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INFINITE AND PRIVATIVE JUDGMENTS IN ARISTOTLE, AVERROES, AND KANT

In Aristotle judgments are divided with respect to quality into two types, the affirmative and the negative, of which the propositions "A is B" and "A is not B" are the respective examples.¹ But under affirmative judgments Aristotle mentions two other types of judgments, which though affirmative in quality are negative in meaning. First, a proposition in which the predicate is what he calls a privation (στέρησις),² such as the terms "blind" (τυφλός) and "toothless" (ὠδός).³ Second, a proposition in which the predicate is what Aristotle calls an indefinite term (ὄνομα ἀόριστον),⁴ but which through Boethius has been known in the history of philosophy as an infinite term (*nomen infinitum*),⁵ as, for instance, the term "not-just" in the proposition "the man is not-just."

In Aristotle no special terms are used to distinguish these three types of propositions, namely (1) affirmative and negative propositions, (2) propositions with privative predicates,⁶ and (3) propositions with infinite predicates. Through his commentators, however, these three types of propositions came to be designated respectively as (1) simple propositions, (2) privative propositions, and (3) infinite propositions.⁷

Now, with regard to negative and privative propositions, Aristotle draws a sharp distinction between them. In negative propositions, he says, the predicate may be negated of a subject even if that subject can never naturally possess that predicate, as, for instance, the term "one" which can be negated of a subject even if the subject cannot naturally be one,⁸ but a

¹ *De Interp.*, c. 6, 17a, 25-26.

² *Categ.*, c. 10, 10a, 26-12b, 5; *Metaph.*, IV, 2, 1004a, 10-16.

³ *Categ.*, 12a, 34.

⁴ *De Interp.*, c. 2, 16a, 32.

⁵ Boethius' commentary on *De Interpr.*, Prima Editio, I, c. 2 (ed. C. Meiser, Vol. I, p. 51, 1, 23).

⁶ The expression πρότασις στέρητική is used by Aristotle in the sense of negative proposition. Cf. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, s.v.; Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik*, I, p. 195, n. 330.

⁷ Cf. Ammonius *De Interpretatione*, ed. A. Busse, p. 161, 11, 7-9, and p. 163, 1. 14: πρότασις ἀπλή, στέρητική, ἀόριστος; Boethius, *op. cit.*, Secunda Editio, IIII, c. 10 (Vol. II, pp. 277-278); *propositiones simpliciae, propositiones privatoriae, propositiones infinitae*.

⁸ *Metaph.*, IV, 2, 1004a, 10-16; cf. Schwegler's commentary *ad loc.* (Vol. III, p. 156, §14).

privation cannot be affirmed of a subject unless its opposite habit could be naturally possessed by it, thus the term "blind" or "toothless" cannot be affirmed of a subject unless the subject could naturally possess "sight" or "teeth."⁹ Alexander illustrates this distinction by the example of the term "wall," "for," he says, "the expression 'is not seeing' may indeed be appropriately said both of a blind man and a wall, the latter of which is absolutely incapable of having sight . . . not so, however, is the case of blindness."¹⁰ In other words, you can say "the wall is not seeing" but you cannot say "the wall is blind." But no such statement is made by Aristotle with regard to predicates which are infinite terms, such as, e.g., not-seeing. The question may therefore be raised whether according to Aristotle the term "not-seeing" could be predicated of a wall. Indeed the proposition "it is not-day (οὐχὶ ἡμέρα ἐστὶ)" which Aristotle would call an "infinite judgment" is described by the Stoics as a "negative judgment" (ἀποφατικὸν ἀξιῶμα),¹¹ but Stoic usages are not decisive in the interpretation of Aristotle.

Though in the passage quoted above with regard to privative propositions Aristotle makes no distinction between propositions in which the predicate is only privative in meaning but not in form, as, e.g., the term "blind," and predicates which would seem to be privative both in meaning and in form, as, e.g., the term "toothless," in another passage he seems to put terms which have as their prefix the Greek *alpha privative* into a special class by itself. In that passage, discussing the meaning of "privation," he makes the general statement that "there are as many kinds of privations as there are words which derive their negations from the *alpha privative*," and as illustrations of such privations he mentions the terms "unequal" (ἄνισον), "invisible" (ἀόρατον) and "footless" (ἄπονον).¹² Furthermore, in contradistinction to the privatives "blind" and "toothless," concerning which he says that "it is a universal rule that each pair of opposites of this type has reference to that to which the particular 'habit' is natural,"¹³ he would seem to say concerning privatives formed with the *alpha privative* that they can be affirmed of subjects which do not naturally possess the opposite habit. For in this passage under consideration, privative propositions are divided by him into three types. First, propositions of the type "the plant is eyeless." Second, propositions of the type "the mole is

⁹ *Categ.*, c. 10, 12a, 27-34.

¹⁰ Alexander in *Metaphysics*, ed. M. Hayduck, p. 327, 11, 18-20: τὸ γὰρ οὐχ ὁρᾶ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ τυφοῦ ἀληθὲς καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ τοίχου, ὅς οὐδὲ δλωὺς ὤψεως δεκτικός . . . οὐχ οὕτω καὶ ἡ τυφλότης.

¹¹ Diogenes, VII, 69.

¹² *Metaph.*, V, 22, 1022b, 32-36.

¹³ *Categ.*, c. 10, 12a, 27-29.

sightless" or "the blind man is sightless." Third, propositions of the type "the man is blind."¹⁴ Now of these three types of privative propositions, only the third conforms to the universal rule laid down by Aristotle himself with regard to privative propositions. In the case of the first of these three types of propositions the privation "eyelessness" is affirmed of a plant, even though plant belongs to a genus which naturally does not possess the habit of being endowed with eyes. In the case of the second type of these three judgments, the privation "sightlessness" is in the first instance affirmed of a mole, even though a mole belongs to a species which naturally does not possess the habit of "sight" and in the second instance it is affirmed of a blind man, who, as a particular individual, i.e., a blind man, does not naturally possess the habit "sight."¹⁵ Inevitably, therefore, the universal rule laid down by Aristotle was not meant by him to apply to propositions in which the predicate is a term prefixed by an *alpha privative*. Corroborative evidence for this conclusion may be found in Aristotle's oft-repeated statement that we can say of a "voice" that it is "invisible" (*ἀόρατος*),¹⁶ even though a voice cannot naturally possess the habit of being "visible." Probably the distinction which Aristotle meant to draw was one between terms which are privative only in meaning and not in form, such as "blind," and terms which are privative both in meaning and in form, such as "un-seeing," and if he puts the term "toothless" (*ὠδός*) in the same class with the term "blind" it is because the negative prefix *νη-* was of rare and only of poetic use and therefore terms having it as their prefix were not considered by him as being in the same class as terms having the *alpha privative* as their prefix.

This distinction in Aristotle's conception of privative propositions has, as far as I know, not been noticed.¹⁷ In Boethius, the typical example of a privative proposition is the proposition "*est iniustus homo*,"¹⁸ though the term *iniustus* represents the Greek *ἄδικος*. The Stoics, too, use the proposition "the man is inhumane (*ἀφιάνθρωπος*)" as an illustration of what they call a "privative proposition" (*στερητικὸν ἀξιῶμα*),¹⁹ but here, again, Stoic usages are not to be taken as decisive in the interpretation of Aristotle.

¹⁴ *Metaph.*, V, 22, 1022b, 22-29.

¹⁵ This is what I understand to be the meaning of the three types of privation in this chapter. Other interpretations are given in the Oxford translation of the *Metaphysics* by Ross and in the Loeb translation by Tredennick. Cf. below the discussion of Averroes and Avicenna.

¹⁶ *Phys.*, III, 5, 204a, 13-14; V, 2, 206b, 10-11; *Metaph.*, XI, 10, 1066a, 36.

¹⁷ Cf. the discussion of the passages in question in Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, II, 2^a, p. 216, n. 7 (*Aristotle*, I, p. 226, n. 6).

¹⁸ Boethius, *op. cit.*, Prima Editio, II, c. 10 (Vol. I, p. 133); Secunda Editio, IIII, c. 10 (Vol. II, p. 277).

¹⁹ Diogenes, VII, 70.

In our analysis of Aristotle's statements with regard to infinite and privative judgments we have thus come upon two generally unnoticed points. First, there is the question whether an infinite term, such as "not-seeing," can according to Aristotle be predicated of a subject which naturally cannot see. Second, there seems to be in Aristotle a distinction between a privation which is only privative in meaning, such as "blind," and a privation which is privative also in form, such as "unseeing." Both these points, we shall now try to show, are subjects of discussion in the interpretation of Aristotle in Arabic philosophy.

But before we begin to deal with the relevant texts in question, let us make two comments on the Arabic translation of two Greek terms.

First, the Arabic translation of what Aristotle calls *ὄνομα ἀόριστον*, and Boethius translates by *nomen infinitum*, is *ism ghair muḥaṣṣal*.²⁰ But for what Ammonius and Boethius call "infinite judgment" the Arabic uses the expression *qaḍiyyah ma'dūlah*. As for the meaning of that Arabic expression there is some uncertainty. Johannes Hispalensis in his translation of Ghazali's *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* renders this expression by *propositio privativa*,²¹ Horten renders the term *ma'dūlah* by *infinita*²² and Goichon renders it by *équivalente*.²³ None of these, as can be readily seen, are exact translations of the Arabic term. Now the Arabic term *ma'dūlah*, among its many meanings, has also the meaning of "deviated," and it is in this sense that it was taken by mediaeval Hebrew translators of Ghazali's *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* who render it by either *musar* or *noṭeh*.²⁴ Taken in this sense the expression *qaḍiyyah ma'dūlah* literally means "a deviated proposition" and may therefore be taken as a translation of the Greek *πρότασις ἐκ μεταθέσεως* or *κατὰ μετὰθέσιν*, i.e., "proposition by transposition," which was used by Theophrastus as a description of what Boethius calls "infinite proposition."²⁵ The Arabic expression may therefore be translated by "transposed proposition."

Second, in the passage in the *Categories*, Chap. 10, quoted above, the

²⁰ See "Glossar," s.v., p. 39, col. 1, in I. Pollak's edition of Ishāq ibn Ḥonain's Arabic translation of the *De Interpretatione* (*Die Hermeneutik des Aristoteles*, Leipzig, 1913).

²¹ Quoted in Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik*, II², 1885, p. 373, n. 260. In the Latin translation of Averroes' *Epitome of the Organon*, made from the Hebrew, the corresponding Hebrew term *musarim* is translated by *remotiva*; cf. quotation below, n. 38.

²² M. Horten, *Die spekulative und positive Theologie des Islam*, 1912, p. 203.

²³ A.-M. Goichon, *Lexique de la Langue philosophique d'Ibn Sina*, 1938, §411.

²⁴ The former in Judah ben Nathan's translation, MS. Jewish Theological Seminary, Adler 1015, p. 23a; the latter in Isaac Albalag's translation, MS., *ibid.*, Adler 131, p. 9b.

²⁵ Ammonius de *Interpretatione*, ed. A. Busse, p. 161, 11. 10 and 28; Alexander in *Priora Analytica*, ed. M. Wallies, p. 397, 1. 2; cf. Prantl, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 357-358, nn. 30-33; Zeller, *op. cit.*, II, 2^a, p. 221, n. 4 (I, p. 232, n. 2).

term "toothless" (νυδός) is translated by the term *adrad*,²⁶ which like the term "blind" is privative only in meaning and not in form. Consequently, the universal rule laid down by Aristotle in that passage with regard to propositions with privative predicates could be taken by readers of his works in Arabic translation to apply exclusively to predicates which are privative only in meaning and in no way privative in form. They did not have to make an exception, as suggested by us above, of predicates which in Greek have the poetic negative prefix νη-.

The source which contains the clearest statement of what may be considered as constituting the Arabic traditional interpretation of Aristotle with reference to the two points mentioned by us is to be found in the commentaries of Averroes.

First, with regard to privative propositions of the type "A is unseeing," we shall reproduce his comment on Aristotle's discussion of the various meanings of "privation."²⁷ In that comment, Averroes enumerates seven types of privation. The first three are illustrated by propositions in which the predicates are terms which are privative in meaning but positive in form, such as, for instance, the term "bald," "blind," "naked," "poor," "squint-eyed," and "cripple-bodied."²⁸ The common characteristic feature of these types of proposition is that the subject in question, while having certain "privations" predicated of it, could naturally also possess the opposite habits and thus be described as "hairy," "seeing," "clothed," "rich," "straight-eyed," and "straight-bodied," corresponding to what Aristotle says of the opposites of "privation and habit" that "it is a universal rule that each of a pair of opposites of this type has reference to that to which the particular 'habit' is natural."²⁹ The last four types of privations are illustrated by the following propositions: "God is immortal (*lā mā'il*) and incorruptible (*lā fāsīd*)," "the donkey is irrational (*lā nā'iḡ*)," "the woman is unmanly (*lā dhakar*)"; and "the boy is ignorant (*lā 'āqīl*)."³⁰ The com-

²⁶ Cf. Averroës: *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Maqūlāt*, ed. M. Bouyges, Beyrouth, 1932, p. 97.

²⁷ *Metaph.* V, 22, 1022b, 22ff.; *Epitome of the Metaphysics* (ed. C. Quirós), I, 47, pp. 26-27.

²⁸ Cf. *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, loc. cit. The use of the terms "blind," "naked," and "poor" as illustrations of privation is to be found in *Aristotelis Fragmenta*, ed. v. Rose, §119, 1498a, 36-38: "Blindness is of those privations which are according to nature; nakedness is of those which are according to custom; privation of money is of those which exist in use" (τῶν ἐν φύσει, γυμνότης δὲ τῶν ἐν ἔθει, ἀργυρίου δὲ στέρησις τῶν ἐν χρήσει παραγινόμενων.)

²⁹ *Categ.*, c. 10, 12a, 27-29.

³⁰ *Epitome of the Metaphysics*, I, §47, p. 27. The Latin translation (*Aristotelis opera*, Venice, 1574, Vol. VIII, p. 361 H-I) translates the last three propositions by (1) "asinus non est rationalis," (2) "cum dicimus foeminam non esse marem," and (3) "cum dicimus puerum non esse doctum," in all of which the translator has missed the main point of the illustrations, for all his propositions are negative and not privative.

mon characteristic feature of all these propositions is that the subjects in question have certain 'privations' predicated of them even though they cannot possess the opposite 'habits' and cannot therefore be described, in the case of God, as being 'mortal' and 'corruptible', in the case of the donkey, as being 'rational', in the case of the woman, as being 'manly', and, in the case of the boy, as being 'learned', reflecting thus the implications of Aristotle's statements quoted above with regard to propositions in which the predicate is a term privative in form.³¹

But here a question comes up. In Arabic, which has no privative prefixes or affixes, no distinction can be made between an infinite term, such as "not-seeing," and a term which is privative in form, such as "unseeing." Both of them are expressed by a separable negative particle followed by the participle in question. Consequently when Averroes says here that you can say of God that He is *lā mā'it* and *lā fāsīd*, and of a woman that she is *la dhakar*, and of a donkey that it is *lā nāṭiq* and of a boy that he is *lā 'āqīl*, the question is whether these terms were meant by him to be taken as privations in form, namely, "immortal," "incorruptible," "unmanly," "irrational," and "ignorant," or whether they were meant by him to be taken as infinite terms, namely, "not-mortal," "not-corruptible," "not-manly," "not-rational," and "not-learned." The same question may also be raised with regard to Aristotle's statement quoted above that we can say of a voice that it is "invisible," whether the Greek word for "invisible," which in Arabic must be translated by the use of a separable negative particle, was taken by Averroes to mean "invisible" or "not-visible." In other words whether Averroes was conscious of the fact that the Arabic separable negative particle followed by a participle or adjective translates two different forms of predicates in Greek, and also whether he made any distinction between these two forms of predicates with regard to their application to subjects which cannot naturally possess the opposite habits.

In answer to this we shall try to show that Averroes definitely disproves of the use of an infinite predicate, such as "not-seeing," of a subject which cannot naturally possess the habit "seeing," and therefore when he

Similarly Horten (*Die Metaphysik des Averroes*, 1912, pp. 27-28) translates them by (1) "Der Esel ist nicht vernünftig," (2) "Das Weib besitzt nicht die männliche Natur," and (3) "So sagen wir von dem Knaben, dass er nicht den vollen Gebrauch der Vernunft habe." So also S. van den Bergh (*Die Epitome der Metaphysik des Averroes*, 1924, p. 20) translates them by (1) "Wie wenn wir sagen vom Esel, dass er nicht vernünftig ist," (2) "so wenn wir sagen von der Frau, dass sie nicht männlich ist," and (3) "wie wenn wir sagen vom Knaben, er sei nicht gelehrt." Similarly Quirós in his Spanish translation (*Averroes: Compendio de Metafisica*, 1919, p. 44) translates these three examples as negative propositions instead of privative propositions.

³¹ Cf. above, nn. 12-16.

does allow, in the passage quoted, the use, for instance, of such terms as *lā mā'it* and *lā fāsīd* of God, these terms were inevitably meant by him to be taken in the sense of "immortal" and "incorruptible" rather than in the sense of "not-mortal" and "not-corruptible."

The passage in which Averroes expresses himself clearly on this point is his comment upon Aristotle's discussion in *De Interpretatione*, Ch. 10, of the distinction between the negative proposition "man is not just" and the infinite proposition "man is not-just." His comment reads as follows: "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 a 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."³² The meaning of this passage is quite clear. An infinite term like "not-just" is the same as a privative term "wicked" and consequently an infinite judgment is like a privative judgment and not like a negative judgment. The term "not-just" therefore cannot be predicated of a subject which cannot naturally possess the habit of "justice."

In another passage he not only repeats his view that infinite propositions are of the same status as privative propositions but he also indicates that propositions with a predicate which is privative in form is the equivalent of negative propositions. He says: "Some propositions are transposed,³³ and these are those propositions in which the predicate is an infinite noun or verb,³⁴ as when we say, for instance, 'Socrates is not-healthy'. This occurs in propositions which are not used in the Arabic language. Some are privative propositions, and they are those propositions in which the predicate is a privative noun or verb. It is a universal rule that privation is [predicated of a subject as] the absence of a habit which would naturally exist in the subject at a time it would naturally exist in it,³⁵ as when we say, for instance, 'Socrates is blind' or 'Plato is sick'. The force of infinite terms in those languages in which they are used is like the force of privative terms, for our saying 'not-seeing' is of the same order as our saying 'blind' and our saying 'not-healthy' is of the same order as our saying 'sick'. In-

³² Middle Commentary on *De Interpretatione*, *Aristotelis opera*, Venice, 1574, Vol. I, 1, p. 86A: "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, cui nata est inesse, tempore quo nata est inesse ei."

³³ Latin: "remotivae," see above n. 21.

³⁴ With reference to an "infinite verb" (ἀόριστον ῥῆμα), see *De Interpr.*, c. 3, 16b, 12-14.

³⁵ Cf. *Categ.*, c. 10, 12a, 27-29; cf. above, n. 14.

asmuch as infinite terms are not used in the Arabic language, the negative particle is regarded by Arabic logicians as one of the ambiguous particles, for sometimes they use it generally and mean thereby merely privation,³⁶ and sometimes they mean thereby absolute negation.³⁷ It is this consideration that has compelled men of the art of logic to treat of transposed terms, for if we are not careful about these terms and pay no heed to their being technically equivalent to privations, we might be led into error and take that which is infinite to mean negation, and vice versa."³⁸

The implication of this passage is quite clear. Such an expression as *lā baṣīr* in a nominal proposition wherein the copula is omitted is in ordinary Arabic not used in the sense of what logicians call the infinite "is not-seeing." It is ordinarily used in the sense of "is not seeing" or "is unseeing,"³⁹ the latter of which is to be taken as being in its logical sense a negative like the former "is not seeing." Evidently there must have been a traditional interpretation of Aristotle among the Arabic philosophers to the effect that a term privative in form like "unseeing" was to be distinguished from a term privative only in meaning like "blind."

In the light of these explicit statements of Averroes we may explain certain statements in Avicenna with regard to infinite and privative judgments which are not so explicit.

Avicenna, in his discussion of infinite and privative judgments makes the following statements.

First, propositions are to be divided into three types, described as simple (*baṣīṭah*), transposed (*ma'dūlah*)⁴⁰ and privative (*'adamīyyah*).⁴¹ The

³⁶ As, e.g., in the use of *lā baṣīr* in the sense of "is not-seeing."

³⁷ As, e.g., in the use of *lā baṣīr* in the sense of "is not seeing" or "is unseeing."

³⁸ Averroes' *Epitome of De Interpretatione*, Ch. IV, in *Aristotelis opera*, Venice, 1574, Vol. I, 2, p. 41 I: "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. Et quaedam sunt privativae, et sunt quarum praedicatum est nomen privativum, vel verbum privativum. Privatio autem universaliter est, quod deficiat habitus, cuius consuetudo est, quod sit in eo subiecto in hora, qua solet esse in eo: sicut si dixerimus Socrates est caecus, et Plato aegrotat. 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."

³⁹ Caspari-Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, II, §82, d, *Rem. b*, p. 227.

⁴⁰ *Najāt* I, Cairo, 1331 A.H., p. 22, 11. 4-7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24, 11. 7-11.

terms by which these three types of propositions are designated, as we have seen, do not occur in Aristotle; they are the same as those used by his Greek and Latin commentators.

Second, infinite propositions, illustrated by the proposition "Zaid is not-seeing," are expressed in Arabic in two ways: (a) a nominal proposition which contains a copula, namely, *Zaid huwa ghair baṣīr*,⁴² (b) a nominal proposition in which the copula is omitted, namely, *Zaid lā baṣīr*.⁴³

Third, the following distinction is to be drawn between a simple negative proposition and an infinite proposition. A simple negative proposition may be true even of a non-existent subject, whereas an infinite proposition can be true only of subject which has existence. Thus, taking the sphinx as an example of that which does not exist, he says it may be true to say "the sphinx is not seeing," but it cannot be true to say "the sphinx is not-seeing."⁴⁴

Fourth, the terms *ghair baṣīr* can be predicated of any subject that happens to be without sight, irrespective of the fact whether (1) it naturally possesses sight, or whether (2) it naturally does not itself possess sight but its genus or species possesses sight, or whether (3) neither itself nor that which is predicated of it (i.e., its genus or species) possesses sight.⁴⁵ As against this, he says, in a privative proposition, such as "Zaid is severe (*jā'ir*)" or "the air is murky (*muḥlim*)," the terms "severe" and "murky" can be predicated only of a subject which either itself or its species or genus can naturally possess the opposite habit of being "lenient" and "bright."⁴⁶

Fifth, with reference to the proposition *Zaid lā baṣīr*, he says that its meaning depends upon the intention of him who uses it. If he means by it *inna Zaid laisa huwa bi-baṣīr*, i.e., Zaid is not seeing, it is a negative proposition; but if he means by it *inna Zaid huwa lā baṣīr*, i.e., Zaid is not-seeing, it is a transposed proposition.⁴⁷

Now his fifth statement is exactly the same as the statement we quoted above from Averroes with regard to nominal propositions in which the copula is omitted and the predicate is preceded by the negative particle *lā*. But his fourth statement, wherein he seems to say that the infinite term "not-seeing" (*ghair baṣīr*) can be predicated even of a subject which naturally has no sight would seem to be contradictory to Averroes' explicit statement that such an infinite term is like the privation "blind" which can

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 22, l. 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 23, ll. 13-14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23, ll. 2-6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23, ll. 6-10; *Ishārāt*, ed. J. Forget, 1892, p. 28, ll. 10-13.

⁴⁶ *Najāt*, p. 24, ll. 9-11.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23, ll. 12-13; *Ishārāt*, p. 27, l. 15—p. 28, l. 10; cf. a similar statement reproduced from the *Shifā* in I. Madkour, *L'Organon d'Aristotle dans le monde arabe*, pp. 169-170.

be applied only to a subject which naturally possesses sight. Now there is nothing impossible in the assumption that there is a difference of opinion between Avicenna and Averroes on this point, for they differ on many points in the interpretation of Aristotle. But, if there is such a difference of opinion between them on this point, it is strange that Averroes should make no allusion to it, for Averroes usually calls attention to his differences with Avicenna.

We shall therefore try to show that there is no difference of opinion between Avicenna and Averroes on this point.

In Arabic, as we have already pointed out, owing to the lack of inseparable negative prefixes, both the privative "unseeing" and the infinite "not-seeing" were expressed in the same way, either by *ghair baṣīr* or by *lā baṣīr*. Let us assume then that this kind of privative term became somehow confused with the infinite term, so that both these kinds of terms came to be known as "infinite terms" and propositions formed with both these kinds of terms as predicates also came to be known as "transposed propositions." But let us also assume that despite this confusion there still survived a tradition that one kind of such propositions has the force of a privative proposition and the other kind has the force of a negative proposition. It is for this reason, therefore, that both Averroes and Avicenna, as we have seen, try to explain the twofold meaning of the proposition *Zaid lā baṣīr*. Similarly we may now assume that the two statements, namely, the third and fourth, made by Avicenna with regard to the expression *ghair baṣīr* have reference to the two distinct meanings of that expression. When in his third statement he says that the predicate *ghair baṣīr* can be affirmed only of an existent subject, the predicate in question is the infinite "not-seeing"; but when in his fourth statement he says that this predicate *ghair baṣīr* can be affirmed even of a subject which does not naturally possess sight, the predicate in question is the negative "unseeing."

That these two statements of Avicenna refer to two different kinds of predicates can be established by a study of the literary sources of these statements. Both of them are based upon statements in Aristotle.

Avicenna's third statement that a transposed proposition can be true only of an existent subject, whereas a negative proposition can be true even of a non-existent subject is based upon the following statement in Aristotle. "In the case of 'privation' and 'habit', if the subject is non-existent at all, neither proposition is true. . . . But in the case of 'affirmation' and 'negation', whether the subject exists or not, one is always false and the other true."⁴⁸ Now in this passage Aristotle definitely deals with the privation 'blind' as the opposite of the habit 'seeing.' Avicenna, as

⁴⁸ *Categ.*, c. 10, 13b, 20-29.

will be noticed, applies what Aristotle says with regard to the privation 'blind' to the infinite *ghair baṣīr*. It is therefore reasonable to assume that by *ghair baṣīr* Avicenna means the infinite "not-seeing," thus agreeing with Averroes' explicit statement that the infinite "not-seeing" is logically the equivalent of the privation "blind."

Avicenna's fourth statement to the effect that the predicate *ghair baṣīr* may be predicated of any subject deprived of sight irrespective of the fact whether (1) it naturally possesses sight, or whether (2) it naturally does not itself possess sight but its genus or species possesses sight, or whether (3) neither itself nor its genus or species naturally possesses sight, reflects the following statement of Aristotle; in which the three possibilities mentioned by Avicenna are given in reverse order. "We speak of 'privation' (1) if something has not one of the attributes which a thing might naturally have, even if this thing itself would not naturally have it . . . (2) if, though either the thing itself or its genus would naturally have an attribute, it has it not . . . (3) if, though it would naturally have the attribute, and when it would naturally have it, it has it not."⁴⁹ Now in our analysis above of this passage, as well as of Averroes' commentary thereon, we have shown that the predicates in the case of all these three types of propositions are terms which are privative in form. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Avicenna's *ghair baṣīr* is his parallel statement here was meant by him to be taken in the sense of "unseeing."

Part of Avicenna's discussion of infinite judgments is restated also by Ghazali. Taking the proposition "Zaid is not-seeing (*ghair baṣīr*)" as the subject of his discussion, he describes it as a "transposed proposition" (*qadīyyah ma'dūlah*), explaining that the infinite "not-seeing" has the same meaning as the privation "blind" (*a'ma*), and, like Avicenna, he adds that while in negative propositions the subject may be something non-existent in infinite propositions the subject must be something existent.⁵⁰ From his statement that the infinite term "not-seeing" means the same as the term "blind" it is quite evident that the term "not-seeing" can be predicated only of a subject which naturally does possess the habit of "sight."

Indirect light on these various types of proposition is thrown also by Maimonides. With regard to negations, he follows Aristotle when in his discussion of the negative attributes of God, as, e.g., in such a proposition as "God is not mortal," he says that this negation does not imply that it negates of God that which He could naturally possess.⁵¹ Then with regard

⁴⁹ *Metaph.*, V, 22, 1022b, 22-28.

⁵⁰ *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* I, p. 22, l. 14—p. 23, l. 4. Like Avicenna in *'Ishārāt*, p. 28, l. 1, Ghazali (p. 22, l. 13) refers to Persian as a language in which the copula is not omitted in nominal propositions.

⁵¹ *Moreh Nebukim* I, 58.

to privation, he also follows Aristotle when he says: "Nothing can have a term of 'privation' as its predicate except that in which the 'habit' opposite to that 'privation' can naturally exist, for we do not say of a wall that it is foolish or blind or dumb."⁵² Incidentally, the example of a wall is taken from Alexander's commentary on the *Metaphysics*.⁵³ But then in another place he says that "we do say concerning a wall that it is not seeing."⁵⁴ Now the Arabic for that which I have provisionally translated by "is not seeing" is *lā baṣīr*, the very same expression which according to both Avicenna and Averroes may mean either the infinite "not-seeing" or the privative "unseeing." But since Maimonides says that *lā baṣīr* can be predicated even of a wall, which means that the proposition in question is of the same status as a negative proposition, we may assume that it is to be understood here, as in the similar statements of Avicenna and Averroes, in the sense of "unseeing." Though Maimonides makes no direct statement as to the status of infinite propositions, we may also assume that like Avicenna and Averroes he takes them to be of the same status as propositions in which the predicate is a privative term of the type of the term "blind" and not of the type of the term "unseeing."⁵⁵

As a result of our discussion then we know that according to a traditional interpretation of Aristotle in Arabic philosophy a distinction is to be made between a proposition of the type "A is not-seeing" and a proposition of the type "A is unseeing." The former, the infinite proposition, is to be regarded as the equivalent of the privative proposition of the type "A is blind," so that the term "not-seeing" could not be affirmed of a subject which naturally cannot possess sight. The latter, the privative proposition of the type "A is unseeing," is to be regarded as the equivalent of the negative proposition "A is not seeing," so that the term "unseeing" can be predicated even of a subject which cannot naturally possess sight.

We have already pointed out that in Latin philosophy no distinction was made between a privative predicate of the type of "unseeing" and a privative predicate of the type of "blind." Nor, as far as I know, did Latin interpreters of Aristotle try to throw light on the question whether infinite propositions like "A is not-seeing" is the equivalent of privative propositions of the type of "A is blind," or of negative propositions like "A is not seeing." Hobbes indeed takes the proposition "*homo est non lapis*" as an example of a negative proposition,⁵⁶ but it is not clear whether

⁵² *Millot ha-Higgayon*, Ch. 11.

⁵³ Cf. above n. 10.

⁵⁴ *Moreh Nebukim* I, 58.

⁵⁵ Cf. my paper "Maimonides on Negative Attributes" in the Ginzberg Volume, pp. 411-446.

⁵⁶ *Opera Latina*, 1839, I, p. 31.

this was meant by him to be in opposition to Aristotle's conception of an infinite judgment, or whether it was meant by him to be an interpretation of it, or whether unknowingly he confused an infinite proposition with a negative proposition. Similarly when Wolff describes an infinite proposition as a proposition which in reality is affirmative and not negative, but it has the appearance of a negative proposition,⁵⁷ it is also doubtful whether by the last statement he meant that in an infinite proposition like "A is not-seeing" the subject "A" could be something which naturally had no sight. A similar uncertainty is also to be found in Baumgarten's statement that "an affirmative proposition, in which there is a negation, is called infinite."⁵⁸

Through Wolff, it is generally assumed, Kant learned of the old conception of an infinite judgment. The only innovation introduced by him, it is again generally assumed, was in making it into a third kind of judgment under quality and placing it by the side of the affirmative and the negative judgments,⁵⁹ and the question was therefore raised whether the introduction of that innovation was at all necessary.⁶⁰ But in the light of our discussion of what, according to the Arabic tradition, was the meaning of infinite and privative judgments in Aristotle, the departure of Kant from Aristotle, perhaps unknown to himself, was more fundamental. If the soul is assumed not to be mortal by its very nature, then according to Aristotle, in contradistinction to Kant, it could be said of it that "it is not mortal" but it could not be said of it that "it is not-mortal." Moreover, among the expositors of Kant it is said that his model proposition of an infinite judgment, namely, "the soul is not-mortal" is the same as the proposition "the soul is immortal."⁶¹ According to the traditional interpretation in Arabic philosophy, however, Aristotle would maintain that inasmuch as it is assumed that the soul cannot naturally be mortal, it could be affirmed of it that it is "immortal" but it could not be affirmed of it that it is "not-mortal."

Let us summarize the result of our discussion.

⁵⁷ Ch. Wolf, *Philosophia Rationalis sive Logica*, §§208-209: "Si negandi particula non refertur ad copulam, sed ad praedicatum, vel subjectum; propositio negativa non est, sed aliquam ejus saltem speciem habet . . . propositio, quae speciem negativam habet, sed revera affirmativa est, infinita dicitur."

⁵⁸ A. G. Baumgarten, *Acroasis Logica*, §217: "Propositio affirmans, cui inest negatio, dicitur infinita."

⁵⁹ Kant, *Logik*, §22, *Anm.* 3; *Kr. d. rein. Vern.*¹, p. 70.

⁶⁰ Cf. W. Hamilton, *Lectures on Logic*, 1866, I, pp. 253-255; Th. Ziehen, *Lehrbuch der Logik*, 1920, pp. 638-640.

⁶¹ Cf. W. T. Krieg, *Logik*, 1833, §55, *Anm.* 3: "*animus est non-mortalis = immortalis*"; C. F. Bachmann, *System der Logik*, 1928, §84, *Anm.* 2: "Die Seele is *nicht-sterblich* (*unsterblich*)."

An analysis of the various texts of Aristotle brings out the fact that he distinguishes four types of proposition.

First, a negative proposition of the type "A is not seeing."

Second, a privative proposition of the type "A is unseeing," in which the predicate is privative in form.

Third, a privative proposition of the type "A is blind," in which the predicate is only privative in meaning.

Fourth, an infinite proposition of the type "A is not-seeing."

With regard to the first type of proposition, Aristotle explicitly says that the subject "A" can be something which naturally never possesses sight, as, e.g., a wall. The same may also be inferred with regard to the second type of proposition.

With regard to the third type of proposition, he explicitly says that the subject "A" must be something which naturally would possess sight, as, e.g., a man.

But with regard to the fourth type of proposition, he does not say whether it is like the first and second types of proposition or like the third type. Nor is any light shed on the subject by Greek and Latin commentators and in general by the western tradition of Aristotle.

From Arabic commentators, however, it may be gathered that the fourth type of proposition in Aristotle is like the third type.

As a result of this analysis and interpretation of Aristotle, the differences between him and Kant are two.

First, with regard to negative propositions of the type "A is not seeing," in which, according to Aristotle "A" can be a "wall," whereas according to Kant it cannot.

Second, with regard to infinite propositions of the type "A is not-seeing," in which according to Aristotle "A" cannot be a "wall," whereas according to Kant it can.

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EXTRACTO

Un análisis de varios textos de Aristóteles trae a colación el hecho de que en él se distinguen cuatro tipos de proposición:

Primero, una proposición negativa de tipo "A no es auditivo."

Segundo, una proposición privativa del tipo "A es inauditivo," en la cual el predicado tiene forma privativa.

Tercero, una proposición privativa del tipo "A es sordo," en la cual el predicado solo es privativo por su sentido.

Cuarto, una proposición infinita del tipo "A es no-auditivo."

Con relación al primer tipo de proposición, Aristóteles dice taxativamente que el sujeto "A" puede ser algo que carezca por naturaleza de audición, por ejemplo un muro. Lo mismo puede inferirse con relación al segundo tipo de proposición.

Con relación al tipo tercero, Aristóteles dice también explícitamente que el sujeto "A" debe ser algo que posea por naturaleza la audición, por ejemplo un hombre.

Pero con referencia al cuarto tipo de proposición, no indica si es como el primero y segundo tipos, o si es como el tercero. Tampoco arrojan luz alguna sobre la cuestión los comentaristas griegos y latinos ni, en general, la tradición occidental de Aristóteles.

Sin embargo, de los comentaristas árabes podemos colegir que este cuarto tipo de proposición en Aristóteles es como el tercero.

Como resultado de esta interpretación de Aristóteles, la diferencia entre Kant y Aristóteles en el empleo de las proposiciones infinitas se convierte en algo más fundamental de lo que se considera generalmente.

(Nota: en el texto inglés se emplea como ejemplo para el predicado de estas proposiciones la visión y no la audición. El idioma español no permite una traducción perfecta de las correspondientes formas inglesas.)