Western philosophy as "infinite." With regard to privative and negative propositions, Aristotle draws the following distinction. The negative proposition "A is not seeing" may be used even in cases where the subject "A" is an inanimate object which by nature is incapable of seeing. The privative proposition "A is blind" can be used only in cases where the subject "A" is a living being who by nature is capable of seeing but it happens to be deprived of sight.⁶⁴ There is nothing in his writings, however, to indicate as to whether, with respect to that distinction drawn by him between negative and privative propositions, the indefinite proposition belongs to the one or to the other. From the fact, however, that a proposition of the type of ἔστι νωδὸς ἄνθρωπος, "man is toothless," is said by him to be a privative proposition⁶⁵ it may be inferred that he would consider the indefinite proposition "man is not-just" to be the equivalent of "man is unjust" and hence as having the force of a privative proposition, for in both cases the negative particle belongs to the predicate and not to the copula.

While this is undoubtedly what may be inferred from Aristotle's own writings with regard to the meaning of an indefinite proposition as a privation and not as a negation, there seems to be a difference of opinion with regard to it between the Western tradition of philosophy and Averroes. In the Western tradition, the Stoics are reported to have described a judgment which Aristotle would call

⁵⁹ *Categ.* 10, 12a, 31-33.

⁶⁰ *De Interpret.* 10, 19b, 27-28.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶² *Ammonius De Interpretatione*, ed. A. Busse (1897), "Index Verborum," sub *πρόσας*.

⁶³ Boethius on *De Interpretatione*, Secunda Editio III, c. 10 (ed. C. Meiser, II, 277-278).

⁶⁴ *Categ.* 10, 12a, 27-34.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 31-33. Other statements in Aristotle which seem to convey a different view are discussed in my paper, "Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and the Gnostic Basilides," *Harvard Theological Review*, L (1957), 154 f.

"indefinite" as a "negative judgment,"⁶⁶ but from the fact that the expression "indefinite judgment"⁶⁷ is used by them in a sense different from that of Aristotle it may be inferred that they were not trying to interpret Aristotle but rather to advance a view of their own. So also in Hobbes the proposition *homo est non lapis*, which, according to Aristotle, should be described as an indefinite proposition, is described as a negative proposition,⁶⁸ but it is not clear whether this was meant to be in opposition to Aristotle, or whether it was meant to be an interpretation of Aristotle, or whether unknowingly Hobbes confused an indefinite proposition with a negative proposition. Quite certain it is, however, that the use by Kant of what he calls infinite judgment, such as "the soul is not-mortal,"⁶⁹ as the equivalent of Aristotle's negative judgment was not meant to be an interpretation of Aristotle, for what he calls negative judgment, such as "the soul is not mortal,"⁷⁰ is not used by him as the equivalent of Aristotle's negative judgment but rather as the equivalent of Aristotle's privative judgment. But I imagine it would be heretical to say that Kant unwittingly distorted an old logical distinction; it would be more canonical to say that he discovered an original profound logical distinction. In Averroes, however, Aristotle's indefinite propositions are presented without much ado as privative propositions. Thus commenting on the passage in *De Interpretatione* where Aristotle distinguishes between the negative proposition "man is not just" and the indefinite proposition "man is not-just," he adds: "When we say man is not just, the statement may apply both to a man who is wicked and to a man who is neither wicked nor just, that is, an uncivilized man or boy. But when we say 'man is not-just,' the statement applies only to a man who is wicked, for our predicate 'not-just' signifies a privation, and privation is the remotion of a habit from a subject in which it would naturally exist at a time when it would naturally exist in it."⁷¹ This interpretation of Aristotle's indefinite propositions must have been based upon a tradition and not upon an inference, such as we have explained above, from Aristotle's use of the proposition "man is toothless," for, in the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Categories*,⁷² the Greek *νωδός*, which is negative both in form and in meaning, being composed of the privative prefix *νη-* and *δδός*, is translated by the Arabic *adrad*, which is positive in form though negative in meaning.

But here Averroes and other Arabic writers, dealing with this type of proposition, hint at a certain difficulty which they try to solve in anticipation. The

⁶⁶ Diogenes, vii, 69.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁸ *Opera Latina* (1839), i, 31.

⁶⁹ *Logik*, §22; *Kr. d. rein. Vern.*¹, p. 70.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Middle Commentary on *De Interpretatione* (*Aristotelis Opera* [Venice, 1574], Vol. i, 1, p. 86 A): "Nam cum dicitur, homo non est iustus, verificatur de homine iniusto et de homine qui non est iniustus neque iustus, qui sive est incivilis vel puer. Sed cum dicitur, homo est non iustus, significat privationem. Privatio autem est ablatio rei ab aliquo, qui nata est inesse, tempore quo nata est in inesse ei."

⁷² Cf. below n. 76 and at n. 65 above.

difficulty may be stated as follows. In Greek, the difference between a negative proposition and an indefinite proposition, as may be gathered from the examples used by Aristotle,⁷³ consists in the difference in the position of the negative particle in the proposition. In a negative proposition, such as οὐκ ἔστι δίκαιος ἄνθρωπος, the negative particle is placed before the copula, whereas in a privative proposition, such as the proposition ἔστιν οὐ δίκαιος ἄνθρωπος, the particle is placed before the predicate. This is all well and good in Greek, where the copula, with but a few exceptions, is always used. But in Arabic the copula is as a rule omitted. How then could the difference between the two kinds of propositions be expressed? Then, also, in the case of an indefinite proposition in which the predicate in Greek is a word combined with an inseparable negative prefix, such as in the proposition hinted at by Aristotle, ἔστι νωδὸς ἄνθρωπος, "man is toothless," there is a similar difficulty. In Arabic there is no inseparable negative prefix. As a result of these two circumstances, the Arabic proposition *zayd lā baṣīr* may mean either (1) "Zayd is not seeing," which is negative, or (2) "Zayd is not-seeing" or "Zayd is unseeing," which is privative.⁷⁴

Here is the Latin text in which Averroes deals with the problem:

Et earum sunt remotivae, et sunt illae, quarum praedicatum est nomen vel verbum imperfectum: sicut si dixerimus Socrates est non sanus: et hoc est in orationibus, quae non usitantur in lingua Arabum. . . . Vis autem nominum imperfectorum in idiomatibus, quae utuntur eis, est vis nominum privativorum, quia dictum nostrum non videns est in gradu dicti nostri caecus: et dictum nostrum non sanum est in gradu dicti nostri aegrum. Quoniam autem non fuerunt ista nomina in lingua Arabum, fuit dictio negationis apud eos ex dictionibus ambiguis, quia ipsi aliquando proferunt ipsam simpliciter, et volunt per eam rem privationis, et aliquando volunt per eam negationem absolutam. Et hoc est, quod cogit homines huius artis loqui per nomina remotiva, quia nos dum non cavemus ea, et imponemus eis istam impositionem, possibile est quod erremus, et accipiamus quod est imperfectum loco negationis, et contra.⁷⁵

And here is an English translation, which I have tried to make self-explanatory by bracketed additions:

"Some propositions are transposed (Latin: *remotivae*) and these are those propositions in which the predicate is an indefinite (Latin: *imperfectum*) noun or verb, as when we say, for instance, 'Socrates is [*non sanus*; Hebrew: *lo bari*' = Arabic: *la ṣahīḥ*, used in the sense of] not-healthy.' This occurs in propositions which are not used in the Arabic language. . . . The force of indefinite (Latin: *imperfectorum*) terms in those languages in which they are used is the force of privative terms, for, when we say [*non videns*; Hebrew: *lo ro'eh* = Arabic: *lā baṣīr*, which consists of two words] 'not' and 'seeing,' [it may mean 'not-seeing']

⁷³ *De Interpret.* 10, 19b, 27–28.

⁷⁴ In earlier papers where I discussed this problem ("Infinite and Privative Judgments in Aristotle, Averroes, and Kant," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 8[1947], 173–187; "Maimonides on Negative Attributes," *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume* [1945], 411–446) I thought that an Arabic proposition which is a translation of a Greek proposition in which the predicate is combined with *alpha privative* or *ἡ* had the meaning of a negative rather than of a privative proposition. I have since revised my interpretation.

⁷⁵ *Epitome of De Interpretatione* (*op. cit.*, Vol. I, 2, p. 41, I).

or 'unseeing,' and as such] it is of the same order as when we say 'blind,' and similarly, when we say [*non sanus*; Hebrew: *lo bari*" = Arabic: *la ṣaḥīḥ*, which consists of two words] 'not' and 'healthy,' [it may mean 'not-healthy' or 'unhealthy,' and as such] it is of the same order as when we say 'sick.' Inasmuch as these [indefinite] terms do not exist in the Arabic language, the negative particle [*lā*, "not," in the Arabic proposition *lā baṣīr*] is regarded by Arabic logicians as a sort of ambiguous particle, for sometimes they use it in an unrestricted sense [as, e.g., in the expression 'is not-seeing' or 'is unseeing'] and mean thereby privation, and sometimes [they use it differently, as in the expression 'is not seeing'] when they mean thereby absolute negation. It is this consideration that has compelled men of this art [of Logic in the Arabic language] to speak of 'transposed terms' (Latin: *nomina remotiva*), for, if we are not careful about predicates preceded by a negative particle and do not think of the possibility that they may have two meanings, we may err and take some such predicate as indefinite [and hence as a privation], when it should be taken as a negation, and similarly the other way around."

Here is my exegetical supercommentary:

It will be noticed that in my English translation I have rendered the Latin *remotivae* by "transposed" and the Latin *imperfectum* by "indefinite." There is a good reason for these renderings.

Both these Latin terms are possible translations of the underlying Hebrew terms, (1) the Latin *remotivae* of the Hebrew *musarim*; (2) the Latin *imperfectum* of the Hebrew *bilti nishlam* or *bilti magi'a*. Since, however, the context requires that these two terms, or at least one of them, should reflect Aristotle's ἀόριστος, "indefinite," as used by him in *De Interpretatione*, I assumed that behind one of these terms, at least, there would be an Arabic term used as a translation of that Greek term of Aristotle. Fortunately the old Arabic translation of *De Interpretatione* is available in two printed editions.⁷⁶ There the Arabic for ἀόριστος is *ghayr muḥaṣṣal*, which would ordinarily mean "not caused to result," "not attained." Inasmuch as these are respectively the ordinary meanings of the Hebrew *bilti nishlam* and *bilti magi'a* underlying the Latin *imperfectum*, we may assume that the underlying Arabic of these Hebrew terms is *ghayr muḥaṣṣal*, which, as we have already seen from the Arabic translation of *De Interpretatione*, is the conventionalized Arabic rendering of the Greek ἀόριστος. On the basis of this I have substituted in my translation the English "indefinite" for the Latin *imperfectum*.

Since the Latin *imperfectum* proved to stand for the Arabic *ghayr muḥaṣṣal*, the other Latin term, *remotivae*, would have to stand for some other Arabic term. But what is that Arabic term? Here our search would have to start from the Hebrew term *musarim* of which Latin *remotivae* is a translation. And so I began to look for the term *musar* in Hebrew works which were translated from the Arabic and of which the Arabic was available in print. I could not find that

⁷⁶ *Die Hermeneutik des Aristoteles*, ed. Isidor Pollak (Leipzig, 1913); *Organon Aristotelis*, ed. 'Abdurrahman Badawi (Cairo, 1952).

word in any published Hebrew work of that type.⁷⁷ But I found it in a copy of an unpublished Hebrew translation of Algazali's *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*⁷⁸ in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.⁷⁹ There the Arabic underlying the Hebrew *musar* is *ma'dūlah*. Now the term *ma'dūlah*, as technically used in logical terminology, has been variously interpreted. John Hispalensis, of the twelfth century, in his Latin translation of Algazali's *Maqāṣid*, as may be gathered from a quotation in Prantl's *Geschichte der Logik* II² (1885), p. 273, n. 60, translated it *privativa*. But this could not be connected etymologically with *ma'dūlah*. Horten, in *Die spekulative und positive Theologie des Islam* (1912), p. 203, translates it *infinita*. This, too, cannot be connected etymologically with *ma'dūlah*. Goichon, in her *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā* (1938), §411, translates it *équivalente*. This has an etymological connection with *ma'dūla*, for *ma'dūlah* comes from a word which means "to be equal," but there is no term in Greek philosophy meaning "equivalent" to be used in the sense in which the Arabic term seems to be used here in this context. What is needed here is a Greek term, underlying this Arabic term, which should have been used as an equivalent of the term ἀόριστος 'indefinite' as used by Aristotle in connection with the subject under discussion. So we went to look for such a term, and lo and behold! Alexander of Aphrodisias in his commentary on *Analytica Priora*, of which there existed an Arabic translation,⁸⁰ quotes Theophrastus as having used the expression πρότασις κατὰ μετὰθεσιν,⁸¹ "proposition by transposition," that is to say, a proposition in which the negative particle was transposed from a place before the copula to a place before the predicate, as the equivalent of the expression "indefinite proposition." All we needed now was to show how *ma'dūlah* could be used as a translation of κατὰ μετὰθεσιν. This was easy, for the verb 'adal, of which *ma'dūlah* is a passive participle, means not only "to be equal" but also "to deviate." Thus *ma'dūlah* means "deviated" and as such we may assume, it was used in the sense of "transposed" as a translation of κατὰ μετὰθεσιν. Similarly the Hebrew term *musarim*, of which Latin translation is *remotivae*, may also mean "turned away" and hence "deviated" and "transposed." Moreover, another unpublished Hebrew translation of Algazali's *Maqāṣid*, of which, again, there is a copy in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, translates *ma'dūlah* by *noṭeh*,⁸² "turning away," and hence "deviated" and "transposed."

Averroes must have had all this in the back of his mind. He thus speaks of "those languages" in which "indefinite terms" are used, that is to say, in which the copula is used, so that by position of the negative particle one could tell whether the proposition is negative or indefinite. And thus he speaks also of the

⁷⁷ Klatzkin's *Thesaurus Philosophicus Linguae Hebraicae*, under *musar* quotes only the passage of the *Epitome* here under discussion, and *musar* is translated there *privative*.

⁷⁸ Cairo, n.d., p. 22, l. 17.

⁷⁹ MS. Adler 1015, p. 23a.

⁸⁰ Cf. Steinschneider, *Die arabischen Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen* (1897), p. 41.

⁸¹ *Alexander in Priora Analytica*, ed. M. Wallies (1883), p. 397, l. 2; cf. Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik*, I (1855), 357-358, nn. 30-33; Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, II, 2² (1862), 158, n. 4.

⁸² MS. Adler 131, p. 9b.

Arabic language in which "indefinite terms" are not used, so that there is no way of telling whether certain Arabic propositions are negative or indefinite. What languages he had in mind in his reference to those languages which use "indefinite terms" may be gathered from a parallel passage in Avicenna, who speaks of "certain languages" in which the copula is always used, and of these languages he specifically mentions "Persian," a language which he knew and of which he quotes a sentence as an illustration.⁸³ The other language of the "languages" referred to by Avicenna was undoubtedly Greek, which he did not know, but about which, on this particular point, there must have been a living tradition among students of Aristotle's *Organon*, with which he was acquainted. Accordingly, "those languages" referred to by Averroes we may assume, are Greek and Persian, neither of which he knew.

In Arabic, then, there were two terms to designate what Aristotle calls "indefinite" propositions, (1) *ghayr muḥaṣṣal* and (2) *ma'dūlah*, the former being a translation of ἀόριστος used by Aristotle himself; the latter being a translation of κατὰ μετάθεσιν, quoted by Alexander from Theophrastus. The Arabs, as we may gather not only from the passage here of Averroes but also from passages of Avicenna⁸⁴ and Algazali,⁸⁵ adopted the term *ma'dūlah* as a description of the indefinite proposition. The reason for that is quite obvious. The term *ghayr muḥaṣṣal* merely told them that a proposition was "indefinite"; the term *ma'dūlah* told them how to recognize a proposition as "indefinite": it is "indefinite" when it is "transposed." Thus, for instance, in such a proposition as *Zayd lā basīr*, literally consisting of three words, "Zayd not seeing," when the copula "is" is mentally supplied before "not," the proposition is negative; but when later it is mentally transposed to before "seeing" the proposition thereby becomes "indefinite."

This is what Averroes means by his statement in the latter part of his passage that "it is this consideration that has compelled men of this art [of logic in the Arabic language] to speak of transposed propositions," where he then goes on to explain in effect how by mentally transposing the mentally supplied copula one could tell that a proposition is "indefinite," that is, "privative," rather than "negative."

This, then, is an example of what is needed for an understanding of a text of Averroes, especially if one has only the Latin translation before him. No wonder that there were different opinions about the value of Averroes after his second revelation.

* * *

I have spoken of two revelations — revelations which took place at an interval of four hundred years. In 1931, about four hundred years after the second revelation of Averroes, there was a third revelation. It took place when our Academy

⁸³ *Kitāb al-'Ishārāt wa'l-Tanbīhāt*, ed. J. Forget (1892), p. 27, l. 20–p. 28, l. 1. French translation: *Livre des Directives et Remarques* by A.-M. Goichon (1951), p. 127. Cf. also Algazali, *Maqāṣid*, p. 22, ll. 13–14, where reference is made to the use of the copula in Persian.

⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 27, l. 9; p. 28, l. 9 (French, pp. 125 and 128).

⁸⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 22, l. 17.

adopted its plan for the publication of a *Corpus Commentariorum Averrois in Aristotelem*. There is, however, a difference between the third revelation and its two preceding ones. The first revelation involved translations only. The second revelation involved translations and printing. The third revelation, as projected in the plan, involves three series of edited texts, each text in each of the three series equipped with three critical apparatuses and a quadrilingual glossary, and supplementary to all these a fourth series of translations with commentaries. The brief exegesis of the Latin passage in Averroes which I have acted out before you will explain why this third revelation of Averroes had to take this elaborate form.

In speaking of the first two revelations, I dealt with their achievements and their receptions. But I feel there must have been a story, a human story, behind the achievements, the story of Michael and Hermann and William and Frederick and Abraham de Balmes and Joannes Franciscus Burana and Jacob Mantinus and the Juntas and Cominus de Tridino. For we of the Academy know that there is a story, a human story, behind the volumes, so splendidly published in our *Corpus* — the story of scholars who, without the patronage of a Frederick, voluntarily gave up their evenings and week-ends, year after year, for the preparation of the thousands of minute items that make up the elaborate and complicated apparatuses and glossaries of their editions; the story of a provost and a dean of a university who allowed us the use of a certain fund under their care for the publication of certain volumes; the story of the president of a foundation who always came to our assistance when we had to meet the printer's bill; and the story of a mere business man who at a luncheon, after consulting with one of our editors on a matter on which he needed some advice, said: Now that you have done something for me, what can I do for you? And he did. He came just in the nick of time to enable us to publish one of our most expensive volumes. I hope that some future speaker at a future meeting of the Academy, perhaps at the celebration of the completion of the *Corpus* fifty years, or a hundred years, hence, in reporting on the achievement and the reception of this third revelation of Averroes, will also tell the story, the human story, behind the achievement.

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