

Aristotelian Elements

In the Thinking of Ibn al-'Arabí and the Young
Martin Heidegger

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University of Helsinki

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Martin Heidegger

by

Mikko Telaaranta

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This study has both a long academic and non-academic history. Its beginning goes back to my post-graduate four years in the early 1980's in Cairo. There my decisive contacts came through the Dominican Institute of Oriental Studies, *IDEO*, dedicated to bridging together Islam and the West, headed by the late Georges C. Anawati, O.P. (1905–1994). While studying during the day-time Arabic language and the foundations of religion (*usûlu 'd-Dîn*) at the University of Al-Azhar, during the evenings I had at my disposal the excellent library of the Institute, the vast knowledge of its director on medieval philosophy and the possibility of meeting scholars from around the world. There I also made the acquaintance of Professor Osman Yahia from the Sorbonne who patiently introduced me to the overall structure of the *Futuhât al-Makkîyya*. Both great scholars made a lasting impression. In Cairo I also met Charles Le Gai Eaton, the author of profound and beautifully written books on Islam, with whom I could discuss on a cordial personal level questions of Islam in the contemporary world and the genuine questions of human spirituality in our correspondence, continuing till the last years before his death in February last year.

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Mikko Telaranta

Tiivistelmä

Väitöskirjassa analysoidaan aristoteelisen ajattelun peruskäsitteitä kahdessa hyvin erilaisessa viitekehyksessä: oman aikamme filosofin, Martin Heideggerin ajattelussa, sekä islamilaisen maailman ehkä tunnetuimman mystikon, Ibn al-‘Arabín (1165–1240) ajattelussa. Nämä kaksi erilaista aristoteelisen filosofian reseptiä korostavat työni yleisempää perusluonnetta nimenomaan uskontofilosofian fenomenologisena tutkimuksena. Tässä yhteydessä fenomenologia viittaa varsinaisen filosofisen kysymyksenasettelun perennaaliseen luonteeseen. Fenomenologian peruslause *Zur Sachen Selbst* on yhtä relevantti niin Aristoteleen, Martin Heideggerin kuin Ibn al-‘Arabín ajattelussa. Siksi työ jakautuu kolmeen luontevaan osaan: ensimmäinen osa tarkastelee aristoteelista ajattelua sen omassa kontekstissaan kahden modernin Aristoteles-tutkijan analyysien perusteella. Näistä Monte Johnson (2005) tarkastelee Aristoteleen teleologiaa ja Heinz Happ (1971) aristoteelisen filosofian materiaalista peruskäsitettä *hylê*. Näiden kahden alustavan tutkielman tarkoituksena on hahmottaa aristoteelisen ajattelun perusluonnetta taustaksi myöhemmälle islamilaisen maailman keskiaikaiselle sekä oman aikamme Heideggerin tulkinnoille. Työni pyrkii osoittamaan aristoteelisen ajattelun monipuolisia soveltamisen mahdollisuuksia niin mystiikan kuin uusien ja tuoreiden filosofisten avausten suuntaan, mikäli sitä luetaan aidon filosofisena eikä vain länsimaisen metafysiikan tai ”onto-teologian” historiallisena kivijalkana.

Työn toinen osa paneutuu tarkemmin nuoren Heideggerin filosofiseen projektiin ennen hänen pääteoksensa *Oleminen ja Aika* julkaisemista vuonna 1927. Hänen alkuperäisenä motiivinaan oli aristoteelisen skolastisen tradition purkaminen, mutta syvälinen perehtyminen Aristoteleen ajatteluun johdattikin ”Antiikin ontologian radikalisointiin” ja kokonaan uuden ja mielekkään tulokulman avautumiseen Aristoteleen ajatteluun ilman kristillisen skolastiikan painolastia.

Kolmas ja laajin tutkimuksen osa tarkastelee aristoteelista perinnettä islamilaisessa maailmassa. Tässä osoitetaan, että varhaisin ja merkittävin väylä aristoteelisen filosofian leviämiseksi oli antiikin *peri physeôs* -traditio ja sen välittyminen Aristoteleen *Syntymisestä ja häviämisestä*, *Taivaasta* sekä *Meteorologia* teosten käännösten kautta. Tässä osassa aristoteelisen fysiikan keskeisyys tulee ilmi Ibn al-‘Arabín kosmologian sekä yleisemmin islamilaisen luonnontieteen perustana. Tutkimus päättyy filosofian ja mystiikan kohtaamiseen osoittaen näiden kahden inhimillisen perussuuntautumisen yhtäläisyyksiä ja eroja ihmisen perimmäisten päämäärien tarkastelussa.

Avainkäsitteet: *hylê/hayûlâ*, materia; *dúnamis/quwwa*, voima, mahdollisuus; *energeia/bi’l-fa’el*, aktuaalisuus; *tò tí ên êinai, quod quid erat esse*, se mikä oli oleva; *entelekheia*, toteutuneisuus, *al-nashâ’ al-insânîya*, ihmisen ulottuvuus, *Dasein*, täälläolo; *stoikheia, al-ustuqussât*, elementit.

Abstract

This dissertation analyses basic Aristotelian notions in two quite different contexts: in the modern Western philosophy of Martin Heidegger and in the mystical thought of perhaps the greatest Islamic medieval mystic Ibn al-‘Arabí (1165–1240CE). These two widely separated receptions of Aristotelian philosophy are intended to emphasize the main approach of the dissertation as phenomenological studies in the philosophy of religion. Phenomenology stands here for the perennial nature of genuine philosophical questioning: the demand of *Zur Sachen Selbst* is equally pertinent in the framework Aristotelian, Ibn al-‘Arabian and Heideggerian frames of reference. Thus the work is divided into three main sections: the first part tends to give an overall picture of Aristotelian thinking in its own context through the analysis of two modern scholars on Aristotle. These two are Monte Johnson (2005) on Aristotelian teleology and Heinz Happ (1971) on the Aristotelian concept of matter, *hylê*. These two studies serve as the general foundation of Aristotelian thinking to provide background for the later interpretations in the medieval Islamic and modern European frames of reference.

The second part takes a closer look at the project of the young Heidegger on Aristotelian philosophy before the publication of his major work, *Being and Time* in 1927. Although his primary motive was to attack the Aristotelian scholastic tradition, these early years of thorough Aristotelian investigations brought him to a “Radicalizing of Ancient Ontology,” meaning a new and relevant entry into Aristotelian philosophy without the heavy baggage of Christian scholastic tradition. This study aims to show that if Aristotle is understood in a genuine philosophical sense and not through the western metaphysical or “onto-theological” tradition, his basic ideas are highly applicable to both genuine mystical ideas and provide an opportunity for a new and fresh entry into philosophical questions as such.

The third and largest part of this work deals with the Aristotelian legacy in the Islamic world. Here we see how the earliest and decisive channel of influences came through the Aristotelian and the earlier Greek *periphyseôs* tradition through the early translation of *On Generation and Corruption*, *On the Heavens*, and the *Meteorology* of Aristotle. Here I want to show the direct influence of Aristotelian physics in the cosmological teachings of Ibn al-‘Arabí and the Islamic tradition on the whole. The study ends in a meeting between philosophy and mysticism to show the similarities and differences of these two basic human approaches on ultimate human ends.

Key-concepts: *hylê/hayûlâ* matter; *dúnamis/quwwa*, force, possibility; *energeia/bi’l-fa’el*, actuality; *tò tí ên eînai*, quod quid erat esse, the what it was to be, *entelekheia*, having-come-to-the-end, *al-nashâ’ al-insânîya*, the human level, *Dasein*, being-there; *stoikheia*, al-ustuqussât, the elements.

Acknowledgements

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Aristotelian Elements in the Thinking of Ibn al-'Arabí and the Young Martin Heidegger

Introduction

According to Muslim commentators of the Qur'ân the first five verses of sûra 96, *The Clot*, were the first revelations received by the Prophet in the cave of Mount Hira on the 27th night of *Ramadân*, the traditional month of retreat, in his fortieth year:

*Recite: In the Name of thy Lord who created,
created man of a blood-clot.*

*Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Generous,
who taught by the Pen,
taught man what he knew not.*

In these First Words of Islam the fundamental themes of the present study are brought up neatly. The first point is the mentioning of night-time as the moment of revelation, the darkness of night into which these words came “like the breaking of the light of dawn.”¹ This particular night and the date given is the traditional holiest moment of the Islamic calendar, the *laylatu-l'qadr*, the Night of Power, which “is better than a thousand months” (Q 97:3). According to these authors, and Ibn al-‘Arabí (1165–1240) in particular, this excellence of the night time refers to the whole of revelation, but in an undifferentiated mode (*ijmâl*). It is only in temporality that this shrouded undifferentiation is differentiated (*tafsîl*) into the complete Book of al-Qur'ân. This is further enhanced by the figure of the pen: a pen in which the ink is material for words to be written; in the inkwell the words are in an undifferentiated mode only to be differentiated and individuated into the meaningful words of a language in the act of writing, thereby “teaching man what he knew not.”

Now, to speak in Aristotelian terms, what is here depicted is a passage from *potentiality* (*dúnamis*) into *actuality* (*energeia*). In its darkness and lack (privation, *stérêsis*) of visible form, the night stands for *matter* (*hylê*) yearning for entified existence. On the whole, it is this fundamental idea of emerging, the event of coming into being, *Ereignis*, as Heidegger called the “critical moment in which *Dasein* and its ‘there’ first emerge”,² which is at the focal point of my study. Similarly, Michael A. Sells speaks of a “meaning event” to explain Ibn al-‘Arabí’s

¹ B I.3 These words are like the *Aurora consurgens* of the *Canticum* (6:10).

² Polt in CHCP 2001, 93-94. GA 65: Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis).

“dynamic, performative notion of existence.”³ This grand idea of both being (*physis* in *phuein*) and thinking (*noein*) in transition is at the heart of this study. Instead of the traditional petrified ontology of metaphysics, this ongoing process as an essential openness to being is well depicted in the title of an early treatise by Jâbir ibn Hayyân: *Book of the passage of Potentiality to Actuality*.⁴

Finally, in these first words there is a strange “biological” or natural flavor, in the sense that the human being is said to be created from a blood-clot (*khalaq al-insânu min al-‘alaq*). Typically, the Arabic word *‘alaq* has a number of meanings listed in dictionaries: *to hang, be suspended, cling, cleave, be attached, and devoted, to become pregnant, conceive (woman), to begin* and so forth. One concrete meaning of the word goes back to a clot of blood and, therefore, in this connection, an embryo, a foetus. Thus, the passage of potentiality to actuality begins by the formative power of the seed producing an embryo clinging into its mother’s womb, the receptacle for the young in the belly (*rahim*, “uterus,” *rahîm* the All-Merciful): “*He brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs, not knowing anything*” (Q 16:78). Here, in the first words, there is an analogy between the growth of an embryo into a complete human being and the creation of the cosmos through the merciful act of God, thus, between embryo and cosmos—or, to use the widely applied Hellenic expressions, between microcosm and macrocosm. Ibn al-‘Arabî even says “the beginning of time (*sadr al-zamân*) is the time of the reception (*qubûl*) of form by *hayûlâ*” (F II 652.30 = the conjunction of Aristotelian *materia prima* and *morphê*). Comparisons between matters *vide apart* call for both qualitative understanding and understanding of qualities and the ancient principle of *like is known by like* (Empedocles).

The purpose of this study is to elucidate the ideas inherent in a passage; a passage from something (*ex hou*) into something, the first being the “material” cause of potentiality “from which,” or “out of which,” and the latter that of actuality “for the sake of which” (*ou heneka*; Aristotle never uses a term like “final cause”). These thoroughly Aristotelian concepts are the signposts on my way through very heterogeneous materials either directly influenced by Aristotle’s works or as ideas so thoroughly molded in the respective traditions that one cannot simply call them only Aristotelian elements. The paragon of such concepts and ideas would undoubtedly be Aristotle’s concept of *physis*, nature. To give this concept a broader perspective has been my constant desire during the passage of this work from its first conception all the way to the final “product.” It is my firm conviction that one fundamental reason for the perseverance of these Aristotelian ideas throughout history is due to their correspondence with the human experience itself. Therefore one important

³ Sells 1994, 88

⁴ *Kitâb Ikrâj mâ fi’l-Quwwa ila’l-Fi’l*, Kr 331; traditionally dated to the 8th century

goal of the present study is to provide grounds for understanding *perennial* philosophical ideas, that is, not just schools of thought or rational systems of disputing philosophers, but the thought provoking philosophical questions themselves, touching the very marrow of our own human being. This is well expressed in a much quoted medieval principle formulated by S.Thomas of Aquinas in his commentary on the Aristotelian work *On Heavens* (Book 1, cap.10, lect 22): “*Studium philosophiae non est ad hoc quod sciatur quid homines senserint, sed qualiter se habeat veritas rerum,*” a principle which is quoted by a modern scholar, Philip Roseman, who says it “epitomizes the most important methodological presupposition of my project” and which he translates as: “The Study of philosophy is not about getting to know what some people might have deemed to be the case, but what the truth of things is.”⁵ This says well that perennial questions are by nature philosophical, they need the thinking thought to become actual, they need the questioning, searching and illuminating human understanding in the slow process of distillation into pure “gold,” as the alchemists called it. Therefore, according to Aristotle, art imitates nature, and this it does in order to learn how things come about. In this study ancient conceptions of nature (*péri phuseôs*) are followed to gain deeper understanding of existence as such and the unique human possibility of gaining awareness of the all.

As is obvious already from the aforesaid, the method of proceeding in such philosophical ambiance is deeply structured by concepts – and this on multiple levels. First, there is the philosophical tradition heavily laden with definitions and delicate nuances. In going through these basic philosophical concepts my ample support has been the way Martin Heidegger illuminates the Greek philosophical concepts. My own philosophical awakening came through Edmund Husserl and phenomenology and, particularly, Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (1901), which opened my eyes some 30 years ago on philosophical understanding. However, within years of completely other studies in Islamic mysticism Husserl’s influence waned and Heidegger seemed more and more challenging and rewarding. A recent commentator says: “In contrast to Husserl’s thinking the phenomenology of acts-of-consciousness, Heidegger’s thinking opened up the self-showing of the phenomenon – and then thought the more originary way in Greek *alêtheia* (the unconcealing of what emerges), disclosing or un-concealing, the emergent emerging, the self-showing [...]”⁶ Thus, in asking what is the matter for thinking (*Zur Sache des Denkens*) Maly answers: “from consciousness and objectifying subjectivity, to the being of beings...” To express this difference between Husserl and Heidegger in the simplest way is to remind of the fact that in the major work

⁵ Roseman 1996, Introduction

⁶ Maly 2007, 114–15.

of Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927), the most central and important word of Husserl, namely consciousness (*Bewußtsein*), does not appear.

If for Heidegger the decisive impetus for deeper understanding of intentionality came from the Greeks, as suggested above by Maly and often referred to by Heidegger himself, then in my case it was Islamic mysticism and particularly that of Ibn al-‘Arabí which made Heidegger’s approach more pertinent. In the Islamic world intentionality (*ma’nâ*) is used in different ways”to express both particular (and ultimately corporeal) datum and an immaterial, intelligible concept.”⁷

Furthermore, the phenomenological slogan of *zur Sachen Selbst* is a vital idea of Ibn al-‘Arabí: to see “the thing/situation as it is in itself” (*al-‘amru ‘alâ mâ huwa alayhi fî nafsîhi*). For Ibn al-‘Arabí this can only take place as *Self-disclosure* (*tajallî*) of things themselves in their *mazhar*, translated by Chittick as “locus of manifestation.” Thus, here we have the Greek *phainomena*, but not merely as objects of intentional consciousness but as beings in the world. And it is this classical realism, “this validation of nature, elementality, receptivity, and constant flux,” as Sells describes the thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabí, what makes Aristotle so applicable to his thinking although he certainly is not an Aristotelian philosopher—neither Aristotelian nor a philosopher. But here I again come to the need of a deeper understanding, now concerning both nature and its transcendence—meaning: transience opening through *Dasein*.

Above I referred to various levels of concepts used in argumentation. For a philosopher like Aristotle there is no revealed word, but contrary to many of his predecessors, Aristotle takes seriously arguments both of his predecessors and common agreement. These are not decisive, but they do give him food for thought and he often goes through such arguments to find reasons behind them. Similarly, even though one can say that Jâbir ibn Hayyân, whom we meet in the third part of this study, was a “*sûfî*” (he was known as “the *sûfî* from Tûs”), he seldom if ever uses the revealed word as an argument. Instead, for him, things either make sense or they don’t. What he was solely interested in was how things work. But, then again, his knowledge of Aristotle and the whole ancient tradition is massive.

For a traditional religious scholar or a mystic there are two basic conceptual levels: the revealed word and the mystics own experience.⁸ Both these levels are profusely used by Ibn al-‘Arabí. But contrary to many or perhaps even most mystics he is at the same time applying the full arsenal of

⁷ Ivry in AMCA 2002, 147 n.40

⁸ I avoid using modern expressions like “personal experience” since what is at stake here is not in the least a colorful personal “style” of experiencing, instead, here own experience stands for experience purified from personal elements, and, thus, “to wean ourselves from the habit of always hearing only what we already understand.” Maly 2007, 84.

scholastic terminology rooted in Hellenic philosophy tainted in the hues of a vast Hermetic tradition of late Antiquity. Thus the prerequisite to understand his thought is knowledge not only of the Qur'ânic language but also that of scholarly philosophy and Hermetic ideas, all of which are constantly further backed by arguments rising from his own experiences of *unveiling (kashf)*.

Finally, perhaps the most important level of conceptual analysis is what Heidegger called “dismantling” or “destruction” of traditional stultified conceptuality. This does not mean dismissing concepts; instead, what is crucial is finding a way through the heavy baggage of historical interpretations back to the more original ground of concepts in phenomena themselves. Here one of his central concepts is taken from Meister Eckhart: *breakthrough* (Durchbruch). For this the young Heidegger developed his *phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity*.⁹ But this same impetus is found also in Ibn al-‘Arabí who quotes a saying “feed us with fresh flesh,” meaning fresh in the sense of the Stoic *prosfaton*¹⁰, fresh or not yet spoiled. It is due to freshness that a statement can cause a response in a listener. Feed us with that which you yourself have understood instead of just repeating phrases. Similarly he uses the Arabic proverb: “I hear the mills grinding but can’t see any flour,” referring to scholastic discussions as never-ending disputations.

To sum up these different levels of analysis as methods of proceeding: (1) Philosophical tradition requires an analysis of intellectual context meaning both the reasoning behind the concepts and their historical destiny: a “subject” for a modern philosopher may mean something quite different than for a Medieval thinker. (2) The revealed word requires knowledge of a tradition’s self-understanding. If Qur’ânic arguments are used, they must be understood and analyzed in their own context. This is often a laborious task and one can perhaps be happy that the Qur’ânic commentary of Ibn al-‘Arabí is lost, as it covered only the first 18 sûras and yet had already 64 volumes! (3) Arguments resting on practice. In many cases we will come to complicated analytical processes that follow practice and availability of materials. This is the Aristotelian *phronêsis*, often translated as practical reason. This refers to practical know-how as the prerequisite to know how something is accomplished. In the case of Heidegger this level of analysis is decisive. Finally, last but not least (4) could be referred as explanations and argumentations based on *experience* (Aus der Erfahrung). All thinkers in this study argue on this level. A typical example could be the saying of the mystics: *He who has not tasted does not know*. In Ibn al-‘Arabí this is closely

⁹ Introduced in his early plan of 1922 for further studies in philosophy called *Phenomenological Interpretations with respect to Aristotle* [=PIA]

¹⁰ Nussbaum 1994, 381–83, on the mentioned saying, see above p.140

connected with understanding the revealed word: the connection between “tasting,” experiencing the “horizons” (*in-der-Welt-sein*) and hearing God speak in the verses of the revealed text is fundamental in his hermeneutics.

This study is based on original sources, meaning the works of Aristotle, Heidegger and Ibn al-‘Arabí. Yet, no one can cover such huge amount of material. The *Gesamtausgabe* (GA) of Heidegger with its now over a hundred volumes, or the gigantic *Futûhât al-Makkîyya* (F), The Meccan Openings (or Illuminations), alone of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s works, which in the critical Osman Yahia edition (1972–) is going to cover 37 volumes with 5–700 pages each, and of which less than half have so far seen the day. Not even to mention the two millennia of Aristotelian scholarship with its fiercely and thoroughly combatted details.

To save myself from drowning in this millennial tradition I have chosen two modern scholars to introduce Aristotle. Monte Johnson (2005), explaining Aristotle on teleology, and Heinz Happ with his Magnum Opus *HYLE. Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie-Begriff* (1971) explaining the very basic concept of my whole study. Though all perspectives are contestable, here I am not discussing these studies. Instead they serve as basis and perspective for the later discussions. Therefore, I plead for patience in the reader to go through these preliminary studies.

After these first two studies on Aristotle the second main part of this study is devoted to Aristotelian elements in the thinking of the young Heidegger, meaning mostly material antedating the publishing of his major work, *Being and Time* in 1927. This is an interesting and formative period of twelve years in Heidegger’s thinking during which he published nothing. However, as the recent publishing of his early courses and seminars held on Aristotle during this period and also the growing number of Heideggerian studies heralded by the major studies of Theodore Kisiel (1995, first ed. 1993) and John van Buren (1994) have shown, it was a deeply formative period for Heidegger’s original thinking. Here the whole Aristotelian philosophy is taken under careful investigation, not as the dominant philosopher of the long scholastic tradition in the West but, rather, Aristotle as the highest peak of Greek philosophy which, according to Heidegger, was even “more original and radical than that of his teacher Plato.”¹¹ Heidegger wrote in 1925: “Phenomenology radicalized in its ownmost possibility is nothing but the questioning of Plato and Aristotle brought back to life: *the repetition, the retaking of the beginning of our scientific philosophy*.”¹²

¹¹ Brogan 2005, 4

¹² GA 20, 184/136; see also SD 2000, 87

The third and largest part of my study is on Aristotelian elements in the thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabí, “the greatest master,” as he is often called. Here, again, one faces the problem of overwhelming quantity of material. I have already referred to his magnum opus, the *Meccan Illuminations/Openings*, the size of which alone surpasses the limits of any academic study. Even maybe his best known and reasonably sized work, *The Ringstones of Wisdoms (Fusûs al-Hikâm)*, is yet also a work with well over hundred commentaries extant in the Arabic language. My theme, however, Aristotelian elements in his thinking, is a fairly defined topic. To my knowledge Aristotle is never directly mentioned in the *Futûhât*, and the only direct mention of an Aristotelian work is the *Sirr al-asrâr* (see p.159), known in the Latin form as *Secretum secretorum*, a work Ibn al-‘Arabí considered to be a work on Politics, written by Aristotle to his pupil Alexander the Great. This work has nothing to do with Aristotle. A friend of his recommended Ibn al-‘Arabí to write a commentary on this work, which he did in three days with a name *at-Tadbîrat al-ilâhîya* (see n331 above in Ch III.2.6). Furthermore, Ibn al-‘Arabí does not consider himself a philosopher, except in the real sense of the Greek word, meaning Lover of wisdom, as every reasonable human being is, as he says. Thus my purpose is not so much to explain his mystical thinking or “philosophy,” a subject way beyond my competence. Instead, what I want to dig into are more like the tools of his thinking, the way he formulates his thoughts, the fundamental and recurring themes of his thought, one eminent of these being the idea of a passage from potentiality into actuality. The most concrete Aristotelian element in his thinking has to do with cosmology, which, as I intend to show, is largely based on the *peri phûseôs* tradition of Antiquity, the theme of the long chapter III.2, Towards a Science of Balance above.

A few words are still in place on previous western studies on Ibn al-‘Arabí. He was first introduced in the West through three of his short treatises edited by H.S.Nyberg in his dissertation in the University of Uppsala in 1919. Another contemporary of him was the Spanish scholar Miguel Asín Palacios with a strong Christianizing motive. During the last half a century a veritable explosion has occurred in Western Ibn al-‘Arabí –studies, starting with the grounding works by Henry Corbin and Toshiko Izutsu. More recently, William C.Chittick, a fine scholar and translator of Ibn al-‘Arabí, has brought this fascinating mystic within the reach of large audience. We will become more familiar with this scholarly work on Ibn al-‘Arabí during the last fifty years, through the following pages.

Part I A: Aristotle's primary teleological concepts

I. A. 1. Knowledge of nature through the four causes

In the later tradition of philosophy in Antiquity, the commentators of Aristotle and Plato were primarily trying to level down on the one hand the apparent differences between these two philosophers and, on the other hand, due to their Christian or Muslim context, to use their philosophical concepts to develop arguments and proofs for the existence and the qualities of God. This was not what Aristotle was looking for in his philosophy. Rather, Aristotle rejected extrinsic causes such as mind or god as primary causes for natural things. "Aristotle's radical alternative was to assert nature itself as an internal principle of change and end, and his teleological explanations focus on the internal and intrinsic ends of natural substances – those ends that benefit the natural thing itself."¹ Indeed, in reading Aristotle's crucial passages on for example the concept of *entelécheia*, a term coined by Aristotle to express the state of completion, he seems almost obsessed with the terms "in" or "into" ('*en*', '*eis*', '*esó*') when explaining the proper source of natural ends for a living thing: "both functioning and the completion have to be understood as internal".² Goods and ends are internal and thus also different for different entities: "the good is different for humans and fishes".³ Thus "nature is a principle of the good for each kind of thing individually".⁴ "Aristotle conceives of natural motion and change in general teleologically, as a condition of completion with respect to something's capacities."⁵ Thus, teleology is about explaining and providing the account for the completion of the possibilities for something to be. It does not explain how something happens or what brings it about; instead, it explains *why* it happens.⁶ One could therefore call this explanatory account a philosophical perspective as it tends towards seeing the actual completion of given possibilities. "Nature makes everything for the sake of something (*tên fúsin éneka tou poieîn*), and this is something good." (*Somn.* 455 b17–18)

In asking about the why of something happening we can pose the questioning in four different modes: Out of what? Owing to what? According to what? Because of what? Of these four different modes of questioning Aristotle generally uses substantive expressions like *the matter* (*hé hylé*), *the form* (*tò*

¹ Johnson, 2005, 6

² Ibid. 90

³ NE 6.7, 1141 a22-23

⁴ Johnson 2005, 11

⁵ Ibid. 8

⁶ Kahn, in Johnson 2005, 43

eîdos), the source of motion (*hé arkhé tés kinéseós*). Or 'the for the sake of' (*tò où éneka*).⁷ In his book on Physics Aristotle writes (II 7, 198 a21–24): "And since all knowledge of nature concerns the four causes (*ai aitía téttares*), it is naturally necessary to demonstrate the reason in all these ways: the matter, the form, the mover, the for the sake of which." The modern notion of 'cause' does not, however, convey fully the idea of Greek *aitía*, the primary meaning of which is responsibility. This feature is clearly visible in the common German translation of *aitía*, *aítion* as "Ursache".⁸ Johnson writes, "The four kinds of explanation, as causes, are a scheme for representing facts and states of affairs of people and things. Perhaps the phrase 'causal explanation' captures what Aristotle means".⁹

The first mentioned cause, generally referred to as the material cause, is far wider in the Aristotelian use than the modern concept of matter. But as this concept is the main subject of the next chapter, I here lay only a brief sketch for the idea of the first cause, matter, *hylê*. Primarily this cause signifies "that out of which anything is made, whether that be raw materials, parts, or even letters and arguments".¹⁰ Thus Aristotle writes: "Letters are the cause of syllables, their matter of artefacts, fire and the like of other bodies, their parts of wholes, and the hypotheses of the conclusion, as the cause out of which (*tò èx où aitía*); and the one group, the parts and so on, are causes as the underlying thing, while the other group, the whole, the composition and the form, are causes as 'the what it was to be' (*tò tí ên eînai*)." (Phys II 3, 195 a16–21) Here we have the basic Aristotelian distinction of matter as possibility or subject of change and form as completion or "actuality" (*hylê–eîdos*): "that out of which" or "according to which" and "the what it was to be". The quoted passage also clearly shows the wide meaning of Aristotelian matter in comparison to modern notions.

The last mentioned somewhat awkward expression for completion "the what it was to be" is a direct translation of an important Aristotelian term, which is often translated "essence". Johnson, however, writes: "But the term 'essence', like 'cause', is heavily laden with customs, baggage, and ambiguities (necessary and sufficient conditions, secret natures, etc.), which do not really apply to Aristotle".¹¹ Johnson admits that the literal translation is awkward but conveys better the idea, and, that the original Greek phrase was also awkward. The phrase *tò tí ên eînai* responds to the commonplace and technical-dialectical question: *tí esti* – what is? "Aristotle defines the cause we are discussing with the words 'the account of what it was to be something'" (*ho logos ho toû tí ên eînai*, Phys II 3, 194 b27= Met V.2, 1013 a27). This clumsy phrase which contains both the imperfect (*ên*) and the infinitive (*eînai*),

⁷ Johnson 2005, 42

⁸ Happ 1971, 59 See also GA 18, 291

⁹ Johnson 2000, 41

¹⁰ Johnson 2005, 45

¹¹ Ibid. 47. Aubenque 1962 gives the French form "ce que c'était que d'être", and he further explains the imperfect form of *ên*: L'imparfait du *tí ên eînai* ne corrige, en le figeant, la contingence du présent, que parce qu'il est l'image et le substitute d'un impossible parfait, celui qui exprimerait non pas l'achèvement de ce qui était, mais l'achèvement toujours achevé de ce qui a toujours été ce qu'il est", p.472, quoted through Minca 2006, 61 n.2

"indicates the object of definition – what is being defined: 'what it is for something to be', whose formula is definition (*horismós*), is also called the substance of each thing" (*Met* V 8, 1017 b21-2).¹² Johnson considers it possible that the imperfect is the so-called “philosophical imperfect” – referring not to something that actually happened in the past, but rather to something that was mentioned a short while ago in the ongoing discussion, but there are other possible explanations too. As an example he quotes a phrase from the *Rethorics*: "that at which all things aim, this was [always or all along] a good" (*Rhet* I 6 1363 a8–9). Thus a possible translation for the phrase *tò tí ên êinai* could run as “that which something [always or all along] was to be”. This translation becomes relevant when we discuss the key-word of Aristotle's teleology, that is, *entelécheia*. His account of generation "holds that the form pre-exists before an embodied thing comes to be in matter".¹³ For if we are discussing biological generation or development, "not every phase of development is the basis for its explanation, but only the animal 'in a state of completion' (*entelécheia*), i.e. a fully mature adult, which corresponds to its form. Something persists through the embryonic, infant, pubescent, adult and geriatric stages. The definition and substance of biological entities refers to a fixed point in a continuous development."¹⁴ Having lived as the father of my child through all different phases of her human growth I, nevertheless, have “known” or recognized her all along. This something in my child is undifferentiated in the beginning but becomes clearer and expresses itself in ever richer forms as she grows to her full individual adulthood. Thus one can say, as Johnson puts it, that the *eidos* (or form) is "an instance of the cause referred to by the cumbersome phrase 'the what it was to be'".¹⁵ Form is thus not a pre-existing static "idea"; instead form is motion of natural phenomena from potentiality to "the what it was to be". One could also say that the *eidos* provides us the “looks” of the essential, “the what it was to be”, seen from a certain standpoint or in a certain situation. Both Plato and Aristotle use the word *eidos* also as a synonym for *génos*, kind, race or, in some sense of the word “species”: each *genos* has its own *eidos*, that is, its own form of completeness. These points will come under discussion later when we enter Heidegger's reading of Aristotle.

The second causal explanation mentioned is “the source (or origin) of motion (or change)”, often called the efficient cause. Again Johnson sees the modern notion of efficient cause somewhat problematic when applied to Aristotle's use of the source of motion. For Aristotle the question was about any "active principle which initiates change (or rest), whether this is a billiard ball or a doctor."¹⁶ Here we run into

¹² Ibid 48. Like Heidegger, GA 18, 32: “*tò tí ên êinai* ist gerade das Thema des *horismos*”

¹³ Ibid, 48, referring to *Met* 1032 b 11–12, 1034 b 12–13, and 1072 b30-73 a 3

¹⁴ Johnson 2005, 48

¹⁵ Ibid. 47

¹⁶ Ibid. 45

an important Aristotelian pair of notions which will play a major role later on when I am discussing both the thinking of Ibn al-'Arabi and that of Heidegger, namely, that which is active (*tò poiêtikon*) and that which receives the activity, that which is passive (*paskhein*). Aristotle writes: "That which is active is a cause as 'whence the beginning of change'. But 'the [cause] for the sake of which' is not active. That is why 'health' is not active, except metaphorically. For whenever the agent is there, the patient becomes something; but when conditions [e.g. of health] are present, the patient no longer becomes [something], but already is [something, e.g. healthy]. And the forms and the ends are states, but matter, insofar as it is matter, is passive". (GC I 7, 324 b13—18) Thus we have here an idea of the efficient cause as an activity operating from the outside, externally (a father of a son, the maker of a product) and the material cause as something intrinsic and receptive, that out of which something is made or generated. But there are also things whose principle of motion and rest is internal, not external to them. Indeed, "this is, in fact, how Aristotle defines 'nature' [*fysis*]"¹⁷ — one of the key-concepts of later chapters in this study. This internality of nature contrasts nature sharply from art: "art is a principle and form of what is generated, but in another; but natural change is located in the thing itself" (GA II 1, 735 a2—3). Johnson writes: "Knowledge of how natural entities are generated and exist is the purview of theoretical science — the kind of knowledge that grasps the intrinsic causes of things — as opposed to practical knowledge which, like art, knows how to use things and is concerned not with internal and intrinsic forms but with 'a form and principle in another'. This distinction... is very important to Aristotle."¹⁸ Again we should note here the strong emphasis on the internality of both forms and knowledge of them.

I.A. 2. The soul as cause and starting point of the living thing

For Aristotle the most natural of functions for living things is to generate and to use food. He says:

The nutritive soul underlies the other souls, and it is the first and most common power of the soul, being that in virtue of which all the living things subsist. It is the function of this to generate and to use food. For that is the most natural of functions for living things (...): to produce another like itself, an animal an animal, a plant a plant, so that they participate in the eternal and divine as far as possible. For everything desires this, and does for the sake this everything that it does naturally. For 'that for the sake of which' is twofold: that of which [i.e. the aim] and that for which [i.e. the beneficiary]. Thus since it is not possible to share in the eternal and divine, because nothing among the perishable things is able to remain the same and one in number, each participates as possible, it shares in this, some

¹⁷ Ibid. 46

¹⁸ Johnson, 2005, 77

more and others less, and remains not the same but like the same, not one in number, but one in form. (DA II 4, 415 a23—b7)

Here, like Plato before him¹⁹, Aristotle makes a twofold distinction between aims: that *for the sake of which* and that *for the sake of which as beneficiary*. This has to do with substances capable of change: we do something in order to become something, for example exercises in order to be healthy and in good condition. According to Aristotle the ultimate goal is participating in the eternal and the divine but since this is impossible for perishing entities, they strive for the likeness, not one in number, but one in form. Thus the natural desire to produce another like itself is ultimately for “generic eternity”, eternity of the species: a natural desire for reproduction is for the ultimate end of 'immortality' and the divine. This distinction is important when we come to discuss the perfection of the human soul which is the ultimate end and beneficiary of various instrumental bodily capacities we have. It is precisely because we are able to become something by striving towards this something which requires first diverse instrumental activities as secondary aims for the sake of this ultimate end, like a sick person taking medicine to gain health. Only a changeable thing can be the beneficiary of something. Therefore the Aristotelian *Unmoving mover*, like any complete form, is not the beneficiary of anything: benefiting would change it and that is "axiologically impossible... since that change would be either for the better (impossible, since there is nothing better) or the worse (impossible, since the divine will not become worse)".²⁰

Thus the individual organism in animals or the individual soul in humans is that for the sake of which. This brings us to Aristotle's notion of the complete state (*entelecheia*) of an individual organism. He says in the continuation of the passage quoted above (DA II 4, 415 b7—21, tr. by Johnson):

The soul is cause and starting point of the living thing. But these are said in many ways (*pollakhôs légetai*) and the soul is a cause in the three senses [of cause] that we have distinguished. For the soul is cause of the animate bodies 'whence the motion', and 'that for the sake of which, and, as substance. That it is [a cause] as substance is clear. For the substance is the cause of existence for everything. And animation is existence for animals, but the cause and starting point of this is the soul. Again, the thing in a complete state constitutes the account of what exists potentially (*'éti toû dunámei 'òntos logos hê entelécheia*). And it is apparent that the soul is cause as an end and for the sake of which.

¹⁹ Lys.219 E, One of Plato's examples is also medicine which is taken in order to gain health. For Ibn al-‘Arabi on nutrition, see part III n239

²⁰ Johnson 2005, 72

For, just as reason creates for the sake of something, in the same way so does nature, and this is its end. And the soul is by nature this kind of thing [i.e. an end] in living things. For all natural bodies are instruments of the soul; just as the natural bodies of animals, so those of plants, since these things are for the sake of the soul. But 'that for the sake of which' is twofold, both the 'of which' and the 'for which'.

Here Aristotle makes, as he often does, a comparison between nature and art: reason creates for the sake of something in the same way as nature does. And to understand how something is made or how nature works one needs to know its causes, both matter and form. Thus an artist must know both the material conditions for the making and the aimed form which is the end-product of the artistic process. There is, as was already mentioned, a very important difference between natural and artistic processes in the thinking of Aristotle: "art is a principle and form of what is generated, but in another; but natural change is located in the thing itself" (*GA* II 1, 735 a2—3). Here we again may note the importance of internality, which has to do with —as Johnson says— *where* nature is rather than what it is.²¹ Nature is a "way to nature" (*Phys* II 2, 193 b13), it is an end and for the sake 'of which', and all natural change is located in the thing itself and not in another. Therefore, for Aristotle, "nature does nothing in vain, for everything by nature is for the sake of something" (*DA* III 12, 434 a31—2), or, as he says closer to Platonic terms: "nature never manufactures (*demiurgeî*) anything in vain, but rather the best possible" (*PA* 711 a 17—19). Nature has created the physical bodies of living things, but this it does for the soul which is its "cause and end and for the sake of which". "The soul is by nature an end in living thing... 'But that for the sake of which' is twofold, both the 'of which' and 'the for which'." Nature makes the physical body so that the soul may use it so that the ultimate beneficiary is the living thing as a whole in its natural striving for perfection. Or to take an example from art or human skills, the artisan knows both how to produce what she is doing and for what that thing is used for — be it a piece of clothing or a musical composition. Johnson formulates this analogy between nature (*fysis*) and crafts (*tekhnê*) thus: "artefacts can only be explained, according to Aristotle, on the basis of their relationship to natural things", and in a further note, referring to Charles, he adds: "Aristotle does not assimilate the explanation of natural things to the sphere of human craft production; although the model of craft shows how it is that we identify the natural kinds about which we later develop deeper kinds of knowledge".²² One should also note that this common usage of analogy between nature and *tekhnê* in Aristotle can not be thought in terms of typical modern views on oppositions like 'nature—art', 'nature—culture', or 'nature—spirit', which really do not apply to Aristotle's thinking.²³

²¹ Ibid. 76

²² Johnson 2005, 133 n.5, (Charles D. 2000, *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence*, Oxford)

²³ For this, see: Happ 1971, 8-9

The quoted passage contains the important Aristotelian notion of actuality preceding potentiality: "the thing in a complete state (*hé entelécheia*) constitutes the account of what exists in potentiality (*toû dunámei*)". One may think of death as the end of life but not as its purpose: the complete state does not refer to a "final stage", rather, it has to do with capacities and powers. In his "metaphysical lexicon" Aristotle further explains the word "complete" (*téleion*). He says: "Excellence (or "goodness" for the Greek *arête*) is something complete (a perfection, *teleiôsis*). For each thing is something complete, and every entity is something complete when according to the kind of excellence native to it (*kata tò eîdos tês oikeias arête*) no part of its natural dimensions is lacking". (*Met* V 16, 1021 b21—24). Here he again underlines the inherent nature of the end of each thing: the kind of excellence *native* (*oikeías*) to it; a thing is complete when it has reached its own excellence. Natural entities have various ends each according to its own specific nature. A few lines later Aristotle stresses that "an end is final in the sense of the for the sake of which (*télos dè kai tò ou èneka éskhaton*). (1021 b30—31) Johnson writes: "Complete means having reached an end that constitutes an excellent condition of a specific kind of thing. Thus it is clear from the definition of 'complete' that Aristotle understands the relevant kind of ends in connection with limits, not finalities".²⁴

According to Aristotle "nature flees from the infinite; for the infinite is imperfect, and nature always seeks an end".²⁵ He also says that "all living things both move and are moved for the sake of something, so that this is the limit of all their movement — that for the sake of which", or, talking about humans, "the reasonable person, at least, always acts for a purpose; and this is a limit, for the end is a limit".²⁶ All these passages connect together ends and limits (*péras*) since Aristotle thinks that if something is infinitely extended or divided it can never reach a state of completion.

As was just noted "completion" has to do with capacities and powers. Here the Greek *entelecheia* is connected with another important term, namely *energeia*, activity, another expression coined by Aristotle from the root *ergon*, "function", "work" or "action". He says: "The *érgon* (function) is the *télos* (end), and the *enérgeia* (activity) is the *ergon* (function). For this reason the word *enérgeia* (activity) is said in the sense of the *ergon* (function) and extended to the *entelécheian* (state of completion)" (*Met* 9.8, 1050 a21—3). This very dense passage needs to be delved into.

²⁴ Johnson 2005, 84

²⁵ *GA* I 1, 715 b14—16

²⁶ *Motu* 6, 700 b15—16, *Met* I, 11, 994 b16

I.A.3. The Function of each thing is its end

The word function is central in Aristotle's teleological thinking: "everything is defined in respect of its function; for when something is able to perform its function, it is truly that thing; an eye for example, when it is able to see". (*Meteor* IV 12, 390 a10—12) Thus he can say: "the function of each thing is its end (*télos ekastou tò érgon*). It is obvious, then, that the function is better than the state. For the end, as end, is the best. For it was assumed that the best and the final is the end for the sake of which all other things exist. That the function is better than the state and the condition, then, is plain". (*EE* II 1, 1219 a8—10) In contrasting the function as activity with the capacity or power for an activity, that is, potentiality, Aristotle emphasizes the function as an end, an outcome of an activity, which thus reveals what a thing is potentially. Thus both *energeia* and *entelecheia* are opposed to capacity and potentiality, *dunamis*. This activity and functioning of something, it's "being in work", is for the excellent outcome of the end, as Johnson puts it.²⁷ And this is what the term *entelecheia* stands for. Like the word *energeia*, which was also constructed by Aristotle, the word *entelecheia* has the prefix "in" (Greek *èn-*) which in the former case could be indicated with "internal functioning", that is, for example, the functioning of an organism according to its own nature. This functioning of "each thing", each particular thing (*ekaston*) according to its own end seems to be crucial for all Aristotelian teleological thinking. But how is this internality to be understood in the case of the completion of a natural entity? In what sense can the process of internal functioning lead to an end that is also internal, that is, 'having a *télos* within one'? How is one to discern this end in the midst of the process of becoming? This question becomes quite intriguing if one thinks the human process of becoming: how is one to discern one's own end, 'the for the sake of which', in the ongoing process of everyday living? This will be the central question of Heidegger.

One important definition in which Aristotle uses the word *entelecheia* has to do with the soul. He says: "the soul is a state of completion—the first of a natural body that is potentially alive" (*DA* II 1, 412 a 27–8). In this case the completion refers to the "fully developed adult specimen, capable of reproduction".²⁸ We already noted above that the end is an outcome of an activity, a functioning that reveals what a thing is potentially. "All things that come into being come from what is in a state of completion" (*DA* III 7, 431 a 3) and "only something in a complete state can generate a substance". (*Met* VII 9, 1034 b 17). "When Aristotle says in *De Anima* 2.1 that the soul is the *entelecheia* of the body having *dunamei* (i.e., of seed), he means that the state of possessing the soul is the state of having been generated from the appropriate active and passive powers."²⁹ Above Aristotle called the soul the "first

²⁷ Johnson 2005, 87

²⁸ Ibid, 89

²⁹ Menn 1994, 105, Johnson 2005, 88 n.55

completion of a natural body that is potentially alive". This "firstness" refers to a *hexis*, a capacity, namely, the capability to perform some function. The soul has at its disposal various capacities that remain in the state of first completeness as long as they are not used: they are only a possibility. Thus the soul reaches its second completeness as a result of its actually using its capacities. Aristotle's example in this connection is knowledge as something the soul in its first completeness merely possesses whereas when it actually exercises its knowledge in thinking and contemplation, then the soul reaches its completeness in a second sense: becoming, for example, wise. Here it is obvious that Aristotle is not referring to the difference between potentiality and actuality, but rather to the difference between merely having a capacity and actually using or exercising that capacity, not just having knowledge but actually using that knowledge for thinking or contemplating.

Above I quoted Aristotle's principle that only something "in a complete state can generate a substance" and that "all things that come into being come from what is in a state of completion". This has to do with the priority of actuality to possibility in Aristotelian metaphysics (which will be further discussed in due course). Here it is enough to point that only a mature hen can produce an egg, only the full adult specimen is capable of reproduction. A thing is more truly what it is when it is *entelecheia* than when it is only potentially so (*Phys* II 1, 193 b7–8). Thus one can also say that that which grows in growing is the complete or full adult specimen and that it grows from an incomplete state of being: in growth the mature form becomes true: it is the for the sake of which (*to ou éneka*) of all growth, the principle and beginning of new growth.

Aristotle sums up the concept of *entelecheia* in a rather lengthy passage in his metaphysics (*Met* IX 8, 1050 a4–23). Johnson points out that this "passage makes it clear that Aristotle intends each of the pieces of the compound term *entelecheia* to be significant" and that this is "something the translations 'actuality' and 'activity' fail to convey".³⁰

But it [activity or functioning, *energeia*] is also prior to that [power, *dunamis*] in substance (*ousia*). [a] First, because the things posterior in generation are prior with respect to their form and substance, for example man is prior to boy, and human to sperm. For one has the form, the other does not. Second, because everything generated proceeds to a principle [*arkhê*, litt. 'beginning'], i.e. an end. For the [cause] for the sake of which is a principle (*arkhê gàr tò ou heneka*), and that which is generated is for the sake of the end. And the internal functioning is an end (*télos ó ê énergeia*), and it is for its benefit that the capacity is acquired. For it is not in order to have eyes that we see; rather animals have eyes in order to see. Similarly, people acquire the skill of construction in order that they may

³⁰ Johnson 2005, 90

build, and theory in order that they might theorize. But we do not theorize in order to have the capacity to contemplate, unless we are practicing. But those who are practicing are not contemplating except in this [special] sense, otherwise they have no need to contemplate. [c] Third, the matter is a capacity because it could come *into* the form (*eis tò eîdos*), and when it is internally functioning (*energeía*), then it is in the form. And similarly for the other cases, even when the end is motion. Because, just as teachers think that their end is indicated by pointing to the students in active functioning (*energounta*), so nature is like that. For if it was not, then there will be something like Pauson's *Hermes*. For it will be unclear whether knowledge is *internal* or external (*esô hê èxô*), as it is with condition of the artwork. For the function is the end (*tò gàr érgon télos*), and the internal function is derived from the function (*enérgeia légetai katà tò érgon*) and extended to the thing *in a state of completion* (*sunteinei pros tèn entelecheian*).

So far we have been discussing teleology mainly in the generality of natural substances. In the case of human being we are dealing with a far more complicated being who is also capable of deliberate and intentional action; a being that can choose ends to pursue, that is, desire ends that nature does not provide for it. In human living the "second *entelecheia*" becomes central. What Aristotle says about particularly human ends needs now to be looked into.

I. A. 4. Human ends

We have seen that nature does nothing in vain and that the “for the sake of which” forms the essential key to all understanding of nature: all natural substances are brought into being for the sake of something and that this something is their own good. If an internal impetus towards completion is the decisive principle of nature itself, then, what is one to surmise of this principle in the special case of the human being? How should one think about the specific human potentiality and its striving for its own good, its completion? Or, if in nature the function of each thing is an end and if the internal functioning is extended to the thing in a state of completion, then one should ask about the proper human functioning, the specific activity that makes the human being human. Reproduction cannot fulfil this function—even though it is perhaps closest to the eternal and the divine in us—since it is a function the humans share with all plants. Similarly more complex capacities like perception and locomotion are common to both humans and animals. In his discussion on the soul, Aristotle distinguishes five groups of powers for souls: (1) nutritive-reproductive, (2) appetitive, (3) perceptive, locomotive, and (5) intellective (*DA II 3, 414 a31–2*). These powers are "ordered serially, such that the possession of one

implies possession of all the others that come before it".³¹ Thus, when the discussion is focused on the human being then all powers of the souls are relevant for the discussion. In the case of plants and animals the nutritive-reproduce power is both the fundamental and explicative function of their living: reproduction explains the 'why' of plants and animals. Aristotle writes (*GA* II 1, 731 b25–2a1):

But soul is better than body, and the animate is better than the inanimate, because being is better than not being, and living is better than not living. For these reasons there is reproduction of animals. For since nature of this kind of thing cannot exist forever as an individual, the individual exists forever in the way that is possible: in virtue of having reproduced it is eternal. So in number it is impossible, since substantial being is that which is individually (*kath' ékaston*). Where it that kind of thing it would be eternal, but it is possible only in form. That is why there is always, of humans, animals, and plants, a kind.

To explain the specific human project one must take into account all the above mentioned powers of the soul, and to understand them one must first find out what they are for, that is, what is their proper function, because, as we already know: "Everything is defined with respect to its function: the function of each thing—what it is able to do—is what it truly is". Animals may share all other powers of the soul with humans—including even memory and ability to learn (*Met* I 1, 980 b21–5)—but the power of thought and thinking belongs only to "humans and possibly another similar kind or something superior" (*DA* II 3, 414 b18–19). Animals may live by appearances and memories but only the human race "lives also by art and reasoning", as Aristotle states in the just quoted passage from the first book of his *Metaphysics*. And, of course, the whole phenomena of a soul can become a question only through the intellectual powers of the human soul.

Since the good life is a species-relative matter, "we must speak about the good, and about what is good not *simpliciter*, but for us. Not, therefore, about the divine good, for another discourse and another inquiry deals with this." (*MM* I.1, 1182 b31–5) The Aristotelian "discussion of the good life begins with an account of the specific and characteristic functioning of the human being, and, in effect, restricts its search for *good* functioning for us to search for the excellent performance of these characteristic functions", as Martha Nussbaum sums up the "human function (*érgon*) argument".³² In contrast to Plato, Aristotle maintains that all goodness is both species- and context-relative. Therefore, his

³¹ Johnson 2005, 173. According to Happ this idea of a hierarchical 'serial order' (*efexês*) is fundamental in all Aristotelian thinking even though it is expressly addressed only in passing, as it was taken for granted in the Academy-tradition. Thus, the hierarchical serial order permeates all Aristotelian thinking from metaphysics and ontology – like the above mentioned "priority of actuality to possibility" – to the order of sciences and the cosmos itself. This also explains the centrality of teleology in the thinking of Aristotle. Happ 1971, 342–383

³² Nussbaum 1989, 292–3

discussion about the good life is neither theoretical nor scientific: instead, it depends on experience and a particular type of perception. Thus it is by its nature a fundamentally practical affair, not deductive scientific understanding with commensurable rules, laws or universals, instead, practical wisdom is concerned with ultimate particulars (*ta kath' hekasta*), which are not in the province of *episteme*, but are grasped with insight through experience (*ex empeírias*). (*NE* VI.8) "'Perception' can respond to nuance and fine shading, adapting its judgement to the matter at hand in a way that principles set up in advance have a hard time doing."³³ But before going into questions of ultimate ends of good human living we must take a look at those specific human powers and functions that determine what such human ends might be.

Although other natural substances also pursue ends proper to their own kind, only humans can do this deliberately and by choice (*proaíresis*): "humans are the origin of choice, and intentional and deliberate action".³⁴ In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle says (*NE* VI 2, 1139 a31–b5):

The origin of action—the source of motion, and not that for the sake of which—and that of choice, is desire and reason that is for the sake of something. That is why there is no choice without intelligence and intention and character. For good action and the opposite does not exist without intention and character. But intention by itself moves nothing, but only intention that is for the sake of something and is practical does. This too is the origin of production. For everyone who produces does so for the sake of something. But what is done is that too. For the good action is an end, and desire is for this. That is why choice is either desiderative intelligence or intentional desire, and the origin of this kind of thing is a human.

Deliberation (*bouleusis*) means proceeding thoughtfully, and not only as desire dictates, towards a given end. This means the possibility of pursuing intentionally towards chosen ends and, thus also, the possibility of choosing the best means to the desired end. In the above quotation one can see also the close connection that Aristotle makes between good human action and the act of producing something. Good action is an end that we desire in the same way that, to use one typical example of Aristotle, good shoes are the proper end of a cobblers work. One of the common features between human goodness and artefacts lies in the idea of attainability: whatever the ultimate human ends might be they should be something achievable, just as making good shoes is possible. "Even if there is some one good which is universally predicable of goods, or is something separate and independent, clearly it could not be attained by a human; but we are now seeking something attainable" (*NE* I 4, 1096 b32–5). However,

³³ Nussbaum 1989, 301

³⁴ Johnson, 2005, 212

despite the similarity between ends of concrete production and human ends, it is clear, as has already been said, that for Aristotle all products of design are posterior to and imitative of nature.

Although Aristotle rejects the Platonic idea of the good he is, however, looking for the ultimate good and end of human being in both of his ethical works. In the Eudemian Ethics there is passage that provides also a good example how Aristotle uses the 'function (*érgon*) argument' in looking for the ultimate ends of each thing, including the human being (*EE* II 1, 1218 b37–1219 a8)³⁵:

Let it be assumed as to excellence that it is the best disposition or state or faculty of each class of things that have some use or function. This is clear from induction, for we posit this in all cases: for instance, there is an excellence that belongs to a coat, for a coat has a particular function and use, and the best state of a coat is its goodness; and similarly with a ship and a house and the rest. So that the same is true also of the soul, for it has a function (*érgon*) of its own. And therefore let us assume that the better the state is, the better is the function of that state, and that as states stand in relation to one another so do the functions that result from them. And the function of each thing is its end (*kaì télos ekástou tò ergon*).

Like all natural substances in the Aristotelian universe have a proper function of their own so does the human soul also have one: "as eye and hand and foot and in general each of the parts appears to have some function (*èrgon*), so too must be put down some function of a human apart from these." (*NE* I 6, 1097 b30–33). But what exactly is the proper end for the human soul, capable of deliberation and choice? The simple Aristotelian answer would be 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*), a word that Nussbaum renders with the word 'flourishing' and Johnson with 'success'—admitting that "it is hotly disputed just how the term should be translated".³⁶ But whatever translation one regards as closest to the original, the question remains open what exactly is human happiness, flourishing or success?

After examining capacities of the soul which are common to plants animals and humans Aristotle comes in his *Nicomachean Ethics* to the conclusion that "there remains an activity of that which possesses reason," and that of this,

[O]ne part is obedient to reason, and the other has the reason and thinks about it. But since this is spoken in two ways, we must establish what we mean in the sense of activity, for this seems to be the most proper sense. But if the function of a human soul is an activity in accordance with reason (*enérgeia katà logon*) or not without reason, and if we say that this is a function for that kind of

³⁵ Quoted through Johnson 2005, 218

³⁶ Johnson 2005, 220n11

thing and a good one of those, like a lyre player and a good lyre player, and so without qualification in all such cases, eminence is established with reference to the excellence for that function. For of a lyre player it is playing lyre, and the one who plays the lyre well is a good lyre player. If this is so, and we put it down that for a human some kind of living is the function (*èrgon dzóén tina*), and this is a functioning of the soul and an activity in accordance with reason (*psykhes ènergeian kai prákseis meta lógou*), and the functioning of the good man is the noble and fine activities of these, and each good thing is perfected in accordance with its native excellence (*kata oikeían aretèn apoteleîtai*), the human good becomes the functioning of the soul in accordance with excellence, and if these excellences are several, according to the best and most complete (*teleiotátén*). (NE I 6, 1097 b33—8a17)³⁷

Earlier we came across the expression "native excellence" in defining the word 'complete'. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle says: every entity is something complete when according to the kind of excellence native to it (*kata tò eídos tês oikeias aréte*) no part of its natural dimensions is lacking". (*Met* V 16, 1021 b21—24). Here, what is said to be 'native' particularly in the human being is reason (*noûs*) and therefore good human functioning turns out to be 'activity in accordance with reason'. Thus human flourishing, happiness or success would be "the activity of this part in us [*noûs*] in accordance with its native excellence" (*NE* X 7, 1177 a 16—18). The end of human happiness, human flourishing, or "complete success (*teleía eudaimonia*), is some kind of theoretical activity" (*NE* X 7, 1178 a7—8). Wisdom (*sofía*) is pure seeing (*theôrein*) and thus the ultimate end of human life is life in contemplation of theoretical entities, that is, speculating (*speculatio* was the latin translation of *theôrein*) the forms of all entities, beings that always are (*aeî*). This turns out to be closest to the activity of the divine (*hê toû theû énergeia*). "So, among human activities, that which is most similar to this is most successful (*eudaimonikótátê*). (*NE* X 8, 1178 b21—3)

³⁷ Johnson 2005, 221—2

Part I B An ontological approach to basic Aristotelian notions

I.B.1. Aristotle's material principle in the tradition of Plato's Academy

This section is based on only one modern monumental study on Aristotelian concept of *matter*, *hylê*. The point here is not in discussing this Second Principle of the Platonic academy in the vast Aristotelian literature; rather, this section is to give an overall picture on how this principle is treated by a modern scholar. In his large monograph on Aristotle's concept *Hylê* Heinz Happ argues for the necessity to situate Aristotelian philosophy in its proper context as essentially a continuation and development of the Pre-Socratic and Platonic tradition of the Academy. Aristotle differs from all previous philosophers in that he uses widely the opinions of both his predecessors and common sense arguments (*consensus omnium*) and he does all this, of course, in the language in which this tradition was given. This, however, does not mean, according to Happ, that Aristotle is bound to these “givens” of the Greek philosophical tradition. Rather, he is aware of the tradition he belongs to, but is not bound to it. He develops his philosophical ideas in a tradition but in a way that is ready to overcome the limitations of this tradition when the studied *phenomena* so demanded. Thus the criterion of truth lies for Aristotle in the studied phenomena, but this does not mean that truth is simply empirically given. Rather, his **philosophical method, the way of thinking, proceeds from what is clearer to us (*safestera êmin*) towards that what is clearer by nature (*safêsera tê fúsei*)**, as he says in the first chapter of *Physics* (also: *Met* VII 3, 1029 b3–). The surrounding concrete worldly entities are the starting point back towards that which is first given only implicitly and can become explicit only through the human *noús*, the human intellect. The human intellect is thus capable of 'reading' through the given *empiria* back to a principal order that is clearer (*dêloun*) in itself. It is obvious that this Aristotelian basic method is based on the Platonic division between analysis and synthesis, reduction and deduction (*epì tàs arkhás* and *apô tôn arkhon*).³⁸ Thus, only through the activity of the human mind are the phenomena of what is given realized. This mixture of what is objectively given and what is spontaneously understood marks the Aristotelian way towards the principles (*epì tàs arkhás*). "Only when one understands the *pragmata* (given facts) in this way, one can also talk about phenomenal facts or the phenomenological method of Aristotle."³⁹

³⁸ Happ 1971, 78. Aristotle uses the expressions *from principles* and *to principles* in *NE* I.4, 1095a30—36 and refers the division back to Plato and links it with his own distinction *gnôrimôteron fúsei—gnôrimôterôn pròs êmas*, a deviation which is central in his *Metaphysics*.

³⁹ Happ 1971, 80

The main theme in Happ's study is the "Material principle" of the Pre-Socratic and the Academy-tradition of Plato, Speusippus and Xenocrates and its continuity and development in Aristotle's thought as the *hylê*-principle.⁴⁰ He devotes roughly 200 pages to discuss this earlier tradition as it has slowly been discovered by modern scholarship. Happ is a pupil of Hans Joachim Krämer and the so-called Tübingen-school of Platonic scholarship, a fact that explains his expertise in what he calls the "inside tradition of the Academy" (*der innerschulischen Lehre*), referring to the unwritten philosophical teachings of Plato, often misleadingly referred to as the "esoteric doctrine" of Plato. The expression is misleading as what is meant with this corpus is simply a "theory of teaching, learning, and philosophical communication" that could not be conveyed in a literal form as it required long and close apprenticeship between the teacher and the pupil.⁴¹ The point was not on the impossibility of putting these fundamental doctrines in written form, rather, the question was on the side of reception, that is, depending on the reader's capacity to understand, something a teacher can control in a live discussion but not once it is put down in writing. Aristotle also expressly refers (*Phys* IV 2, 209 b15) to the different contents of "the unwritten doctrines" (*tà ágrafa dogmata*) in comparison to the doctrines of the dialogues.⁴² In his *Seventh Letter* (the authenticity of which is doubted by some scholars) Plato refers to this teaching as "*the principles of reality*" (*tà peri fúseôs ákra kai prôta*), and still more precisely, principles of the *alêtheia atês eis to dunaton (kai) kakías*, that is, the ultimate truth of good and evil, which must be taken together. (*Seventh Letter* 344 a-d) Happ goes through the basic findings of modern scholarship regarding this inside tradition of the academy as it may be behind Plato in his last years and as it is explicit in the case of Speusippus and Xenokrates. Thus in many cases Aristotle is to be seen as continuing more on the lines of thought of these two colleagues of him rather than Plato the teacher.⁴³ Happ discusses earlier thinking on the question of matter, the second principle of the two principles of the Academy, in order to show to what extent Aristotle depends on his predecessors and where he differs from them, and thus, making clearer his originality as a thinker. This previous philosophical tradition enlightens and helps to understand what Aristotle meant with his fundamental philosophical teachings, but Happ also stresses that he is studying Aristotle's, not his predecessors concept of *hylê* and, therefore, none of his conclusions are dependent on the so-called "unwritten doctrines".⁴⁴ And, of course, when Aristotle is directly addressing the teachings of Plato, he is doing this as Aristotle, that is, as he understood his teacher.

In the present study there is no point in going to the detailed study on Aristotle's predecessors. Here it is enough to note that according to Happ what we now know of Plato, the Academy and the early

⁴⁰ Happ 1971, 152

⁴¹ Krämer 1990, 42, *Seventh Letter* 341c-d, translations by Krämer

⁴² On other references in the *Met* And *Phus.*, see Happ 1971, 136n302

⁴³ Happ 1971, 84

⁴⁴ Happ 1971, 90

Aristotle, it is certain that Aristotle developed his concept of *hylê* on the basis of the second principle of the Academy and that Aristotle's original contribution to this complex principle operative on all three essential Platonic levels of being—the intelligible, the "middle region" and sense perception—was in formulating it as a defined and unified concept of *hylê*.⁴⁵ We will later see how Aristotle structured this basic Platonic three-levelled ontology and how radically he differed in his own thinking from that of Plato. But on the whole Happ proposes that there is more that unites Plato and Aristotle than what separates them. This is particularly true when it comes to Aristotle's notion of *hylê*, which Happ considers impossible without the Platonic *aoriston duas*, the undefined two.⁴⁶ Yet, throughout his study Happ's perspective is clearly on how Aristotle developed his own philosophical teachings by re-working on the teachings of the Academy.

In order to understand just how fundamental this division into two principles was in the Academy tradition and how wide the concept of *hylê* is in Aristotle's philosophy it may be useful to refer to a table, in which Happ has, following Konrad Gaiser, collected the functioning of these two principles on different levels of philosophy (Happ p.175):

	The first principle	The second principle
1. <i>Ontologically</i>	<i>Being</i>	<i>Not-being</i>
2. <i>Categorically</i>	<i>Identity</i>	<i>Difference</i>
	<i>One</i>	<i>Many</i>
	<i>Similarity</i>	<i>Dissimilarity</i>
	<i>The in-itself</i>	<i>Relativity</i>
	<i>Limit</i>	<i>The unlimited</i>
	<i>In form</i>	<i>Formless</i>
	<i>Undivided</i>	<i>Divided</i>
3. <i>Axiologically</i>	<i>The good (arête)</i>	<i>The bad (kakon)</i>
	<i>Order</i>	<i>Disorder</i>
4. <i>Cosmologically</i>	<i>Stasis: rest, constancy</i>	<i>Kinesis: movement, change</i>
	<i>Life/The divine</i>	<i>Death/mortality</i>
	<i>Demiurgos: planned ordering</i>	<i>Anankê: irregular necessity</i>
5. <i>Psychologically/ Epistemologically</i>	<i>Noûs–episteme–logos</i>	<i>Doxa–aesthesis–epithymia</i>

Aristotle took the common Greek word for wood (as material) and forest, *hylê*, and used it to cover all modes of matter (corporeal, spiritual etc.) in a way that could be summarised as standing for the second principle of the Academic tradition in his philosophy. He was not thinking of wood as something organic, but rather as "that out of which" (*ex ou héneka*), that is, the material of a carpenter. Thus it was

⁴⁵ Happ 1971, 260 and 152, where to show this is said to be the main purpose of his whole study.

⁴⁶ Happ 1971, 257-8, 290 n.49

a *tekhne* that stood as a model in his thinking of *hylê* and this is clearly seen in the many natural examples *per analogiam* that Aristotle uses from the art of a carpenter to enlighten his thinking on *hylê*.⁴⁷ However, one should not mix the Aristotelian *hylê* and modern notions of matter as this sense, matter as concrete "stuff", is just one level of being where the spiritual principle of *hylê* manifests in a concrete form. And it is precisely *hylê* as a spiritual principle, as an ontologically founding principle (Happ 277: "*als umfassendes Seinsprinzip über alles Materialhafte*"), that one can speak of continuity between the Platonic Academy-tradition and the systematic thinking of Aristotle: "The thematic philosophical thinking on 'Matter' does not begin with Aristotle but with Plato and the Academy".⁴⁸ This thinking in terms of two principles should be seen as a middle road between the absolute monism of Parmenides and the absolute pluralism of the Atomists and the school of Heraclitus. This tradition is fundamentally characterized by the Platonic erotic longing of the incomplete towards what is complete, for example, sensation (*aisthêtá*) longing for the ideas or the ideas longing for principles. Happ calls this fundamental erotic vertical tendency an *ordo amoris*, that is, a transcending upward movement starting from the absolutely undefined material level and longing towards the fully defined being of the perfect *telos*, that for the sake of which (*ou héneka*), the One (*Hen*) or the Unmoved mover.⁴⁹ This longing is rooted in the Aristotelian notion of *hylê* when it is thought as a possibility of being (*dunámei ón*): the *hylê* longs for the Form (*eidos*). It is possible that Aristotle wanted to express this longing for being with the important notion of *steresis*, lack, privation, which is not only a logical third element between the contraries *hylê* and *form*, but is to be seen ontologically as expressing *hylê* as something capable of striving in one form for yet another form. Thus *steresis* expresses the dynamic character of *hylê*, its active striving for perfection.⁵⁰

I. B. 2. The underlying *hylê* of contrary opposites

One of the approaches that Aristotle takes towards all generation and corruption and all becoming in nature is to see it as a result of three principles instead of the two contrary opposites (*enantia*) referred to in the tradition of the Academy. Thus he introduces in his *Phys* I 6–7 the triad *Eidos—Steresis—Hylê*. The point is that for the two contrary principles to be effective a third and different something (*heteron triton*, 1.6, 189 a26-7) is necessary as an “underlying matter” in which these contraries can become effective (*poiein*) and in which a change can take place, i.e., that which “suffers” (*paskhein*) the change.

⁴⁷ Happ 1971, 276 Carpenters work is the standard example also in Ibn al-‘Arabi’s writings

⁴⁸ Happ 1971, 257–8

⁴⁹ Happ 1971, 207

⁵⁰ Happ 1971, 208 This, as we will see, is also the crucial idea of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s *hayûlâ*, as we will see

Aristotle called this third something *to hupokeímenon*, literally that “which stands/rests under”, rendered into latin as *subiectum*, a word which with its modern grammatical or personal connotations is quite unsuitable for what Aristotle had in mind. Thus, instead of subject the word *substrate* is used throughout this study. This underlying substrate is one, and the effecting contrary opposites are two effective forces. Together these three are the basic and fundamental principles (*arkhê*) of all natural becoming. Here we also see one use of two central Aristotelian concepts, namely, activity and passivity: the substrate is something passive (*paskhein*), it suffers and is effected by the active contrary powers of the opposites (*Phys I 6*, 189 b14–19).⁵¹

In his doxographical summary of his predecessors (*Phys I 4*) Aristotle introduces all the relevant notions of his own thinking on the fundamental principles of nature which he later explicates in *Phys I 7*: *tò hupokeímenon*, substrate; *enantía*, contrary opposites, further discussed in I.5 where he notes that all his predecessors understood the contrary opposites also as principles in some way (188 a26); *eidos*, form, and *hylê*, matter. In defining the number of principles (*Phys I 6*) Aristotle says that it is not possible that there is only one principle as contrary opposites (*enantíon*) are not one and one cannot make its opposite (189 a12), but nor can their number be infinite, and this for several reasons. The unlimited as such is not knowable and thus if the number of principles were unlimited they could not be known and, consequently, nothing could be known in the world since knowledge and understanding results from knowing the underlying principles (184 a12–14). Further, he says, “in each category there is only one couple of contrary opposites and substance is one category” (189 a13). As it is easy to think of many opposites, for example, in the category of quality those of sweet/sour, poor/rich, beautiful/ugly, educated/uneducated, it seems that Aristotle assumed one primary pair of contraries under which all the others could be subsumed (*cf.* Ross). But the point is in the necessity of limitedness and theoretically the number of contrary opposites would be one in substance and nine in the other categories.⁵²

To summarises what has so far become clear of Aristotle's thinking on natural becoming: **A)** all natural processes are due to the influence of opposites. **B)** These opposites are contrary to one another and are thus not hierarchically ordered (like *idea*—particular being, matter/stuff—form/*energeia*), rather, these opposites are complementary to one another. **C)** In order to be functional both of these opposites need a “third something” in which they are contraries.⁵³

⁵¹ Here Happ makes a note that this basic distinction should not be taken too rigorously as this substrate when it coincides with *hylê* is also an 'active' force striving for form.

⁵² Happ 1971, 280

⁵³ Happ quotes, 281 n.12, St.Thomas in his commentary *Phys*90: “*utrumque contrariorum transmutat aliquod tertium, quod est subiectum utriusque*”.

This three-part model is very clearly brought forth by Aristotle and can be taken as his fundamental notion of all becoming and also the structural context for his concept of *hylê*. The *Phys* I 7 gives a full exposition of his thinking on the substrate as the basis of contrary opposites from which all becoming is due. Happ divides the chapter into two parts: in the first part (a) Aristotle shows that in all becoming one can distinguish three separate factors (189 b30–190 b17); in the second part (b) of I 7 (190 b17–191 a22) he develops this knowledge into what could be called a doctrine of principles.

a) Even though the topic is about both substantial becoming as *genesis* and accidental change like becoming different (*alloiôsis*), Aristotle gives examples only on the latter because the underlying working relations in accidental change are easier to discern and thus serve as a model for understanding substantial *genesis*. Thus the example Aristotle here uses is education, a human being becoming educated from her previous uneducated phase. In such a process one must distinguish first that which “holds itself in being” (*hupoménon*), that is, remains the same, like in this example the human being itself remaining the same, and, second, that which does not remain the same (*oukh hupoménon*), that is, which changes, here the being uneducated. Thus the process of becoming educated means that something remains the same (the human being) and something changes into its opposite (un-educated into educated). Thus what is here changeable is an accidental quality in its two contrary modes, whereas that which remains the same is the underlying (human) substance as the substrate (*hupokeímenon*). And these three factors working together make up the processes of all becoming and of change.

b) All substantial being and becoming stems from a substrate and *morphê*, form. But again Aristotle returns to his example of un-educated and educated human being, that is, an accidental change, in order to differentiate between being human and being educated: an educated man or woman is formed from a compound of being human and being educated. This difference cannot be given examples in substantial change as the underlying *hylê*-substrate can only be conceptualized together with an *eidos*-principle; it does not have an independent being—just as the *eidos* cannot appear by itself. Therefore Aristotle says that in the case of natural *genesis* the underlying substrate can be known through an analogy between *fysis* and *tekhnê*. Happ constructs this analogy thus: 'tekhne-material' : 'formed product of *tekhnê*' = 'substrate in general' : *ousía*.⁵⁴ This analogy claims that in all natural generation, in all *genesis* as *fysis*, the underlying moments are the same as in all production of artefacts, that is, in *tekhnê*. Here the common structure is: substrate, privation (*steresis*) and *eidos*. Through this *analogy with any process of production* one can understand an underlying substrate for all natural entities as their *materia prima* (*prôtê hylê*) even though this can not exist by itself (*khôriston esti*) as does any individual being, any

⁵⁴ Happ 1971, 286–7.

“this one” (*tóde ti*). Maybe Aristotle is here already thinking in terms that he introduces in the next chapter (*Phys* I 8), that is, being as possibility (*dunamis*) and being in a state of completion (*energeia*): *hylê* “is” as a possibility for the *tóde ti* of the completed entity. In the realm of arts and crafts the *hylê* is the material (wood, bronze, gold etc.) of making and the *eidos* is the completed statue of, for example, Hermes. Privation (*steresis*) would be the condition of the material before any work on it. And, indeed, in the books IV/XI of *Metaphysics* privation is equated with possibility (*dunamis*) which again is equated with *hylê*.⁵⁵ Aristotle sees this unformed material as something that lacks form; it longs for an order (*taxis*): this malleability and longing for a form of the formless is called a *steresis*, a privation, in the unformed material (“Diese Formerwartung des Formlosen nennt er Steresis”, Happ, 289). Aristotle also states that “every contrariety involves privation” (*Met* XI 1063 b17–19). Thus one could say that **in this Aristotelian triadic structure the contraries are related to a substrate by privation.**

According to Aristotle, instead of the dualistic tradition of the Academy (of one and undefined two, *hen—áoriston duás*), there are three ontological principles (*arkhê*) in all genesis and they are *hylê—steresis—eidos*. Aristotle thought that his triadic model was a solution to the problem of strict Eleatic dualism of being/not-being, which actually could not explain the process of becoming: if matter represents pure not-being (*mê hón*) as the opposing principle of pure being (*eidos*), then this second principle has only a negative function in the process of becoming: in striving towards the *eidos* it would be striving to negate itself! (*Phys* I 9, 192 a19–22) Instead, by introducing an ontological modality–principle from pure not-being in itself (*ouk hón kath' autên = steresis* as the opposite of *eidos*) to relative not-being (*hylê*) and up to complete being, Aristotle could genuinely explain change as a way of being of all natural entities (*ta fúsei hónta*). In his triadic explanation the *hylê*-principle has a positive role in that it strives like a mother according to its own nature towards the divine, the good and worthy (*Phys* I 9, 192 a13), whereas *steresis* as pure not-being forms a sharp privative contrast to this divine and thus also explains the existence of “evil” or “the bad” (*to kakon*).

Thus Aristotle applies this triadic model at least in his theoretical explanations, but practically, in his *de facto* explanations of natural processes he mostly uses the *hylê—morphê* dichotomy. Thus, as Happ says, even though Aristotle perhaps wanted to avoid the ambivalent nature of the material principle of the Academy, yet his own *hylê* is also that which strives for the good (both in the individual entity as well as in the whole of cosmos) in the same way as the aimless causal-mechanistic elementary forces are to explain failures in natural processes that lead to “evil” (*kakon*).⁵⁶ Thus, it seems that here (*Phys* I.9) Aristotle wants to contrast his three principles with the Academy tradition and in doing this he gives a simplified picture of the Platonic teaching. According to Happ it has clearly been shown that the same

⁵⁵ Happ 1971, 468

⁵⁶ Happ 1971, 295

three-fold distinction of substrate—contrary opposites is developed in Plato's *Phaidon* and that there are traces of the idea of *steresis* in the *Symposion*. Further, also Aristotle's own references (in *MetIV/XI*) to the “Tables of contrary opposites” show clearly that Matter was not thought in the tradition of the Academy simply as the opposite of Form. Rather, Matter as a heading (*systoikhie*) held within it two aspects, the substrate and *steresis*.⁵⁷ However, according to Happ, the philosophically important point in this passage (*Phys I 9*) is not the possible number of principles but rather the fact that here *hylê* is introduced as a universal active principle *yearning* for the completion in each incomplete being where it is as the underlying material cause. This also explains why the Aristotelian matter is nothing tangible: one can not experience matter directly, instead, *Hylê* is a non-tangible, spiritual principle that can only be seen through intuition (*Wesenschau*); it is a *noêtôn*.⁵⁸ Possibilities are not objects of sense-perception but nor are they a mere nothing or arbitrary, instead, possibilities are given in concrete situations and moments where they can be seen as opening possibilities towards something realizable.

I. B. 3. Three definitions of *hylê*

In the end of *Phys I. 9* Aristotle gives within parenthesis a definition of *hylê* after a brief discussion on generation and corruption with regard to matter. He concludes that as potentiality matter is neither generated nor corruptible, and this on the grounds that he "defines matter as that first substrate of each entity from which it becomes and which is the immanent and not accidental cause of its becoming" (according to Happ: "*welches nicht auf akzidentelle, sondern auf wesentliche Weise immanente Ursache seines Werdens ist*"). The German "Ursache" renders well the idea of *arkhê*, the principle or the first beginning, which is here stressed as an immanent principle (*enupárkhontos*) of each entity. In *hylê* this principle of becoming is immanent, it belongs to the substrate as such in contrast to privation, *steresis*, regarding to which all becoming is purely accidental. Here we note that Aristotle does not include in this definition the idea of potentiality (*dunamis*), which, nevertheless, is fundamental in his philosophical thinking on matter. But here, in the first book of *Physics*, Aristotle is mainly concerned with making clear his distinction between absolute non-being as privation (*steresis*) and relative non-being as matter (*hylê*) it is obvious that the definition of matter is also done in these terms.

In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle gives two further definitions of *hylê*, one with regard to potentiality and actuality and the other with regard to categories. In the second definition, in *Met VIII.1*, 1042 a27, *hylê*

⁵⁷ Happ 1971, 295

⁵⁸ Happ 1971, 804

is conceptualized in terms of the fundamental Aristotelian distinction between *dúnamis* and *enérgeia* which characterizes the relation between *hylê* and *eidos*: "by matter I mean that which is not actually, but is potentially, an individual thing". *Hylê* does not possess reality (Wirklichkeit), or, as Johnson put it, "activity", nor does it have subsistence of its own (*khôriston einai*) like a particular thing, this something (*tóde ti; sunolon*), but it is ready for these and strives towards them and in this sense it is a potentiality, a possibility (*dunamis*) for them. Here matter is thought in terms of being the first substrate (*hupokeimenon prôton*), that is, as something quite definite and not as absolutely undefined matter.

The third definition of *hylê* is found in *Met VII 3* (1029 a20-26), where Aristotle says: "by first matter I mean that which in itself is neither a particular thing nor a quantity nor designated by any of the categories which define being [...]. Thus the ultimate substrate is in itself neither a particular thing nor a quantity nor anything else. Nor indeed is it the negations of these; for negations too will only apply to it accidentally". In itself, in its essence (*kath'autên*), *hylê* is beyond all categorical definition, be they substantial (*tî*) or accidental (*posón*); thus, *hylê* is non-categorical or pre-categorical and thus the ultimate definable as such. Yet here too *hylê* should be seen in terms of possibility and thus as a striving towards being something (*tî*) and definition (as quantity, *poson*, the second category as property of dimensions imposed on First matter). What is left after all subtractions is not nothing, a *prope nihil*, instead, what we have is the "definable as such", "possibility as such". Here matter is defined as the most comprehensive and all-inclusive *hylê*-principle of Aristotle.⁵⁹ Happ notes that it is, indeed, very difficult for our understanding to distinguish between this pure definability as such and the beyond categorical fullness of Being, between the highest substance and the pure Nothing as pre-categorical "I do not know what", to use the apt expression of John Locke.⁶⁰ No wonder this difficulty has been acknowledged ever since Plato and Aristotle up to Neoplatonists (for whom it was in itself an important aporia). Yet, despite this difficulty of the human *nous* and its *nóesis* to distinguish between pure potentiality, pure actuality and the nothing, the thinkers of Antiquity laid their trust on human understanding.⁶¹

I. B. 4. *Materia prima* as the inseparable possibility for being

The Aristotelian triadic model of all change and genesis was explained above as dynamism between three principles: an underlying passive and malleable matter and two actively influencing contrary principles of a completed *eidos* and its privation, *steresis*. Thus, in criticizing Plato's *Timaios*, Aristotle states (*GC II 1*, 329 a24–26) that every perceptible body has an underlying substrate as its matter but

⁵⁹ Happ 1971, 297

⁶⁰ Quoted through Sorabji 1988, 3 and 23.

⁶¹ Happ 1971, 707, 676–7

this is not something separate, instead, it can only exist as a combination of matter and its various formally defining principles. Here he uses the so-called four elements as an example of such combinations. The elements should not be seen as ultimate entities but as combinations of *hylê* and one of the contrary elemental qualities of dry and wet (= *pathêtika*, passive qualities, identified with *hylê*), heat and cold (= *poiêtika*, active qualities).⁶² Here *hylê* is called inseparable (*khôrista*, *GC* II 1, 329 a25) from the contrasting opposites, and, later (a33), a “potential (physical) body” (*dunámei sôma aisthêton*). As Aristotle is here constantly differentiating between *hylê* and the contrary principles it may sound strange that he, nevertheless, calls them inseparable. What he means is an ontological inseparability: we cannot find *hylê* or the contrary principles in nature since they can be separated only in thought as *arkhai* of all change and becoming. But does this then mean that matter as the underlying primal principle of all existents is merely a logical being? And, further, shouldn't this then be the case with all *noêta*, all realities that can be understood only in thinking, are they all mere human abstractions? It is precisely the concept of abstraction (*afairesis*) that needs to be defined carefully in its Aristotelian usage in contrast to the modern notion of abstraction, which, according to Happ, goes back to John Locke, and is dominated by the dichotomy of thinking and being, subject and object, pure conceptuality (that is empty and abstract) and things as concrete entities.⁶³ In the Aristotelian context one cannot talk about things without thought nor of thought without things. In a separate chapter further down we will take a closer look on the Aristotelian abstraction, *afairesis*, here it suffices to note that *hylê* is discussed as inseparable from the contrary opposites that accomplish its each individual appearance, and, that it is called a potential (physical) body. Consequently, *hylê*, as a possibility, is a necessary condition for any and all experience in the world. Thus, as Happ says in general on the mode of being of the Aristotelian *noêta*, that is, things known through the act of thought, that they are not some optional constructions of the human mind, instead, their mode of being is in beings as possibility, that is, their mode of being is *latent* (*dunamei*) “in” the things as they are “standing there”.⁶⁴ Thus, what is seen in an act of understanding is the completed aspect (*eidos*) of the possibility given in real entities. It is not our consciousness or our seeing that makes a thing stand out there, instead, as we have already seen, it is *physis* (nature) that brings things to stand out there. Aristotle says “It is not because we think truly that you are white, that you are white, but because you are white, we who say this have the truth” (*Met* X 10, 1051 b7). But this same structure applies to purely formal objects: what is beheld in an act of thought, in *noesis*, is not some free formation of the human understanding; instead, this seen aspect is pre-given in the seen object itself of the act understanding. Thus, for Aristotle, the so-called *noêton* is never an empty concept but always precisely defined by that what is beheld as such. Thus the *noêton* is an

⁶² *Meteor* 4, 378b31–34, Happ 1971, 533–534, passive does not mean ‘passivity’ but ability to be effected, and, being an active component in the formation of elements and elemental combinations. See further, pp 196 and 275

⁶³ On the mentioned dichotomy and Locke, see Happ 321, 586, 588, 650–651

⁶⁴ Happ 1971, 304

“objective structure of being”.⁶⁵ This will be further endorsed in the next chapter on Aristotelian abstraction.

The above quoted feature of *materia prima* as potential or possible (physical) body (*dúnamei soma aisthêton*) describes the essence or “the what it was to be” of *hylê* as a possibility of being an actual corporeal thing, for example an element. “Each being in the cosmos that is in one sense according to possibility (*dunamei hon*) is also in another sense a completed being, an actuality.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, according to Aristotle, the unlimited as such is also unknowable. Thus, one can not say what matter as such exactly is as it is a pure possibility for simply anything, but one can proceed towards understanding this pure possibility in a negative way of eliminating formal structures by what can be called *subtraction*, a leading downwards, a reversed form of abstraction. Both these terms will be dealt with later on.

Regarding the term “*prima materia*”, which in the philosophical tradition stands for the “first” matter and is a rendering of the Aristotelian term *prôtê hylê*, a note should be made that for Aristotle, the word *prôtos* can mean both that which is “more known to us”, that is, entities as we face them in everyday life, or, it can mean the first and thus most general principle of being which can only be reached as an end of the act of knowing. This double meaning of *prôtos* gives the term *prôtê hylê* two different connotations: on the one hand it can mean the highly defined matter of each individual substance (like in *Phys* II.193 a29) and, on the other hand, it stands for the material substrate in the combinations of the elements (like in *GC* II 1, 329 a23–), that is, matter as the elementary stuff of earth, water, air and fire. In this latter sense the word means the “substrate of opposites” as was described above. But this *prime matter* belongs in the Aristotelian cosmos only to the *sublunar* world and it is only when one proceeds beyond the sublunar sphere that one can reach a universal *hylê*-principle (for example in the sense of *Met* VII.3) ruling over the whole of cosmos and thus also the *noetic* realm of thought. This *Hylê*-principle is incorporeal.⁶⁷

I. B. 5. *Hylê* and knowledge: Aristotelian abstraction

According to Aristotle matter as such is both unlimited (*apeiron*) and undefined (*aoriston*) and can not therefore be known as such (*Phys* I 4 187 b7; *Phys* IV 6, 207 a26–32; *Met* VII 10, 1036 a9): matter as

⁶⁵ Happ 1971, 387

⁶⁶ Happ 1971, 304

⁶⁷ Happ 1971, 309 This could be read as an answer to an old *aporia* of Aristotle’s commentators: “If the prime matter of the four elements is extension then, how will the matter of celestial fifth element differ, as one interpretation Aristotle thinks it does? Alexander of Aphrodisias raised this sort of question in the form of a dilemma (*Questiones* I 15, 26, 30–27.4). [...] If celestial bodies have the same prime matter, all bodies will be equally perishable [or equally imperishable, as Simplicius substitutes]. Sorabji 1988, 14–15.

such (*kath autên*) is *agnôstos*, not knowable. The upshot of this is that gaining knowledge of something requires a turning away or putting aside the material content and turning towards the form of that particular thing in order to reach its essence, that is, the what it was to be. Thus one can say that matter has only a negative function in the act of knowing. This negative function, which has a long continuity in the Platonic/Neo-Platonic tradition as *apophasis*, a *via negativa*, a way of coming to know God, however, describes the act of knowing which consists of two moments: a positive act of grasping (*noein*) of that which is to be known, that is, the potentially knowable (*hylê noetê*), and a negative *elimination* or subtraction (*afairein*) of the material-like and unknowable side of what is to be known.⁶⁸ Or, conversely, if the inquiry is headed towards a less developed form, say from a concrete entity towards the elements, then the abstraction takes the form of a *Via negativa*, that is, eliminating the higher or more developed forms to reach towards that which lies underneath. This is how Aristotle approaches his *hylê* –principle in the above quoted third definition of *hyle* (*Met VII.3*) as an ultimate (*eskhaton*) and all-inclusive principle of being. But as the absolutely amorphous and undefined *matter as such* is unknowable, the human understanding can only approach this principle through this negative way of subtraction. Further, as matter is for Aristotle also the principle of individuation and thus the individual is also as such unknowable (*individuum est ineffabile*), abstraction means also turning away from the individual towards the universal (*katholon*).⁶⁹ This act of turning away from matter/individual and, instead, looking solely towards the universal form of what is to be known means that the Aristotelian act of abstraction (*afairesis*) is an insight, an intuitive grasping of an essence, it is an “*a priori* Wesensschau”.⁷⁰ It is thus also clear that this spontaneous act of knowing is always directed towards a given something, it *must be facing an object of knowledge*. Thus the known thing is not a mere construction of thought but always something that belongs to the structure of being itself, namely the *eidos* or form of the concrete compound (*súnolon*) matter/form: in the act of knowing our understanding is directed towards the *eidos*-aspect of being. And this is naturally something the senses cannot perceive: it is a mental image, *noêton eidos*. But it should also be stressed, that this spontaneous or subjective side of essential grasping (*wesensschau*) does not mean individual subjectivity, rather, the subject of Aristotelian abstraction is always the *Sophos*, an ideal wise human nature, “a transcendental logical subject”, who does not posit truths or realities but only uncovers them.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Happ 1971, 560

⁶⁹ Happ 1971, 560-61

⁷⁰ Happ 1971, 587, in the same vein Happ also says that the “Aristotelian *epagoge* is not the modern ‘induction’ ..., instead, it means recognizing the universal in a [given] specific case, which already presupposes an *a priori* knowing of this universal. (“...sondern die Erkenntnis des Allgemeinen am Einzelfall, welche ein apriorisches Wissen um dieses Allgemeine bereits voraussetzt”). Ibid, 588.

⁷¹ Happ 1971, 54

When Aristotle speaks of “sensible matters” (*aisthêta hylê*, *Met* VII 10, 1036 a9–12), he does not mean perceptible matter but the matter of perception, that is, the perceptible *eidos* which cannot be perceived unless it exists in its compound form of *eidos* and *hylê*. In the *De Anima* (*DA* III 8, 432 a4–6) Aristotle says: "But since apparently nothing has a separate existence, except sensible magnitudes—both the so-called abstractions of mathematics and all states and affections of sensible things—reside in the sensible forms" (*en tois eídesi tois aisthêtois tà noêtòn esti*). Or to look at this process from the side of thinking he says (*DA* III 7, 431 b2–3): "So the thinking faculty thinks the forms in mental images" (*tà (noêta) eídê to noêtikòn en tois fantasmasi noei*). "Even if we think speculatively (*theorêi*), we must have some mental picture (*fantasmá*) which to think; for mental images are similar to objects perceived except that they are without matter" (*aneu hylês*). (*DA* III 8, 432 a8–11) Thus the senses perceive the sensibles and transform them into images without matter (*Wahrnehmungsbild*) and these are then further developed by the power of imagination (*phantasia*, which for Aristotle means precisely this power of having images⁷²) into imaginal forms, *phantasmata*, and, finally, these are again the raw-material, matter in mental form (*hylê noêtê*) for thinking to reach out for the actual intuition of its *noêton eidos*. Only this last-named is an abstracted non-imaginal, non-sensible and immaterial (*aneu hylê*) *noêmata*. In this last phase of thought the essence, or *the what it was to be* of the object, is infused with the highest faculty of human reason as it now actually sees the object in its essential form.⁷³ But, as just noted, for Aristotle, this human reason does not refer to the empirical subject of thinking as an individual, instead, it refers to a "transcendental logical subject" of the *sofós*, the subject of wisdom *sofia*, that is, an ideal human nature which does not posit truths or realities of its own, but, rather, finds and uncovers (*entbirgt*) objective structures of being.⁷⁴

This basic structure of abstraction is applied on all various levels of being, that is, on the primary level of abstraction with material substances (*fysis*), in the middle realm of geometrical forms or mathematics as the second level and, finally, with the pure forms of metaphysics or First philosophy (ontology/ousiology/theology) as the third level of abstraction, that is, as “being *qua* Being” (*on hê on*), an Aristotelian formula, which should, according to Happ, be understood as referring to being both as a material object and formal object, that is, being in respect of its pure form, *energeia* or *eidos*, being in its “*eidos*-aspect”. Thus the *hê onta* refers to “the ontic kernel” and – as all being is serially ordered (*efexeis*) by the *pros-hen* –structure towards the ontologically first in each series – ultimately this means

⁷² *DM* I, 449 b30. See Sorabji 2004, 72

⁷³ Happ 1971, 656

⁷⁴ Happ 1971, 54

that the 'qua Being' is referring to the *akinêtos ousia*, the Unmoved Mover.⁷⁵ Thus, the Unmoved mover is the ultimate end of all knowledge, but it is not the sole object of knowledge. These three levels of being and abstraction are the basis for the Aristotelian three theoretical sciences; physics, mathematics and first philosophy, or theology.⁷⁶ Happ stresses that all such divisions are due to the structure of being itself (Struktur des Seins) and that these are accessible to the human spirit (Geist) while it is also living in this same [world of] Being ("welche der Geist deshalb zu erschauen vermag, weil sie dem Sein auch innewohnt").⁷⁷ This formulation brings us actually quite close to Heideggerian themes of "In-der-Welt-sein", to which we will come in due course.

This two-phased process of gaining knowledge through emphasizing the essential and inhibiting the in-essential, means also a reaching out towards a higher level in the structure of being (*pros hen*), that is, an ontological hierarchy stretching out between the pure potentiality of matter and, in the other end, pure *energeia*, pure form, the Unmoved mover. Therefore, if our inquiry is directed towards the *hylê* – aspect in the compound, for example *hylê* as the bearer of a definite *eidos*, then we are no longer moving in the sensible realm (*aisthesis*) but have entered the realm of thinking and analyzing. And this applies to all types or aspect of *hylê*: matter can only be a theme of thought and can only be reached out for in thinking by subtraction. Thus, in the Aristotelian *afairesis*, that which is abstracted is the inessential, which does not belong to the pure *eidos* of the object of inquiry. But this is a two-way street: the one lane reaching out from pure potentiality up to the completion as form, and the other lane descending down from form/matter compound towards absolutely undefined *hylê*-principle as pure potentiality. This will be the theme of our next chapter on *Hylê* as a universal principle.

According to Happ, this two-way Aristotelian noetic understanding corresponds both historically and contextually to the Platonic way of knowledge as proceeding to the principles by way of eliminating (*kat'afairesin*) all that is incomplete and longing for the highest principle. Thus Happ says that one can see this basic teaching on abstraction/subtraction as a continuity reaching out in antiquity all the way from Plato through Aristotle up to Plotinus.

⁷⁵ Happ 1971, 385–394. This, however, does not mean the equivalence "*on hê on=akinêtos ousia*" as some scholars have maintained (Merlan, Owens), except, of course, when the being under discussion is the Unmoved mover *qua* Unmoved mover (for example in *Met* VI 3, 1026 a 29–32, or, *Met* 11 7, 1064 a 28–b14).

⁷⁶ Happ 1971, 565, the division into three realms goes back to the Platonic division *aisthêta—mathematiká—eidê*. Happ sees even the profound changes in how Aristotle interpreted these basic levels of reality as a development of Platonic thought. He says in general that one should avoid ultra-realistic interpretations of Platonic abstraction as well as purely nominalist interpretations of Aristotelian abstraction. Happ 1971, 634

⁷⁷ Happ 1971, 568.

I.B. 6. *Hylê* as a universal principle of being

In his *Metaphysics* Aristotle refers quite often to *tables of opposites* or two “columns”, “series” (*systoikhia*, *Met* I 5 986 a23)⁷⁸ of contraries, but says that they have been “sufficiently studied in the Selection of Contraries” (*Eklogê tôn enantiôn*, *Met* IV). Unfortunately no such work or study of Aristotle has survived. We have already above (II.B.2.) seen how Aristotle uses the contraries in his triadic model of *eidos*—*steresis*—*hylê* in his *Physics*. In his *Metaphysics* (especially in books III and XI these contraries are developed as principles of all knowledge, logic and (first) philosophy. In *Met* XI 3, it is indeed stated that the philosopher is the man who studies being *qua* Being and its contrarities *qua* Being (*Met* IV 2, 1061 b4-6 and 1061 b12-15). Thus the fundamental role of contrarities for Aristotle is in that they are the primary articulation of all Being, that is, Being is given in contrarities, such as one—many (*hen*—*plêthos*), being—not-being (*hon*—*mê hon*), similarity—dissimilarity etc.⁷⁹ And these contrarities can according to Aristotle be referred back (*anagein*) to primary contrarities, which in the books III.2 and XI.3 are united as the one—many, or, as being—not being (as “one” and “being” are convertible, likewise, “the many”—“not being”).

A large part of Happ's work is devoted on the analysis of these two columns or series, *systoikhia*, which is no wonder if one considers the table represented above on p.17, where the two principles are applied to different parts of philosophy. In the present inquiry where the theme is *hylê* as an ontological concept of possibility, it is enough to get an overall picture on how Aristotle sees these two *systoikhia* or series in his philosophical thinking.

According to Happ, for Aristotle the *Pros-hen* –relation is definitely not a synonym for analogy — as it was for Neoplatonists, nor is it meant to be understood only as a logical, but also as an ontological relation, a relation with The One, *hen*, which is convertible with *òn* (*Met* III 4, 1003 b23, “*Ens et unum conventuntur*”).⁸⁰ He says that basically the *pros-hen* is *a relation of the secondary to the primary* and can thus be described as a vertical relation in contrast to a horizontal relation of an analogy, for example, a relation between accident and substance.⁸¹ Aristotle says that [the word] “being” is used in various senses, but always with reference to one principle (*pros mian arkhê*)” (*Met* III 2, 1003 b5–6) All beings are related (*pros*) to necessary Being (Sein schlechthin = *haplôs*, a word that has the basic connotation “simple”). Following this, Happ says, “*Pros-hen* [-relation] and equation of Being [*ón*] and One [*hen*] lead to the construction and development of first series (Form-*systoikhie*) and, on the other hand, seeing from the relationship of contrarities (die anschauung vom Zusammenhang der

⁷⁸ Further *Met*: XIV.6, 1093 b12, III.4; 1004 b27; II. 9, 1066 a15; XII.7, 1072 a 31; X. 3, 1054 b35; X 8.1058 a13.

⁷⁹ Happ 1971, 421–22.

⁸⁰ Happ 1971, 336.

⁸¹ Happ 1971, 453 n.734.

Gegensätze) this leads further to [the construction and development] of the second series (Material-systoikhie)".⁸²

The first series, or the form/eidos *systoikhie*, consists of one (*hen*), same (*tautón*), equal (*íson*), and similar (*hómoion*). The second series or the material/*hylê* *systoikhie* is then constructed by the contraries of this first series, that is, the opposite of one is many/plurality (*plêthos*), the opposite of same is other (*heteron*), and that of equal is unequal (*anison*) and, finally, that of *similar* is dissimilar (*anómoion*).

This means that the second series is formed according to privation (*steresis*) of the opposites in the first series; the second series "expresses privation", as Aristotle says (*Phys* III 2, 201 b26-27) and, moreover, "In each pair of contraries one is a privation no less than it is a contrary — a privation of substance (*ousías steresis*)", and this, because "privation is the negation of a predicate to some defined genus". (*Met* III 6 b18–20) Here, although Aristotle does not schematize it, one has to subsume the underlying substrate as a necessary condition for both *steresis* and the contraries to appear as contraries. Thus the originally Platonic dualistic model is molded into the Aristotelian triadic model of two opposites and an underlying substrate.⁸³

At the top of the Form-series is pure actuality, that is, pure *energeia* where all possibilities are realized in their *eidos*, whereas at the top of the Material-series is pure possibility⁸⁴, *dunamis*, where nothing is yet actualized, the absolutely undifferentiated and undefined plurality, *plêthos*, or *hylê* –Principle. But as a pure possibility this second principle is not merely a lack of being, rather, it is an active force striving towards forms, it is a yearning for form, a possibility for higher forms of higher reality; an open possibility towards any direction, "ein Urgrund" of slumbering realities, but, also the active source of all a-teleological movement striving for a form and *telos*.⁸⁵ The negating words with which *Hylê* is described (words pre-fixed with the so-called *a-privativum*), "unformed" (*amorphon*), "undefined" (*apeiron*) or "not having an end" (*atelês*) are also expressing this longing for perfection. Thus, Happ writes, "only when *Hylê* is really understood as the second Principle with its own power and rule does the Aristotelian structuring of Being become understandable: it is not a static and monistic hierarchy on top of which stands the pure form and underneath opposing it a next to nothing force striving for not-being, rather, it is a tensional construction stretched between the two poles of *Form* and *Hylê* and in which the two opposites are effecting one another with varying intensities.

⁸² Happ 1971, 422.

⁸³ Happ 1971, 453

⁸⁴ Aristotle does not really have a concept like 'pure possibility', even though he might have thought of it as such (*Met* IX 6, 1048 b14–). In *DI* 23 a25 he differentiates between the three modes of being of 'pure *energeia*' without any *dunamis*: the Unmoved mover; *energeia* and *dunamis*: contingent beings, and those without any *energeia*, or '*dunameis mónon*'. What Aristotle exactly means with this last term is not quite clear, and does not become clearer with the *Met* IX 9, 1065 b5 passage with which it has been linked. Happ 1971, 710–711

⁸⁵ Happ 1971, 710

Only this dynamic dualism genuinely explains generation and corruption: a static and purely passive *Hylê*-principle would have added nothing to the explanation of becoming... and would have left Aristotle with the same static notion of being as it did in Plato's thinking."⁸⁶

The driving and striving force of *hylê* can be distinguished in the on-going changes of the elements one into another and in the endless chain of generation and corruption with which the sublunar being is imitating the eternal spherical motion of *aether*. Now, the bearer of this yearning and thereby the driving force of these enormous circular processes is *hylê*. Thus one can call this on-going spherical motion also history and therefore understand the Aristotelian notion of matter/*hylê* as possibility to be also the very condition *sine qua non* of history (time): "*hylê* as *dunamis* is, therefore, the factor of the historical in Aristotle's understanding of being."⁸⁷

I. B. 7. Necessity (*anankê*) and teleology

The Aristotelian conception of necessity is closely linked with teleology. But in order to understand this connection one has to take a closer look on what he means with necessity. In his Second book of Physics (*Phys* II 8–9), Aristotle says that all philosophers of nature tend to explain natural processes as happening out of necessity or chance, and even when they speak of other reasons, like “Love and Hatred” (Empedocles) or intelligence (Anaxagoras), these have no real power over mechanic causality. What he means by these predecessors of him are the Presocratic thinkers, but not Plato, with whom Aristotle is here basically on a par in criticising those predecessors who tend to explain natural processes only causal-mechanistically. In his late work *Laws* (889 C1), Plato says that the ‘materialists’ explain natural processes as happening in “haphazard combinations that inevitably resulted (*kata tukhê ex anankês*) when the opposites [elements/elemental qualities] were mixed”. What seems strange for modern readers in this is the connecting of luck, irrationality and necessity, as we see the binding/necessary causal-mechanical laws of nature precisely as laws and order of nature. Not so for Plato and Aristotle for whom only the form or idea could give structure and order in anything.

In his *Timaios*, Plato gives a dualistic basis for all that happens in the world: everything is due to a play between the blind and mechanically effecting conditions of material necessity (*anankê*), which in the direction and supervision of intellect (*nous*) works together as an accompanying cause (*sunaition*) in order to yield “the best possible results”. Thus the *anankê* is a negative contrary principle to *nous*, towards which, nevertheless, the formative power of *nous* is directed. Thus, with *anankê* Plato means:

⁸⁶ Happ 1971, 774

⁸⁷ Happ 1971, 775

a) Spontaneous forces of matter which work without intellection and which in their connections and combinations come quite close to what are now called “laws of nature”.⁸⁸

b) The intellect cannot effect or change these spontaneous forces, but it uses them for its own rational ends. Matter is the *condicio sine qua non* (οὐ οὐκ άνευ) for rational ends to become true, and, thus the contributing cause (*sunaition*) for all happening in the world. Yet, Plato never uses the word *anankê* for this relation of matter as necessary condition for *nous*, whereas the later expression coined by Aristotle, “hypothetical Necessity” (*anankê ex hypothéseôs*) [in the form: to reach a specific end X, the material Y is a ‘necessary’ condition], was to express the connection between teleology and the “contributing cause” (*sunaition*), that is, matter as “*condicio sine qua non*” for intellection. Therefore, Happ says that even though the Platonic *anankê* of Timaios cannot be said to be behind the Aristotelian “hypothetical necessity,” there is another fundamental Greek notion connected to *anankê* and appearing both in Platonic dialogues and other non-philosophical writings. This connection comes through *anankê* expressing the idea of “world-order” or the “order of being” (*kósmos, taxis*), which appears in the end-myth of the *Republic* and in the *Laws* (818 A-B), where a distinction is made between human necessity and Divine Necessity, that is, the (mathematically conceivable) order of Being which is binding even for gods.

Thus, for Plato, *anankê* means basically blind mechanic forces of matter, but secondarily also the principal/ideal order of Being itself.

Both these Platonic aspects of *anankê* are taken over by Aristotle.

- a) Necessity as matter working haphazardly with no ends (ateleological), including not only the causal-mechanical “laws of nature,” but also all spontaneous and by chance happening forces against natural processes, such as miscarriages, malformations *etc.*, and also individuation. This “simple necessity” (*haplôs*) is absolute, since matter under same conditions always reacts in a same way.
- b) Necessity caused by form; a necessary result towards which the motion proceeds if nothing impedes it: a seed grows to be a tree. And here we have a fundamental Aristotelian conception: “The seed becomes but the end really exists” (*PA II 1, 641 b27*). All forms are fixed and constant, yielding also fixed results in their combinations with matter. The Unmoved mover as pure form and pure *energeia* has no contingency and “cannot be in any other way than it is” (*ouk endékhetai allôs éxhein oudamôs*), therefore it is the absolutely necessary Being (*Met XII 7, 1072 b7–11*), the *wâjib al-wujûd*, of the Muslim philosophers. The same applies to the spheres

⁸⁸ Happ 1971, 715

of the fixed stars which, however, are contingent — not in their being as they are eternal — but with respect to the circularity of their motion. In the sublunar realm this form-related necessity applies to each kind of entity as its *eidōs*. This form-related necessity is another name for “world-order” (*taxis*) (GC II 11, 338 a5–b5), an all-inclusive universal law that is grounded in the eternally ongoing revolving of the “*etheral*” realm and through this back to the Unmoved mover. It is in further explicating the mutual relations between this form-based necessity and the necessity of matter, the absolute necessity of matter for the form to realize its own end (*telos*) *qua* form that Aristoteles formulates the idea of

- c) “Hypothetical necessities,” i.e., those necessary conditions that matter *qua* matter sets on any becoming of a specific form as an end. And this is a two-way relation in that all matter, despite its basic “atelic” nature, is also striving for form, and, every form is in need of matter to become true. This striving necessity of the imperfect towards the more perfect is dictated and directed by the form as an end. Therefore it is a universal governing phenomena throughout the sublunar sphere where every *aisthêta* is imitating (Happ: *nachahmen*) the perfection of the revolving starry spheres and these again are reaching out imitating the perfection of the Unmoved mover. Thus, this *hylê*-based necessity makes up a universal hierarchy of striving.⁸⁹ Or, to look at it the other way round, the eternally revolving spheres of the fixed stars are in need of the sublunar being in order to exist as reality (*Cael* II 3), and, similarly, the revolving of the fixed stars is “in need” of the revolving planets and, finally, the Unmoved mover is “in need” of the cosmos — though with this last relation the hypothesis must be formulated differently, for example: ‘*when or as there is an Unmoved mover, then there must be...*’⁹⁰ Thus, this hypothetical necessity expresses the inner dynamics of matter and form, the imperfect and the perfect, and, between the mechanic atelic necessity of matter and the teleological necessity through form in the whole of cosmos.

The standard example of Aristotle to illustrate this hypothetical necessity is the saw. Aristotle answers the question “why is the saw as it is?” by referring to its end, function (*ergon*), the what it is for, *ou héneka* (*Phys* II 9, 200 a10–13). It is *impossible* (*adunaton*) to use the saw for its proper purpose unless it is made out of very hard material, like iron. So, this hardness is a necessary material condition, a hypothetical necessity depending totally on the purpose, that is, the function of the saw, because, without the “for the sake of which,” there would be no saws. Thus, here necessity comes through matter, and the *ou héneka*, that for the sake of which comes through definition (*logos*). This “logos” is the definition, that is, the essence or “the what it was to be” of an entity and thus the end for which

⁸⁹ Happ 1971, 717 He also calls it an “*ordo amoris*”. Ibid., 511

⁹⁰ Ibid. See also 512. Elsewhere Happ states “The unmoved mover is meaningless without the moved world” Ibid. 318 and regarding Platonic ideas he says: There are no ideas without a world” Ibid. 568. Compare with p 168 “rabb—marbub” structure.

matter is striving for.⁹¹ Thus each end (*telos*) to become true needs first certain materials and, second, a certain ordering of making and development (nutrition and growing in case of *fúsei onta*, building, and putting together in case of *tekhnê onta*), and together these, the materials and their proper ordering, bring about the desired form. These material qualities Aristotle called *dunameis poiêtikai* and *dunameis pathêtikai*, that is, active and passive dispositions, abilities to bring about effects in another or to go through and suffer effects (*Cael* II 7, 275 b4–6). Fire is heating and water warms up and they have thus a definite and constant relation to one another: "when the agent and the patient meet in accordance with the potency in question [i.e. irrational potencies (*álogoi dunámeis*) of living and inanimate things], the one must act and the other be acted upon" (*Met* IX 4, 1048 a5–6). When a dinner is prepared the food is heated until it is cooked but yet not burned, whereas fire by itself simply burns as long as there is something to burn, irrespective of any ends. This it does by absolute necessity, that is, all these *atelic* or irrational material forces are necessarily what they are, they are invariable and constant, and nothing can change or break them. But Aristotle empowers this simple and absolute necessity with his concept of hypothetical necessity by setting it into a relation with an end (*telos*). How this relation works can best be seen in any process of production, that is, in *tekhnê*. All art of producing consists in the act of ordering and putting together these invariable qualities of matter and material forces in a way that they all work for the same defined end result. Thus, what is needed is a thorough analysis of the wanted product (*poiêton*), that is, an analysis of the outward look, the aspect, the *eidos*, which can only reside in the soul of the artisan – for example the outward look of a house in the mind of an architect (*Met* VII 7, 1032 b1). Here we have a central idea appearing later in the chapters on both Heidegger (p 121) Ibn al-‘Arabí (pp 179 and 245). In this process of analysis all the necessarily effecting material qualities and their forces which are already at hand are taken into account, and their artful putting together is determined according to a plan which now puts them into work for a new and more complex and organized totality. In a process of production there are thus two sets of causal chains working together: first the absolutely necessary causal connections of matter working mechanistically, and, second, the teleological processes of relative (hypothetical) causality, resulting from the desired and determined end product.⁹²

This example of *tekhnê* serves to make understandable complex processes of nature (*physis*) because Aristotle sees these two as basically identical structures. But he uses *tekhnê* as an example because in manufacturing something the moving cause (as *arkhê*, principle and end) is always separate from the moved product, whereas beings of nature have this principle internally. In *tekhnê* the artisan is the cause and not the product, which makes the relational process of becoming more transparent for our

⁹¹ Happ 1971, 722, for "the what it was to be" see above pp. 15–16 and 135 n 16

⁹² Happ 1971, 726–7

understanding. But principally, both in the processes of nature and those of production, the structure is the same: certain necessary material conditions are organized for a definite purpose which in the case of an artefact is defined by the producer, and, in the case of natural entities, the end is interior as the *eidos* of each completed entity.

Now, according to Happ, these mechanically working, automatic or aimless, *atelic*, primal forces of matter are also applicable to their principle, that is, *hyle kath autê*, matter as such. Therefore, he says *Hylê* is the principle and cause, “Ursache” (*aitia*), of all aimless, *atelic*, and mechanistically happening processes of nature that take place with absolute necessity.⁹³ Thus, the elementary passive and active automatic forces (hot, cold, wet and dry, see above pp 37, 155, 213 and 276) of nature are included in *hylê* as *dunamis*, i.e. possibility of being — both of generation and of corruption. Therefore, when it comes to corruption (weakness, sickness or death) which, seen from the individual point of view, may seem negative occurrences against the good end (*telos*), these too must be seen as working for the general good end and functioning of nature on the whole in the ongoing circular process of generation and corruption. Thus, even though these necessary forces working for corruption are caused by aimless irregularities (*anômalos*) in elementary forces of matter, yet, even they are not *anti-* teleological — let alone 'evil' (*kakon*). They are simply *aimless* forces of *hylê*.⁹⁴

Finally, as a fundamental and all-embracing example of the complementary functions of *hylê* as matter and *dunamis*, and *morphê*/form as *telos* and *energeia*, Happ goes through what Aristotle says on insemination and the generation of all animals, including humans. Like in all explanations of becoming, Aristotle explains also generation in terms of his two contraries and substrate –model, the four causes and the concepts of *dunamis* and *energeia*. In this process the male has the role of formal and moving cause (in the sense of the German *Ursache*) and the female has the role of material cause (*hylê*). The male contribution is sperm (*sperma*) and the female contribution is the menstrual blood (*tà katamenia*). In the conception the male sperm transmits the essential form (*eidos*) and the origin of motion (*causa efficiens*) from the male to the female, thus igniting the development of the embryo into an end-directed process in the already existing matter of the *katamenia*.

Yet, in order to understand the contrasting functions of *causa formalis* and *causa materialis* in this process, both sperm and menstrual blood share their common origin, namely, blood. For Aristotle blood is potentially everything in the body. It is the *hylê* of the whole body, and, that part of blood which does not go to nutritional purposes serves generative purposes. The male body, because of its higher temperature, “warms up” (*pépsis*, see p 195 n 240) this surplus part of blood into sperm, whereas the

⁹³ Happ 1971, 739

⁹⁴ Happ 1971, 744

female body with its lower temperature keeps the remaining blood as menstrual blood, which, seen in this way, is half cooked sperm, or, the sperm is fully-cooked menstrual blood. In other words, sperm and menstrual blood are analogous. They share a functional similarity. We will come closer to these qualities of hot and cold in Ch.III.2 and the *peri fúseôs* –tradition. In the male body the heating up of blood into sperm does not destroy the native possibility of blood developing into any part of the body, that is, the sperm is like blood potentially flesh, bones, sinews, or, a hand, a face or any other organ of the developing body. (*Gen An.* II 3, 737 a22–24) They are both also moving in the same direction, that is, they have the same *dunamis* as tendency towards the building up of a whole body with all its organs as their aim (*télos*). It is this being and acting of the sperm and menstrual blood towards the same ends which is due to their shared origin in blood. Insemination would, indeed, be impossible if the menstrual blood was not already in itself teleologically oriented towards the same ends as sperm is. Therefore, neither sperm nor menstrual blood could start this process alone. Thus, *hylê* as menstrual blood is effected (*pathos*) and is in some way passive (*pathêtikón*) in respect of the activating force of sperm, and yet, this passivity is highly related to the active quality of sperm as *hylê* is equally active in the formation of the embryo. Thus one cannot simply say that sperm effects menstrual blood, but, rather, that they form a highly tensional realm of complementary togetherness, working both against and for each other towards a shared goal. Here we have a fundamental feature of *hylê* on the whole as an active contrary and complementary principle of *eidos*.⁹⁵ Thus, for Aristotle, matter as such is an effective principle of nature and it is independent of form and *telos*. This shows that Aristotelian ontology has a fundamentally dualistic character in which these two principles of *hylê* and *eidos/telos* are affecting one another dynamically and continuously on all levels of being.

⁹⁵ Happ 1971, 748

Part II Heidegger on Aristotle

Radicalizing Ancient Ontology

*It would be an odd thing if a man chose to live
someone else's life instead of his own.*

Aristotle, *NE* X 7, 1178 a2

*Dasein as being-with is lived by the Mitdasein of others and by the world
that concerns it in this or that way. Precisely in its ownmost everyday
activity Dasein as being with others is not itself. Instead it is the others who
live one's own Dasein.*

GA 20, 337/245

II.1. Early contacts with Aristotle, Franz Brentano and Carl Braig

In the year 1907, at the age of 18, Heidegger received in Messkirch from a family friend, Farther Konrad Gröber, later to become the archbishop of Freiburg, a work by Franz Brentano, a Catholic priest and philosopher and teacher of Edmund Husserl, who had left the Church, but not before he had written an excellent book (according to Gröber and Heidegger) on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in 1862. Part of the book's excellence was due to its author's thorough knowledge of medieval Scholastic philosophy in general and of Scotus and St. Thomas in particular.¹ Whether this is really Heidegger's way to Aristotle as he himself repeatedly states, or is simply a legend hovering over the youth of a great thinker, does not really matter. The fact remains that Brentano was a central figure for the early Heidegger in at least three important respects: through him a connection was opened both back to Aristotle and from Aristotle to medieval scholastic philosophy of Duns Scotus and St. Thomas, and, thirdly, forward to modern phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, the pupil of Franz Brentano. Thus, one can say with Caputo, that Brentano was a gate "back to the Greek experience of Being, [and] forward to the phenomenology of experience".

It is, therefore, crucial to understand that these perspectives back and forth were opened to a young "Christian theologian" (underscored to stress the logician in this particular case), or in Heidegger's much later own words: "Without this theological background I should never have come upon the path of thinking" (US 96/10). Walter Biemel and John D. Caputo have also shown that although

¹ GA 1, Vorwort zur Erster Auflage (1972), 57; Biemel 1977, 10

Heidegger himself emphasizes the role of Brentano's Aristotle-book on his early thinking there was another theologian, Carl Braig, who actually played a far greater role in the development of Heidegger's thought. To this I will return shortly.

In his assessment on Heidegger's early (1922) "Aristotle introduction" (to which I will take a closer look further down) Hans-Georg Gadamer states that when writing this manuscript Heidegger was still a seeker of his own way, and like we all at that time, he had his problems with the teachings of the church as a child of Enlightenment at the age of science.² However, for Heidegger Aristotle provided a particular challenge due to his high education in Christian theology and dogmatics through which he knew well Aristotle of the scholastics, but above all, who also by knew well that Aristotle was no answer for any genuine religious quest. He wanted to go beyond the Aristotle of the Scholastics towards a quite different and original philosopher, thus—literally—"reforming" both himself and Aristotle from the long and massive scholastic tradition of Christianity. This he did with the help of Luther's vehement criticism of Aristotle and the Scholastic *theologia gloriae*.³ We do not really know what happened to Heidegger's religious convictions, but when he returned home from the war (he did his military service in 1918) he was, then at the age of 30, a changed man: he wrote in an often quoted letter on January 1919 to his friend, Engelbert Krebs, a Catholic priest, about this fundamental transformation of his "philosophical standpoint", stating that "Epistemological insights extending to the theory of historical cognition have made the *System* of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me—but not Christianity and metaphysics (these however in a new sense)."⁴

Later that same year he explains in the notes of a lecture course [which was actually never held] that **[philosophy] renounces/abdicates** (*Verzichtet*, the same word he had used in the above mentioned letter to Krebs⁵) **the 'system', the ultimate portioning of the All into realms**".⁶ Life is not a "system" of living, and, therefore, the days of great philosophical systems (religious or non-religious) are over. In this Outline and Sketches for a lecture on the Philosophical Foundations of Medieval Mysticism Heidegger wrote in August 1919: "In the environment and sphere of realization of such systems (for instance Catholicism) [...], *the capacity of experience* in regard to different regions of value in general and the religious in particular, *stagnates*—this being caused by a complete lack of original cultural consciousness" [italics mine].⁷ This displays a decisively "Heideggerian" perspective for both overwhelming tradition and actual historicity of experience, or, as it is here depicted in terms of Windelband (*Das Heilige*, 1914), a tension between *norm and norm-adverse*, actuality of understanding

² Dilthey-Jahrbuch 6/1989, 228

³ van Buren 1994, 58

⁴ Kisiel 1995, 15

⁵ For the fully quoted letter, see Caputo 2003, 60 n. 23

⁶ van Buren 1994, 135

⁷ GA 60, 313/238

and immediacy of religious experience. In contrast to these genuinely historical and immediate experiences the dogmatic principles are seen as “repressing the subject with police-force as an ecclesiastical-legal statute. In the end, the system totally excludes an original and genuine experience of religious value.” The immediacy of religious life is jeopardized and religion is forgotten in theology and dogmas. Considering this kind of religious stagnation, the young Heidegger sees mysticism as its countermovement, a return to the inner origin and root of the mystical subject, and to the ever increasing vitality of its inner life.⁸ A few lines further down he writes referring to the basic principle that “the like is known by the like”: “you can only know what you are”, quoting Meister Eckhart’s “fundamental conception”.⁹

In preparing these notes for a lecture course Heidegger was meditating on the famous sermon of Eckhart “On the birth of the Eternal word in the Soul” (Von den Geburt des ewigen Wortes).¹⁰ From these early notes on philosophical foundations of medieval mysticism one can clearly sense the basic thrust of thought towards “the problem of expression as such and its role in the fulfillment of any experience,”¹¹ and this again, is clearly rooted in the basic idea of phenomenology: **letting the experienced “things” (Sache) speak for themselves as genuine qualities structuring the inner experience.**

A few years later, in WS 1921–22, he strongly renounces all dreams of “absolute knowledge” in philosophy, instead “Philosophy takes up in principle, and puts into effect, the rights of the life of encounter and its mode of encountering”.¹² Here we have the *haecceitas* of Duns Scotus (see pp.67) expressing the ultimate uniqueness of each moment, each encounter, each individual and each historical era. “What is past is not only no longer... it was also an *other* than we and our life today in the present are.” This has to do with the qualitative understanding of time, later evolving into its original sense as the temporality of Dasein itself, time being the veritable *principium individuationis*, as Heidegger wrote in his speech for the Marburg theologians in 1924.¹³ And, indeed, the other grand theme of Heidegger’s thinking with Being is Time. We will soon see that his thinking on time was strongly based on ideas evolving around “original/primal Christianity”, an idea he came across both through his laborious

⁸ Ibid. Kisiel 1994, 82

⁹ GA 60, 316/240 the citation continues: “Thus God only, when, and insofar as you are God.” Only God knows God as the mystics of Islam say (F II.69), see Netton 1989, 277

¹⁰ GA 60 ibid; Kisiel 1994, p.84, and n.25, p.522; 526

¹¹ Kisiel 1994, 109 How experience is given and how is it articulated: Intuition and expression, *Phenomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks*, was the theme of a lecture course in summer 1920, GA 59

¹² GA 61, 163–64/123

¹³ GA 1, 427, 431, GA 64, 124

Luther-studies and the Protestant theologian and romantic philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey.¹⁴

In his “My Way to Phenomenology”, Heidegger mentions right at the beginning not only Husserl and Brentano as his early important philosophical encounters, but in the same connection he also mentions a professor of systematic theology at the Freiburg University, Carl Braig (1853–1923), who is actually thought to have coined the term “modernism”, as van Buren notes.¹⁵ Heidegger mentions him and his book “*Vom Sein. Abriss der Ontologie*” (“On Being. Outline of Ontology”) published in 1896, a work “with extensive text passages from Aristotle, Thomas of Aquinas and Suarez, always at the end, and in addition also the etymology for fundamental ontological concepts”.¹⁶ He tells us that Braig wanted to broaden the perspectives of “the dogmatic system of Scholasticism” by bringing it into dialogue with German idealism of Schelling (God reduced to nature) and Hegel (monism versus Scholastic dualism). Unlike Brentano’s book on Aristotle, or Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, Braig’s book *Vom Sein* is not known to many nowadays. Yet, as Caputo has shown, his influence on Heidegger was considerable, since he studied the work at the age of twenty, “when one’s world is only beginning to take shape”.

According to Caputo, Being means for Braig “activity, the active process of be-ing and acting. There is no lifeless inert being; to be is to be active. The primary instance of the activity of being is self-consciousness, the active life of the ego”.¹⁷ On the other hand, his advice for students was: “let us not only study the philosophy of St. Thomas; let us also study philosophy as St. Thomas does.”¹⁸ Indeed, in reading such basic assumptions it is no wonder that Braig’s approach suited Heidegger quite well. There is nothing extraordinary as such in that a professor of theology quotes in his Forward to *Vom Sein* a sentence from Bonaventure’s *The Mind’s Road to God* (5.3–4) with the Scholastic/Avicennian claim that “Being is what first enters the intellect” (*Ens est primum quod cadit in intellectu*), a sentence quoted by Heidegger in SZ §1,3 through St. Thomas.

¹⁴ For a concise analysis, see van Buren 1994, 146–50

¹⁵ *Mein Weg in die Phenomenologie*, in SD 2000, 81; van Buren 1994, 124 See also, Biemel 1977, 10.

¹⁶ SD 2000, 81–82

¹⁷ Caputo 2003, 47

¹⁸ Caputo 2003, 48, quoting from Braig’s letter to a college Despite the example Braig was not a Thomist, *ibid.* 54

For both Heidegger and the medieval thinkers Being is an “a priori”, a *prius*, which precedes our understanding of particular beings.¹⁹ However, Bonaventure’s point is to highlight the human intellectual blindness (*caecitas intellectus*), the fact that despite this priority, “the mind’s eye, intent upon particular and universal beings, does not notice Being itself, which is beyond all genera”. Instead, human understanding, “when it looks upon the light of highest Being, it seems to see nothing, not understanding that darkness itself is the fullest illumination of the mind”.²⁰ Buonaventura uses here the same comparison as Aristotle between our eyes and those of a bat: “just as it is with bats’ eyes in respect of daylight, so it is with our mental intelligence in respect of those things which are by nature most obvious.” (*Met* II 1, 993b8) One can easily catch some essential and life-long Heideggerian themes in such passages, even though it would be “foolish to say that Heidegger learned all this from Buonaventure”, as Caputo writes, however, such fundamental notions may well have served as “signposts pointing Heidegger in a certain direction”.²¹

Finally, Caputo’s study shows interestingly how much Heidegger was influenced by the style of Braig’s writing. It is of course obvious that a book called *Vom Sein* uses constantly both words *Sein* and *Seiendes*, but to use these words together like *das Sein des Seienden*, or in neologisms as in compounds *Was-sein*, *Dass-sein*, *Andersein*, or in prefixes like *Seinsmöglichkeit*, *Seinsordnung* as well as long hyphenated phrases as *Zu-sich-selber-kommenkönnen* (being able to come toward itself), a reader of Heidegger is bound to be astonished (Caputo 2003, 54). It is also worth noting that many of Braig’s etymologies found their way to Heidegger’s texts, the most important perhaps being the Greek concept *logos* which Braig originates from *légô*, to cull, collect. Let us have a look.

Lecturing on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* in 1931 Heidegger explains this fundamental philosophical concept of *lógos*: “*légein* means ‘to glean’ [*lesen*], that is, to harvest, to gather, to add one to the other, to include and connect one with the other. Such laying together is a laying open [*Dar-legen*] and laying forth [*Vor-legen*] (a placing alongside and presenting) [*ein Bei- und Dar-stellen*]: a making something accessible in a gathered and unified way (*gesammelt einheitlich zugänglich machen*). And since such a gathering laying open and laying forth occurs above all in recounting and speaking (in trans-mitting and

¹⁹ Caputo 2003, 48; Heidegger notes that a priori is “patently a *time-determination*, “from the earlier” or “the earlier,” quoting Kant who says: “Now to cognize something a priori means to cognize it from its mere possibility” (Werke, Cassirer, Vol.4 p.372, quoted through Heidegger). Something is there already, has been understood already. Consequently, a priori means that which makes beings as beings possible in *what* and *how* they are. Plato, the “discoverer of a priori,” characterized it (in *Phaedrus* 249 B5-C6 and *Phaedo* 72 E5) with *anamnesis*, a “recollection” of something already previously seen: “starting from the multiplicity of perceived [beings] he draws it back to single concept.” For a thorough analysis of a priori see GA 24, 461-69/324-30.

²⁰ *Mira igitur est caecitas intellectus qui non considerat illud quod prius videt et sine quo nihil potest cognoscere*; Opera Omnia V, 308. The Mind’s Road to God, tr. George Boas 1979, 35–36

²¹ Caputo 2003, 49

com-municating to others), *lógos* comes to mean discourse that combines and explains [...]. The meaning of *logos* as relation (unified gathering, coherence, rule) is therefore ‘prior’ to its meaning as discourse (Rede).” And, further, “the current translations of *logos* as ‘reason,’ ‘judgment,’ and ‘sense’ do not capture the decisive meaning: gathering joining and making known. They overlook what is originally and properly ancient and thus at once essential to the word and concept.”²²

A second example: A few years later, in his lecture course *An Introduction to metaphysics (Einführung in die Metaphysik GA 40, 1935)* Heidegger insists that this pivotal word of western philosophy, *lógos/legô/legein*, lat. *legere*, did not mean originally for the early Greeks “to say”, “speech”, or “discourse”, as it is usually translated, or, still less, a “word”/*verbum* as in the prologue to the Gospel of St. John, referring to Christ as the mediator between God and men, or, as the Old Testament notion of the ten *commandments* of God rendered in the *Septuagint* as *hoi deka logoi*. Instead, for the early Greeks the fundamental or primal meaning of this word stands in no relation what so ever to language. According to Heidegger, the primary meaning—and the first meaning still given in dictionaries—is the same as the German word “*lesen*”: to glean, to gather wood, the vintage, the cream of the crop... in short, to gather. Thus, originally *logos* meant the primal gathering principle, “the intrinsic togetherness of the essent, i.e. being” (*Die in sich stehende Gesammeltheit des seinden, d.h. das Sein*, GA 40, 139). In the same context Heidegger quotes Aristotle using the word still in the early sense of togetherness (*Phys VIII 1, 252 a13*): *taxis de pasa logos*, “all order has a character of bringing together” (*jede Ordnung aber hat den Character des Zusammenbringens*).²³

However, here it is enough if we note that the grand theme of Heidegger’s life-long thinking, namely **the question of Being, was first introduced in an Aristotelian-Scholastic setting**, that is, in Heidegger’s own words: “My basic philosophical convictions remained those of Aristotelian-Scholastic philosophy”, as he states in his 1915 CV.²⁴ And indeed, during the years preceding his major work *Sein und Zeit*—itself first planned to be an Aristotle book—what Heidegger gave his students after the first early courses on *phenomenology of religion* were precisely the fruits of his meticulous studies on Aristotle. But this “postmetaphysical” Aristotle whom we find in the courses of the 20’s is quite different from the *Philosophus* of his early Neo-Scholastic years before and during the war. One can therefore say that the early Freiburg and Marburg years (1918–1928) of Heidegger were utterly devoted

²² GA 33 2-3/5 and 121/103-04

²³ GA 40, § 48, p.132–33 *Ähren lesen, Holz lesen, die Weinlese, die Auslese; ein ‘Buch lesen’ ist nur ein Abart des Lesens im eigenbtlichen Sinne. Dies besagt das eine zum anderen legen, in eines zusammenbringen, kurz: sammeln ...* The passage from Physics is usually translated as “order always involves a ratio”, due to understanding the word *logos* and *legein* as thought, understanding, and reason (*ratio, rationis*).

²⁴ van Buren 1994, 53

to Aristotle-studies but it took some time before the thoroughly scholastically educated modern philosopher begins really to “radicalize ancient ontology”—as he in 1927 described his intentions in a letter to Rudolph Bultman.²⁵ John van Buren breaks the early religious interests of Heidegger “down into three phases, namely, the antimodernist Neo-Scholastic phase (1909–12), the mystical Neo-Neo-Scholastic phase (1913–16), and the free Protestant mystical phase from 1917 into early 1920s...”.²⁶

During the first two above mentioned early phases of his religious thinking (1909–1916) Heidegger was still sternly planted in “ancient wisdom” of medieval Scholasticism and mysticism, where modernism was still painted as a cultural sickness—a metaphysical homelessness—deemed to be a decadent phenomenon.²⁷ But, then again, from early on his mindset was highly dynamic, perhaps best illustrated by his very broad literary interests. Besides Classical, Scholastic, Neo-Kantian and Phenomenological philosophy-studies and studies on mathematics, Heidegger had a keen interest on poetry and literature: Hölderlin, Rilke, Kleist and Trakl became his life-long poet-companions, and, besides Thomas Mann (see n 47 above) he also read Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Novalis and Schlegel; translations of Dostoevsky’s works, Selma Lagerlöf... and of course the classical Greek authors Homer, Sophocles and Euripides. In fact, his first publications were not on philosophy but on poetry and theology.²⁸

As a phenomenologist of religion, Heidegger was heading in his early years towards “primal Christianity” (*Urchristentum*), or, in the words of Hans Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), himself a student of Heidegger, “freeing himself from the prevailing theology in which he had been educated, in order that he could become a Christian.”²⁹ Similarly, the Japanese philosopher Miki Kiyoshi, who studied under Heidegger in 1922–23 and wrote the first ever published essay on Heidegger’s *Ontology* in 1930, described Heidegger’s philosophy as “returning from that which is Greek to what is originally Christian”.³⁰ This assessment is quite true concerning the young Heidegger, whereas quite soon Heidegger’s direction was the opposite: turning away from Christianity and heading towards the roots of European thinking in early Greek thinkers. However, this long-term project went through a series of upheavals and modifications, reaching in the end—or maybe more aptly throughout his philosophical career—into something quite different from what was originally anticipated.

²⁵ Kiesel 1995, 308

²⁶ van Buren 1994, 156

²⁷ van Buren 1994, 124–27.

²⁸ GA 13 5-7, *Frühe Gedichte*. Cf. van Buren 1994, 62

²⁹ Gadamer 1983, 142, quoted through van Buren 2007, 25. Here we also have a clear Kierkegaardian project, see above p. 61 and n122. Heidegger is also after philosophy as “*Urwissenschaft*” and phenomenology as “*vortheoretische Urwissenschaft*” KNS 1919, GA 56/57, 15–23; 63. See also note 45 above.

³⁰ Yuasa, in HAT 1990, 160–61

And so it happened that during the years of studies and lecture-series in the late teens and early 20s the subject of religion actually began to wane in the thinking of Heidegger, ending up finally in his firm conviction that all philosophy must be basically atheistic, as he was to claim already in 1922.³¹ Not in the sense that philosophy declares that God does not exist, but due to the fact that access to God can only be based on faith (as both Kant and Kierkegaard emphasized) and not human reasoning. And faith is not in need of philosophy. Philosophy as a human affair means essentially questioning, whereas an act of faith is something quite different. In WS (=winter semester) 1921–22 he writes: “Questionability is not religious, although it alone might lead to a situation of religious decision. My comportment in philosophizing is not religious, even if as a philosopher I can also be a religious person. ‘The art resides precisely in that’: to philosophize and, in so doing, to be genuinely religious; i.e., to take up factically one’s worldly, historiological-historical task in philosophy, in action and in concrete word of action, though not in religious ideology and fantasy.”³²

On the other hand, and with even broader consequences, the planned attack on Aristotle actually ended up in a truly radical and new entrance into Aristotelian philosophy influencing a whole new generation of Aristotle-scholarship.³³ This novel way of entering Aristotelian philosophy is my main theme in this Part II of my study. However, entering the philosophy of Aristotle did not come about just like that; instead, Heidegger had to proceed step by step as his own thinking was evolving towards the fundamental ontology of *Sein und Zeit* (=SZ), *Being and Time* (=BT), and still later beyond it. Therefore, I will here mainly go through material antedating his decisive Aristotle-commentaries in 1924–33, in order to get a picture of the kind of philosopher/theologian tackling the great challenge of Aristotle. And, indeed, one could well say that Aristotle of Heidegger can best be appreciated through his own “way to phenomenology,” gaining thereby an access to genuine philosophizing and making Dasein visible and understandable as a possible soil of ground concepts.

Heidegger’s own personal and educational background was deeply religious and he was from an early age directed towards Catholic priesthood. For quite some time he therefore called himself not a philosopher but “*ein christliche Theologe*”, though not forgetting to mention the long theological

³¹ PIA 1989, 246/367 In a note Heidegger specifies that “here atheistic means keeping oneself free from misleading concern (Besorgnis) which merely talks about religiosity.”

³² “Atheism as a matter of principle”: GA 61, 195–197/147–48

³³ van Buren 1994, 226, lists: H.-G.Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, Helene Weiss, Walter Bröcker, and Ernst Tugendhat.

tradition in German philosophy.³⁴ However, due to health problems (exhaustion for overworking) he left his theological studies in early 1911 and would have wanted to continue studying under Husserl in Göttingen, but that he could not afford financially. Instead he enrolled in September the same year at the University of Freiburg to study mathematics to get a degree for a high-school teaching position (he had studied carefully Husserl's *Die Philosophie der Arithmetik*, published in 1891). This plan, however, did not come true and Heidegger was forced to revise his plans still many times. But then, as it turned out in 1916, Husserl became the successor of Heinrich Rickert in Freiburg and Heidegger, now having already obtained his degree in Philosophy, had finally the chance to work under his supervision. Together Husserl and Heidegger “were phenomenology”—as Husserl claimed—and their team went on till Heidegger was nominated to Marburg in 1923.³⁵ Nevertheless, his early immersion in theological studies on Duns Scotus, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and even more so on Meister Eckhart, were to have a lasting imprint on his heart.

Through Medieval mysticism (further above II.3.4) Heidegger gained an access to what he called in 1915 the medieval “experience of life”, *Lebenserfahrung*, a concept recalling the influence of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) on Heidegger.³⁶ It is also through Dilthey that Heidegger describes Duns Scotus in his Habilitationsschrift as “the most sharp minded scholastic”.³⁷ Instead of empty formal concepts of transcendental philosophy, Dilthey—who was also first a theologian—wanted to bring the human sciences (*Introduction to Human Sciences*, 1883) into their foundation in the lived experiences of the human being itself: I find myself always amidst the situations of my own life, or, my self-world. Heidegger writes in his SS (= summer semester) 1919 that “we are indebted to him [Dilthey] for valuable intuitions about the idea of this science.”³⁸ And, indeed, it was through Dilthey that Heidegger adopted the idea of Christianity as the origin of “historical consciousness”, as will be shown further down (see p.88 and 94). The personalistic language of Dilthey plus his decisively antimetaphysical approach to the phenomenology of human sciences certainly appealed to the young Heidegger. Dilthey wanted to “regard ‘life’ itself in its structures, as the basic reality of history”, as Heidegger later wrote in his SS 1925. No wonder he insisted in his 1916 thesis that the subject matter of his study, the problem of categories, must be rooted in the historical life of the Middle Ages (GA 1, 408–09), and thus, emphasizing the fundamentally temporal context of all understanding. According to Heidegger, Dilthey was in fact also the first to recognize the central significance of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*

³⁴ In a letter to Karl Löwith in 1921, Kisiel 1995, 7; “Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel were theologians, and Kant can only be understood in terms of theology...” GA 61,7

³⁵ van Buren 1994, 204

³⁶ Safranski 1998, 41

³⁷ Den”scharfsinnigsten aller Skolastiker” (GA 1, 203.)

³⁸ GA 56/57, 164–165

and the true aims of phenomenology.³⁹ Furthermore, he was to “launch a *personalistic* psychology against the reigning *naturalistic* psychology. The psychical was now to be understood not as an event of nature but as *spirit* and *person*.”⁴⁰ To these general influences we should add Heidegger’s own specific remark in the SZ on “our common interest in understanding historicity” (*das uns gemeinsame Interesse Geschichtlichkeit zu verstehen*, SZ 398, also SZ 268 n.1), referring to Dilthey-Yorck correspondence on which Heidegger wrote an article “The Concept of Time” (appearing as GA 64) in Marburg 1924, and the review of which was to become the very first “passages written for the famous book of 1927” [i.e. SZ]. This shared interest does not refer to “world history,” as Kisiel notes, “but rather *being-historical*,” and thus, the ontological structure of a being that is historical. Thus, “historicity is an ontological character of the human being, Dasein.”⁴¹ And, as Heidegger says referring particularly to count Yorck in this correspondence, what is needed is a clear differentiation between the categories of beings of nature and the being (Dasein) which is history.⁴² Here Heidegger emphasizes the generic difference brought to the fore by count Yorck between the ontic and historical becoming. Traditional ontology of antiquity stemming from the narrowed perspective of eternal (*aei*) present [*ousia* as presence, *parousia*]⁴³, the theory of ideal and perfect being *qua* being, is not adequate for the analysis of fundamentally temporal structures of being, the being that takes place in human Dasein. This difference can become a question of investigation only through a fundamental-ontological clarification of the meaning of being on the whole (SZ 403).

As these examples show, Dilthey had more than a word to say on Heidegger’s life-long central themes of thought.

Thus, on the whole one can say that from early on Heidegger’s fascination on theology was more on the philosophical than devotional side of Catholicism: “in Heidegger the theoretical-philosophical interest is predominant”, as Husserl estimated his pupil in a letter to Rudolf Otto, dated March 5, 1919.⁴⁴ But, then again, “The proper attitude of the phenomenologist must be that of devotion” (*Hingabe*, an Eckhartian term adopted also by Emil Lask, see above p.77–79 and 82–3), a full involvement and submission of the thinker to his subject matter combined with not just knowledge but clear and thorough intuition, an opening for the given as such—an attitude that Heidegger modeled on the

³⁹ Ibid. 165

⁴⁰ GA 20, 19/17; 30/24; 161/116

⁴¹ Kisiel 1994, 322-23

⁴² “SZ §77, 399: [In dieser Forderung] Yorcks [...] liegt die Aufgabe beschlossen, positiv und radikal die verschiedene kategoriale Struktur des Seienden, das Natur, und des Seienden, das Geschichte ist (des Daseins), herauszuarbeiten.”

⁴³ For the Greek sense of being, *ousia*, see above pp.117ff

⁴⁴ Quoted through Kisiel 1995, 73; 520 n.9

mystical experience of Eckhartian *Gelassenheit* [releasement, letting-be].⁴⁵ That is, letting the matters speak for themselves, letting them be what they are.

In those days Europe was recovering from the far more devastating First World War than we tend to think. Inflation, a loss of value, and not only that of money, was rampant in Germany⁴⁶ and fundamental questions of life, epitomized in *The Magic Mountain* of Thomas Mann in 1924, were circulating like slogans of the time.⁴⁷ *The malaise of culture*, an essay published by Freud in 1929, expresses aptly the general mood of crisis both in the Weimar Republic and the post-war Europe in large. Symptomatic new movements of occultism, vegetarianism, nudism, theosophy, and anthroposophy were all offering new roads to salvation. Perhaps the most passionate and devoted philosopher of life was Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), whose much quoted phrase, Will to Power (“Wille zur Macht”, a compilation of notes from the years 1883–88), had actually nothing to do with political ideology, quite the contrary in fact, it was a deep cry for the human possibility of not just adjusting oneself with the *status quo*, but finding a life of one’s own, based on the unique individual possibilities as a human being. Here it is not difficult to see parallels even with Ibn al-‘Arabí, the passionate spokesman for individually emerging *wujûd* of each human being.

The turbulent outer circumstances of the first decades of last century provided a fertile and flammable ground for the radically new perspectives opened up by the mesmerizing young lecturer on philosophy, known already as “Little magician from Messkirch”.⁴⁸ The young Japanese philosopher already mentioned, Miki Kiyoshi, who studied in 1922–23 under Heidegger, described in his “*A Journey of My Readings*” his experiences thus, “Germany at the time was in total spiritual anxiety. [...] The philosophy itself of Professor Heidegger [who at the time was thirty-two and Miki twenty-six] could be seen as an expression of this anxiety. His philosophy sprang from the prevailing atmosphere of the

⁴⁵ GA 56/57, 61: to get at the original sphere (of immediacy) by pure dedication to the matter; 65; 68: to be immersed in the lived experience; on p.110 He calls—in quite Goethean terms— this “original mode” (*Urhaltung*) an “original intention” (*Urintention*) as living in “sympathy with life” (*Lebenssympathie*). For a brief discussion on Goethe and Heidegger, see Eichhorn 1971, pp. 72–81, 198–200. *Gelassenheit*, 2004 pp 29–71. Husserl does not speak of devotion or submission, but for him too genuine philosophizing required “passionate engagement” (*leidenschaftliche Anteilnahme*), Foreword to the Second Edition (1921) of LU Vol.II, Part 2, 1992, 533.

⁴⁶ The neo-Kantians were obsessed with value philosophy but it was the French philosopher Georg Simmel who hit the bottom line in all value-questions when he published his *Philosophy of Money* at the beginning of the century.

⁴⁷ *The Magic Mountain* was a book that Heidegger read enthusiastically with his student beloved and life-long friend Hannah Arendt when it was first published. Ettinger 1995, 25

⁴⁸ Messkirch: Heidegger’s place of birth, merely a small village but one with a history going back seven centuries and with a church dedicated to St. Martin where his father, Friedrich, was a sexton.

popularity of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Hölderlin. This was the reason that Heidegger attracted overwhelming popularity among young students.”⁴⁹

“There was hardly more than a name, but the name travelled all over Germany like the rumor of the hidden King”, as Hanna Arendt wrote nearly 50 years later on the occasion of the 80th birthday of Martin Heidegger to describe the enthusiasm this young magician was causing in the early 20s.⁵⁰

Ever since the “hammering” philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, the idea of life-philosophy, *Lebensphilosophie*, was a key-word for such very diverse thinkers as Wilhelm Dilthey, Henri Bergson, Max Scheler and Karl Jaspers—all of whom were both studied and criticized by the young Martin Heidegger before and after the war.⁵¹ Indeed, Karl Jaspers’s “groundbreaking book”, *Psychology of Worldviews* (1919), which, according to Kisiel, will “inaugurate German *Existenzphilosophie*”, inspired Heidegger to write a review on the “immanent intentions” of Jaspers in 1921.⁵² And, as he notes, Jaspers’s position belongs under the rubric of “philosophy of life” (Jaspers was originally a medicine man, psychiatrist, and not a philosopher). Heidegger was no enthusiast for this highly popular trend of “philosophy of life” of his youth, but here, in the case of a great thinker, he notes quite generally that “philosophy of life” tends in the “direction of the phenomenon of existence”.⁵³ And, though Heidegger does not mention it here, Jaspers’ exposition of Kierkegaard’s thought—though by no means the first acquaintance of Heidegger with the Danish existential thinker—was highly impressive for the young phenomenologist. Jaspers’ analysis of Kierkegaardian basic notions like, “human existence”, “the moment of vision” (*Augenblick*), “death”, and “guilt”, all became central explicates also in Heidegger’s own thinking. “We shared a passion for Kierkegaard”, as Jaspers wrote about his visits with Heidegger from 1920 onward.⁵⁴ In this early review on Jaspers Heidegger uses already the expression *Dasein*, though not defining the word as a technical term until two years later in SS 1923. But nor is the term here used simply as the ordinary German expression for existence; instead, Heidegger plays with the

⁴⁹ Quoted through Yasuo Yuasa in HAT 1990, 159

⁵⁰ van Buren 1994, 3; Kisiel 1995, 16.

⁵¹ Heidegger writes in 1925 that it was precisely through Scheler that Bergson became known in Germany and was also recognized by Husserl in the *Investigations of internal time consciousness*—a text edited by Martin Heidegger. GA 20 125–26/92, see note 109 on Bergson above. Heidegger’s own Nietzsche Lectures (N I and II) from 1936 to 1940 were a confrontation (“a setting apart from one another” *Auseinanderstzung*, in *Der Spiegel*, 1976, 30 (23), 204) with both Nietzsche and National Socialism. The lure of grandeur was there and so was a mind apt for greatness.

⁵² Heidegger’s comment was not published until 1972 as GA 9, but copies of this text were distributed as “a private communication” already in June 1921. Kisiel 1995, 137

⁵³ GA 9, 12 Heidegger’s mentor Heinrich Rickert published a critical monograph on philosophy of life in 1920, *Die Philosophie des Lebens*, which Heidegger quotes in his WS 1921–1922, GA 61, 80/62, noting that “the term, ‘life’, is remarkably vague today”, appearing in all sorts of “frivolous dialectics”. He also wants from the very outset to cast aside all “biological concepts of life” as unnecessary baggage. Yet, referring directly to Rickert he notes that “philosophy is a basic mode of life itself”. The whole part III of the course is devoted to the “Basic Categories of Life”. For Heidegger and Life-Philosophy, see Krell 1992.

⁵⁴ Quoted through van Buren, 1995, 150

literal meaning of the word as “being there” (*Da sein*) and this as both “being out toward” and being involved “in” the world. “Life is understood as objectifying in the widest sense, as an act of creative formation and achievement, as an act of going out of itself, and thus—though this is not clearly spelled out—as something like our ‘*being there*’ [*Da sein*] in this life and as this life.”⁵⁵ Quoting from Jaspers’ book, Heidegger writes “the *Dasein* of our mental life, i.e., its existence or ‘being there’, arises through antinomies”⁵⁶—here the word “antinomies” shows the Kantian heritage into which Jaspers situates his thinking. But for Jaspers the term is particularly exemplary in the connection of mysticism as “spiritual existence arises through antinomy”. Therefore mystics are “the most intense thinkers of antinomy who in their paradoxical expressions readily teach us about this kind of mystical and vital unity”.⁵⁷ In the same vein he continues quoting Jaspers: “the consciousness of our existence arises precisely through our consciousness of situations of antinomy.”⁵⁸

Jaspers’ book was formative for the young Heidegger in the way it dealt with “our *existence* [Existenz] in its particularity as pointing to the phenomenon of the ‘I am’, i.e., to the sense of being in this ‘I am’ that forms a starting point of an approach to a context of fundamental phenomena and the problems involved there.” Life encountered in the “facticity” of the individual—a concept expanded a few years later in SS 1923, but used already quite often in this early text. Here he writes “We come to have the phenomenon of existence only within a certain ‘how’ of experiencing it. *That our factual, historically enacted life is at work right within ‘how’ we factically approach the problem of ‘how’ the self, in being anxiously concerned about itself, appropriates itself—this is something that belongs originally to the very sense of the factual ‘I am’*”.”⁵⁹

This book-review is also interesting in showing how Heidegger reads another text: he says himself at the end of his commentary that “familiarity with Jaspers’s book is assumed”. His comments come after what Jaspers already has said; he wants to go further. What Heidegger wants here is a returning “to the thoughts in question and understanding them in a deeper sense”.⁶⁰ The same attitude is clear in his later readings of Aristotle. On the other hand, Jaspers wrote to Heidegger: “Of all the reviews which I have

⁵⁵ GA 9, 15/13” ...so etwas wie in diesem Leben und als solchem Leben ‘Da sein’.”

⁵⁶ GA 9, 7/6 “Das geistige Dasein entsteht durch die Antinomie.”

⁵⁷ GA 9, 12/10 “...gerade die stärksten Antinomisten lehren in paradoxen Ausdrücken gern eine solche mystische oder lebendige Einheit.” See examples above pp 251, 259, 275, 290–93

⁵⁸ See also Paul Tillich *Über die Idee* (GW IX), 18. 1944

⁵⁹ GA 9, 35/30–31 “Das faktische, vollzugsgeschichtliche Leben im faktischen Wie der Problematik des Wie den bekümmerten Selbstaneignung des Selbst gehört ursprünglich zum sinn des faktischen ‘ich bin’.”

⁶⁰ GA 9, 8/7 ...Weiter- bzw. Zurückferstehens

read, yours is, in my opinion, the one which has dug most deeply to the root of my thoughts. It has in fact touched me profoundly... .”⁶¹

II.2. Categories, ancient, medieval and modern

For the young Heidegger, who was a philosopher and not a historian of philosophy, links and bridges between distant eras and thinkers meant a dynamic and creative tension, in which both medieval and modern thinking, both realism and idealism, could be enriched. Instead of viewing modern thought as a developed version of medieval thought, these two perspectives should rather be juxtaposed as a worthy “Sache” or matter of thought as such, that is, as tackling a genuine philosophical problem.

Instead of ever sharpening tools for theoretical life, what is needed in the modern world, according to Heidegger, is a genuine encountering of the historicity of factual life in a questioning mode. But here the word “historical” does not refer to objective past, the science of history, instead, historical refers to that which is *becoming, emerging, proceeding in time*. “A living spirit is as such essentially a historical spirit in the widest meaning of the word.”⁶² **Historical object thus means the way we encounter something in life in a particular temporal context.**

Already in his 1919 KNS lecture course, *The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldviews*, Heidegger battles against the reign of the theoretical: “The primacy of the theoretical must be broken, but not in order to proclaim the primacy of the practical . . . but because the theoretical itself and as such refers back to something pre-theoretical.” In all our doings and theoretical meditations there is always already a “there”: only if the world is “worlding” (*weltet*) can anything in the world be given.⁶³ This “pre-theoretical something” – to which we will soon return as a concept of Emil Lask – refers to the context of all possibly appearing phenomena, the world within which we are immersed as living beings first in an undifferentiated “not-yet”, but which in particular experiences gains its infinite variety of “thisness,” and, similarly, where I as the living, becoming and evolving individual slowly turn out to be my particular “what-I-was-to-be,” in a definite historical and cultural context.⁶⁴

⁶¹ A letter dated August 1, 1921, in Kisiel 1995, 527 n.5

⁶² GA 1, 407 *Der lebendige Geist ist als solcher wesensmässig historischer Geist im weitesten Sinne des Wortes*.

⁶³ GA 56/57, 59; 62–63

⁶⁴ GA 56/57, 74

Heidegger reads the Aristotelian analogical unity of “being” which is “said [*attributed*] in many ways” (*tò òn pollakhôs légetai Met IV 1, 1003 a33*) in a far wider sense than is usually done: “Aristotle meant nothing more than what one had theretofore seen. For Aristotle, at issue is not only an ontological consideration.”⁶⁵ The categories of Aristotle were a “philosophical expression of the ‘naturalism’ of the Greek worldview, which was absorbed in the sensible environing world of natural reality.”⁶⁶ These categories of the real [*Realkategorien*] are to be understood as expressing the cosmocentric naturalism of ancient Greece and therefore only “a specific class of a specific region [of reality], and *not as the categories as such*.”⁶⁷ Thus, during the Middle Ages these analogical categories of being were attuned to fit a theocentric spiritual worldview, covering not only natural but also transcendent and metaphysical realities. The Aristotelian categories are not as such applicable to the medieval mindset, unless they are modified to express this spiritual worldview, in which all realities what so ever are ultimately grounded in divine spiritual reality.⁶⁸ Seen from a medieval perspective “the [Aristotelian] conception of God as first Mover was a very inadequate conception, as it does not pass beyond the physical world and attain the transcendent, infinite Being on which all finite beings essentially depend.”⁶⁹

Therefore, the categories are to be seen as “epochal formulations” and “at bottom conceptual expressions of the historical worldviews belonging to the philosophizing personalities in question”, as van Buren formulates.⁷⁰ Already in his early Habilitation work (GA I, 408–09) Heidegger speaks of the medieval worldview (*mittelalterlichen Weltanschauung*) as the necessary context for the understanding of the question of categories; that is, the cultural-philosophical basic orientation of a particular historical epoch must first be seen clearly before trying to understand the problem of categories formulated during that specific epoch. It is also in this sense that the question of categories, *al-maqûlât*, should be seen in the Islamic context, that is, not as epistemological predicates but almost invariably as ontological distinctions.⁷¹ To put it bluntly and anticipating Part III of our study: the question of categories equals in the Islamic mystical context the question of divine names and attributes of God. According to Ibn al-‘Arabî these names are not ontological entities (*‘umûr wujudiyya*) but relations: each name refers to a way of being (*Seinsverhältnis* in terms of Heidegger) as an open possibility to be accomplished in the

⁶⁵ GA 60, 56/39

⁶⁶ van Buren 1994, 92

⁶⁷ GA 1, 211 The ten Aristotelian Categories of the real express only the objective realities, but not simply any notion of understanding “*non quodlibet intelligibile*”, as Duns Scotus says. Any thinkable notion can be a category, like “*non ens*”, not being, a *privation* which can be thought, judged upon and named, but is not objectively given. GA 1, 287.

⁶⁸ GA 1, 199

⁶⁹ Copelston, HOP Vol II, 1976, 483.

⁷⁰ van Buren, 90

⁷¹ See AMCA on DA I.5, 410 a13, p.36 and the translators comment on p.167, n.5.

actuality of human being (see above III.3.3). We will come back to this soon with the ancient and medieval principles of analogicity of being .

Ultimately, moreover, all categories are abstract conceptual expressions for lived realities, forms of life, and it is the *breakthrough* (*Durchbruch*) to this reality behind concepts that philosophy, according to young Heidegger, is after.⁷² Therefore, as he later put it, philosophizing is a far wider project of *attunement to realities*, not just into doctrines of it: the task of philosophy is “*not to describe the consciousness of man but to evoke the Dasein in man*”.⁷³

A vivid tension between medieval and modern philosophy is brought to full swing in Heidegger’s postdoctoral *Habilitationsschrift* where the medieval Franciscan Duns Scotus and Husserl in his *Logische Untersuchungen* are staged in a dialogue between Being and language, ontology and logic, between being and meaning or, *Categories and Meaning*.⁷⁴ This “Theory of Meaning” (*Bedeutungslehre*) refers to medieval tradition of “Speculative grammar”, in which all forms of psychologism were rejected, that is, the constitution of human mind is not accepted as a foundation for meaning. Instead, the forms of language and grammar are here seen as functions of the “signifying mode” (*modus significandi*) for universal forms of thought (*modus intelligendi*), which again are reflections of being itself (*modus essendi*). Thus, as an example, the term *analogy* is ultimately envisaged as a conceptual expression of the inner unitive experience of human soul in its primordial relationship to God...⁷⁵ Here we have “the baseline of medieval experience”, as Kisiel notes and as Heidegger formulates: the “distinctive form of inner existence anchored in the transcendent Ur-relationship of the soul to God.”⁷⁶ The human person is no thing, substance or object (SZ 48), instead the being of human person exists only in the fulfillment of its own intentional acts. Here existence is identified with intentionality. In this early work intentionality is founded on the “transcendent primal relationship of the soul to God.”

⁷² GA 1, 406 where the true calling of Philosophy is described with an Eckhartian term as “*auf einen Durchbruch in die wahre Wirklichkeit und wirkliche Wahrheit abzielt*.” See p.82

⁷³ GA 29/30, 257/174 Thus, philosophizing is not a Hegelian (or Husserlian) conceptual construction. A few pages earlier he calls this genuine philosophizing the liberation of the Dasein in man. In SS 1927 Heidegger writes very much in the spirit of Ibn al-‘Arabi: “We wish to revive neither Aristotle nor the ontology of Middle Ages, neither Kant nor Hegel, but only ourselves (*nur uns selbst*) [...]” GA 24, 142/101

⁷⁴ “Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus”, published in GA 1. The work Heidegger was working on, *De modis significandi*, was thought to be by Duns Scotus himself but turned out later to be written by another Scotist of the 14th century, Thomas of Erfurt, but that does not change anything. See, Caputo 1990, 145.

⁷⁵ GA 1, 408–09: “Er ist der begriffliche Ausdruck der bestimmten, im transzendenten Urhältnis der Seele zu Gott verankerten Form inneren Dasein”

⁷⁶ Kisiel 1995, 31; GA 1, 409: “... ein begriffliche Ausdruck der bestimmten, im transzendentem Urverhältnis der Seele zu Gott verankerten Form inneren Dasein...” Thus, in the words of a “genuine mystic”: “*In breaking-through I discover that God and I are one*,” says Meister Eckhart; quoted through van Buren 1994, 113.

However, although intentionality certainly came to Heidegger's thinking from early medieval sources, it also happened to be a central notion of both Husserlian Phenomenology and ancient Aristotelian philosophy. No wonder Heidegger picked up one powerful version of the above primordial intentional relation of the soul to God from his contemporary phenomenologist, Max Scheler, who is verbally quoted in the lecture course of summer semester in 1923.

Here Scheler boldly poses the question "What is man?" And answers: man is the "intention and gesture of *transcendence* itself, a God-seeker, a 'between', a 'limit'".⁷⁷ Scheler definitely influenced the young Heidegger both as a catholic person and as a philosopher.⁷⁸ No wonder he is referred to fairly often in the early works and in BT. Still in 1928 Heidegger notes: "Scheler first made it clear, especially in the essay 'Liebe und Erkenntnis' [first published in 1916], that intentional relations are quite diverse, and that even, for example, love and hatred ground knowing. Here Scheler picks up a theme of Pascal and Augustine."⁷⁹ Needless to say, he also suggests here a very important broadening into the strictly logical notion of both classic Aristotelian categories and intentionality of Husserl: "Love and hatred" as basic forms of intentionality imply a vast broadening that becomes quite crucial for Heidegger's later thinking and interpretations of the basic *pathê*, passions, feelings, the variable conditions of the human soul, that is, the role of "pleasure" (*hedonê*) and "pain" (*lupê*), as central elements in Aristotelian philosophy (*EN* II 5, 1105 b25, *Rhet* II)⁸⁰. In the later SS 1925, when discussing the fundamental interpretation of Dasein based upon the phenomenon of *care*, Heidegger specifies that ultimately this care has the character of discoveredness, which means that understanding is always a sighted understanding and refers, therefore, to *having the possibility for something in oneself: I am, that is, I can*. Therefore, knowing is *not even a primary but founded way of being in the world*. Further down he writes, "this [above] interpretation of Dasein is not an invention of mine...—I have no philosophy at all—, but is suggested simply by the analysis of the matters themselves." However, as he a few lines further notes, "It was first seven years ago [roughly 1918], while I was investigating these structures in conjunction with my attempts to arrive at the ontological foundations of Augustinian anthropology, that I first came across the phenomenon of care."⁸¹ And maybe it was precisely Scheler's *Liebe und Erkenntnis* that first

⁷⁷ GA 63, 25/22 Ibn al-‘Arabi could have written this sentence word for word. "Limit", *barzakh*, is one of his fundamental notions studied thoroughly in Bashier 2004. Also, his '*ayin maqsûda*, "*ipsum intentum*," is a name he uses in *Fus* for human being

⁷⁸ In his "Vom Wesen der Philosophie" [1917] and, "Problems of Religion" [1920], Scheler discusses the theme of the "Nothing", that is, the "positive nature of the content of the insight that there is anything at all and not rather nothing", and "Absolute nothing as not being something and not existing in one". *Gesammelte Werke* Vol.5, 1954, 93, 293

⁷⁹ GA 26, 169/134 (SS 1928); GA 20, 181/130 For "Liebe und Erkenntnis", see Scheler's *Gesammelte Werke* Vol.6, 1963, 77–98

⁸⁰ SZ § 29, 138/178 Here Aristotle's analysis in the second book of his *Rhetoric* is referred to as the "erste systematische Hermeneutik der Alltäglichkeit des Mitanderseins". And a few lines further down it is noted that Max Scheler, in "accepting the challenges of Augustine and Pascal, has guided the problematic to a consideration of how acts which 'represent' and acts which 'take interest' are interconnected in their foundations." Here a further reference to Pascal is also given.

⁸¹ GA 20 222/164; 412-13/298; 417/302

introduced Heidegger to this ontological fundament which Augustine and Pascal both emphasize in their writings. And, indeed, we will come back to this theme in his SS 1921, *Augustine and Neoplatonism*.

It is quite telling that Heidegger devoted his habilitation work on Duns Scotus (1265–1308), commonly known as *Doctor Subtilis*. For Scotus “the object of metaphysics is being as being” quite as Aristotle stated, “but the Aristotelian metaphysic centres in practice round the doctrine of the four causes, whereas Scotus treats at length of the idea and nature of being, and the impulse thereto seems to have been partly derived from Avicenna”, as Copelston noted in his *History of Philosophy*.⁸² This remark reminds us also of the reciprocal influences between philosophers “East” and “West” in the Middle Ages.

Heidegger esteems the medieval Duns Scotus not only as a sharp minded scholastic philosopher but also as a human being with highly developed and nuanced sense of realities, a closeness to life, as he says, expressed in the important concept of Duns Scotus: *haecceitas*, “This-here-now” (*Solches-Jetzt-Hier*), a heightened awareness and expression of individuation both with respect to *individuum* (the Aristotelian *ekaston*) and its moment (Aristotelian *kairos*, Ibn al-‘Arabí’s *al-ân*, see III.3.3, p.203 and n.273), time. This quite original term of Duns Scotus clearly suggests an opening towards the directions of Heidegger’s later *Dasein*.⁸³ “Two apples in the same apple-tree nonetheless have not the same view of the sky”, as Scotus says. No matter how like one another the apples might be they yet differ fundamentally with respect of their position in the same tree. And so it is with the fundamentally situational human condition: “The being-there of our own *Dasein* is what it is precisely and only in its *temporally particular* ‘there,’ its being ‘there’ for a while (*in seinem jeweiligen* ‘Da’).”⁸⁴

Due to a medieval unifying perspective on scholastic and mystical experience, Heidegger actually found the roots for his later “hermeneutics of facticity” (again later evolving into “existential analytic” of SZ 72, n.1, BT 490, n.1) in medieval thinking.⁸⁵ Not only the doctrine of categories of Duns Scotus proved to be fruitful, as also his quite original term, *haecceitas*, was decisive for Heidegger: “Scotus had found a greater and more refined closeness to real life [*haecceitas*], to its multiplicity and capacity

⁸² Copelston, HOP Vol.II, 483

⁸³ GA 1, 253 this is how Scotus defines the term *haecceitas*: *Expono quid intelligo per individuationem...non quidem unitatem indeterminatam, secundum quam quodlibet in specie dicitur unum numero, sed unitatem signatam ut hanc, ut est haec determinata*. Oxon. II, dist.III, quest. IV 33 a, n.3, in GA 1, 253, n.54. In the same note Heidegger quotes Scotus on the apples: *Duo poma in una arbore numquam habent eundem aspectum ad coelum*.

⁸⁴ GA 63, 30/24 Cf. SZ §60, 299–300.

⁸⁵ “Facticity” was a neo-Kantian (Fichte) term which Heidegger adopted and thoroughly revised in its meaning, see Kisiel 1995, 27. To illustrate this “facticity” Heidegger takes an example from his own particular being-there (*Dasein*), a description of the table in his family home (see above p.117): this table in “its temporality of everydayness”, “the Da-sein of this table”. GA 63, 90/69 “Something is given to me out of an immediate environment (*Umwelt*)”, given in “the pure gaze into lived experience”, or, “*es weltet für mich*”, it worlds for me, as he lectured already in 1919. GA56/57, 72, 85

for tension, than any Scholastic before him.”⁸⁶ This latin word with the indexical *hic* meaning “this”, “now” or “here” as “this-ness” or “here-ness”, is referring to facticity, and also “individual-being”, the “now-ness” and “once-ness” (*Einmaligkeit*) of each singular thing which cannot be grasped through concepts. The individual is something ultimate: *Individuum est ineffabile*. However, at the end of his review on Jaspers Heidegger says: “Instead of repeating again and again the oft-quoted *individuum est ineffabile*, it is high time we ask what sense the *fari* [speech] should thereby have and what sort of apprehension should come to expression.” Here Heidegger is “breaking through”: how is the uniqueness of the individual experience to be understood. And, as Kisiel notes, “This is in fact Heidegger’s problem of ‘formal indication’. Instead of merely repeating the “in-expressibility of the individual”, we should pay attention to the very structure of what is here expressed as a formal indication, that is, the I-ness not as an indicator of person, but simply as an existential possibility.”⁸⁷

In his Habilitation study Heidegger notes;”That there are different domains of actuality cannot be proved *a priori* by deductive means. Facticities can only be pointed out.” And these again can be “read off” because **the empirical reality is itself formed, determined and ordered structurally in categories, making such pointing and understanding possible.** (*Sie können nur von der empirischen Wirklichkeit abgelesen, weil diese durch ein solches ermöglichende kategoriale Struktur aufgezeichnet ist.* GA 1, p.155; 197) This idea of shown realities that can be immediately understood (*simplex apprehensio*) occurs frequently in this early work of Heidegger, and as Kisiel (1995, 27) notes, it is “ensuing from the young **Heidegger’s commitment to Aristotelian-scholastic realism**: simple apprehension espies the analogical distribution of an identical meaning (*ens commune*) differentiated ‘in each case’ (*je*) in accord with “the inherent differentiation of meaning coming from the domains of reality themselves,’ and so ‘determined by the nature of the domains’ to which the meaning is applied (GA I, pp.256–57 and 287). Thus, an order that sets a limit for absolute plurality. In practice it is our duty only to look, to grasp actually all there is to grasp, to draw out the pure self of what is offered. Over the immediate there can be no doubt, probability, and delusions. For as immediate it has, as it were, nothing between itself and the apprehension (*simplex apprehensio*).” (GA1 213/155, Kisiel 1995 26-27)

Later in the 20’s Heidegger called this *haecceitas* the “mine-ness” (*das meinige*) of Dasein. Therefore each individual is always bound to a particular place (here) and to a decisive moment (now), into its *jeweiligkeit* (literally *the each-while-like*), a temporal particularity or moment which is “in each case (*je*) mine”. Heidegger introduces his best known technical term *Dasein* in his SS 1923 precisely in terms of

⁸⁶ GA 1, 203 “Er hat eine grössere und feinere Nähe (*haecceitas*) zum realen Leben”

⁸⁷ GA 9, 39/34 Kisiel 1995, 146 in fact, Heidegger uses in this text his important expression “formal indication” (*formale anzeige*) quite often.

this temporal particularity (Aristotelian *ekaston* as “each” and *tóde ti* as “this-here”): “The being-there of our own Dasein is what it is precisely and only in its *temporally particular* ‘there’, its being ‘there’ for a while.”⁸⁸ In his early thinking, philosophy itself meant questioning in the here and now, philosophizing in the *kairos*, in the critical moment.⁸⁹

Already in WS 1921–1922, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, a course in which he elaborates the idea of *facticity* and “factual life”, and which only a year later evolves into the just mentioned term Dasein and its analytic, Heidegger refers to the phenomenon of movement (*kinesis*) in Aristotle to understand the “movedness [*Bewegtheit*] of factual life”. (GA 61, 93/70) Thus, the term *Dasein* is fundamentally based on Aristotle, as will be further elaborated later on. Similarly, the example of the table (see above note 85 and the text on p.117) was used, despite its everydayness, to illustrate precisely the basic meaning of the Greek word *ousia*, the “term for a being and its being”, usually translated in philosophy as *substance*, which however, as Heidegger reminds us, “is also an ontic term, one used [by the Greeks] for that which is always available in the everyday Dasein of humans: useful items, the homestead, property assets, possessions, that which is at hand anytime for everyday use, that which is immediately and for the most part always present [*Anwesende*].”⁹⁰ Similarly, he pointed out that the original meaning of *ethos* is “dwelling-place”, “home”.⁹¹ (for a discussion on *ousia*, see p.117–120 above)

With these philosophically crucial concepts, set out in our everyday-environment, we already get a glimpse of the later direction of Heidegger’s highly original way of reading Aristotle.

Above *haecceitas* was said to be an opening towards the term Dasein. It is the proper mode of appearance for particular human affairs (*praxis*), passing moments of life apprehended by the Aristotelian *phronesis*, *fürsorgende umsicht*, “solicitous circumspection,” as Kisiel translates (1995, 266) the term usually rendered as practical reason, or prudence, a concept that Heidegger carefully analyzes through Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in a lecture course held in 1924–25 on Plato’s Sophist.⁹² Already in 1922 Heidegger wrote: “*phronesis* brings the That-with-respect-to-which of the dealings of human life (and dealings with human life itself) and the “How” of these dealings in their own Being into truthful safe-keeping. These dealings are *praxis*: the conducting [*Behandeln*] of one’s

⁸⁸ GA 63, 29 *Das eigene Dasein ist, was es ist, gerade und nur in seinem jeweiligen 'da'*

⁸⁹ van Buren 1994, 251

⁹⁰ GA 26, 183/145

⁹¹ GA 61, 90–92, GA 63, 89–91

⁹² GA 19 § 8; 19-20 and § 23-24

own self in the how of dealings which are not productive, but are rather simply *actional* [*handelnd*]. *Phronêsis* is the illumination-of-dealings which co-temporalizes life in its *Being*.”⁹³ And, furthermore, “*phronêsis* looks at the *eskhaton*, the outermost, the extreme, in which the determinately viewed concrete situation comes to a head.” Primarily *phronêsis* is an *aesthesis*, a kind of perception, an “eye” of *praxis*, apprehending at once its *télos* and *arkhê* (NE VI 10, 1143 b14). “*Phronêsis* is the inspection of the this here now, the inspection of the concrete momentariness of the transient situation. As *aesthesis*, it is a look of an eye in the blink of an eye, a momentary look at what is momentarily concrete, which as such can always be otherwise.” (GA 19, 163-64/112-14, see above Part III n14).

Practical reason or prudence is perhaps the one key-concept of Aristotle that is in the very heart of Heidegger’s philosophy. “What concerns man is *Dasein* itself, namely *eúdaímonia* [*human flourishing*]. And for this, *phronêsis* provides direction (GA 19, 135/93).” It was analyzed thoroughly by Heidegger and transformed to be the basic means of the factically existing *Dasein*, that is, *Dasein* which “in each case is mine”, the singular and unsubstitutable possibility of the *individuum*. This crucial feature of practical reason is obvious also for Aristotle when he describes *phronêsis* as a “seeing of oneself” (to *hautou eidenai*, NE VI 8, 1141 b35). This seeing implies a *hic et nunc*, a given context at a particular instant. In contrast to Platonic philosophy, all of Heidegger’s thinking is grounded in a surrounding world (*Umwelt*), it has an environment out of which it rises and concerns beings that are there (*prágmata*) for the thinking to be taken care of (*prâxis*). But this seeing or “knowledge of the self” (*Selbsterkenntnis*) implies not inspecting a “point” called the “Self” (*Selbstpunkt*), rather it must be seen in a far wider context of being-in-the-world with all its constitutive elements (i.e. *Sein bei der Welt* and *Mitsein*). For Heidegger this existential sight implies openness to world, a *transparency* (*Durchsichtigkeit*): “a being that exists sights ‘itself’ [*sichtet ‘sich’*] only insofar as it has become transparent to itself” (SZ 146).⁹⁴ This transparency (Gr. *diaphora*) means conceptual interpretation (*Auslegung*) of one’s actual being-there, a grasping of one’s self (*Sich-begreifen*) in concrete self-interpretation (*Sich-selbst-aus-legen*).

Here we have the characteristic combination of Heidegger’s philosophical thinking as ontic explanation (direct givens as *aísthêsis*, Met IV 2, 1003 b19-22) and ontological interpretation (hermeneutics) interwoven to yield genuine *concepts* for the *opening up* of each possible subject-matter. Transparency is opened up through concepts. And, as Heidegger’s choice of words here tell, this is not something taking place by itself, on the contrary, becoming transparent requires constant effort, awareness in the facticity of everyday existence and resoluteness in productive concept-formation for each region of

⁹³ PIA 1989, 259/381

⁹⁴ See McNeill 1999, 110

being.⁹⁵ It requires a specific lived worldhood which is never the same from day to day (*Weltlichkeit, die am keinem Tag dieselbe ist*, SZ 138). As concern [*cura*] for one's own as well as others' well-being *Phronêsis* leads and guides all human acting, but it is not a mere logical faculty (*hexis meta logou monon*, EN VI 5, 1140 b28). "*Phronêsis* lies more in *praxis* than in *logos*" (GA 19,139/96) and therefore it is in need of life-experience. In 1929 essay *Was ist Metaphysik?* Heidegger writes (GA 9): "Philosophy gets under way only by a peculiar insertion of our own existence into the fundamental possibilities of *Dasein* as a whole."⁹⁶

Thus, similarly, Heidegger can in 1916, in his habilitation work agree with Duns Scotus : The fact "that there are different domains of actuality cannot be proved *a priori* by deductive means. Factivities (*Tatsächlichkeiten*) can only be pointed out (*aufweisen*)."⁹⁷ Here the emphasis is in the immediacy of seeing and understanding of such pointed out realities: "letting what is at hand be seen as such [*i.e.* letting beings be seen as beings]."⁹⁸ We do not arrive at factivities through any representational processes of thinking, instead, when seen, the pointed-out entity is simply there ("*simplex apprehensio*"; *steht in seinem Selbst vor uns*: GA 1, 213). That such realities become open for *circumspection* is not the outcome of our cognitive apprehending bringing theoretical realities into intuition. We humans do not invent existence, "things themselves are not dependent upon humans"⁹⁹; instead, worlds are disclosed precisely because we always already find ourselves in concrete worldly situations: "*whatever* is to be pointed out must already *be apprehended* in advance in the *unity of its determinations*, in terms of which and in which it can be determined explicitly in its character *as such and such*."¹⁰⁰ Or, as Aristotle puts it: "it is the *hylê* which is there throughout (*enupârkhêin*) and which becomes (*gígnetai*)."¹⁰¹ (*Met* VII 7, 1032 b 32) But this *hylê* is not "a thing in the mind" (*en tê psûchê*), instead, it is already there, not as a the concrete "stuff", but only in the ontological sense as the "out of which", the out of which of planning, for example, it does not need first to be produced as it is already "there." (GA 19, 43/30.) *Es gibt*, as the early Heidegger says; the sense of givenness is already given before we specify what it exactly is. (GA 56/57, 67)

⁹⁵ GA 18, pp.277-78/188 ...*die rechte Möglichkeit des Begrifflichen ist ja nur das Begriffliche als ergriffene Auslegung des Dasein selbst* Cf. pp.328-29/222, and Minca 2006, 48.

⁹⁶ In PIA 255/377 *phronêsis* is translated as *fürsorgende Umsicht*, solicitous circumspection. "*Die Philosophie kommt nur im Gang durch eine eigentümlichen Einsprung der eigenen Existenz in die Grundmöglichkeiten des Daseins im Ganzen.*" GA 9, 122/96

⁹⁷ GA 1, 213

⁹⁸ GA 29/30, 462/319 "Pointing-out is therefore an *apofainesthai*, bringing something into view, and it is doing so for our seeing that understands and for our grasping." Ibid.463/320

⁹⁹ GA 33, 202/174

¹⁰⁰ GA 29/30, 456/314

Since the surrounding facticities of *Dasein* are opened up in circumspective understanding (*Einsicht* and *Umsicht*) in and through its concrete activities, its self-understanding in its concrete existing, this understanding expresses *a relation with its own existence (Seinsverhältnis)*, not just being-ontical, but rather “being in such a way that one has an understanding of Being (*nicht einfach ontisch-seiend, sondern seiend in der Weise eines Verstehens von Sein*, SZ 12).” That is why Heidegger calls this *existentiell understanding*. Existential understanding implies direct contact, immediate awareness instead of theoretical contemplation or deductive knowledge. *Dasein*’s understanding is a “seeing.” The question of existence is always understood by *Dasein* as a possibility of its own (*je seine Möglichkeit*, SZ 42): “*Dasein* understands itself, in its own being, in and through its concrete activities, without taking any distance from its involvements and absorption in the sense of standing back and ‘thinking about itself.’[...] ‘The question of existence is an ontic ‘affair’ of *Dasein*.[...] One does not have to be a philosopher or theoretician to ‘see’ and understand one’s own being in some way.’”¹⁰¹

In fact, as we in passing already noted, the Aristotelian *phronêsis*/prudence indicates a particular kind of perception, a “seeing of oneself” (*to hautou eidenai* NE VI 8, 1141 b35, the word *phronêsis* stemming from *phren*, “heart”), and, therefore, “the *telos* [of prudence] is the proper being of man” (*autês eupraxia têlos*, 1140 b7). And it is originally this Aristotelian distinction between *phronêsis* and *sophia* that gives Heidegger’s thinking its basic direction towards *Dasein* as practically and factically and, therefore, historically (temporally) being-in-the-world, not just as a theoretical understanding pondering on the eternal principles of wisdom (*sophia*).

That prudence indicates a particular kind of bringing into view, as Heidegger sees it, indicates further that something in man’s being is *not obvious* to start with, instead, the actual practical situations we find ourselves are in need of illumination to become transparent and realizable: “circumspection regarding himself and insight into himself must again and again be wrested away by man in face of the danger of being drowned or covered over by the circumstances” (GA 19, 51/36). *Phronêsis*/prudence is to be exercised; it is a task to be taken. Therefore, in his reading of Aristotle’s definition Heidegger translates: prudence is “a disposition of human *Dasein* such that in it I have at my disposal my own transparency” (NE VI 5, 1140 b 20ff. GA 19, 52/37)

But, as we already know, in Heidegger’s interpretation this transparency does not refer to a point-like consciousness (*Selbstpunkt*, SZ 146) seeing indubitably (the “*inconcussum*” of Descartes), as this self-

¹⁰¹ McNeill 1999, 102-03

being is always already in a world, and, therefore, its circumspective view includes the self in all its various being-related-with existential worldly affairs and other beings. Thus, what is actually perceived in *phronêsis* is the full horizon and context of *Dasein*, that is, the world! Thus the **“first principle of hermeneutics”**: **Dasein is in each case mine (*je meines*)**. Here we have a curious “ambivalent unity of the equiprimordial personal and impersonal combination of to-be: “in each case mine (*je meines*), mine for a while” (*je-weils*).¹⁰² For Aristotle, on the contrary, knowledge of the world in this sense requires more than mere practical reason can provide: the world of practical involvement is indeed the proper horizon of prudence, but yet one that needs “help from above”, from a higher level of understanding, in order to be known. For Aristotle this higher order of knowing is the theoretically based wisdom, *sophia*.

In summer semester 1927, Heidegger writes: “Dasein is being-in-the world and, in equal originality with its facticity, a world is disclosed and other Daseins are disclosed with it and intraworldly beings are encountered. [...] In existentiell understanding, in which factual being-in-the-world becomes *visible and transparent* [*einsichtig und durchsichtig wird*], there is always already present an understanding of being which relates not only to the Dasein itself but also to all beings which are unveiled fundamentally with being-in-the-world” (GA 24, 396/279–80, italics mine). Here we have already many central themes of the present study full-blown, but here only two preliminary remarks are particularly pertinent.

First, the notion of *circumspective* understanding, or *insight*, expressing in English what Heidegger called *Einsicht* and *Umsicht* in this 1924/25 lecture course to translate the Aristotelian term *phronêsis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE VI 3, 1139 b15, GA 19, 21). Usually *phronêsis* is rendered as *prudence* or, in terms of the Kantian distinction as *practical reason* to contrast *sophía*, theoretical reason. In Aristotle himself the theme of *sofía* deals with beings that always are (‘*âei*, always, everlasting), whereas *phrónesis* aims at and makes transparent precisely that which can also be otherwise (*endekhómenon allôs ekhein*), the Being of human Dasein” (GA19, 61/43).¹⁰³ Instead of the “theistic theater of theory”¹⁰⁴, as David Farrel Krell describes this eternal, divine, contemplative beholding of ideal truths, it is precisely the changing realities of our own immediate factic life that make the realm of *phrónesis*, and, it is precisely through *phrónesis* that these encountered facticities are rendered

¹⁰² Kisiel 1994, 394-97 The above principle is repeated throughout the SZ: 42–43, 143, 181, 188, 191, 103, 259, 264, 336... etc.

¹⁰³ Like the difference between angels and Adam in Ibn al-‘Arabi, the former being eternal and complete, the latter timely and incomplete.

¹⁰⁴ Krell 1992, 26

transparent: prudence studies particular (the Aristotelian *ekaston*) goods: “for one observing each thing in relation to itself is prudent.” And, as Aristotle further says, “prudence is concerned with human affairs (*tá antrôpina*).” (EN VI 7, 1141 a 26 and 1141 b9) “Practical wisdom is not deductive scientific understanding (*epistêmê*). For it is of the ultimate (*eskhaton*) and particular [...], of which there is no scientific understanding, but a kind of perception [...].” (Ibid. 1142 a 23). These ultimate and particular things of perception are the possibilities for acting and responding to situations (*prakta*); they are referred to as ultimate, since they cannot be analyzed, discussed or shared: what needs to be done in a certain unique situation may be a wrong action in another similar but different situation. “Precisely on our seeing the ‘world’ in a nonconstant, fluctuating/flickering (*flackernden Sehen*) way in accordance with our moods the ready-to-hand shows itself in its specific worldly character, which is never the same from day to day.” (SZ 138) Practical insight is, therefore, “centrally, the ability to recognize, acknowledge, respond to, pick out certain salient features of a complex situation.”¹⁰⁵

Here we also have the motive for our second remark already pointed at, namely, the idea of *transparency* (*Durchsichtigkeit*), a fundamental feature of all hermeneutics in the thinking of Heidegger. The term appears already at the start of the early draft on Aristotle in 1922 (PIA 237/358) where *transparency* is said to be the goal of making each hermeneutical situation understandable: the situation becomes transparent and lucid; it becomes the experientiable being of the human life (*zôê*) itself. “The transparency is not a mode of onlooking which considers disinterestedly how the action could appear” (GA 19.143/98). “*Phrónesis* is the inspection of the ‘this here now’ (*Diesmaligen*), the inspection of the concrete momentariness of the transient situation (*Augenblicklichen Lage*).” This, as we already noted is an *aísthesis*, a look of an eye at what is momentarily concrete and which as such can always be otherwise. Therefore, this momentariness and contingency differentiates *phronêsis* from the *noeîn* in *sófia* which is a looking upon that which is *aeî*, that which is always present in sameness. Time (the momentary and the eternal) here functions to discriminate between the *noeîn* in *phrónesis* and the one in *sophía*.¹⁰⁶ But as this momentary understanding is derived from the very existence of Dasein as its ontical understanding, Heidegger calls it *existentiell understanding*. Thus, “Dasein understands, in equal originality with its understanding of existence, the existence of other Daseins and the being of intraworldly beings [...]. In *existentiell* understanding, in which factual being-in-the-world becomes visible and transparent (*Durchsichtig*), there is always already present an understanding of being which relates not only to the Dasein itself but also to all beings which are unveiled fundamentally with being-

¹⁰⁵ Nussbaum, 1989, 305 The constantly changing, flickering nature of the ever-changing nature of our being-in-the-world equals what Ibn al-‘Arabí expresses as the “fluctuating” (*taqallub/qallaba*) and constantly over-turning nature of the human heart [*phren*>*phronêsis*] which alone is capable of receiving the ever-changing and fluctuating nature of reality, see p 308

¹⁰⁶ GA 19, 163–64/112

in-the-world.” (GA 24, 396/279-80) This disclosure of *phronêsis*, as we noted earlier, is carried out *metà lógou*, in speech, in the discussion of something, in asserting something about something (*légein ti kata tinos*), but as was also noted, *phronêsis* is not only in speech, it is not a mere logical faculty (*hexis meta logou monon*, EN VI 5, 1140 b28) because it speaks of the *prakton*. “*Phronêsis* must have both” (1141 b21) (GA 19,139/96) and therefore it is in need of life-experience (*ex empeiriâs*) which again requires time (*khrónos*): only through much time (*plêthos khrónou*) is life-experience possible, and this is reserved for the maturity of old age. Whereas pure knowledge, coming from abstracting from concrete things, like mathematical understanding, is not in need of experience and therefore young people can discover important things in such theoretical sciences. But there is a difference between mathematical and philosophical knowledge. Here Heidegger says “it would be wrong to translate the Aristotelian *ex empeirias* as “induction”, as if what is at issue here were a matter of the generalization of single cases. Instead, *ex empeirias* is opposed to *aphairesis*” (GA 19, 140/97). Instead of abstraction away from concreteness, experience explicates and clarifies the ontological foundations of concrete beings in their becoming distinguished from the manifold of beings, which can be gained and gathered only through time.

Thus, on the whole, in *phronesis* we have a basic Aristotelian concept which plays a decisive role in the *deconstructing* thinking of Heidegger. Through a clearer understanding of practical and theoretical knowledge he wants to dig deeper into the foundation of Aristotelian thinking, to find an even more original scope to think beyond the Aristotelian dichotomy of theoretical and practical comportment. But to this we will return later on.

Another early connecting ‘bridge’ between ancient, medieval and modern world which Heidegger himself mentions¹⁰⁷ is **Emil Lask (1875–1915)**, a logician, and another pupil of Heinrich Rickert (Heidegger’s *Doktoralvater*), whom Rickert also mentions in his assessment of Heidegger’s thesis, as “particularly influential on Heidegger’s philosophical orientation as well as on his terminology”. Theoretically Lask’s distinction between *constitutive* categories, which “pertain to the matter of the domains of reality, and the more formal, general, and so ‘empty’ *reflexive* categories” have a catalytic function for the evolving of Heidegger’s later central concepts of *facticity* (as constitutive matter), our precognitive existence as a matter of already being in the world, being involved in it, and, on the other hand, a *formal indication* (as reflexive category) providing us an access to this pre-theoretical facticity.¹⁰⁸ Brought together, these two yield the fundamental Heideggerian *hermeneutics of facticity*, the pre-theoretical world constantly “worlding” and thus providing us *der Sache*, the “matter to be thought”, that is, material for interpretation and understanding.

¹⁰⁷ GA 1. Vorwort, p 56 and p 192

¹⁰⁸ Kisiel 1995, 25–26

In the preface to his thesis Heidegger sees Lask not only as mediator between Rickert and Husserl but as one “who also sought to listen to the Greek thinkers” (GA 1, 56). Lask expanded the field of Aristotelian ten categories of empirical reality on the lines of Husserl’s Sixth Logical investigation on Categorical intuition—to which, as will be seen, Heidegger returned throughout his life—finding, that such categories are also in need of categories, if they are to become objects of knowledge. But does this not lead to an infinite regress of ever-increasing forms or categories? Indeed, this is what Heidegger finds out.

In the medieval doctrine of meaning (*Bedeutungslehre*) in logic and ontology (*grammatica speculativa*) of the Franciscan Duns Scotus Heidegger finds a challenging articulation of the problem of categories (das Kategorienproblem, GA 1, 399) comparable to modern phenomenological theories of Husserl and Lask (referring to his *Die Lehre vom Urteil*, 1912): in asking “how do we know that there are different domains of reality?”¹⁰⁹ How are such differentiations articulated?” Heidegger finds out that according to Scotus such differentiations are “read off” from realities standing before us. In Aristotelian realism the differentiation of meaning comes from the domains of reality themselves.

Lask develops the idea of categories emerging from a prior dynamic state of lived reality of experience before they are to be known as differing categories. Thus “the nonsensory form is at first not known but only experienced or lived (*erlebt*)”. According to Lask we always first already live in this “primal something,” “a pretheoretical something” (*Ur-etwas*), before we know it, and, therefore, our first experience of categories is such that we are “lost” in them, in “pure absorption”, for example in aesthetic, ethical, or religious ‘devotion/dedication’ (*Hingabe*).¹¹⁰ Thus, as Kisiel says referring to Lask, “We live in categories as in contexts through which we experience the things included within them. The relation of form to its matter is thus one of ‘environment’ (*Umgebung*). Matter is encompassed, embraced (*umgriffen*), surrounded or environed (*umgeben*), bordered (*verbrämt*) by the form; it is enveloped (*umhüllt*), enclosed (*umschlossen*) in the form” (GS II,75 quoted through Kisiel 1995, 33). Here it is easy to see Heidegger coming through the categories into the world, and precisely into the environing world (*Umwelt*)¹¹¹ and the world of *facticity*! As Malpas says: “We thus find ourselves first of all enmeshed in a world, and so in a set of relationships, and it is only subsequent to this that we begin to separate out a sense of ourselves and a sense of things as they are a part from us.”¹¹² That this is how Heidegger himself understands matters, is clear already in his early lecture course: “The world, claims

¹⁰⁹ *Wirklichkeitsbereiche*: GA 1, 214; 203-06; 215-16; Kisiel 26

¹¹⁰ *Gesammelte Werke* II, 1923, 191, quoted through Kisiel 1995, 28. Lask was also fascinated by Eckhart!

¹¹¹ GA 56/57, 72

¹¹² Malpas 2006, 52

Heidegger, is that which environs or surrounds us and also that toward which we are oriented, about which we are concerned and to which we attend”, as Malpas continues. Or, in terms of early Heidegger: “Living in an environment, it signifies to me everywhere and always, everything has the character of world [*welthaft*, everything is “worldish”]. It is everywhere the case that it ‘it worlds’ [*es weltet*], which is something different from ‘it values’ [*es wertet*].”¹¹³ Whatever we encounter in life, it always happens in a definite place and at a certain moment: the “there” of our own existence in the world, that is, in the particular abode where we find ourselves. I am always already immersed in a surrounding world. In the above 1919 lecture course, Heidegger used the expressions “it worlds” or “it happens” [*es ereignet sich*], “it signifies” to me, or to us, whereas a few years later, in the SS 1923 we read: “*Welt ist, was begegnet*”, the world is something being encountered, it happens [to us]. In this German sentence there is no object (“us” or “one”), and literally the meaning would be “the world is what encounters” or “happens”. To live means always living “in” something, to live “out of” something, to live “for” something, to live “from” something. “The ‘something’ indicated in these prepositional expressions [...], is what we call ‘world’.”¹¹⁴ And for Heidegger “the phenomenological category, ‘world,’ immediately names—and this is crucial—*what* is lived, the content aimed at in living, that which life holds to.” And, further, “life = existence, ‘being’ in and through life.”

For the young Heidegger (in 1919) intentionality meant basically *Verhalten zu etwas*, comportment relating itself to something.¹¹⁵ Thus, in this kind of comportment something shows itself, “gives itself,” as this distinct something in the widest sense, thus, not only as physical extensional objects but also as that which is given in thought, in wishing, through love or fear, or aesthetical and religious lifeworlds. In his habilitation work Heidegger worked on this theme through the medieval notion *modus essendi* (see above p.67), mode of being (*es gibt*), which covers whatever can be experienced (*Erlebbares überhaupt*), and therefore also that which in an absolute sense is objectively given in consciousness (*im absoluten sinne dem Bewusstsein Gegenüberstehende*, GA 1, 260). This *modus essendi* refers to the immediately given empirical reality in terms of existence (*Der Modus essendi ist die unmittelbar gegebene empirische Wirklichkeit sub ratione existentia*). And for the young phenomenologist acquainted with the work of Emil Lask, this means the *Ur-etwas*, that pretheoretical something, that primal something, which is not yet differentiated and is therefore “not yet” a worldly thing. This “not yet” denotes therefore to “the highest potentiality in life.”¹¹⁶ It is the basic feature (*Zug*) of life itself, that primal something out of which everything is “to world out” (*auszuwelten*) into particular lifeworlds. “But this means that the sense of something as that which can be experienced implies the moment of

¹¹³ GA 56/57, 72–73 These verbalized substantives are not so odd in German as they are in English, as such verbalizing is quite common in expressions like *es nachtet*, it nights, *es wintert schon*, it winters.

¹¹⁴ GA 61, 85/65

¹¹⁵ GA 56/57, 112, Kisiel 1995, 50

¹¹⁶ GA 56/57: The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldviews, p.115, see also above on Eckhart in Ch II.3.4.

‘out toward’ (*auf zu*), ‘direction toward,’ into a (particular) world—and in fact in its undiminished ‘vital impetus’.”¹¹⁷ And here we come to Heidegger’s radical change of optics on intentionality:

“It is out of this preworldly vital something that the formal objective *something of knowability* is *first* motivated. [...] Thus the universality of the formally objective appropriates its origin from the in-itself of the streaming experience of life.” (GA 56/57, 116, Kisiel 1995, 51.) Thus, here we have a “living out toward”, a flowing tendency of life itself, an *élan vital* streaming from the inside out, a stream yearning for formal expression, something that comes close to how Happ described the *hylê* of Aristotle (above Part I.B 6).¹¹⁸ There is thus in the primal and pretheoretical “vital impetus” already a direction out toward a determinate world, the “not yet” as expressing the primal potentiality of intentionality as a tendency to “world out” (*auswelten*). This intrinsic directional sense is not coming from above like a category from the table of judgments, instead, it refers to the fundamentally relational character of this “primal something”, which is not at all an object but precisely a relational sense (*Bezugsinn*) of intentionality. And this tendency “out toward” is what Heidegger meant with his important early concept: *formale Anzeige*, formal indication, which does not refer to any specific ontic content but only to the movement toward, the aiming at, the tending motivation “toward which” (*das Worauf*).¹¹⁹ For example, in the simple sentence “I am” (the *sum* in *cogito—sum*), what is decisive is the sense of the “am,” not of the “I”. “This approach is intended as a formal indication...” That is, “bringing life to show itself,” as Heidegger expressed it in WS 1921–23.¹²⁰ This requires explication of facticity,

¹¹⁷ GA 56/57 Ibid, Kisiel 1995, 51

¹¹⁸ Expressions (listed by van Buren 1994, p.81) like “the flowing stream of consciousness,” “a flowing and inconstant reality,” the psychic process of events (*Ereignisse*), or, a very Ibn ‘Arabian expression of “the same psychic situation of consciousness can never repeat itself,” or, “being never repeats Itself” [compare: *lâ tekrâr fî tajallî* a principle going back probably to a saying of Abû Tâlib al-Makkî, SPK 103, see above n135 and part III n 268] bear a marked influence of Henri Bergson on Heidegger, who also edited Husserl’s “Bergsonian” study on Time-consciousness (see GA 20, above n 51). It is also known that Bergson himself was strongly influenced by Plotinus with whom he, nevertheless, also found the greatest error of western philosophical tradition (compare Ibn al-‘Arabî p.138 above). Thus, “in the relation of life to thought, the intellectual is not for Bergson, as it was for Plotinus, the realm of perfect actuality, the always-complete motionless activity which the vitality of soul imitates weakly. Instead, for Bergson, inverting the locus of strength within the schema, intellectual effort shares the character of psychic life. He constructs a parallel between the intellectual and the vital and seeks to understand how the material emerges from the immaterial, as Plotinus also does. However, whereas for Plotinus soul is an image of Nous which reigns over it, Bergson manifests the character of intellect by referring to the moving vital. The vital is the paradigmatic and normative. He speaks of something “between impulsion and attraction, between the efficient and the final cause.” Hankey 2006, pp106-07 That Bergson’s Plotinus was actually quite far from the ancient mystic is obvious when he writes further concerning Aristotle: “Aristotle’s *modus operandi* [according to Felix Ravaisson through whom Bergson found Plotinus] is: ‘to extend the vision of the eye by a vision of the mind: without leaving the domain of intuition, that is, the intuition of things real, individual, concrete, to seek an intellectual intuition beneath the sensible intuition.’ This involves intuiting the dynamic unity “joining beings to one another.” The unity ends “in divine thought, which thinks all things in thinking itself.” The Aristotle who proceeds from inorganic matter to the divine in this way is “the founder of metaphysics and the initiator of a certain method of thinking which is philosophy itself.” Hankey 2006, 109; See above Part III.1.1.

¹¹⁹ Later in SZ this was expressed as *Das Woraufhin des primären Entwurfs*, “The toward-which of the primary project” of Dasein, that is, “in terms of which something can be conceived in its possibility.” SZ § 65, 324 See, Kisiel, 1995, 518 n.16.

¹²⁰ GA 61 173–74/130–31 Here Heidegger wants to depart from traditional “Ego-metaphysics” of Descartes, Kant or Husserl. He says that Descartes “intends the word *sum* in an indifferent, formally objective, uncritical, and unclarified sense, one that has no genuine relation to the *ego*.” In SS 1925 Heidegger says that instead of the Cartesian *cogito—sum* sentence a genuine statement of Dasein would be *sum moribundus* [I am in dying], where “the *moribundus* first gives the *sum* its sense.” GA 24, 437/317

bringing into view the ongoing situation of my temporal being: the fact that I am sitting at my desk, preparing my thesis; that the sun has just arisen; the sky is today cloudless etc.” The possibility of *existence* [*Existenz*] is always the possibility of concrete facticity as a *How* of the temporalizing [*Wie der Zeitigung*] of this facticity in its temporality. It is impossible to ask in a direct and general manner what *existence* shows. *Existence* becomes understandable in itself only through the making questionable of facticity, that is, in the concrete *destruction* of facticity with respect to its motives for movement, with respect to its directions, and with respect to its deliberate availabilities.”¹²¹ Here *destruction* actually equals what was earlier referred to as “*evoking Dasein in man*,” that is, a heightened awareness, not just living but actually “being-there” through awareness of the constituents of one’s facticity.

Thus, finally, this *Ur-etwas*, this primal something, the experientable as such, is fundamentally a concern of *my life* (*es geht um mein Leben*, see note below), it is that particular and historical process of facticity amidst which I always find myself. Or, in terms of *Dasein*: that which *is its very ‘there’ and ‘in’*.¹²² It is worth noting, therefore, with regard to my whole study, that from early on (KNS 1919) the ineffable (because fully individuated) starting point of the facticity of *Dasein* refers to how we *find ourselves in being and as being*, as Kisiel says. In sentences like “*Dasein is time*,” “*Dasein is history*” etc., the key is in emphasizing the *is* which seeks to express the “irreducible moments of our inescapable facticity.”¹²³ But this timely conceived facticity must be balanced with the equiprimordial sense of the “there” of *Dasein*, that is, “the field in which the phenomenon of time comes visible.”¹²⁴

This has to do with the above noted intentionality turned upside-down: intentionality as a tendency of life to “world out” (*auswelten*), streaming into possibilities. Here there is a strong emphasis on the material, the cause out of which (*tò èx où aitia*), as the individuating and reality-making principle, which Kisiel (*ibid.* 349) now calls **the material and therefore mater-nal thrust in Heidegger’s thinking. He refers to it as a hyletic return to the “principle of material differentiation and individuation” in Heidegger’s thought.**¹²⁵ The very being of *Dasein* is a *being-out-toward* something which is not yet but can be; and further, only “when it *is* that which it can be is it apprehensible as a

¹²¹ PIA 245/366 Here in this important early draft of 1922 we have the first appearance of the term *Existenz*, here however understood in a restricted sense life’s unique and authentic possibility and not as the later formal indication of *Dasein*’s ownmost possibility as such of BT. Also the famous Heideggerian term *destruction* appears here and must be understood in its basic meaning of critique, de-structuring, analyzing and structuring anew (*abbauenden Rückgang*, PIA 249), or as is here particularly the case, as an antidote for “life’s tendency of falling” into everydayness and *unauthenticity*. Cf. SZ 22/BT44 For deconstruction and ordinary time-conceptions, see GA 64, 109–12; see also Kisiel, 1995, 117, 320

¹²² GA 20, 402-03/291-92 and GA 64, 42, where Heidegger speaks about Kierkegaard’s “The Concept of Dread” (*Der Begriff der Angst*, 1844), a finding oneself before nothing, with nothing to hold on in the world, a state of no-more-being-at-home (*Nicht-mehr-zu-Hause-Seins*) which comes about in *Dasein* as dread of facing and “having to be” (*Zu-sein*) this being itself, that is, its very being is at issue, *es geht um sein Sein selbst*.

¹²³ Kisiel 1995, 348

¹²⁴ GA 20, heading of the First Division.

¹²⁵ Kisiel refers here in a note to recent French hyletic phenomenology, n.18 p.544. This “topological” theme of the “there” and the field and location of *Dasein* is the central theme of Heidegger in the late 1910s and early 1920s, emphasizing the “situational” character of thinking as such. A theme studied and developed also by Malpas, 2006.

whole,” that is, as a how of being that characterizes Dasein.¹²⁶ Thus in this case completion as arriving at its end and being fully there does not mean finality or “termination.” Instead, as was noted in the first part of our study concerning the Aristotelian *entelecheia* (above pp. 18–23 and notes 94, 285): “One may think of death as the end of life but not as its purpose: the complete state does not refer to a ‘final stage’ rather, it has to do with capacities and powers.”

Here we also come to the most lasting influence of Husserl on Heidegger, a whole new perspective on categories and the sense of being itself.

II.2.1. Categorical intuition

The above mentioned countering perspectives of devotion and philosophy, or, to use Kantian terms, “antinomies” (see above p.61) of mysticism and ontology, seem to live in a creative tension in young Heidegger’s mind, theological mysticism giving food for ontological analysis and the latter structuring the former.¹²⁷ No wonder that the two volumes of Husserl’s *Logische Untersuchungen*, with its central topics of “intentionality” and the “categorical intuition,” lay on his studying desk ever since his first semester in the Faculty of Theology at Freiburg, and he read the work again and again.¹²⁸ Indeed, still in 1925 Heidegger calls the *Logical Investigations* the *basic book of phenomenology*.¹²⁹

In the above mentioned name of Heidegger’s *Habilitationschrift* the word “categories” is not referring to the traditional ten categories of Aristotle, instead, it too focuses on Duns Scotus (and Emil Lask), whom Heidegger considers to offer a broader notion of categories, covering not only “natural reality” (*ens reale*) but also unreal logical being, and thus, everything thinkable [*ens rationis*].¹³⁰ The categories of Aristotle are not simply *the* categories, rather, what they cover are only certain classes of beings and a certain sphere of being (*die aristotelische Kategorien nur als eine bestimmte Klasse eines bestimmten Bereich erscheinen und nicht als die Kategorien schlechthin* GA 1, 211).

The sixth *Logical Investigation* with its central notion of “**categorical intuition**” represented for Heidegger the focal point of Husserlian thought: here, according to the former, the latter is struggling

¹²⁶ Kisiel 1994, 339

¹²⁷ In *My Way to Phenomenology* Heidegger speaks of “the tension between speculative theology [Schelling/Hegel] and ontology as the structure of metaphysics” becoming a theme for his studies through Carl Braig’s lecture course on dogmatics. SD 2000, 82/2002, 75

¹²⁸ The LU, and not for example the later work *Ideen*, in which Husserl turns to the “transcendental ego”, clearly not in tune with Heideggerian perspectives.

¹²⁹ GA 20, 30/24 SD 2000, 81

¹³⁰ Ga 1, 212 Here we have an important parallel to the Arabic notion of “thing” (*al-shay*), which is “most indetermined of all indeterminates”, referring to the Absolute as totally unknowable. I will return to this concept of the *mutakallimûn* in the thinking of Ibn ‘Arabi in the last part of my thesis.

with the question of *being*. This is understandable as Husserl arrives at the “categorical intuition” (intuition of ideal objects) through sensuous intuition (of real objects) [*Sinnliche und Kategoriale Anschauungen* as the title of the second section of Chapter six], that is, not through theory but through sensation of real objects (*realer Gegenstand*) grounded in what “Husserl calls *Hyle*, that is, that which affects sensibly, the sense data.”¹³¹

Thus, according to Heidegger, *hylê* is for Husserl the ground of sensuous perception. These primary grounded acts of sensibility ground further acts yielding “categorical objects” as “perceptually given.”¹³² An object as such is not given in the sensuous impression. Instead, Husserl refers to “sensibility structured by categorial acts” (*durch kategoriale Akte geformten Sinnlichkeit*) in which the object is given. He speaks of a *surplus* of meaning (*ein Überschuss in der Bedeutung*) in the intention of, for example, our word “white”. This word coincides with the colour-aspect of, say, this appearing white paper, but only partially: “a surplus of meaning remains over, a form which finds nothing in the appearance itself to confirm it.”¹³³ This “is” is not added to the sensible data; but, nevertheless, it is “seen”, even though differently from what is sensibly visible. Thus, in the same connection, Husserl also speaks of the “epistemic essence of seeing (*das erkenntnismessige Wesen des Sehens*), in which the apparent object announces itself as self-given [...]” Here we clearly have a formulation influencing Emil Lask, as we have just seen, in his idea of our first being immersed in undifferentiated categories. We are first simply living in “pretheoretical something”, before this something may be determined into differing categories. We are immersed in a precognitive lived meaning from which the categories emerge in their differentiation. Heidegger then developed his concept “formal indication” as a “tool”; not as a specific something, but as an indication of *something tending in general*, something which is *not yet*, but is *out toward* something, And thus, an expression referring or denoting this pretheoretical something.¹³⁴ Here, in *LU* § 40, for Husserl this “epistemic essence” serves as that out of which an appearing object announces itself.¹³⁵ For Husserl this means new categorially grounded acts of consciousness out of which an object announces itself. The “surplus” of meaning comes from the side

¹³¹ GA 15, 112/65 I fail to find the Aristotelian expression here mentioned by Heidegger in the *LU* itself, but on the whole Husserl’s way of using “matter” and “stuff” as that “out of which” and as the individuating principle corresponds to Aristotelian use of *hylê*. Comp. *DA* II,12, 424a17–24

¹³² The categorial objects can “*in der Weise der ‘Wahrnehmung’ nur in Akten ‘gegeben’ sein können, welche in anderen Akten, letztlich in Akten der Sinnlichkeit fundiert sind.*” *LU* II, 2, Einleitung, 1992, 541

¹³³ *LU* II.2, §40, 1992, pp 660; *SLI*, pp 341

¹³⁴ In the 1919 KNS-seminar he called this a formal-objective something (*Formallogisches gegenständliches Etwas*), motivated in primal something (*motiviert in Ur-etwas*). *GA* 56/57, 117

¹³⁵ The whole topic under discussion here could be given word-for-word references also from the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabî, simply because the underlying philosophical questions inherent in all predication and attribution are necessarily the same: *the questions of the Divine Names is a question of categories*. Indeed, being is said in many ways. To take just one exemplary sentence from Ibn al-‘Arabî explaining God’s Self-disclosure [*tajallî*] as essential unity appearing in intelligible and mental multiplicity, to which I will return in my Conclusion: Despite “the multiplicity of forms and their [sensible] diversity they all go back in reality to one single substance which is their Prime Matter [*hylê*]” (*ma’ kathrati’l-sawâr wa ikhtilâfihâ turja’ fi l-haqîqati ‘ilâ jawharⁱⁿ wâhidⁱⁿ huwa hayûlâhâ*) *Fus* 124–25; see also Izutsu 1984, 207–08, with the commentary of al-Qashânî.

of our meaning-intention and it is this surplus in consciousness which appears as each respective category.

Heidegger, on the contrary, does not take this detour first to consciousness as donator of forms, instead, the individual existent as a *synolon* (Gr. *syn*=together and *holon*=whole, unit) of matter and form always appears in the due and specific form of *this material (ekaston)*: “matter cannot be understood unless vested in a form” (*Materia non potest intelligi nisi sub habitudine ad formam*), as Heidegger quotes from Duns Scotus.¹³⁶ Thus, it is the material as *principium individuationis* which gives the form its specific meaning in this particular individually existing real entity (*Was Real existiert, ist ein Individuelles*, GA 1, 252). Thus the whole structure of intentionality is turned upside down as it is grounded in the individually existing realities and not in reflective processes of the human consciousness on them as “forms of thought”, that is, as “some kind of encasements into which we stuff beings”.¹³⁷

Perhaps, simplistically put, what we have here is the Platonic–Husserlian eidetic “scientific ideal” (*Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*) of philosophical truth being grounded in theoretical intuition slowly but sternly modified into a Heideggerian practically grounded phenomenology, the study of the historically encountered *hylo–morphic* world with a clear Aristotelian flavor.

Nevertheless, it was precisely through the Husserlian meditations on the categorial intuition that Heidegger could make his *breakthrough (Durchbruch)* “into true actuality and actual truth” (*wahre Wirklichkeit und wirkliche Wahrheit*, GA 1, 406)¹³⁸ of the temporal sense of the question of Being, which indeed was to remain his life-long question. In explaining the sensual and categorial intuition, Husserl writes: “I can see colour, but not being-coloured. [...] Being is nothing *in* the Object, but nor is it a judgment or a constituent of a judgment. “It is, however, *self-given (Selbst gegeben)*, or at least putatively given, in the *fulfillment* which at times invests the judgment, the *becoming aware (Gewahrwerdung)* of the state of affairs supposed.” And, finally, “the concept of Being can arise only when *some being, actual or imaginary, is set before our eyes*” (LU § 44).

Therefore, let us still return to categorial seeing as a decisive early impetus of Husserl on Heidegger’s thinking. There is, as already noted, a difference between “seeing” sensuous data and “seeing” the

¹³⁶ Sub.lib.II. *anal.post* qu.VI, 333 b, in GA 1, 251

¹³⁷ GA 33, 7/4.

¹³⁸ *Wirklich, würke[n]lich, wirklich, wirksam, tätig*, the word was used by early German mystics rendering the Latin *actualis*, equating the Aristotelian *energeia*. Der Grosse Duden, 7: Etymologie, 1964, 767–68; Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, XIV/2, “Wirklich,” “Wirklichkeit,” pp. 575–86. See above n72, compare to Ibn al-‘Arabi’s *haqq/haqā’iq* on p.183.

categorical: I do not see substances the way “as” I see concrete individual entities. Yet, according to Husserl, both “perceptions” do refer to something *given*: not only sensuous data but also the categorical, the ideal forms, the “is”, are somehow able to be encountered.¹³⁹

As was noted, Husserl arrived at his categorical intuition through an analogy with sensuous seeing: “a parallelism between meaning-intentions and [...] *perceptually founded acts (in Wahrnehmungen fundierten Akten)*.” As Heidegger later explains: “the sense data are what gives the measure [for the analogy of correspondence], and the categorical [that is, the Kantian forms] is what corresponds to the sense data. Categorical intuition is ‘made analogous’ to sensuous intuition.”¹⁴⁰ To take an example of Heidegger: I do not “see” a book in the same way as I “see” its substance. And yet this book is a substance that I must “see” in some fashion, otherwise I couldn’t see anything at all (compare above Part III pp183 and 214). Therefore, when I see this book; I do see a substantial thing, without however seeing the substantiality as I see the book. But it is the substantiality that, in its non-appearance, enables what appears to appear.” In Kantian terms “the category ‘substance’ brings the manifold hyletic data into a definite form. Thus, through knowledge, which for Kant is the activity of bringing-into-form that is accomplished by the understanding, the object is posited as a synthesis of intuition and concept.” For Kant this bringing-into-form is only a function of understanding, whereas the term *categorical intuition* of Husserl indicates something more: it stands for an intuition that brings a category to view.¹⁴¹

On the whole, Heidegger can claim that “with his analyses of the categorical intuition, Husserl freed being from its attachment to judgment. By doing so the entire field of investigation is re-oriented. [...] Through this achievement I finally had the ground: ‘being’ is no mere concept, no pure abstraction arising by way of deduction.”¹⁴² No wonder Heidegger tells in his “My way to Phenomenology” that the distinction between sensuous and categorical intuition worked out by Husserl in his Sixth logical investigation “revealed itself to me in its scope for the determination of the [Aristotelian] ‘manifold meaning of being.’”¹⁴³ In the same instance he also notes that both Husserl and himself took their first steps in philosophy with Franz Brentano, only for Husserl Brentano meant the author of *Psychology from Empirical Standpoint*, a work Brentano published in 1874, whereas for Heidegger Brentano was

¹³⁹ In the Seminar held in Zähringen in 1973, Heidegger speaks of Husserl’s decisive discovery of a twofold seeing (sensuous and categorical) as also Husserl’s fundamental difficulty. The difficulty lies in the double signification of seeing corresponding to two modes of expression: the predicative and the attributive mode of statement. “I do not see the substance in the same way ‘as’ I see a white paper.” Heidegger notes the same difficulty already in Plato’s philosophy and quotes a scholia by Simplicius on Aristotle’s *Categories* 8 b25 saying, “O Plato, I surely see the horse, but I do not see horsehood.” GA 15, 115/67

¹⁴⁰ GA 15, 112/66

¹⁴¹ GA 15, 113/65

¹⁴² GA 15, 116/67

¹⁴³ SD 2000, 86, English tr. by Joan Stambaugh, 2002, 78

the author of *On the Manifold Meaning of Being in Aristotle* (1862), “my Brentano, Heidegger says [still 60 years later] with a smile, is the Brentano of Aristotle!”¹⁴⁴

And it is precisely the proper phenomenological “seeing” which Heidegger was slowly learning in the step-by-step training of Husserl starting from 1916. Indeed, as he stated in 1923 “Husserl gave me my eyes.”¹⁴⁵ For Husserl, exercising phenomenology meant refraining from references to authorities: instead of referring to what has already been said the phenomenologist is to describe and elucidate what he/she can bring to full clarity of view. This is what Husserl meant with the phenomenological *epokhê*, suspending everything except that which is given in pure phenomenological seeing, intuition, *Anschauung*. This demand of “eidetic” seeing, though clear also in all of Heidegger, brought him to a paradox. He writes: “the clearer it became to me that the increasing familiarity with phenomenological seeing was fruitful for the interpretation of Aristotle’s writing, the less I could separate myself from Aristotle and the Greek thinkers.”¹⁴⁶ True phenomenological understanding made access to Aristotelian philosophy more natural and, for Heidegger Aristotle was indeed a phenomenologist *par excellence*. For Heidegger, in Aristotle “the aim of philosophy is to make facticity transparent, to learn to see the world” and the ensuing “living well” (*eu zên*) as “a concrete being in the world, a how of our going about in the world.”¹⁴⁷

On the other hand, Husserl’s interest in the Fifth Logical Investigation¹⁴⁸ was more on the side of “Consciousness as an intentional experience”, whereas the scholastic philosophers, and Heidegger, as was already noted, were more possessed by the real being towards which the intentionality of consciousness is directed: “the upon-which and to which [*Worauf und Wozu*], precisely as a being.” And further, in WS 1921–22, specifying “a being: an object, this object, in what and how it is.”¹⁴⁹ Therefore, “to intentionality, as comportment toward *beings*, there always belongs an *understanding of the being* of those beings to which the intention refers.” And this is so because Being-in-the-world belongs to Dasein’s ontological constitution: the *understanding-of-itself* by the Dasein.¹⁵⁰ Here the emphasis is on experiencability instead of knowability and therefore the “pretheoretical something” grounding all further knowability. That is how intentionality becomes a theme for the understanding of “being-in-the-world”, not for “being-in-consciousness”. It was also precisely this difference in the direction of interest of intentionality that was later putting Heidegger’s thinking at odds with Husserlian phenomenology.

¹⁴⁴ GA 15, 123/72

¹⁴⁵ GA 63, 5

¹⁴⁶ SD 2000, 86; 2002, 78

¹⁴⁷ Kisiel 1995, 273

¹⁴⁸ LU V: “Über intentionale Erlebnisse und ihre ‘Inhalte’”

¹⁴⁹ GA 61, 55/41. The *haecceitas* of Duns Scotus, defined above pp 69–70

¹⁵⁰ GA 24, §15, 249/175 Like Ibn al-‘Arabî above in II.1.2 “The root of the existence of knowledge of God is knowledge of self,” the pure form receptive of all forms, the *dektikon* of Aristotle *GC* I 4, 320 a 2–3.

No wonder that Husserl thought it was a “scandal”¹⁵¹ that in *Being and Time* the word “consciousness” (*Bewusstsein*) is plainly and simply set aside, and, instead, Heidegger uses only his *Dasein*¹⁵², emphasizing that things are what they are, not as “being-in-consciousness”, but *being-in-the-world*, *Dasein*, being-in-an-open-expanse, being precisely other than consciousness. Yet, Heidegger maintains that it was through his intensive studies on Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* that he came to a fundamental insight: “What occurs for the phenomenology of the acts of consciousness as the self-manifestation of phenomena is thought more originally by Aristotle and in all Greek thinking and existence (*Denken und Dasein*) as *alêtheia*, as the unconcealedness (*Unverborgenheit*) of what is present, its being revealed (*dessen Entbergung*), its showing itself (*sein sich-Zeigen*).”¹⁵³

Thus, on the whole, existential philosophy can be seen as a protest against philosophy of consciousness. However, both Scholastic philosophy and phenomenology of Husserl shared in their common rejection of psychologism as “unphilosophy”¹⁵⁴, a feature that remained central also in Heidegger’s thought and which he later called “subjectivism”. Heidegger wants to reject idealism which never attains the real world; instead, for him, to be is to be real, and reality is the opposite of mere appearance. Here we have, then, an important subject of thought to get a hold of Heidegger’s later development: the concept of intentionality serves as a bridge between the modern idea of consciousness and classical realism because of its fundamentally relational character: intentionality is never an entity, instead, it is always a combination, a relation. Heidegger wanted “to surpass both idealism and realism for the sake of a higher standpoint”.¹⁵⁵ In his combination of Medieval and Modern theories of intentionality, idealism and realism, “there is neither worldless subject nor subjectless thing in itself”, as Caputo succinctly puts it.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ GA 15, 117/68

¹⁵² In the late Zähringen –seminar (1973) Heidegger admits that the term *Dasein* was used “very awkwardly and in an unhelpful way”, GA 15, 118/69.

¹⁵³ SD 2000, 87; 2002, 79 Kisiel makes an important note in saying why “Heidegger assumes without comment that *alêtheia* can be translated as unveiling or unconcealment. It is simply the way German dictionaries had been translating it since the early nineteenth century! See, e.g., Franz Passow, *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache* (Leipzig 1831), p.81, where *alêtheia* is translated not only as “Wahrheit” but also as “Unverstecktheit” and *alêthês* as “unverholen” quoted through Kisiel 1995, 537–38, n.17, L gives for *alêthês* nicht verhehlen, unverholen

¹⁵⁴ GA 1, 205 and 63–64; Later, the same rejection is seen as uniting also Scheler and Husserl, despite their obvious diversities: they both would agree that “The person is no thinglike and substantial Being” (Person ist kein dingliches substanzielles Sein).SZ §10,47/73

¹⁵⁵ For an early discussion between critical realism and idealism, see GA 56/57, 77–79 and 83

¹⁵⁶ Caputo 2003, 42 I have discussed this topic in my article *On Heidegger’s Critique of Descartes* (in Finnish), Telaaranta 2007, 404–414. This theme is developed in SZ §43, where the “equiprimordiality” (*gleichursprünglichkeit*) of “world” and “subject” is emphasized, expressed here in the basic formula: “the substance of man is existence” (SZ § 43c 212/255 and §9, 41/67). But “if the ‘I’ is an Essential characteristic of *Dasein*, then it is one which must be interpreted existentially.” Thus, the “I” is only to be understood as a “formal indication”, (*formale Anzeige*), not as referring to personal subject but rather as mere existential possibility. This is one of the rare but important appearances of this early central concept of Heidegger in the SZ (§25, 114, 116, 117/150, 152, §4, 14/34).

II. 3. Original Christianity

In a letter to his friend, Karl Löwith, on September 13, 1920, Heidegger expresses his worry on the poor theological grounding of his students as an explanation to his curricular decisions in scheduling a seminar on phenomenology of religion for the years 1920 and 1921. “For in all honesty, all that would come of it is the kind of drivel over the philosophy of religion that I want to eliminate from philosophy, this talk about the religious that one picks up from the secondary literature. Perhaps we could risk it next summer. I then thought of Plotinus, but once again the same problem in part.¹⁵⁷ So I decided on Aristotelian metaphysics.”¹⁵⁸ Here we have, then, a clear motive for the forthcoming many years of Aristotle studies: phenomenology of religion needs thorough philosophical studies in order to gain true insight into its unique phenomenon. Ultimately this boils down to a question of finding a new language to express meaningfully the living reality of faith instead of the language of rational but petrified conceptual system of Scholasticism, based on Greek philosophy, particularly on that of Aristotle. And, if one thinks of early Christianity itself, language in fact played a decisive role in the Christian experience as the “good message” (*euangelion*) of the gospels, the “word (*logos*) of the Lord”, or in the art of “hermeneutics” as Jesus gave examples of how to understand the scriptures. Instead of the Greek/Platonic “making clear” (*dêloun*) for intellectual seeing, the gospel was something to be heard, and not only with ears but with the very heart of human being (comp. Aristotelian *omma tês psychês*). Thus, what was again now needed was a living and moving language to bring the modern Christian experience into words that make a difference. This called for a thorough theological and religious reform. But the upshot of this is a demand for a thorough reform in philosophy, one which is no longer based on the same stagnated philosophical tradition. And this is where phenomenology comes in: “Phenomenology can only be appropriated phenomenologically, i.e., only through *demonstration* and not in such a way that one repeats propositions, takes over fundamental principles, or subscribes to academic dogmas.”¹⁵⁹ In the early KNS 1919 lecture course (*Kriegnotsemester*, “war-emergency semester”) Heidegger coins the expression *Ent-leben*, “un-living” as a general tendency of theoretical studies and sciences: “theoretization of life ‘de-vivifies’ it, reducing a situation from *Ereignis* – an event

¹⁵⁷ This probably refers to the Plotinian “corruption” of early Christianity through Augustine, that is, the Neo-Platonic Greek interpretations of Christianity, see above II.3.3.

¹⁵⁸ Kisiel 1995, 227 Kisiel also gives a good summary of the extant texts of the course “in view of the fact that there are no plans at present (Kisiel wrote his work between 1981–1993) to publish this course, since the manuscript of the course... has not been found”. However, these courses were published without a first-hand manuscript, based on five sets of notations by Heidegger’s students, and this took place only two years later in 1995 as GA 60, *Phänomenologie der religiösen Lebens*: “Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion” [lecture course WS 1920–21], 1–156. “Augustinus und der Neuplatonismus” [lecture course SS 1921, Freiburg], 157–299 “Die philosophischen Grundlagen der mittelalterlichen Mystik” [draft for lecture course 1918–19], 301–37. This last mentioned course was never delivered.

¹⁵⁹ GA 63, 46/37.

of one's own – to a *Vorgang*, a 'process' that passes before one like a spectacle.”¹⁶⁰ The sense of life withers in stagnated conceptuality. Already in his habilitation -work in 1916 he spoke of “theory divorced from life” and a counter-movement to it as a return to “living spirit.”¹⁶¹ Thus, what the young Heidegger was after was a new beginning for both philosophy and theology.

In the above quoted letter to Karl Löwith, where Heidegger calls himself a Christian theologian, he also gives a sharper edge to his way of “doing” philosophy and scientific research: “The essential way in which my facticity is existentially articulated is scientific research, done in my way”. The researcher is not outside his subject matter, on the contrary, he “must be involved—otherwise there is no engagement”.¹⁶² Thus, the objectivity of philosophical work refers to “historical facticity”. Here we have the “temporal particularity” of one's own position as the only possible basis for philosophical work, that is, what is later in BT expounded as the ontic founding of ontology. This is the very idea of phenomenology in “turning to the things themselves”, removing from all theoretical attitudes (the phenomenological *epokhê*) in order to be without presuppositions and attuned to the immediate life and “its immanent context of meaning”.

Thus, finding oneself is always both finding in time and in a situation, a clearing and an opening (*Lichtung*; *das Offene* SZ 133, 350) of Dasein where entities can come to appearance, as is implicit already in the idea of phenomenological seeing. Therefore, Malpas is certainly right in noting that Heidegger is concerned “to reconnect philosophy with the personal, lived experience that gives it real motive and direction.”¹⁶³ This would be equally true if said of Ibn al-‘Arabî, for whom, as we will see, existence means primarily a finding and an opening (*fath/futûh*) for something to appear for an encounter.

The term “hermeneutics” was familiar to Heidegger from his early theological studies, and later on, he met the term again in Wilhelm Dilthey, who had picked up the concept from the same source, namely, the distinguished Protestant theologian and romantic philosopher, Friedrich Schleiermacher, to whom Heidegger seems to have been very attracted during 1917–19.¹⁶⁴ Already in his first post-war course,

¹⁶⁰ GA 56/57, 74–75; Polt, in CH 2007, 376 Here we have one of the early instances of the term *Ereignis*, which became a key-word in the later thinking of Heidegger and particularly in his Contributions to Philosophy, GA 65.

¹⁶¹ GA 1, 350, 352.

¹⁶² Kisiel 1995, 79

¹⁶³ Malpas 2006, 45.

¹⁶⁴ van Buren 147–48, Dilthey was also the author of a biography, *Leben Schleiermachers*, which Heidegger had read.

known as KNS 1919¹⁶⁵, Heidegger tells his students that Schleiermacher “discovered primal Christianity”, and that he was a theologian who wanted to distinguish clearly religion from metaphysics and morals, as well as from theology! “The essence of religion is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition (*Anschauung*) and feeling (*Gefühl*).” One can well imagine the reverberation of such ideas in the mind of young Heidegger so familiar with medieval mystics.

Heidegger was planning still for the same year a course on the Philosophical Foundations of Medieval Mysticism (see above p. 51–52), but, unfortunately, he had to cancel it due to lack of time, or maybe because he simply was not yet prepared in his thinking for it. But through his 1918–19 preliminary notes and sketches for this seminar we know that it was to introduce not only Eckhart’s sermons, but also the *Sermon on the Song of Songs* by Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Interior Castle* of Theresa of Avila, and the *Fioretti* of Francis of Assisi. In reading these sketches for the course one can clearly see that it would have been a remarkable event. I can give only a brief overview on what he had planned, but if one imagines these themes as the subject of his lecturing technique and profound style, one cannot but pity the fact that he did not have enough time to realize these outlines.

The course was planned to concentrate on religious experience as such. “Our goal can never be to awaken religious life. That only [occurs] through such life itself!” Understanding religious experience does not mean its “rationalization”, “dissolution of experience into its logical components”, instead, a decisive modification of understanding is needed, modification to original seeing [*Ursprungs-Sehen*]. On the whole, these sketches are abounding with sentences on originality, origins, genuine beginnings, the primordial motivation in the religious phenomena and so forth. This modification would amount to “Understanding from out of the genuine aspect of consciousness (precisely to dismiss the Scholastic-Aristotelian, Platonic ‘explanations’ and in part misinterpretations).”¹⁶⁶ Like Schleiermacher, Heidegger too wants to “sharply divorce the problem of theology and that of religiosity”. And the reason for this is the constant dependency of theology on philosophy and “on the situation of the respective theoretical consciousness in general. Theology has heretofore found no original theoretical basic posture that corresponds to the originality of its object. [...] religious experience is not theoretical.” Instead, what should be at stake is “increase of inner vivacity”, a kind of “loosening-up within the subject-sphere [which] leads to a specific experience of the meaning and structure of the *subject of mysticism*, that is, returning to the very ground and root of the soul and its inner life. This would be the Eckhartian *Abgeschiedenheit*, detachment, which is actually an Aristotelian *movement* –

¹⁶⁵ KNS= Kriegsnotsemester, War Emergency Semester, which Heidegger held from February 7 to April 11, 1919, published as GA 56/57.

¹⁶⁶ GA 60, 304–07/ 232–33 The manuscript carries the date August 10, 1919

based possibility of having-oneself-in-one's-end (*entelekhia*, a term that will be a major theme in the later commentaries on Aristotle).

In Heidegger's sketches there is a long section on Schleiermacher's basic thoughts from the work *Über die Religion*, stating for example: "But I must refer you to yourselves, to the grasp of a living moment. [...] You should notice here the becoming of your consciousness, rather than somehow reflecting on a consciousness that has already become."¹⁶⁷ Heidegger is referring in the mode of Schleiermacher to a "Mysterious unstructured unity of intuition and feeling, the one without the other being nothing", but continues with a very Husserlian sentence: "The noetic moment is itself constitutive for the noematic entire content of experience", thus emphasizing the non-objectifying act-character of all religious life: Religion should accompany, like sacred music, all doings of life. He also emphasizes here his anti-psychologism by writing: "The view that the supra-historical sphere of essence as such—given in intuition—would be an immanent heightening of the respective experience itself, is to be energetically dismissed".

The course would also have a section under the heading "*Critique of the 'fundamental concepts of metaphysics'*".¹⁶⁸ Here the point is that conceptual material taken from rationalistic metaphysics is inappropriate on a genuine sphere of experience, as this "conceptual material has such a neutral, faded content, uncharacterized by the sphere of experience, that it is shown in serious investigation as not at all original—that is to say, as not being a conglomerate of sense-elements that originally arise from a sphere of experience".¹⁶⁹ Here we have a clear example of the antimetaphysical vein of Heidegger's thought which he shared with Wilhelm Dilthey and the early medieval mystics. And, as I want to make obvious further down, this was also one of his basic motives in revising the Aristotelian tradition. In his much later commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (SS 1931, GA 33) he says: "Aristotle never had in his possession what later came to be understood by the word or the concept 'metaphysics'. Nor did he ever seek anything like 'metaphysics' that has for ages been attributed to him".¹⁷⁰ The inner life of all genuine mysticism is basically *antimetaphysical* and *antispeculative* and much closer to practical, existential experience of the moment. In a similar vein the mystics in Islamic context are known as *child/son of the (present) moment (ibnu l-waqt)*. (For example F III 485.11)

¹⁶⁷ In F. Schleiermacher's *sämtliche Werke*, Division I, vol. I, Berlin, 1843 (1799), 191, quoted through GA 60, 321/243

¹⁶⁸ A heading which was to become a lecture-series in 1929/30 with the subtitle "World, Finitude and Solitude". This last term, *Einsamkeit* "solitude" together with "seclusion" is actually quite central both in his sketches for the early course under discussion here and for a religious experience as such. A world of ever expanding inner experience is a solitary affair. In Ibn 'Arabi's account of the highest mystical stage, *al-qurba*, proximity or nearness to God, was an experience of absolute solitude, both physically and experientially. Interestingly, when Heidegger first announced the course of 1929 he had written "World, Finitude and Individuation", and that is also how he approaches the subject in the first lecture. GA 29/30, 8–9/6

¹⁶⁹ GA 60, 326/246

¹⁷⁰ GA 33, 3–4/1

Therefore, in his WS 1920–21 course *Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion*, instead of the conceptual paraphernalia of traditional metaphysics, Heidegger wants to understand “the primordial Christian religiosity” as such, to “experience the object itself in its originality”.¹⁷¹ But as he is also heading for an introduction to the phenomenology of religion, that is, to a philosophical questioning of religion, what is first needed is an introductory part on that: what is called *philosophy* if it is to be understood in non-metaphysical terms? Therefore, he now asks, how do we arrive at the self-understanding of philosophy? “One cannot characterize philosophy through an integration into a material complex, according to the manner in which, as it is said, chemistry is a science and painting is an art.” Instead, the self-understanding of Philosophy can only be attained by philosophizing itself. “And if one grasps this problem radically, one finds that philosophy arises from factual life experience.”¹⁷² Therefore, the first step in his introduction tackles the question of Factual Life Experience, and it is obvious that experience does not mean “taking-cognizance-of” but a confrontation-with. Facticity is, then, no theoretical issue, instead, as he notes in WS 1921–22, [the] problem of facticity [is to be seen] as *kinesis* –problem, that is, movement in its fundamental sense as “*genuine movedness of life, in which and through which life exists*”.¹⁷³ Here we have a fundamental connection between Aristotle and Heidegger: the basic concept of *facticity* in the philosophy of early Heidegger is rooted in the basic Aristotelian concept of Physics, namely, *kinesis*, movement, and more generally *change*. Therefore, the term factual may not be interpreted “from certain epistemological presuppositions, but can be made intelligible only from the concept of the ‘historical’”. That is, facticity can only come about in actual living-through something in which the factual is encountered. “We mean the historical in the way we encounter it in life; not in the science of history. [...] the historical, in accordance with this view, obtains the character of a quality of an object changing in time. [...] historical is immediate vivacity.”¹⁷⁴ **That which is lived as experience [*das Erlebte*] is the “world”, not an “object”: one can live only in a world, not in an object.** The world surrounds us (*milieu*), as that which we encounter, and to which belong not only material things but also ideal objectivities, the sciences, art, the communal world (*Umwelt—Mitwelt—Selbstwelt*, the three basic modes of the lived experience of everydayness developed already in the early 1919 KNS-seminar).

Heidegger sees “the historical playing a role in present-day factual life in two major directions. 1. *Positively* speaking, the diversity of historical forms provides life with a *fulfillment* and allows it to rest in the diversity of historical formations. 2. *Negatively* speaking, the historical is for us a *burden*, a

¹⁷¹ GA 60, 76/53

¹⁷² GA 60, 7–8/6

¹⁷³ GA 61, 118/87

¹⁷⁴ GA 60, 32/23

hindrance.”¹⁷⁵ The historical is there already by the time our own existence is merely trying to come through, to establish itself, to create itself as a temporally ongoing process of encounter, to gain a meaning for itself other than past cultures had, a new meaning that exceeds the one of earlier life. And, therefore, “we tend to understand the concerned Dasein out of our own life experience. How does the own living Dasein conduct itself as distressed by history, to history itself? How does factual life stand *from out of itself* to history? [...] at issue is confrontation with history which arises from the sense of factual Dasein.”¹⁷⁶

In fact, this “burden” and hindrance of history has given rise to different ways of trying to surpass its difficulty, the most famous and most accessible way being the Platonic way, where “the historical reality is not the only reality, not the fundamental reality at all; rather it is to be understood by reference to the realm of ideas, in whatever way one may grasp them: as substances, as values, as norms or principles of reason.”¹⁷⁷ That is why Socrates taught, according to Plato, the primacy of the logical/theoretical in explaining that “Virtue is knowledge”: virtuous life is possible only through knowledge.¹⁷⁸ The historical has here become something secondary. Indeed, “the Platonic way is comprehensible only through the *relation* of temporal Being to extra-temporal Being. This is still today expressed in the characteristic Platonic concepts: temporal Being is an “*imitation*” (*mimêsis*) of the extra-temporal; the extra-temporal is the “*paradigm*” (*parádeigma*), while the temporal is the after-copy (*eidôlon*); the temporal “*participates*” (*metékhei*) in the extra-temporal (*méthexis*); presence (*parousia*) of the extra-temporal in temporal beings.”¹⁷⁹ Heidegger is not concerned to go into detailed analysis of these central Platonic themes as his point here is only to describe the means how the philosophy of Plato lifts up the burden of temporal/historical existence: it “ceases to disturb me, because I recognize it as a forming-out of the extra-temporal”.

To get to the phenomenon of religion what is needed is an understanding rising out of the living present, and that “living present” into which Heidegger here wants to dive is the experience of “original Christianity”, as it is formulated in Pauline letters. This goal does not quite come true in the published text of the course as Heidegger was forced to interrupt his lecturing due to students claiming him being too abstract. Before the interruption he was in full swing explaining what is meant with “historical

¹⁷⁵ GA 60, 37/25–26

¹⁷⁶ GA 60, 53/36

¹⁷⁷ GA 60, 39/27

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ GA 60, 45/31 Thw two other examples of Heidegger on the struggle against the Historical, are those of Oswald Spengler and Wilhelm Dilthey into which I will not go further here.

time”, stating that temporality is the first phenomenon to be tackled: “the problem of time must be grasped in the way we originally experience temporality in factual experience—entirely irrespective of all pure consciousness and all pure time. The way is thus reversed. We must ask, rather, what is temporality originally in factual experience? What do past, present, and future mean in factual experience? Our way takes its departure from factual life, from which the meaning of time is won. The problem of the historical is thus characterized.” Here Heidegger was forced to cut his introductory discussion on his important notion of *formale Anzeige*, formal indication, in November 1920 due to students claims of the too abstract level of the course. He was forced to revise his plan for the course and start the next hour on concrete questions of religion and St. Paul: “This I do under the assumption that you will misunderstand the entire study from beginning to end”.¹⁸⁰ This incidence was a pity, as it is quite clear that Heidegger had far higher aims in preparing his students to understand the delicate relation between philosophy and religion and the way he wanted to radicalize phenomenology, as Kisiel notes.¹⁸¹ Heidegger had planned to pursue the Second Part of his course after the holidays in January, but now he had to get to Paul’s letter to the Galatians somewhat unprepared in November.

However, as usual, his proceedings are quite original as he approaches the original Christian lifeworld of the New Testament. Heidegger had come across Paul’s letter to the Galatians not through his Luther-studies but in reading Wilhelm Dilthey, who was convinced that “historical consciousness” began in the West with primitive Christianity. According to Dilthey a “change in the life of the soul goes along with Christianity. The life of the soul turns back to itself”, as Heidegger explains in SS 1921. Luther was not Heidegger’s source, as “Luther and Paul are, religiously speaking, the most radical opposites” and although Luther wrote a commentary on the letter of Galatians, “we must free ourselves from Luther’s standpoint. Luther sees Paul from out of Augustine”.¹⁸² Luther’s translation of Paul’s letter should be avoided for the same reason as it is all too “dependent on Luther’s own theological standpoint”. Instead, Heidegger is using the original Greek text edited by Eberhard Nestle. On the whole, predating the Gospels, Paul’s letters are the oldest sources for primordial Christianity as “factic life experience”. The earliest letter was written in AD 53 to the Thessalonians and the others were written within the span of ten years.

Paul’s letter to the Galatians is important for Heidegger because it contains “a historical report from Paul himself about the story of his conversion. It is the original document for his religious development and, *historically*, reports the passionate excitation of Paul himself”. This report of his conversion serves

¹⁸⁰ GA 60, 65/45

¹⁸¹ Kisiel 1995, 173

¹⁸² GA 60, 67/47 Augustine is the main topic of the SS 1921 course, which will be dealt further down.

as a “grounding phenomena of primordial Christian life”.¹⁸³ What Paul wants to say is that he has come to Christianity not through a historical tradition, but through an original experience, “a break in his own *Dasein*”, resulting in an “original historical understanding of his self and of his existence”.¹⁸⁴ Heidegger gathers from this one of his main points: “Factical life experience is historical. Christian religiosity lives temporality as such”.¹⁸⁵ The enactment of life is decisive in the Christian experience. We should not think of this experience as an object in history, rather, we are talking about a situation, a unique historical situation in its enactment, the “how” of the moment. “Christ *in* me, I in Christ”, as Paul describes the Christian communion with the living Christ. Here one can also note the preposition *in*, which is quite decisive in Heidegger’s later formulation of “being-in-the-world”, *In der Welt sein*. In the case of Paul, Heidegger speaks about “The turning-around from the object-historical to the enactment-historical, [...] of turning-around to the situation”. But, then again, the word “situation” must neither be understood as referring to a “subject-object relationship”. This experience of having become Christian, and the attached knowledge of *having become*, is the main topic in Heidegger’s review over Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians. Paul has become a Christian and so have the Thessalonians to whom he is writing about this having become Christian and what it means. The word *genêthênai*, “having become”, and *genesthai*, “to come, to become”, appear frequently in Paul’s text. Heidegger says we should not think of this as merely external repetition but, rather, as an “ever-repeatedly surfacing tendency, as a motif”, that is, referring to the situational context of Christian life experience, the turning-toward God. Thus, “their Being [*Sein*] now is their having-become [*Gewordensein*], or, their having become is their Being”. As it is stated in I Thess.6: their “acceptance of the proclamation in great despair (*thlipsis*, “anguish”)” and, yet at the same time a “joy” (*metà kharas*) which comes from the Holy Spirit. [...] The having-become is understood such that with the acceptance, the one who accepts treads upon an effective connection with God.” That which is accepted concerns the how of self-conduct in factical life.¹⁸⁶ This turning-toward God is primary, but with it one also turns away from mere *eidola*: “you turned to God from idols” (I Thess.9). Here Heidegger notes that *eidolon* means “illusion” in classical Greek and that in the *Septuaginta* it is rendered “idol images”, where Paul has it from. Here the point is that “It is a decrease of authentic understanding if God is grasped primarily as an object of speculation”. The God of primal Christian experience is not a theoretical issue, not an abstract notion of substance (*ousia*) to be contemplated. The God of Christianity is not the God of *ontotheology*—as Heidegger later would say. He also notes here that Luther in fact understood this in criticizing Scholastic *Theologia*

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ GA 69, 74/51

¹⁸⁵ Ga 60 80/55

¹⁸⁶ GA 60, 94/66

gloriae, a fact which also explains Luther's hatred of Aristotle.¹⁸⁷ Thus, as van Buren writes: "Long before Nietzsche, Luther had already killed the ontotheological God of western metaphysics".¹⁸⁸

The question of "when", "Time (*khronos*) and moment (*kairos*)" (I Thess 5:1), becomes decisive for the Christian experience as it is connected with the second coming (*parousia*) of Christ. In Paul's time, as Kisiel notes, "parousia" no longer retained its classical Greek and Septuagint sense of "presence" or "arrival", but referred to the reappearance of Christ, His second coming. This clearly suggested an impending future event (*Ereignis*) to be expected and awaited".¹⁸⁹ But Paul's answer to this question of when is clear: it is not a question of time, instead the *parousia* urges a Christian to awaken and to be sober: "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night", which "you yourself know perfectly well" (5:1–2): "Let us be watchful and sober" (5:6). Here we have also the word *kairos*, the proper moment, or the living present, referring to the original temporal experience of time, and, of course, the other great theme of Heidegger's philosophical life. He will later find the same term in studying Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.

On the whole, the first course on phenomenology of religion sharpens Heidegger's thinking on temporality as such and, even though the course was interrupted, Heidegger was thereby, as Oscar Becker notes, forced to "come out with the presuppositions of his thought, which otherwise would have remained hidden. He thus unveiled the source from which his thought had received its crucial impetus."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ GA 60, 96/67

¹⁸⁸ van Buren 1994, 163

¹⁸⁹ Kisiel 1995, 185 *Ereignis* is a term that remains throughout Heidegger's life in his thinking, beginning from his *Habilitationschrift* referring to a decisive Event: the "founding of Rome, the birth of Christ, the Hegira" (GA 1, 373). In the KNS we have *Sich-ereignen* of the "historical-I" as an "Ur-sprung", primal leap or origin of experience or as "kairological-time", and, thus, an early version of *Dasein*. In BT (250, 533, 184 etc.) the word has a more everyday-meaning of past-present and future events. And finally to end up as *Das Ereignis* as Heidegger's last word for archaic Being/*Seyn*, the event of "properizing" (GA 66).

¹⁹⁰ Quoted through Kisiel 1995, 191

II.3.1. Summer semester 1921: Augustine and the Hellenization of Christianity

By the time Heidegger held his course on the phenomenology of religion, Augustine was once again a discussed figure in modern Christianity. Similarly, he had been the central figure throughout the medieval Europe for certain Platonizing currents of Christian thought and later in the renewal of the Catholic Church in the seventeenth-century France (Descartes, Malabranche and Pascal). I have already noted that Heidegger did not want to read Paul through Luther because of his theological preconceptions which were actually based on Augustine through whom Luther came to Paul. Heidegger says that “Augustinianism has a twofold meaning: *philosophically*, it means Christian Platonism turned against Aristotle; *theologically*, a certain conception of the doctrine of sins and of grace.”¹⁹¹ Thus, as Heidegger limits his theme, Augustine and Neo-Platonism, he starts with three modern assessments of this prominent Father of the Church and founder of medieval theology. These three different viewpoints can be named as “ethics, religiosity and epistemological foundations”¹⁹² These viewpoints are presented by Ernst Troeltsch in his 1915 published work on *Augustine, Christian Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Adolf von Harnack and his *History of dogma* published one year earlier, and, finally Wilhelm Dilthey’s already mentioned *Introduction to Human Sciences* (1883). Troeltsch interprets Augustine through philosophy of culture: “Since the Christian movement [...] [left] the realm of education, property, and society [...] the problem of culture became the great problem of Christian thinkers.”¹⁹³ How is one supposed to live as a Christian in the midst of “worldliness”? According to Troeltsch, Augustine “is the last and greatest conjoinment of the dying ancient culture with the ethos, myth, authority and organization of the early Catholic Church”. Here Augustine is studied as a representative of a cultural shift from antiquity to that of Christendom.

Adolf von Harnack’s interpretation of Augustine is based more on his writings and thought as a “reformer of Christian piety”. According To Harnack Augustine “led the religion from congregational and ritual form into the hearts as a gift and a task”.¹⁹⁴

The third perspective to Augustine, offered by Wilhelm Dilthey, has to do with the role of Christianity, and of Augustine in particular, for the foundation of human sciences. Dilthey saw here a decisive turn of interest in comparison with sciences in antiquity with their main concern in external, outer world. With Augustine the inner world of the soul and human consciousness becomes a scientific problem.

¹⁹¹ GA 60, 158/115

¹⁹² GA 60, 166/120

¹⁹³ GA 60, 160/116

¹⁹⁴ GA 60, 163/117

Heidegger refers to these three perspectives as interpretations of the *history of culture*, of the *history of dogma*, and the *history of science*. Thus, his point is not so much on what these different perspectives say of Augustine but, rather, to point out that they all share a common interest precisely as perspectives, that is, “viewing [*Hinsehen*] the object as placed in a historical complex of order objectively posited”. This perspective Heidegger calls the *object-historical attitude*. Thus the determination of the object underlies all further evaluations and claims.¹⁹⁵ But in this generalizing and typifying attitude the meaning and significance of human life are covered and left aside for the sake of theory and objectivity since all the factual life-worldly experiences are neglected. And also, as object-historical, all three perspectives share the same notion of time; they are all looking at a determinate time: an *age*. “The possessive relation to time is the relation of the objective distance of contemporary time from earlier time, and these under one another.” Needless to say, none of these mentioned motives and perspectives are relevant to what the philosopher/theologist Heidegger is looking for in his Augustine and Neo-Platonism. In fact, this object-historical attitude is the opposite of what Heidegger is after, namely, the historical as the lived experience of *Dasein* in time.

His point of departure is also the “object-historical context”, which indeed has to do with Hellenization of Christianity or the penetration of Greek metaphysics and cosmology into the inner experience of Christianity. This is clearly the major concern of the whole course on Augustine. This same idea of *Greekification* is brought to the fore also in his WS 1921–22 seminar on Aristotle, where Heidegger is talking about the reception of Aristotle in the Medieval Christian world, which itself had gone through already a thorough “Greekanizing” in its earliest phases.¹⁹⁶ However, these are not simply historical facts to be determined but much more nuanced interpretations of our own basic relationships to life and time itself; they are perspectives still influencing our own life-experience. We are deeply immersed in history ourselves and do not have a position of an outsider, reckoning objective facts in objective time. It also needs to be emphasized that that “Christianity into which Augustine grows is already permeated by what is Greek, and, furthermore, what is Greek in Neo-Platonism has already been subject to a ‘Hellenization’ and orientalization, if not also, as seems very likely to me, to Christianization”. Heidegger states that he wants to “gain access to sense-complexes which are precisely covered up by such formulations”.¹⁹⁷ For example “Dilthey—under the unmistakable influence of Schleiermacher and Ritschl—has spoken of the penetration of Greek metaphysics and cosmology into inner experience. But

¹⁹⁵ GA 60, 167/121

¹⁹⁶ GA 61, 6

¹⁹⁷ GA 60, 172/123

Dilthey has not given us really concrete evidence”, and it is precisely this “factual life” *in concreto* that Heidegger wants to dig into.

Instead of object-historical attitude Heidegger wants to approach and understand Augustine phenomenologically in facticity, and this is carried out by a close reading of Augustine’s *Confessions* and particularly its last autobiographical book 10 in which he no longer relates his past, but rather tells what he is now: what I am “in the very making of my confessions”.¹⁹⁸ There would be numerous interesting topics like *knowledge of oneself, the objecthood of God, the essence of the soul, etc.* highlighted by Heidegger’s close reading, but here I take up only two central themes into brief discussion as these are relevant for my later perusals on Heidegger’s Aristotle. The first is Augustine’s concept of *curare*, being concerned, or being troubled (*Bekümmertsein*) as the basic character of all factual life (*Sorge* in SZ), and, on the other hand, its more problematic form as *curiositas* (*Neugier*, a desire for the “new”) manifested in the desire of the eye (*concupiscentia oculorum*). These two can also be described as the human desire for philosophical knowledge, the desire to see (with the “eye of the soul” *omma tês psychês*) and to understand, and, on the other hand, human curiosity and dispersion in the merely outward appearance of “worldliness”. The second central point to be noted in this course is Augustine’s Platonism, that is, the non-Christian Greek element in his thought, which charges the original Christian sense of life with Greek perspectives. This, indeed, is the central theme and point of the whole course.

II.3.2. *Curare*—living in facticity

Augustine notes that “we are scattered into the many” (*in multa defluximus*¹⁹⁹), we are dissolving into the manifold and absorbed in the dispersion. In all its manifoldness life of the world appeals to us, we are being-pulled by temptation and in delight (*delectation*). This “pull” of the world is our *curiosity* which brings about “the continual possibility of dispersion” (SZ, §36, 172: *Zerstreuung*, “Curiosity is everywhere and nowhere”, “never dwelling anywhere”, *Aufenthaltslosigkeit*).²⁰⁰ In connection with Augustine Heidegger clarifies by contrasting this worldly *Multum*, the manifold, with *unum*: the authentic [*das Eigentliche*], further down Heidegger uses for *Multum* the word “not genuine” [*das Unechte*], and referring here to Aristotelian concepts *ousía*—*tóde ti*, beings in their being, and this

¹⁹⁸ Retractiones II 6; GA 60, 177/128

¹⁹⁹ A thoroughly Neoplatonic notion: *fluere*, “flow”, emanation.

²⁰⁰ These two human modes of philosophical understanding and curiosity are described by Plato in the *Politeia* (V. 475c–e)

particular something. Therefore God is demanding a counter movement against dispersion, against the falling apart of life: *delectio finis curae*, delight is the end of concern. “By continence we are gathered together and brought into the One (the necessary One—God).”²⁰¹ Life is a constant temptation and factual life is therefore a burden of resisting the temptation: I am a burden to myself, as Augustine says. This circumspective concern, *curare*, is “enacted as *timere* and *desiderare*, as fearing (retreating from) and desiring (taking into oneself, giving oneself over to)”. “The goal of care is delight; for each strives in his concerns (*Bekümmern*) and thoughts to attain his delights.”²⁰² Thus, this *curare* [to care, to be concerned, for *curare* as *Sorgen*, PIA 240–41/362] has a relational sense which changes in the historical-factual complex of life, it is an ongoing concern as dealing with the many significances in which I live.²⁰³ Thus it is in this taking care of everyday facticity that the historical experiencing comes about as a dynamic and conflicting continuum.

The many “significances” in which I live are sometimes supportive and conducive to prosperity and at other times *adversa*, impending, countering that for which I strive. “And when one experiences *adverse*, this experience is not simply a registering, a taking-note-of things, but ‘in adversity I desire prosperity’”. Similarly, in the opposite case of delight and prosperous concern, I fear adversity, and all this is constantly happening historically in factual life. “Life is all trial without intermission”, exclaims Augustine. “The self is taken into a historical experiencing of concern. And these experiences of concern are not simply there, in a psychic stream, as it were, but they themselves are had in the experiencing. They are had not as mere theoretical taking-note and registering, but themselves as a concern.”²⁰⁴ This constant presence of the sorrowful or the rejoicing, the good or bad experience gives the human life a tone of insecurity and anxiety: “which side has the victory I do not know”, as Augustine says (*Conf* X, 28); toward what direction one’s own life will incline in the end? Consequently, Augustine exclaims “I have become a question to myself” (*Questio mihi factus sum*, X, 33), and Heidegger notes that this “*questio*” is not an accidental consideration in the mood of a hangover! “Life: I—question. I have become a heavy burden to myself.”²⁰⁵ Here we have, then, the possibility of “grasping the authentic direction of concern of one’s own factual *Dasein*. [...] In self-concern the self forms—in the How of its ownmost being—the radical possibility of falling, but at the same time the ‘opportunity’ to win itself. Thus, our life must somehow *concern* [*angehen*] us ourselves.

²⁰¹ Confessiones X, 29, 40; GA 60, 205–06/151–53 This problematic of antithesis of dispersion into many and return to One, unity and multiplicity, spirit and matter, *curiositas* and *memoria* is adopted from Plotinus. Blumenberg 1986, 287–90

²⁰² Enarrationes in Psalmos 7:9, quoted through Kisiel 1995, 201

²⁰³ GA 60, 206-07/153

²⁰⁴ GA 60, 208/154

²⁰⁵ GA 60, 209/154, n.137

—The How of ‘being’, being of facticity.”²⁰⁶ The basic direction of life, arising from caring and looking after, is delight. And finally in the Being and Time *Als Sorge ist das Dasein das ‘Zwischen.’*” (SZ 374)

II.3.3. Greek axiology in Christianity

This factic life as caring has two basic modes of orientation, which Augustine calls *uti* (using), that is, coping with what life brings to me, and *frui* (enjoying), something which is enjoyed for its own sake. These are the eternal unchangeable things, and above all *fruitio Dei*—“happy is he who indeed enjoys the highest good (*summo bono*)”, whereas the temporal and ever-changing things are to be used as a means to that end: we strive for something for the sake of something else; through the other things of *uti* we will attain to the *frui* of what is genuine. Heidegger sees “a certain basic *aesthetic* meaning lying here; one notices the Neo-Platonic influence: the beautiful belongs to the essence of being”.²⁰⁷

This basic aesthetic meaning of *frui* is clear as the highest good, “the unchanging and ineffable beauty of intelligible things, the trinity of God”. “The *frui* is thus the basic characteristic of the Augustinian *basic posture toward life itself*.”

The non-Christian Greek element has popped already up, but Heidegger sees it particularly in a kind of axiology, or ranking order of phenomena in Augustine: “You belong to God, but the flesh belongs to you. You to God, and your flesh to you”. First, then, submit yourself to God; then with Him to teach you and encourage you, fight: “*Agnosce ordinem* [Observe order]”, put in modern terms: Observe the ranking order of values.²⁰⁸ But here Heidegger says “it is not natural that that which is experienced in the delight stands in ranking order of value. Rather, this is based on an ‘axiologization’ which, in the end, is on the same level as the ‘theorization’. This ranking order of values is of Greek origin. (In the whole manner of concept-formation, it stems ultimately from Plato.)” And he also observes that it is not something only attached to Augustine’s thinking, but holds sway throughout all considerations of the Christian doctrine. What Heidegger is here after is “whether such ranking order of values is a meaningfully necessary one, or whether it does not merely rely on the role Greek philosophy plays in Augustine’s thought.”²⁰⁹ And as we have already seen Heidegger’s relentless aspiration into the everyday facticity of lived experiences and the historical experience and its proper hermeneutics, it is

²⁰⁶ GA 60, 245/183

²⁰⁷ GA 60, 271/204

²⁰⁸ Enarrationes in Psalmos 143, in GA 60, 276/209

²⁰⁹ GA 60, 276/209; 279/211

obvious what he thinks of all forms of objective metaphysics, ideal validity, the *trans-temporal in-itself*, all heading towards the objective from the merely subjective, which he in SS 1923 calls “Platonism of the barbarians”!²¹⁰ Here all this is explained simply, not as Christianity of Augustine, but as Augustinian neo-Platonism, which is actually seen to be fleeing from the factual Christian sense of life. (For this “fleeing” in Plotinus, see above p.138 and Bergson’s comment in note 26.) For Heidegger “What is precisely crucial is to constantly have a radical confrontation with the factual, and not to flee. In order to attain existence, I precisely *must* have *it*. This *having* precisely means *living in it*, but not giving in, not even overcoming it comfortably and axiologically.”²¹¹

The problem of the universal theory of value is connected to Neo-Platonism and the doctrine of the highest good, *summum bonum*, in particular, to the conception of the way in which the *summum bonum* becomes accessible. Here Heidegger refers to a fundamental textual passage of Patristic “philosophy”, namely Paul’s letter to Romans, chapter 1:20, in which we read “Since the estimation of the world, what is invisible in God is seen by thought in His works” [Gr. *tà gar aórata autou apò ktiseôs kósmou tois poiêmasin nooúmena kathoratai...*; and in *Vulgata: Invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ear que facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur...*] Heidegger notes that this proposition returns again and again in Patristic writings in developing Christian doctrine in the context of Greek philosophy; “it gives direction to the (Platonic) ascent from the sensible world to the supersensible world. It is (or is grasped as) the confirmation of Platonism, taken from Paul.”²¹² This, however, he maintains, is a misunderstanding of the passage from Paul. And here Heidegger refers to Luther, who was the first to recognize this misunderstanding in his early 1518 Heidelberg Dissertation, where Luther defends forty theses, twenty-eight theological ones and twelve philosophical ones. Heidegger gives a translation of theses numbered 19–22, but does not delve on them for long, as he is lecturing in Catholic Freiburg!

19) To see invisible things of God through that which is created does not make someone a theologian. —The presentation [*Vorgabe*] of the object of theology is not attained by way of metaphysical consideration of the world. Paul himself calls such “theologians” as “fools”, whose wisdom is but a speculative form of idolatry (*Götzendienst* Rom.1:21–23).

20) He deserves to be called a theologian, who understands the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross. The manifest things of God, namely, his human nature, weakness, and

²¹⁰ GA 63, 42/34, Here Heidegger refers to Plato’s *Politeia* VI, 511b–c, saying that “the decisive dimension of the initial approach to the object of philosophy can be read off from this passage.”

²¹¹ GA 60, App I, 265/199

²¹² GA 60, 281/212; Kisiel 1995, 205–06

foolishness, are placed in opposition to the invisible.... Isaiah says, ‘Truly, you are a hidden [absconditus] God’.²¹³

21) The theologian of glory, who aesthetically gloats (*ergötzt*) over the wonders of the world, calls sensory things God, while the theologian of the cross says how things really are. Here Kiesel adds that “later hours [of the course] will suggest that the ‘theologian of the cross’ is comparable to the philosopher of factic life in their respective descriptions of life as trial, care, and travail”.²¹⁴

22) The wisdom that looks upon the invisible things of God from his works, inflates us, blinds us, and hardens us.

Here we have the Aristotelian–Scholastic –tradition, the “*Theologia Glorae*”, challenged by Paul’s theology of the cross expounded by the young Luther, “who hated Aristotle”.²¹⁵ Here God is not an “Ontotheological” speculative and axiological highest good and beauty, instead, the focus is here on actualizing the experience of God. The question is on belief in matters we do not see, not an ocular-aesthetic theme of contemplation. Instead, Heidegger “gives primacy to phenomena which involve practical and even religious truth, the phenomena of historical encounter rather than psychological experience.”²¹⁶ Or, as Heidegger stated in 1927: “theology is not speculative knowledge of God”.²¹⁷ No wonder that Heidegger wrote in his early introduction to his planned book on Aristotle in 1922, that “for the sake of carrying out the task of phenomenological destruction [of history of ontology], these researches take as their object late Scholasticism and Luther’s early theological period”.²¹⁸ Here we may note already the use of Heidegger’s term “destruction”, which he first used in his WS 1919–20 lecture course, where this term is used precisely in connection of Luther’s *destructio* of Aristotle.²¹⁹

II.3.4. Genuine mysticism

Through Medieval mysticism Heidegger gained an access to what he called in 1915 the medieval “experience of life”, *Lebenserfahrung*, a concept recalling the influence of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) on Heidegger.²²⁰ It is also through Dilthey that Heidegger describes Duns Scotus, as already

²¹³ van Buren 1994, 160 This thesis number 20 is not given in the lecture-text.

²¹⁴ Kiesel 1995, 206

²¹⁵ Heideggers foreword for the SS 1923, GA 63, 4

²¹⁶ Kiesel 1995, 229

²¹⁷ GA 9, 59/48

²¹⁸ PIA, 252/373

²¹⁹ GA 58, 139 ff.

²²⁰ Safranski 1998, 41

mentioned, in his Habilitationsschrift as “the sharpest minded scholastic”.²²¹ Instead of empty formal concepts of transcendental philosophy, Dilthey—who was also first a theologian—wanted to bring the human sciences (*Introduction to Human Sciences*, 1883) into their foundation in the lived experiences of the human being itself: I find myself always amidst the situations of my own life, or, my self-world. Heidegger writes in his SS (=summer semester) 1919 that “we are indebted to him [Dilthey] for valuable intuitions about the idea of this science.”²²² And, indeed, it was through Dilthey that Heidegger adopted the idea of Christianity as the origin of “historical consciousness”, as was noted already. The personalistic language of Dilthey plus his decisively antimetaphysical approach to the phenomenology of human sciences certainly appealed to the young Heidegger. Dilthey wanted to “regard ‘life’ itself in its structures, as the basic reality of history”, as Heidegger later wrote in his SS 1925. No wonder he insisted in his 1916 thesis that the subject matter of his study, the problem of categories, must be rooted in the historical life of the Middle Ages (GA 1, 408–09), and thus, emphasizing the fundamentally temporal context of all understanding. According to Heidegger, Dilthey was in fact also the first to recognize the central significance of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* and the true aims of phenomenology.²²³ Furthermore, he was to “launch a *personalistic* psychology against the reigning *naturalistic* psychology. The psychical was now to be understood not as an event of nature but as *spirit* and *person*.”²²⁴ As these examples show, Dilthey had more than a word to say on Heidegger’s life-long central themes of thought.

Meister Eckhart’s (ca.1260–1327) influence on Heidegger is life-long and deep, representing for him “the genuine and great mysticism” (*echte und grosse Mystik*, SG, 71/37). Eckhart is both quoted and commented throughout Heidegger’s *oeuvre*, starting from his student years in the early teens and continuing throughout his later writings up to 50’s and 60’s (though not in BT).²²⁵ That Eckhart was the lifelong companion of Heidegger on the most fundamental level of philosophical questioning is clear already from a few central examples, the first of which is here taken from the GA 33 lecture course on Aristotle’s *Met IX 1–3, On the Essence and Actuality of Force*. As the question here is on the ambiguity of the fundamental term being, *esse*, a preliminary note on translating this basic term is in order.

²²¹ Den”scharfsinnigsten aller Skolastiker” (GA 1, 203.)

²²² GA 56/57, 164–165

²²³ Ibid. 165

²²⁴ GA 20, 19/17; 30/24; 161/116

²²⁵ The first quotation of Eckhart appears as a motto in Heidegger’s trial lecture in 1915 concerning Heidegger’s life-long theme, time: “Time is that which changes and turns manifold; eternity stays simple.” GA 1, 415

The Latin *esse* is rendered often by Eckhart with the Middle High German *wesen* which has a verbal sense as a “way to be.” Similarly Eckhart translates *essentia* as *wesenheit* and *wesunge*. Heidegger takes up this original German sense of the word, referring to the very Being of being. This usage becomes particularly pertinent when applied to human Dasein, the truest being of man and man’s essential nature. Here *wesen* refers to that “by which a thing is what it is”, the very Being of a being.²²⁶ Answering the “what is?” *ti estin?* it is also *tò tí ên êînai*, *das was war Sein*, *quod quid erat esse*, the what it was to be, as we already know from the first part of our study.²²⁷ The essential being, or nature (*wesen*), of man goes deeper than mere definition of man, thus the first sentence in the *Discourse on Thinking* says “the question into the essential being (*Wesen*) of man is not a question about man” (*die frage nach dem Wesen des Menschen sei keine frage nach dem Menschen*).²²⁸ In his essay *On the Essence of Truth* (*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*) Heidegger provides in the third edition of 1954 a note on the word “**Wesen: 1. quidditas – das Was – koinón; 2. Ermöglichung – Bedingung der Möglichkeit; 3. Grund derr Ermöglichung**,” that is, “Essence: 1. quidditas – the ‘what’ – *koinón*; 2. enabling – condition of possibility; 3. ground of enabling.” (GA 9, 177a/136a) With this essential being (*wesen*) of man we are on a common ground with Ibn al-‘Arabí, who does not accept the classical Greek definition of man as *animal rationale*. When Caputo writes of Eckhart and Heidegger that “both call for a return to a forgotten ground within man which is deeper than anything human, in which man is opened up to the presence of something which transcends beings altogether” he might as well be speaking of Ibn al-‘Arabí.

But let us first look at the reference on Eckhart in the Aristotle lecture course of Heidegger in summer 1931. There he said: “In the Middle Ages the doctrine of analogy of being (*Analogia entis*)” was referred to in “formulating a religious conviction in philosophical terms.” This doctrine was to explain the fundamental difference between the highest being of God (*summum ens* “Allerrealstes Wesen” of Kant, see GA 24, 49/37) and the being of all creatures (*ens finitum*) which nevertheless are also being. Heidegger writes: “How can *ens infinitum* and *ens finitum* both be named *ens*, both be thought in the same concept, ‘being’? Does the *ens* hold good only *aequivoce* [only the name in common] or *univoce* [same name and same meaning], or even *analogice*?²²⁹ [analogy of attribution, “being occurs in

²²⁶ Caputo 1986, 156; for the “way to be” *ibid*, p.163

²²⁷ Heidegger gives a scholastic equivalent by Suarez as *illud quod primo concipitur de re*, where the word *primo* refers to “first in rank”, that which a thing is in its realness. GA 24, 120/85-86

²²⁸ GA 13, 38 (G 29)

²²⁹ Aristotle did not use the term analogy In his work on Duns Scotus the mediaval *analogia entis* is decisive. What stands in analogy is neither totally different, nor totally same: *Was in Analogie steht, ist weder total verschieden, noch total gleich [...]* *Eine gewisse Identität der Bedeutung und doch wieder eine Verschiedenheit je nach dem Anwendungsbereich*, GA 1, 257 The analogata are in a determinate relation of belonging-together, “a peculiar unity in the multiplicity and a multiplicity in the unity” *Ibid*. Here one could well locate Ibn al-‘Arabí’s formula for God: the One/Many, *al-wâhid al-kathîr*. See above III.1.

multiplicity of modes”²³⁰; analogical unity of being which is “said in many ways but related to (*pròs hen*, see above I.B.5) one and the same specific nature” (*Met* IV 2, 1003 a33f.).”] They rescued themselves from this dilemma with the help of analogy, which is not a solution but a formula. Instead, according to Heidegger, Meister Eckhart was the only one who sought a radical solution. He says: God ‘is’ not at all, because ‘being’ is a finite predicate and absolutely cannot be said of God.”²³¹ If finite beings are said to be, then God is not. Thus, rather, for Eckhart God is the mystery concealed by beings, a sentence that could well be taken from Ibn al-‘Arabí for whom beings are a veil of Being (see Part III, pp 177, 205, 208, 300 and 305–06). In this connection Heidegger also notes that “the problem of analogy had been handed down to the theology of the Middle Ages via Plotinus.”

Already long before this 1931 radical reference to Eckhart’s solution to the question of analogy of being, Heidegger was struggling with this question in his thinking. As van Buren reads the early Heidegger, the doctrine of the “analogy of attribution is the philosophical articulation of the prephilosophical theocentric worldview of the Middle Ages (‘Spiritualism’).” This prephilosophical worldview is anchored in the strong medieval lived experience of personal, loving, and faith-grounded relation to God. It was precisely this difference between being in everlasting being (*ens infinitum*) and in temporal being (*ens finitum*) that gave medieval humanity its sense of “identity-in-difference or difference-in-identity.”²³² Analogy is *something like*: not exactly the same but nor fully different [see note 233 below]. It is an all-pervading ordering principle ruling both (for medieval humanity) over the material sensible worlds as well as over the spiritual suprasensible reality (*realen sinnlichkeit und übersinnliche Wirklichkeit*; GA 1, 255). All of reality was understood as informed, distinct and ordered (*geformt, bestimmt, geordnet*): reality comes in categories. As entities are different from one another so is being said in many ways, in many categories but always within the governing principle of analogy.²³³

The second and closely related example of Eckhart’s closeness to Heidegger clarifies the question between existence and essence in medieval scholastic thinking. In a Marburg lecture course in summer 1927 Heidegger takes up Meister Eckhart as an example of a characteristic quality of medieval mysticism trying to find a speculative access to the very essence of God. Here he writes:

²³⁰ GA 22, 154/128

²³¹ GA 33 46/38: “Gott ‘ist’ überhaupt nicht, weil ‘Sein’ ein endliches Prädikat ist und von Gott gar nicht gesagt werden kann.”

²³² van Buren 1994, 91.

²³³ Heidegger quotes here Scotus: *Illā ratio a qua imponitur ens non est una sed aequivoca in diversis sicut est ens... apud Metaphysicum vel Naturalem, qui non considerant vocem in significando sed ea quae significantur secundum id quod sunt, [vox entis] est analogā* Quest.in lib.praed. qu.IV, 449b and 447b, in GA 1,255 here, like in most of Arabic philosophy, categories are primarily ontological not logical distinctions. See above p.66 n 71

“It is the characteristic quality of *medieval mysticism* that it tries to lay hold of the being ontologically rated as the properly essential being, God, in his very essence. In this attempt mysticism arrives at a peculiar speculation, peculiar because it transforms the idea of essence in general, which is an ontological determination of a being, the *essentia entis*, into a being and makes the ontological ground of being, its possibility and its essence, into what is properly actual. This remarkable alteration of essence into a being is the presupposition for the possibility of what is called mystical speculation. Therefore, Meister Eckhart speaks mostly of the ‘superessential essence;’ that is to say, what interests him is not, strictly speaking, God—God is still a provisional object for him—but Godhead. When Meister Eckhart says ‘God’ he means Godhead, not *deus* but *deitas*, not *ens* but *essential*, not nature but what is above nature, the essence—the essence to which, as it were, every existential determination must still be refused, from which every *additio existentiae* must be kept at a distance. Hence he also says: ‘*Sprache man von Gott er ist, das wäre hinzulegt.*’ ‘If it were said of God that he is, that would be added on.’ Meister Eckhart’s expression ‘*das wäre hinzugelegt*’ is the German translation, using Thomas’ phrase, of: it would be an *additio entis*. ‘*So ist Gott im selben sinne nicht und ist nicht dem Begriffe aller Kreaturen.*’ Thus God is for himself his ‘not’; that is to say, he is the most universal being, the purest indeterminate possibility of everything possible, pure nothing.”²³⁴

This *deitas* is within *deus*, *Gottheit* within *Gott*, God beyond every conception or actualization of being. Therefore, shattering all idols, Eckhart can say: “Here we pray God that we might be free of God,” praying to get rid of the God of our imaginings and reasonings and letting God be God.²³⁵ Letting be: this is the Eckhartian *Gelassenheit*: *die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*, Releasement, Detachment and letting-be, a term which later became the theme for Heidegger’s 1959 dialogue bearing the same name but translated as *Discourse on Thinking*.²³⁶ “For if ‘God’ is Father, Son, and Spirit, *causa prima*, creator, omniscient and omnipotent, then Godhead is none of these things; it is *prior* to these things, deeper, not *yet* manifest, the concealed *Wesen*, the *Ab-wesen*, in the manifest God (*An-wesen*).”²³⁷ It is this highest indeterminate “not yet manifest” possibility that should be kept in mind later when we come

²³⁴ GA 24, 127–8/ 90–91.

²³⁵ “*Her umbe sô biten wir got, daz wir gotes ledic warden.*” For the full context of this prayer, see Sells 1995, p.1; pp.187-92 and n.1, p.219.

²³⁶ G 23/54. (first published in 1959) “*Gelassenheit*, although used today in German in the sense of ‘composure,’ ‘calmness,’ and ‘unconcern,’ also has older meanings, being used by early German mystics (as Meister Eckhart) in the sense of letting the world go and giving oneself to God,” as the translators of this text into English explain, p.54 n.4. Letting be is also a theme already in the above mentioned *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, though first published in 1943 was written and presented already in 1930. In the first edition this term is explained in a note: “Leaving that which is present its presencing (*dem Anwesenden sein Anwesen lassen*), and not importing anything else into it in addition. (GA 9 188b/144b). In G 33/60 Heidegger says “releasement is beyond activity and passivity,” instead, it is simply described as openness to that which comes to meet us, and, as such, essentially non-representational thinking.

²³⁷ Caputo 2003, 276

to Heidegger's famous reversal in explaining the Aristotelian "actuality is higher than possibility" as "possibility is always higher than actuality" (SZ 38 "Höher als die Wirklichkeit steht die *Möglichkeit*"). On quite Eckhartian line of thought Heidegger writes at the end of *Identität und Differenz*: "The god-less thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*, is thus perhaps closer to the divine God. Here this means only: god-less thinking is more open to Him than onto-theo-logic would like to admit." (ID 141/72) For us it is enough to emphasize that Dasein is originally pure *Seinkönnen*, pure potentiality-for-being. For Eckhart this means essential emptiness and openness, the soul as Aristotelian *tabula rasa* (DA II,12), becoming "a purely open space into which God alone can enter," as Caputo (2003, 277) says. "Gelassenheit is openness to the Mystery" (*Offenheit für das Geheimnis*): Release toward things and openness to the mystery belong together." (G 26/55)

Furthermore, Heidegger notes already in 1916: "philosophy as a rational construction, detached from life, is powerless; and mysticism as an irrationalist experience is purposless."²³⁸ And in this connection – as he is referring to the basic medieval adaptation of Aristotelian "soul being in a way all things" (DA III 8, 431 b21) and, therefore, also the basis of the problem of truth (*verum*) – he again refers to Eckhartian mysticism as giving this problem its philosophical interpretation and evaluation. He says he will tackle this theme in a later separate study, which, unfortunately, never saw daylight.²³⁹ Caputo, however, gathering together indications from this early work of Heidegger, ventures to compress what he is after as follows. "The personal relationship between the soul and God in Eckhart's mysticism contains a clue to the solution of the problem of truth, where truth is taken to be the correlativity or belonging together of thought and being."²⁴⁰

But in the Eckhartian conception truth and being are convertible on a transcendental level, and as one further reads the way van Buren explicates the Eckhartian position, one immediately senses the common medieval mystical background also found in the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabí. Van Buren writes:

"[A]ll beings (matter) are true, intelligible, illuminated since they conform to and participate in the luminous ideas (form) in the mind of God. On this cosmic level, the principle of the material determinateness of form means that, while the ideas of the divine intellect determine the world and make it intelligible, *the temporal world of creation for its part differentiates the unity of these ideas into a multiplicity of analogical manifestations.*" As Eckhart says: "'Creatures are created after the idea and likeness of something in God.' [...] As if in a mirror, created things are lit up, are in the light ('in God'

²³⁸ "Philosophie als vom Leben abgelöstes, rationalistisches Gebilde ist *machtlos*, Mystik als irrationalistisches Erleben ist *Ziellos*." (GA 1, 352)

²³⁹ GA 1, 402 n.2

²⁴⁰ Caputo 1990, 151

as Eckhart says) since they are made intelligible by participating in the light of the divine intellect. Thus, according to Eckhart, *we must learn to find God* ‘in’ all things, even in the midst of the most commonplace situations.”²⁴¹ [Italics mine.]

Finding God— that is the sole subject Ibn al-‘Arabí ever taught about.

Therefore, with good cause one could also say that Heidegger’s interest in medieval philosophy was on the mystical side because, as van Buren notes quoting Heidegger, “medieval mysticism is already ‘scholastic’ (not irrational experience), and Scholasticism already mystical (not rationalism).”²⁴² Besides, both modern phenomenology and medieval [both Arabic and Latin] philosophy had an important common feature in the central role of originally Aristotelian notion of intentionality, “a volitional being-out-for –something and going-toward-it (Gr. *órexis*, desire).”²⁴³ A term, as we have seen, referring in phenomenology to the basic thematic field of its enquiry in its two aspects: *intentio* as the act of intending and the *intentum* which is intended and the correlation between the two. As objective contents of consciousness intentionality refers to the matters themselves, or the “matter to be thought,” *Zur Sachen Selbst!* — as the phenomenological slogan put it. This means not just “returning to things”, but in a much broader sense returning to “world”, that is, “things as they are given in place and in relation to ourselves”.²⁴⁴ However, to reach “things themselves” is not a simple matter to achieve, instead, already in 1921, Heidegger writes that “the way leading to ‘things themselves’ treated in philosophy is a long one.” This is so because access to “things themselves” requires “a genuine confrontation with the history that we ourselves ‘are’.”²⁴⁵

In his later summer semester 1925 lecture course we read: “the phenomenological maxim ‘*to the matters themselves*’ is addressed against construction and free-floating questioning in traditional concepts which have become more and more groundless.” And, further down, phenomenology is said to be basically descriptive, which means, an *accentuating articulation of what is in itself intuited*.²⁴⁶ And for this Heidegger found ample support in medieval thinking with its decisive emphasis on the content of knowledge: in medieval thinking “the value of the subject matter dominates over the value of the

²⁴¹ van Buren 1994, 100. Heidegger writes: “Mit dem *Ens* gewinne ich die erste bestimmtheit, und insofern jedes *Ens* ein Unum ist, *die erste ordnung* in die mannigfaltigen Fülle des gegenständlichen. *Bestimmtheit ist also etwas Ordnungshaftes am Gegebenen, sie macht es erfassbar, erkennbar, verstehbar.*” GA I, 224.

²⁴² GA 1, 410; van Buren 1994, 104; On the whole, Heidegger calls the distinction *rational/irrational*, “a disastrous pair of concepts”, GA 63, 45/36, as if rationality were something in itself, a self-conscious transcendental ego, as something utterly empty of subject matter, mere worldless calculation.

²⁴³ GA 63, 70/55

²⁴⁴ Malpas 2006, 55

²⁴⁵ GA 9, 5/4.

²⁴⁶ GA 20,103/76–107/78.

self.” [der Sach- (Object)wert dominiert der Ich- (Subjekt)wert: GA 1, 198]. This emphasis on the subject matter is ultimately based on Aristotelian-scholastic realism: both sensual (*sinnliche*) and suprasensual (*übersinnliche*, metaphysical or mathematical) worlds and their mutual relations are categorially ordered (GA 1, 229 and 255–56) and therefore fundamentally knowable realities: “simple apprehension espies the analogical distribution of an identical meaning (*ens commune*) differentiated in ‘each case’ (*je*) in accord with the ‘inherent differentiation of meaning coming from the domains of reality themselves’”, as Kisiel writes.²⁴⁷ This “coming from the domains of reality”, refers to reality as something in itself intentional, and thus, as we will soon see, the grounding root of “categories” as their *Formale Anzeige*, “formal indication.”

II.4. Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle (PIA)

Kisiel describes the years 1921–24 of Heidegger as “confrontation of the ontological tradition”. And what Heidegger precisely was confronting was a tradition focused on Aristotle and not on Plato and/or Parmenides, who were both important precursors for that which reached its highest peak in the philosophy of Aristotle. “The great begins great, maintains itself in existence only through the free recurrence of greatness, and if it is great also comes to an end in greatness. So it is with the philosophy of the Greeks. It ended in greatness with Aristotle.”²⁴⁸

The above mentioned *destruction* must be understood not in a negative sense of destroying, rather, it refers to a methodological tool in the positive sense of dismantling the tradition from the sediments of the history of interpretation; the word denotes to a de-structuring, digging deep down in the structures involved in the concepts of philosophical tradition and thus understanding them more profoundly. This project of destruction was first aimed at contemporary philosophy of Heidegger’s, namely, the phenomenology of Husserl. But soon after that it reached further back in history to the above described deconstruction of Greekanized Christianity and after that to the very root of philosophy in Greek thinking itself in Aristotle. Therefore, de-structuring and de-construction should actually be seen as a fundamental method of “doing” philosophy.

The word destruction was used already in the early KNS 1919 –course, referring to central Husserlian theoretical concepts like “intentionality”, “relation”, “*noesis* and *noema*”(in *Ideen*, 1913),²⁴⁹ “truth”,

²⁴⁷ Kisiel 1995, 27, GA 1, 256 “In each case (*je*) meine,” a sentence expressing soon the facticity of Dasein.

²⁴⁸ EM, 12

²⁴⁹ For various interpretations of Husserl’s *Noema*, see Robert Solomon 1977.

“content”, “enactment”, “sense”, “being”, and so on, which were now to be taken back to *life in and for itself*. These fundamental Husserlian concepts were to be de-structured, which points to an ur-structure, a leap (*sprung*) into their primal source (*Ursprung*) and original givennes, that is, they are to be made transparent in the sense that philosophy may gain through them an access to their actual facticity in lived experience. What Husserl had developed in his purely theoretical attitude of being-directed toward objects in *noesis*, was a universal structure of reason, that is, intentionality as founding acts of all theoretical knowing. But now this is to be broadened to cover all directing-itself-toward, the whole of our everyday comportment in the world, including feelings of fear, hope or love and, indeed, any practical situation one may run into.²⁵⁰ Before any theoretical comportment we always already are in multiple intentional relations of lived experience in the surrounding worldhood of the world. And, therefore, “all knowing is only an appropriation and a form of realization of something which is already discovered by other primary comportments [like love and hate].²⁵¹ Intentionality is fully determined only as the belonging together of *intentio* (*noesis*) and *intentum* (*noema*)²⁵² in any lived experience. Thus Husserl fails to see that “the so-called logical comportments of thinking or objective theoretical knowing represent only a particular and narrow sphere within the domain of intentionality, and that the range of functions assigned to logic in no way exhausts the full sweep of intentionality”.²⁵³ For Husserl intentionality is still a structure of immanent consciousness along the lines of Descartes’s theory. Heidegger specifies: “Intentionality is not an ultimate explanation of the psychic but an initial approach toward overcoming the uncritical application of traditionally defined realities such as the psychic, consciousness, continuity of lived experience, reason.”²⁵⁴ Thus, here we see concretely what was briefly anticipated earlier as difference between Husserl’s “*consciousness of an intentional experience*” and Heidegger’s accent on the *being* towards which the intention directed, i.e., *apprehending the bodily given as it shows itself*. Therefore, the whole structure of intentionality should be viewed as the *reciprocal belonging-together of intention and intentum*. Therefore, here phenomenology is propounded as “a science of the self-world”, since factual life is enacted always necessarily in the situations of the self, that is, in the intentional relations of the self and the world. In the summer semester 1923 lectures Heidegger formulated: “Dasein is a *self* only in *itself*. It is, but as that which is *on-the-way to itself*.”²⁵⁵ This sense of being under way makes clear the enactment-sense of life, which Heidegger calls *Existenz*: “our *existence* [Existenz] in its particularity as pointing to the phenomenon of the ‘I am’, i.e., to the sense of being in this ‘I am’”, as we already quoted him commenting Jaspers (see above pp 60–62). This I am expresses itself in the experiences of the self, and further, the “form of the

²⁵⁰ GA 20, 61/45

²⁵¹ GA 20, 222/165

²⁵² Biemel 1977, 286-303.

²⁵³ GA 20, 106–07/78

²⁵⁴ GA 20, 63/47

²⁵⁵ GA 63, 17/13 “Dasein ist nur in ihm selbst.”

expression of the self is its situation. *I have myself* means: *the living situation is understandable*".²⁵⁶

The self is present in the expression of its situations and, therefore, the Heideggerian self is fundamentally situational and functional; a self revealing something of itself in the non-objective bodily experiences of sensibility, through which the world is experienced in its variety of meaningful encounters, not as a self-reflective consciousness of Descartes or Husserl, incarcerated in its immanence.

Already in the early lecture course of 1919 Husserl's theoretically appropriated attitude of intentionality is said to be *Ent-leben*, "un-living" or "deliving of practical lived experience".²⁵⁷ Instead, the Heideggerian self is always a "*jewiliges Selbstsein*", a self for a while at a particular time; having itself understandingly in and through its situations (WS 1919–20). Instead of *deliving* in intellectual theoretical constructions, "the self lives in ever new and newly interpenetrating, and therefore, unclosable situations".²⁵⁸ This self or "I" can not be separated from its situational experiences, it is not an entity upon which experiences are added, on the contrary, each situational moment expresses and articulates the being-in-the-world of the self. This is what he called in WS 1920-21 course on Religion "*the Christian life experience*" expressed in the Pauline exhortation "let us be awake and sober", and this in order to gain "a genuine and primordial relationship to history, which is to be explicated from out of our own historical situation and facticity".²⁵⁹ It is the each *jeweiligen* present situation which is the only possible source for any history, religiosity or philosophy. And it is not merely a question of seeing (*hinsehen*) but of an actual *Hingabe*, a perceptive submission, "a suffering" as passing through an experience of what is situationally given. It is this our own historical situation as being-in-the-world which is here seen as the "source" of understanding and which Heidegger calls in his following Aristotle-Introduction "the hermeneutical situation".

With this Introduction we are finally getting into Heidegger's actual reading of Aristotle. This early text, which Heidegger composed hastily in 1922 as an explanation of his philosophical commitments and a plan for his future work on Aristotle is actually his application for a junior position in philosophy at the Marburg University, a job for which he was nominated the next year. However, this text anticipates several themes of *Being and Time*, which was originally planned to be a book on Aristotle. In these early perusals of Heidegger "Aristotle really started to speak for us as a contemporary", as Gadamer hails this script. Here we meet Aristotle as a philosopher for the 20th century and not as a

²⁵⁶ GA 58, 166

²⁵⁷ GA 56/57 74, 112, 211; van Buren 1994, 266

²⁵⁸ GA 58, 62

²⁵⁹ GA 60, 125/89

historical figure, as Heidegger is slowly developing his own philosophical and phenomenological anthropology based on Aristotle.²⁶⁰ What Heidegger found particularly in Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Rhetorics* was in full resonance with his "*facticity of Dasein*". And, as Gadamer also tells, Heidegger's lecture course on the Book VI of the *Nichomachean Ethics* was unforgettable in its fundamental analysis of Aristotle's practical reason, *phronesis*, as the basic light and guidance of human everyday existence. And, indeed, this brief but very tense paper is full of later Gadamerian themes and one can well believe him as he says that almost each sentence brought him at that time new insights. The story of this manuscript is interesting in itself as the text was lost during the world war and by chance another copy of it was found and first edited in 1989 in the *Dilthey Jahrbuch* (Bd.6).

Broadly speaking, this Aristotle -project could be seen as an original mixture of primal Christian experience of temporality, and, Husserlian phenomenology reshaped by Heidegger on the lines described above as "ontological phenomenology", and ancient Aristotelian practical philosophy. In SS 1925 he writes: Phenomenology radicalized in its ownmost possibility is nothing but the questioning of Plato and Aristotle brought back to life: *the repetition, the retaking of the beginning of our scientific philosophy*.²⁶¹ —Back to life, that means back to the hermeneutical situation. This refers to "the situation of the interpretation, of the understanding appropriation of the past, [which] is always the situation of a living present."²⁶² Genuine philosophical research "is something that a 'time' [...] can never borrow from another," nor can any interpretation take away from future the burden of radical questioning. All interpretation is always situated in a "living present" [*kairós*]. Therefore, as it was still too early for Heidegger to write a full work on Phenomenological interpretations of Aristotle, what Heidegger here, in this 1922 manuscript gets into, is the introduction to the "hermeneutic situation" in which Aristotle's texts are to be interpreted according the work he has been carrying on during the previous three years. Therefore it has an introduction, entitled "Indication of the Hermeneutic situation". Here we also have clearly stated the double methodological program of a research for *fundamental ontology* and a destruction of the history of ontology (Kisiel). And, indeed, in this paper

²⁶⁰ Gadamer 1989, *Dilthey Jahrbuch*, 230

²⁶¹ GA 20, 184/136 Quoted in our Introduction p.12. Similarly, almost forty years later, in 1963 Heidegger wrote: "What occurs for the phenomenology of the acts of consciousness as the self-manifestation of phenomena is thought more originally by Aristotle and in all Greek thinking and existence as *alétheia*, as the unconcealedness of what is present, its being revealed, its showing itself. That which phenomenological investigations rediscovered as the supporting attitude of thought proves to be the fundamental trait of Greek thinking, if not indeed of philosophy as such." SD 87, engl.tr J.Stambaugh 1972, 79.

²⁶² PIA 237/358 "Die Situation der Auslegung, als verstehenden Aneignung des Vergangenen, ist immer solche einer lebendigen Gegenwart." [cf. SZ 397]

many central themes of his later writings are introduced for the first time; no wonder Kisiel calls the paper both “the zero-point of Being and Time” and Heidegger’s breakthrough to his magnum opus.²⁶³

“The object of philosophical research is factual human Dasein as it is interrogated with respect to its Being-character.” Philosophical questions are not externally added on this factual life, rather this facticity finds its expression and awareness in genuine philosophical questions. Therefore, philosophy’s own history can provide relevant questions only by “forcing the present back upon itself so that it may heighten what is questionable”. Philosophical questioning is therefore a particular “how” of factual life. Critique of history is always but a *critique* of the present: the past, as Heidegger’s marginal note has it, is encountered in existence not as something to be viewed but to be borne.... It is not a matter of ‘doing’ history but of ‘being’ it.”²⁶⁴ History is constantly affecting us, burdening us in the present, without actually being able to be it. “To *understand* means not simply to accept established knowledge, but rather to repeat primordially that which is understood in terms of its own situation and for that situation.”²⁶⁵

But if philosophy is to be based on hermeneutics of facticity, that is, the facticity of one’s own time and generation, why is this research-paper called *Phenomenological Interpretation with Respect to Aristotle*? Heidegger answers: “For the most part, the philosophy of today’s situation moves inauthentically within *Greek* conceptuality, and indeed within a conceptuality which has been pervaded by a chain of diverse interpretations. The basic concepts have lost their primordial functions of expression, functions which are particularly suited to particularly experienced regions of objects.... These basic concepts still carry with them a part of the genuine tradition of their primordial meaning, insofar as there is still detectable in them the meaning-direction which goes back to their objective source. By beginning with the idea of human being, the ideals of life, and representations of the Being of human life, the philosophy of today’s situation moves within off-shoots of basic experiences which have been temporalized by Greek ethics and above all by the Christian idea of the human being and of human dasein.”²⁶⁶ It is this complex conceptual and ideational tradition which must be confronted by way of “dismantling return [*im abbauenden Rückgang*] towards the primordial motive sources of explication.” This path of destruction [*dem Wege der Destruktion*] is headed towards the authentic present, not to illustrating how things were earlier, but as making the tradition transparent

²⁶³ Kisiel 1995, 250, 252

²⁶⁴ “*Kritik der Geschichte heist immer nur Kritik der Gegenwart*.” PIA, 239/360; Kisiel 1995, 254

²⁶⁵ “... das Verstandene im Sinne der eigensten Situation und für diese ursprünglich wiederholen.” PIA 239/360

²⁶⁶ PIA, 249/371

(*Durchsichtig*) for the actual situation of the present, making its question pertinent to today's facticity. This conglomerate tradition is here referred to as *Greek-Christian interpretation of life*. This basis is behind the philosophical anthropology of Kant as well as German Idealism. Fichte, Shelling and Hegel start from theology and borrow from it the basic impulses for their speculation. This theology is rooted in Reformation theology and Luther's primordially appropriated [*zugeeignet*] interpretations of Paul and of Augustine, and from his simultaneous confrontation with late-Scholastic theology.

The late-Scholastic theology, again, operates with the conceptual means which Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure provided for theology. But the Dasein of life which is determined in advance within these theological problem-areas is based on Aristotelian "Physics", "Psychology", "Ethics", and "Ontology"; and thus the basic Aristotelian doctrines are treated according to particular selection and interpretation.²⁶⁷ And, as we have already seen via Augustine, the neo-Platonic influences on early Patristic theology also betray their origin in Aristotle—and this, as Heidegger remarks, to a greater extent than is ordinarily assumed. Now, the important thing is to highlight the central ontological and logical structures within each of the decisive turning points of the history of western anthropology by way of primordial return to the sources. This task can be achieved only if a concrete interpretation of the Aristotelian philosophy is made available; this interpretation must be oriented according to the problem of facticity, i.e. according to a *radical phenomenological anthropology*.²⁶⁸ This, then, is the plan for Heidegger's forthcoming years of study.

What Heidegger here means with anthropology is a clarification of the character of *Being-human* (*das Menschsein*), that is, how is "*Being-in-life*" experienced and interpreted in the philosophy of Aristotle and how is it conceptually explicated. Heidegger calls this the "guiding question" in his forthcoming interpretations of Aristotle. Is this Aristotelian sense of Being taken from a "pure basic experience of just this object and its Being [in its facticity], [...]" or is it subject to a sense of Being which is fixed as something which relates to it archontically".²⁶⁹ That is, do we get the meant sense of being in the very act of doing philosophy, or is it something accepted and taken over from tradition or is it a purely formal construction? And Heidegger wants to go still further and simply ask, "What does Being mean for Aristotle in general; how is it accessible, graspable and determinable?"²⁷⁰ It is clearly this basic question that had been haunting him already some years by the writing of this 1922 script. For example

²⁶⁷ PIA 250/372

²⁶⁸ PIA 251/373

²⁶⁹ PIA 252/374.

²⁷⁰ *Was besagt überhaupt Sein für Aristoteles, wie ist es zugänglich, fassbar und bestimmbar?* PIA 253.

the 1921 course on Aristotle's *De Anima* is clearly centered more on the Book 7 of the *Metaphysics* and the problem of defining the fundamental word *ousía*, more than entering the specific problematic of the *DA*. And his interest is focused on the typical Aristotelian way of expressing the *ousíai* in concrete ontological terms, thus underlining the closeness of expressing and having something, that is, heading towards the "grounds of having something" (the *aition tou einai*, the *enuparkhon*, *Met* 5.8, 1017 b15), this is where we first "have" things and therefore being. And, indeed, it seems we always somehow have the things beforehand already there when we just begin to make sense of them, that is, we already are to some extent familiar with them before we can clearly intuit them. In the WS 1921-22 he writes "the object in the respective definitory determination must be drawn out of the mode *in which the object is originally accessible*."²⁷¹ This *pre-having* is not a thematic problem in Aristotle as he is based on the obvious everyday use of the Greek language: the first dictionary definition of *ousía* is *Habe*, belongings, property. But Aristotle uses in a similar vein the expression *having an assumption* (to *ékhein upolêpsin*, *Met* 1.1, 981 a8), derived "from our going about our business with things". In an exemplary case of Aristotle's discussion on "wisdom", he "develops his own *Vorhabe* (i.e. his *upólêpseis*) on the nature of philosophical inquiry by first explicating what we 'consider and assume' about 'who is wiser', in order then to outline the five 'received' assumptions regarding the wise as such (982 a7 ff.), finally subjecting them to critical examination in order to establish something definitive about the nature and goals of philosophy."²⁷² It is to these mentioned basic texts of the *Metaphysics* that Heidegger returns again and again during the coming years of Aristotelian studies.

During these early years of studying both Husserl and Aristotle, Heidegger "Arrives at the theses that the character of philosophical knowledge since the Greeks has been defined by intuition".²⁷³ This is of course most obvious in Husserl's central *Wesensanschauung* as focusing on eidetic essences. But now, through his Aristotle studies, Heidegger, referring particularly to his account on different kinds of truth: *hê psúkhê alêtheuein*, the different ways in which "the soul truly" (Kisiel 246) in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 6, claims that this intuition is merely one, and not even a fundamental access to knowledge. Through these readings of Aristotle Heidegger comes to different modes of access to knowledge in which the phenomena of historical encounter rather than psychological experience are decisive. On the other hand, it is precisely these years (1922/23) that Heidegger had a "flash of genius" (*Geistesblitz*, as he repeatedly calls it in his conversations with Otto Pöggeler) in which he first saw the theme of what was to become his life's work: "*ousía* for the Greeks means constant presence, and is oriented toward

²⁷¹ GA 61, 19/17

²⁷² Kisiel 1995, 141.

²⁷³ Kisiel 1995, 229.

only one dimension of time, the present, after the model of things ‘present at hand’ (*Vorhandenheit*).²⁷⁴ It seems that the earliest usage of this “constant presence” (*ständige Anwesenheit*) appears in the course *Einführung in die Phänomenologische Forschung*, a lecture course during winter 1923/24 (GA 17, pp.8, 44), but, as Minca notes, Heidegger’s way to this translation begins already in his first so-called KNS 1919 seminar and that the PIA under discussion here is an important stage in this process.²⁷⁵

In this 1922 manuscript Heidegger simply states the later much discussed basic conviction that “the object-field that provides the primordial sense of Being [for Aristotle] is the object-field of those objects which are *produced* (*Hergestellt*, literally to “put” or “place” something “here”). Thus, that towards which the primordial experience of Being is directed is not the Being-field of *things* as a kind of object which is grasped in a *theoretical* and fact-like manner but rather the world which is encountered in the dealings which produce, perform and make use of. Greek being means *Being-produced*.

That which is finished in the movement of the dealings of production (*poiêsis*), that which has arrived at its Being-present-at-hand [*Vorhandensein*], available for a use-tendency, is that which is”.²⁷⁶ Here we have the basic Heideggerian conviction that being, that which is, is not a theoretical construction but has its primary sense in “that which is available for use in one’s surroundings”: in the everyday Greek language, as already mentioned, the word *ousía* means *property, goods and possessions* [*Es bedeutet die habe*].²⁷⁷

Usually *ousía* is translated into English as “substance”, a word conveying indeed one sense of the Greek word as “sub-stare”, “that which stands under” (*hupokeímenon*), however, though certainly one “being-character” of *ousía*, this “sub-stare” is not related to the verb “to be” (*eînai*, of which *ousía* is the singular feminine participial form), and, therefore, the translation misses the essential connection to ontology. Another often used (Aubenque) translation for *ousía* is “essence” from the Latin *essentia*, a word perhaps etymologically closer to the Greek *ousía* but which fails to express the concreteness involved in the word as a thing of matter and form and, furthermore, this translation might cause confusion with the usual (though not very good, as we already know through Monte Johnson) rendering

²⁷⁴ Kisiel 1995, 230

²⁷⁵ Minca 2006, 54

²⁷⁶ PIA 253/375

²⁷⁷ PIA 253/375

of the *to ti ên einai* as “essence”. I will soon come back to the principally ambiguous sense of the word *ousía*, an ambiguity demanded “from the matter out of itself”, as Heidegger says.²⁷⁸

However, the above noted non-theoretical origin of the contextual sense of being, a sense derived from the everyday situational relatedness of beings in the surrounding world, is essential in the Heideggerian understanding of all Greek thinking. The Greeks were not thinking in a vacuum. The sense of being is not a theoretical construction, not a construction of human fantasy or imagination. Rather, it is derived from the everyday “pre-philosophical” encounter with being as the object of dealings, one’s possessions, house and home, that which is constantly close by and present, *estate* [*Anwesen, ständige Anwesenheit*].²⁷⁹ The customary meaning is to be taken as a guide for further perusals, and Heidegger refers to this use of the word *ousía* (as *res familiaris* in Bonitz 1548 a 8 sqq.) in *Politics*, *Nichomachean Ethics* and the *Rhetorics*, and the last-mentioned is quoted (*Rhet II 13, 1389 b28*):

“property/possessions are a necessity of life” (*én gár ti tôn anankaíôn hê ousía*).²⁸⁰ “*Ousía* is a being that is *there for me in an emphatic way*, in such a way that I can use it, that it is at my disposal. It is that being with which I have to do in an everyday way, that which is there in my everyday dealings with the world, as well as when I engage in science.”²⁸¹ **Understanding of being (*Seinsverständnis*) is thus based on an original interpretation of being-experience as being-available and present, as being-there (*Seinserfahrung als Da-sein*), experience of the how of beings (*im Wie dieses eigentlichen Da*).** “The how of being refers to *being there in the manner of being-available*. This suggests that from the outset being, for the Greeks, means *being there (Da-sein)*”.²⁸² From this basic sense of being all further clarification has to move in the direction of the question: what does *there* mean? The clarification of this *there-character* makes the being of beings visible for us in the sense that Greeks saw it. But, then again, Plato would disagree with Aristotle here and, as Heidegger says, “these principles are programmatically the genuine *counter-thrust to Platonic philosophy*. Aristotle says: I must have *ground* under my feet, a ground that is there in an immediate self-evidence, if I am to get at being. I cannot, in fantasy, hold myself to a definite concept of being and then speculate.”²⁸³ Thus, *ousía*, denotes a fundamental being-experience as being-there, a non-theoretical worldly being-there, which is also the very basis of Heideggerian thinking.²⁸⁴ To make Heidegger’s quite original approach to such fundamental historically loaded concepts of philosophy more concrete I will quote a well-known example from a course already

²⁷⁸ GA 18, 23/17

²⁷⁹ GA 17. 8 and 44 and GA 31 § 7

²⁸⁰ GA 18, 345/233; In the same sense of the word Socrates speaks of Cephalus as being defined by his “external wealth and belongings”, *Republic* 329e

²⁸¹ GA 18, 25/19: “*Ousia ist ein solches Seiende, das in einer betonten Weise für mich da ist, so dass ich es brauchen kann, dass es mir zur Verfügung steht, mit dem ich tagtäglich zu tun habe, dasjenige Seiende, das in meinem tagtäglichen Umgang mit der Welt da ist, auch wenn ich Wissenschaft treibe...*”

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ GA 18, 37/27

²⁸⁴ See Minca 2006, 54-55

discussed which he held in winter 1923-24, with the title *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. To illustrate what the Greeks understood with *ousía* as the above *Seinserfahrung als Da-sein*, an encounter, our being involved with things already there, a “being-experience as being available.” With his concrete example Heidegger wants to avoid an already theorized attitude with its ready-made distinctions into subjects and objects, consciousness and being. Instead, He’s example comes from his own everyday life, a *res familiaris*: the table (GA 63, 90/69):

What is there in *the* room there at home is *the* table (not “a” table among many other tables in other rooms and houses) at which one sits *in order to* write, have a meal, sew, play. Everyone sees this right away, e.g. during a visit: it is a writing-table, a dining table, a sewing table—such is the primary way in which it is being encountered in itself. This characteristic of “in order to do something” is not merely imposed on the table by relating and assimilating it to something else which it is not. Its standing there in the room means: Playing this role in such and such characteristic use. This and that about it is “impractical,” unsuitable. That part is damaged. It now stands in a better spot in the room than before—there’s better lighting, for example.... Here and there it shows lines —the boys like to busy themselves at the table. These lines are not just interruptions in the paint, but rather: it was the boys and it still is. This side is not the east side, and this narrow side is so many cm. shorter than the other, but rather the one at which my wife sits in the evening when she wants to stay up and read, there at the table we had such and such a discussion that time, there that decision was made with a *friend* that time, there that *work* written that time, there that *holiday* celebrated that time. That is the table—as such it is there in the temporality of everydayness.

In a course few years earlier (1919) Heidegger called this happening and encountering a world as “worlding” of the world (*es weltet*, see above n85 and p.77) where something is “disclosed” or “unconcealed” or encountered in everchanging worlds. Similarly, in 1928 he wrote: “World never is, but *worlds* (*Welt ist nie, sondern weltet*).” In our everyday dealings we are not engaged with objects or “representations”, sensory stimulations etc., instead we always already are in a world, the very worlds of our own existence. And this world is that where philosophy can take place and where all thinking has always had its origin, its determining “ground,” the origin of being, the “origin” (*arkhê*) from whence something emerges, as he said some 20 years later (GA 51, 108/92-93). And, to further enlighten this ground as philosophy, emerging from (*ex ôn*) means also *genesis*, presencing, emergence. Here the question is of *ousía*, “a being that is there for me in an emphatic way” (GA 18, 25/19).

“It is”, as Heidegger further notes, “no accident that the Greek designation for the things that they first encounter is *pragmata*, ‘beings with which one constantly has to do’ [thus in “praxis”], and *khrêmata*,

‘what is taken into use.’ They refer to the basic meaning of *ousía*.²⁸⁵ Thus, there is a decisive double-sense in the ordinary everyday sense of being for the Greeks which is then carried over into philosophy, or—which philosophy took from this pre-philosophical usage (later in GA 24 §22 called by Heidegger as *the Ontological Difference*): the word *ousía* stands for both a being and its *way of being* (*Seiendes im Wie seines Seins*). “When one uses the term *ousía*, still in its customary meaning, a *definite concept of being* is meant. *Ousía* as *eînai*, ‘being,’ has its fully determinate meaning of being that arises out of primary comprehension that the Greeks have of the beings that they initially encounter. And this primary sense of being is that which still resonates in the terminological meaning.”²⁸⁶ Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics* (*Met* VII 1, 1028 b2) “the old question: ‘*tí tò ón*’: ‘What is the Being?’ (*Was ist das Seiende?*) is really the question concerning the being of beings: ‘*tís ê ousía*’ (*Sein des Seienden*).”²⁸⁷

One of the meanings of *ousía* intends *beings themselves*. In his *Metaphysics*, Book 7, Ch.2, Aristotle says “the being of beings shows itself openly in *sômata*”. Such *sômata* are not only bodily things but also animals, trees, earth, water, air, fire [*tà fusiká*], stars, the sun and the moon and even the heaven (*ouranós*) and the divine (*daimônia*). These beings of our everyday life is where *ousía* according to Aristotle shows (*phanerôtata*) itself, is most obvious for us to see, beings belong to that which is perceived in *aísthêsis*. This “*aísthêsis* means the “perceiving” in the natural mode, a perceiving distinguished by the fact that the senses are implicated in it by providing its access.”²⁸⁸

In the Chapter 8 of Book 5 of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle enumerates these *sômata* to introduce the ground from which the entire investigation of the being of beings is initiated. The traditional title of this Book *Delta* of the *Metaphysics* is “*pollakhôs legómena*”, referring to the “many ways” in which being is said: the word *ousía* means many things, it is, as noted, an ambiguous term, which, according to Heidegger is not “slackness in terminology, but rather *indicates the richness and unmastered urgency of the problems themselves*.”²⁸⁹ “The Greek *ousía tou óntos* means in translation: “the beingness of beings (*Seiendheit des seienden*)”, but, as Heidegger also notes, “beingness” is a very *artificial* linguistic form that occurs only in the sphere of philosophical reflection. On the other hand, the Greek *ousía* was by no means an artificial construction, quite the contrary.

In his 1924 lecture course (GA 18) Heidegger goes through the five basic characters of Aristotle’s “beingness,” *ousía* as *Dasein*, as a determinate conception of the “there”. The first (1) being-character

²⁸⁵ GA 18, 25/19

²⁸⁶ GA 18, 26/20

²⁸⁷ GA 18, 26/19

²⁸⁸ GA 18 29/21

²⁸⁹ GA 31, §7b, /34

of “simple bodies” (*haplâ sômata*) is designated by Aristotle as the above mentioned *hypokeimenon* (*Met V 8, 1017 b 13*), translated into Latin as *Sub-stantia*: beings like animals, plants, humans, mountains, and the sun are such that they already “lie there”, “in advance” (*hypo*); something is already there at the outset, the *substratum*. The being of beings has the character of *being-at-hand* (*Vor-handensein*).

The second (2) enlisted being-character is “that which is also at hand therein” (*aítion enupárkhon*, “Ursache des Seins”)²⁹⁰. The “soul” (*psukhê*) is such a being-character. “The soul is also at hand therein in such a way that it also constitutes the specific being of that which we call living (*dzôê*).” In the *DA III 3, 427 a17* Aristotle gives two basic aspects of the soul as *krínein* and *kinein*, as “separating” from something other, orienting itself in a world, and, as “moving” itself therein. This being-character constitutes “the aspect of a living thing, that is, a way of being in the sense of being-in-the world”, “*im Sinne des In-einer-Welt-Seins*”.²⁹¹ The human being is in the world in the sense that he has his world and he has his world insofar as he knows his way around in it. This is a completely different character of being-there from that of merely being at-hand, say, of sticks, stones and trees. When the soul is said to be *ousía*, it refers to a distinctive mode of being, namely the mode of the living.

The third (3) enlisted being-character is *mórion enupárkhon* (“*mitvorhandenen Teile*” co-given parts, “immanent parts”, as the Loeb edition translates), exemplified by the surface of the body. If the surface is removed the body is no longer there. The surface, then, constitutes the being-there of a body, just as the line constitutes the possible being-there of a surface. This being-character is described also as *horídzon* “the circumscribed”. This “having the limit (*Grernzhaftigkeit*) is for the Greeks a completely fundamental character of the being-there (*des Da*) of beings”—but also so for Ibn ‘Arabi (see above n.415 and n.509). For Aristotle this “*horizon*” “designates the being” (*sêmainon tóde ti*, *Met V 8, 1017 b 18*), it determines and makes a thing visible and apprehensible as “that there”. The concept of limit is fundamental also in understanding movement and being produced (*Hergestelltsein*, as *télos*).

The fourth (4) enlisted being-character in Book *Delta* of the *Metaphysics* is the important philosophical term in itself, the *tò tí ên einai* with which we have already dealt through Monte Johnson and Aristotle’s teleological concepts. There it was translated literally as “the what it was to be”, or in a more explanatory sense as “that which something [always or all along] was to be”.²⁹² This was said to be the

²⁹⁰ In the Sophist Heidegger gives the following clarification of this “*hypo*”: ‘*hypokeimenon*’, ‘*hypomenon*’, ‘*hyparkhon*’. “These are expressions which indicate that something is already there at the outset; ‘*hypokeimenon*’, the substratum; ‘*hypomenon*’ that which always remains there; ‘*hyparkhon*’ that which is already there from the very outset in such a way that it dominates. *Hyparkhein* applies to the Being of the *arkhê*” GA 19, 156/107

²⁹¹ GA 18, 30-31/22-23 Being-in as *Befindlichkeit*, a situation and how one finds oneself situated, disposed. This most important term in the SZ goes back to Aristotle’s Philosophical lexicon (*MetV.*) and the term *diathesis* (1022 b2): “a kind of position, as is indeed clear from the word “disposition.”

²⁹² Johnson 2005, 48, above p.8 and 103

object of definition (*horismós*, limitation), that is, “that being-character on the basis of which *logos* as *horismós* addresses beings” (*Met* V 8, 1017 b22). This *horismós* is “making one familiar with a being in its being (*ousía*).”²⁹³ Therefore, Heidegger says that this being-character is in particular the topic of definition, *horismós*.

And like Johnson referred to the particularity of what something “always or all along was to be”, here Heidegger refers to this “what-being as it was already (*das, was es schon war zu sein*), from which it stems (*arkhê*) in its being, with respect to its *descent* (*génos*), its having come into being there.”²⁹⁴ That is, coming from its *arkhê* into its *je-weilige Da-seiende*, its now being-there.²⁹⁵ And in this we are already amidst the fundamental question of movement, into which we will not specifically enter in this study (see however Ch.II.5 above). This question is amply treated in Walter Brogan’s illuminating study on Heidegger and Aristotle (2005).

Nevertheless, Aristotle says (*Met* V 8, 2017 b21–22): “*tò tí ên einai* is the ‘being of a particular’, *ousía ekastou*, that is, “the substance of each thing”, as Johnson renders the sentence. Heidegger points that “*ekás* means ‘far’; *ekastou* means ‘what is particular’ insofar as I linger with it, insofar as I see it at a certain distance. What is particular is precisely not what is seen initially and directly, but is accessible only when I take a certain distance from it...”²⁹⁶ A few lines further down he points out that familiar objects are not really there for me; I overlook them in seeing beyond them. They do not have the character of presence; they are altogether too everyday. They sort of disappear from my everyday being-there. This explains well the “particularity” Aristotle is here referring to with his cumbersome phrase “that which something was to be”. To perceive this particularity of being-there requires a taking of a distance of our everyday matters in order to see them in their determined character of *tò tí ên einai*.

Having briefly distinguished these four modes Aristotle next notes two basic modes in which *ousía* is used: (1) that which is already there for every dealing with it and (2) beings about which I say “that there”, *khôriston*, standing “in its own place”, having at hand “independently” (*Met* V 8, 1017 b23 sqq.). And it is this “standing there”, this “independence” which brings about yet one mode of being into discussion, which is now expressed by the shape (*morphê*) and form/looks (*eidos*), “that which is seen, sighted”, the “look”, the “appearing”, the “outer appearance” (*Aussehen*) of a being. That which is sighted is in Greek the *eidos*, which through Plato and Aristotle becomes the nonsensible idea or primary form (*morphê*). This is the *form* towards which the particular is descending as its fulfillment from that what it “always or all-along” was. And this *eidos* is the fifth (5) enlisted being-character of

²⁹³ GA 18, 17/14

²⁹⁴ GA 18, 32/23

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ GA 18 32/24

Aristotle (*Met* V 8, 1017 b26). “Already, for Aristotle, *eidos* has “species” as its meaning. Why it means “species,” and why *génos* means ‘genus’ is not understood if one does not know that *eidos* is an entirely determinate being-character”.²⁹⁷ This is a “way of being toward the world which lets us encounter entities within the world merely in their *outward appearance (eidos)*... [...] It takes over an ‘aspect’ [*Gesichtspunkt*] in advance from the entity which it encounters. Such looking-at itself enters the mode of dwelling autonomously alongside entities within the world.” (SZ 61) When an architect is planning a house he first lives and operates in the *eidos* of the house, in the way it looks. (cf. *Met* VII.7, 1032 b13) The “look” [*eidos*<*Fídô* > lat. *video*< Snskr.*veda*] implies here the becoming of a making, a having been shaped and, therefore, connects it as a mode of being to *ousía*, the *goods of the house-hold*. And, as it is connected to the “what the thing all along already was” (*tì tò ên einai*) it is also an *aition*, *die Ursache*, the cause, the nonsensible and primary form in the genesis of beings, making finally up for example a house.

In the early text of PIA Heidegger speaks about “circumspection” [*Umsicht/Sichumsehen*] as a concerned [*cura*] mode of beholding the givens, of being oriented towards what in entity is there [*ist da*] and what is signified as such and such; “the world is encountered in the character of significance [*Bedeutsamkeit*].” “In the care of observing, of curiosity (*Neugier; cura curiositas*), the world is there, not as the With-what of the routine-directive dealings, but rather merely with regard to its *appearance* [*Aussehen*].”²⁹⁸ Here we again come to “seeing/intuition” as the basic feature of philosophy. And, as McNeill writes, “Only because the Greeks implicitly understood the being or givennes of beings as *presence*, could the *eidos*, as that which can be most constantly present amidst the flux of things, come to dominate over the event of unconcealment as such, determining the unconcealment of what appears.”²⁹⁹

However, as Kisiel rightly notes, “In actual fact, the starting point [from initial orientation of *aesthesis*] of this progression [to the pure beholding, *theôrein*, of philosophy], understood as human development, is really *empeiría*, that ‘experience’ made thick and temporally taut (and taught) by memory (*Met* I 1, 980 b28).”³⁰⁰ This makes possible the human being in the world in the way that he knows his way around in it, as was already noted. “Getting around” implies both “know-how” and coping with the world. This boils down to a fundamental connection making *empeiria* possible: “as soon as this, then

²⁹⁷ GA 18, 34–35/25–26

²⁹⁸ PIA 241/363 It is worth noting that here there is no trace of the later central (SZ §36) distinction between mere looking-at in the everyday sense of curiosity to merely arrive at a “having-seen” and the deeper scientific or philosophical beholding through *cura* that desires to see a more unconcealed truth of things.

²⁹⁹ McNeill 1999, 9 ”Unconcealment” being here the literal translation of the Greek word for truth, *alêtheia*.

³⁰⁰ Kisiel 1995, 239

that”. That is, what is required for *empeiria* is memory, retention; the ability to keep in mind a certain this while something new is taking place, the simultaneity of what is present and what has been (the *hama* in *Met IX 6*, 1048 b 23), that is: *to be in time*, to be in transition: “we perceive time and movement together”, as Aristotle says in *Phys IV 11*, 219 a 3³⁰¹ This word *hama* means together *at the same time*. “Through this word”, as Walter Brogan writes, Aristotle is able to articulate the structure of the being of change.”³⁰² Therefore, those who are experienced, “Those who have got used to certain procedure can decide *perì ékasta*, about the particulars, about every step, and have an understanding of how the *érga* (*functions*, the perfections to be achieved) are to be carried out” (*EN X 9*, 1181a19 sqq., see GA 19, §11b).

Using the example of Minca (2006, 61) of the hidden movement of becoming: the Greeks defined the human being as “a living thing that (as living) has language” (*dzôon logon ékhon*). Starting from the first part of the definition we begin a genesis, a descent from a human being as a living thing (that is, life as a mode of being, here the *arkhê*), namely, a being in the above listed second (2) sense of *ousía*, as a living being in the sense of being-in-the world. From this we then proceed to human specific feature of “having language” and thereby come forth to the specific complete form or looks (5) of the human being as a being *having* language (*lógon ékhon*), this particular living human being endowed with the gift of language and speech with which he knows his way around in the world. “*The being-in-the-world of the human being is determined in its ground through speaking.*”

Furthermore, it is precisely this human specific possession of language which works as a foundation for “being-with-one-another” in a shared *Umwelt*, as, according to Aristotle (*Pol I 2*, 1253 a9 sqq.), it is “through language the human beings can make manifest that which is beneficial and what is harmful, and thereby the proper and improper too. [...] The being-with-one-another of such beings (i.e. beings that are in the world in such a way that they speak with it) makes for household and *polis*.”³⁰³ This accentuates the fundamentality of the human “having of language” as both his particular being-there and his particular being-with-one-another as communicating, refuting, and confronting.

In this process of coming from “its what it already was” into its defined particularity (the *lógos* as *horismos*), the guiding – though latent – being-character according to Heidegger is the accomplished and completed being in its being ready, being in its end (*télos*). Here we have the basic structure of all production as such, starting from the *arkhe/genos* and going through a process changes into its actual

³⁰¹ GA 24 §19, 357/253

³⁰² Brogan 2005, 76

³⁰³ GA 18, 46–7/33

“looks” (*eidos*) as a ready-made something. This turning into something as the indigenous end is what rules all becoming.

To sum up these more or less transparent five listed being-characters of the Greek word *ousía*, one can say that being-there means primarily *presence, present* (*Gegenwertigkeit, Gegenwart*), and, secondly, *being-complete, completedness* (*Fertigsein, die Fertigkeit*). Here this “presence”, “*present-being-that-is-there*”, “possessions and goods” is the fundamental starting-point. But we must further understand that the *there* indicates a *having-come-into-the-there*, and specifically, having-come *through production* (*Her-stellung, Her ist ein bestimmtes Da*), a production bringing into the there, into the present, and it is only now that we have “the genuine sense of *poiêsis*: *being-pro-duced* and *being-there-completed, having-come-to-the-end. Telos=peras*. These are clues for the basic sense of Greek ontology.”³⁰⁴

Certainly all artefacts (*pragmata/khrêmata*) produced from various raw-materials into, say a usable tool (*tekhnê on*), are not the same as *ta fúsei onta*, as generated beings. The latter are “that which is there in the producing of itself, what does not require production by others. They are precisely there as the *pragmata* are. But their genesis again has this character of being-there: a plant grows up and brings forth another. The ground of beings is producing.”³⁰⁵

Thus the fundamental understanding of *being-there* and *being-pro-duced* are both grounded in the yet more fundamental *process of becoming*, of a change and motion (*kinesis*), the process of being-produced. Heidegger’s term *Hergestelltsein* tends to bring as a translation all of these elements together in the same way as does the word *entelecheia*, coined by Aristotle to express this dynamic and complex *having-come-to-an-end* (Johnson: a state of completion, see above, p. 21–23). In the PIA Heidegger gathers these elements by writing in a passage already partly quoted on the sense of being in Aristotle which is not something grasped theoretically but needs to be genuinely encountered in all productive dealings: “That which is finished [*Vertiggewordene*] in the movement of the dealings of production (*poiesis*), that which has arrived at its Being-present-at-hand [*Vor-handensein*], available for a use-tendency, is that which is. Being means *Being-produced* [*Hergestelltsein*] and, as something produced, it means something which is significant relative to some tendency of dealings; it means being-available [*Verfügbarsein*]”.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ See note 327 further above.

³⁰⁵ Ga 18 213–14/144

³⁰⁶ PIA 253/375

II.5. The hidden foundational book of Western philosophy

For the purposes of the present study the above (see p.79) term of Kisiel, “*hyletic return*,” is important. He was referring to “a strong emphasis on the material, the cause out of which (*tò èx où aitia*), as the individuating and reality-making principle, the “principle of material differentiation and individuation” in Heidegger’s thought. Kisiel calls this the *material* and therefore *mater-nal* thrust in Heidegger’s thinking. This *hyletic return* could well be a fundamental Aristotelian element in Heidegger’s thinking, even though it is most succinctly expressed in a seemingly anti-Aristotelian mode as: “Higher than actuality stands possibility” (*Höher als die Wirklichkeit steht die Möglichkeit*, SZ §7, 38). Indeed, we know that for Aristotle precisely actuality is always higher than possibility, “actuality is prior to potentiality” (*Met IX 8, 1049 b5*), as this passage is usually rendered. But in a 1928 lecture course Heidegger writes: “‘actuality is prior to possibility’—namely, precisely because possibility is higher than actuality.”³⁰⁷ Now, what is this supposed to mean? We know that Heidegger saw Aristotle as the fulfillment and the concrete refinement of the Philosophy which had gone on before [...]. And that this greatness is directly seen in terms of understanding the phenomenon of movement and its basic terms *dúnamis* and *energeia*.³⁰⁸ Before this statement Heidegger refers only briefly to the fact that “in ourselves possibility is higher than actuality, because with Dasein itself this being higher becomes existent. This being-higher of the possible, vis-à-vis the actual, is only existent when temporality temporalizes itself. If one, however, sees in the temporalization of temporality the being of what is more being than other beings, then it is true that *próteron enérgeia dunámeôs estin*: “actuality is prior to possibility”—namely, precisely because possibility is higher than actuality. If the reader finds this cryptic indeed, Ibn al-‘Arabí might come in for consolation: nor did the angels understand what God was talking about in referring to the elevated but concealed possibilities [i.e. “*Sein-können*”] of the first Dasein, Adam (see above III.3.2.2).

In trying to understand the seeming contradictory statements of Aristotle and Heidegger, I will end this study on Heidegger with a glance on a less obvious Aristotelian concept, a word that according to Heidegger “has as decisive a significance in Aristotle’s thought as does *entelécheia*” (GA 9 294/225), namely *stérêsis*, privation, lack of being, which, according to Aristotle “is a something like appearance” (“so etwas wie Aussehen.” Gr. *eidos pôs Phys II 1, 193 b20*)

³⁰⁷ GA 26, 279/216.

³⁰⁸ PIA, 251/373; GA 9, 283

I first look into the sense of Heidegger's formulation on the primacy of potentiality and then venture towards the direction of understanding how this could be the foundation for what Aristotle wrote. Heidegger himself admits that the questions of being as *dunamis and energeia* here at stake make up "the most difficult phenomenon of Aristotelian and Greek ontology." Here we have two basic modes in which beingness (*ousia*) is thought by Aristotle, and thought in a more original sense than in Plato's ontology.³⁰⁹ For Heidegger Aristotle was the first to successfully understand and conceptualize the phenomenon of movement and change in its widest sense (as *kinêsis* and *metabolê*). But here it is not "the particular motion from place to place that is under investigation, but rather how such beings that have the power to move themselves are. For these beings to be, movement must belong to their very way of being."³¹⁰ It is also precisely this Aristotelian understanding that Heidegger wants to deepen and widen, covering ultimately the "kinetic meaning of being-ness", as Sheehan refers to Heidegger's term *Ereignis*, a term central both in his early and late philosophy.³¹¹

Aristotle's understanding of movement is thoroughly grounded in the general "top-down" understanding of being in Greek philosophy, that is, starting from the conviction of the normativeness of the ideal and perfect. "Philosophy begins with a sense of the ultimate and perfect (how else would it know anything as imperfect?) and then works down from the ideal to the real, from the fully achieved to what is still on-the-way, from the whole to what participates in it," as Sheehan writes.³¹² We have already quoted through Johnson in Part I of this study an important passage of Aristotle's *DA* II 4, 415 b15, where he states concerning the "complete state" of a being, a "being-wholly-fulfilled" [*to teleion*, "completion"], having reached its "ownness" as completeness: "*the thing in a complete state [hé entelékhēia] constitutes the account of what exists in potentiality [toû dunámei]*." In the same instance Aristotle also compares reason creating for the sake of something [*hou eneka*], "in the same way so does nature, and this is its end." In living things, that is, in animated things, "the soul is this kind of end" for the sake of which.

On the other hand, returning back to Minca who noted that Heidegger's [*tripart*] term *Hergestelltsein* ["having-come-to-the-end"] is actually a translation of the [*tripart*] Greek *entelecheia*.³¹³ According to

³⁰⁹ GA 9, 283: "[...] das Schwierigste, was in der Geschichte der abendländische Metaphysik überhaupt gedacht werden mußte [...]" That Aristotle thought "more originally" means for Heidegger deeper analysis, proceeding further into the very core of the phenomena. For Heidegger's assessments on the confrontations of Plato and Aristotle, GA 19 §69c, pp.483–85/334–36

³¹⁰ Brogan 2005, 26

³¹¹ Sheehan 1979 629–35; 1981 xv–xix

³¹² Sheehan 2007, 203

³¹³ Above p.120. Minca 2006, 63 and 62 n.3 Da-sein ist im eigentlichen Sinne *Hergestelltsein*, *Fertig-Dasein*, *Zu-ende-Gekommensein*. Têlos = péras.—Dieses sind *Leitfäden für den Grundsinn der Griechische Ontologie* (...). GA 18, 35/26 and 213/ 144 Furthermore: "Diese beiden Bestimmungen: *Gägenvertigsein* und *Hergestelltsein*, sind dess, die den Seinsbegriff der Griechen verständlich machen" Ibid. GA 18, 219.

Heidegger it is through this state of having reached its end, having arrived at its Being-present-at-hand [*Vorhandensein*] that being is understood in Greek thinking. Therefore, being is fundamentally understood in terms of *production* [*poiêsis*]: “Being means *Being-produced* [*Hergestelltsein*] and, as something produced, it means something which is significant relative to some tendency of dealings; it means being available.”³¹⁴ *Entelecheia* is the highest expression of being as the final state of production, a movement [*kinesis*] of being [*ousía*] from imperfect potentiality [*dúnamis*] to fully determined complete state of readiness and being present-at-hand. In his 1924 lecture course Heidegger states: “A being determined by *entelécheia* means fundamentally *the type of being that maintains itself in its genuine being-possibility so that the possibility is consummated* [...*ein solches Seiendes, das sich selbst halt in seiner eigentlichen Seinsmöglichkeit, so dass die Möglichkeit vollendet ist*].”³¹⁵ “In this concept of *entelecheia*, the most fundamental character of the there [*Character des Da*] comes to expression.” Thus, according to Heidegger this basic concept of completion [*teleion*] is grounded in the being he characterizes as living, being-in-a-world. *Dasein* is a self-moved being heading for the excellence native to itself, but—and here is also a fundamental difference—*Dasein* is always on its way towards, never reaching an ideal and final perfection, or “rest”, the basic normative view-point of Aristotelian perfection. Instead, the human *Dasein* is restless, having its perfection in imperfection: “*Dasein* – the human essence – is whole and complete *in* its incompleteness.”³¹⁶

That this *telos* is always something within the moving entity itself, a principle of perfection as self-fulfillment is clearly stated by Aristotle: “Excellence [or “goodness” for the Greek *arête*] is something complete [a perfection, *teleiôsis*]. For each thing is something complete, and every entity is something complete when according to the kind of excellence native to it [*kata tò eîdos tês oikeias arête*] no part of its natural dimensions is lacking”. (*Met* V 16, 1021 b21-24).

In his sentence “Higher than actuality stands possibility”, what Heidegger emphasizes, therefore, is a direct upshot of *Dasein* itself understood as an open possibility, and furthermore, an imperfect (*a-telês*) being still on-the-way-to-the-goal because it is never going to reach an ideal perfection. Instead, *Dasein* is a possibility that is understood in itself as an *existential*, an ability to-be, a can be [*Sein-können*]. This

³¹⁴ PIA 375/253; Minca 2006, 22 Strictly speaking nature is no producer, nor are natural processes forms of production, but nature becomes understandable in terms of *Herstellen*, in the making of an artifact, like in Aristotle’s own examples on building or making a table, a bed or a box (*Met* IX 7-8). “Making (*poiêsis*) is one kind of production, whereas ‘growing’, *physis*, is another” (GA 9, 289/221). Making requires an outside appearance, an *eidos* or *paradeigma*, as guiding the producing, whereas in natural generation such appearance becomes present in the process of growing. Therefore Aristotle calls this movement as “*physis* that is on the way (*hodos*) towards *physis* (it is a way as *being-on-the-way*, *Weg als Unterwegs-sein* GA 9, 291/222)” (*Phys* II 1, 193 b12-13). “And so this, the self-placing into the appearance, is *physis*” (193 b18).

³¹⁵ GA 18 90/62

³¹⁶ Sheehan 2007, 205

is not just any possibility but the possibility strictly anchored in that being which in each case is mine. Indeed, Dasein is “a possibility which it is itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands.” (SZ 43) And this is grounded in the very existence of Dasein, the “possibility-of-being” [*Seinsmöglichkeit*] of a factic Dasein:³¹⁷ “The sole ground of possibility for the question of being as such is *Dasein itself insofar as it is possible, in its discoveredness in possibilities.*”³¹⁸ Or in the words of BT: “Dasein comports to its being as to its ownmost possibility” and “Dasein is in each case its possibility” (SZ 42). Heidegger wants to emphasize the difference between this existential possibility of Dasein and possibility as a modal category: “This existential possibility which Dasein itself is is to be sharply distinguished from empty logical possibility, the merely possible (*das nur Mögliche*) which, as not yet actual (*noch nicht*) and never at any time (*nicht jemals*) necessary, is regarded as ontologically inferior to actuality and necessity. On the other hand, possibility as an existential is the most original, ultimate, and positive determination of Dasein.” (SZ 143–44)

For Aristotle the *ídon ergon*, the genuine mode of human beings, is *praxis*, determined as a mode of being-in-the-world precisely through speaking, *metà lógou* (EN I 7, 1098 a 14), *katà logon* (EN I 7, 1098 a 7). Having reached this “proper function” of being human, Aristotle then defines the human being as *dzoê praktikê metà lógou* (EN I 7, 1098 a 3): “the *ídon ergon*, the genuine mode of human beings, is *praxis*, determined as a mode of being-in-the-world precisely through speaking.”³¹⁹ But this of course implies genuine functioning, working, acting, on behalf of the human being so defined. She must be in *érgon*, *kat’énérgeian*, not just busily functioning here and there, but, working or functioning for her own proper good (*agathon*), and, as we already know through Monte Johnson, this good refers to the outermost limit (*peras*) of each individual as its own end (*telos*) as its own particular good. Thus, genuine human “work” is fulfilling itself in “virtue/excellence”, *arête*, in its own proper situation. The human good (*anthropotínon agathón*) is *dzoê* itself, “living” itself. Since the specifically human proper function (*ídon ergon*) is based on her having of language, therefore also the proper human activity is an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue (*psukhês enérgeia kat’aretên*). “The *psukhê* is determined as constituting the being of living things.”³²⁰

The normal rendering of this Aristotelian sentence on actuality being higher than possibility seems to be evidently in error, for the contrary is more plausible. Heidegger writes: “Surely in order for something to be ‘actual’ and to be able to be ‘actual’, it must first be possible. Thus, potentiality is prior to

³¹⁷ GA 21, 402

³¹⁸ GA 20, 185/136

³¹⁹ GA 18, 99/68

³²⁰ GA 18, 100/69

actuality.”³²¹ But here, in a sentence in which, according to Heidegger, the whole Greek philosophy and the thinking of Aristotle reaches its highest pinnacle, a peak that was immediately toppled by the Romans for whom the Aristotelian “*enérgeia*, standing-in-the-work in the sense of presencing into the appearance, was translated as *actus*.”[...] “From *actus*, *agere* (to effect) came *actualitas*, ‘actuality.’ *Dúnamis* became *potentia*, the ability and potential that something has.” With these terms the sentence does seem erroneous. “But if we reason this way, we are not thinking with Aristotle or with the Greeks in general.”³²²

To reach a better understanding of these central concepts, Heidegger reminds that “Aristotle characterizes *hylê*, material, as *tò dunámei*. *Dúnamis* means the capacity (*Vermögen*), or better, the appropriateness for (*ein Eignung zu*)... The wood present in the workshop is in a state of appropriateness for a ‘table’.” And here we come back to Heidegger’s claim of the Greeks understanding being as being-produced: “‘to produce’ means, both in Greek and in the original sense of the German *Herstellen*, to *place* something, as finished and as looking thus and so, *forth*, into presencing. *Hylê* is the appropriately orderable, that which, like flesh and bones, belongs to a being that has in itself the origin and ordering of its movedness.”³²³ Thus, all nature (*physis*) is composed of *hylê* and *morphê*, form. These two are also ordered so that for Aristotle the form has priority: it is “nature to a greater degree” (*mallon physis*) than the orderable matter is. For each individual thing is addressed [as properly being] when it ‘is’ in the mode of having-itself-in-its-end rather than when it is (only) in the appropriateness for... [*in der Geeignetheit zu*]” (*Phys* II 1, 193 b 6-8).³²⁴ Here *morphê/form* is seen in terms of completion (*entelecheia*) and therefore prior to *Hylê/matter* as the “appropriateness for” (*dúnamis*). As this is clear, a correct insight is still needed into the kind of priority that *morphê* has over *hylê* because through this insight the essence of *morphê* itself is also more clearly distinguished. Heidegger says: “the task of grasping *physis* as *morphê* has moved up to a new level [...]. *Morphê* is *physis* to a “greater degree”, but not simply because it supposedly is ‘form’ that has subordinate to it a ‘matter’ that it molds. Rather, “*morphê* surpasses the orderable (*hylê*) insofar as *morphê* is the presencing (*Anwesung*) of the appropriateness [*Eignung*] of that which is appropriate [*des Geeignete*], and consequently, in terms of presencing is more original” (GA 9, 288/220). Thus, the *morphê* is more original because it already has the aspect (*eidos*) of what the *hylê* “was to be.”

Here we have the two basic concepts of Aristotelian philosophy: *hylê* and *morphê*. In the second book of *Physics* Aristotle represents these as two different ways of addressing *physis*. (*Phys* II 1, 193 a28-31) The fundamental Aristotelian point here is that his term *hylê* as the underlying substance/substrate

³²¹ GA 9, 286/218

³²² GA 9, 286/218 see note 326 on basic translational problems.

³²³ GA 9, 280-81/214

³²⁴ GA 9, /215

(*hupokeimenon*) of all matter is such that it “stands in a fundamental relation with that to which it belongs and for the sake of which it counts as matter, even when it is deprived of its natural form” as Brogan says.³²⁵ We already know that matter, *hylê*, for Aristotle is understood as that “out of which” or “from which” (*ex hou*). Matter belongs to beings and it is that “from which” or “out of which” a being comes to be, but in itself matter is not a being. Therefore, just above we noted that it is the *morphê*, that towards which a being is directed in its coming to be, which is more original for a being than its matter. This towards which it is directed is provided by the *morphê*, but before this has come true matter is characterized by a lack, privation (*stérêsis*) and this missing something Aristotle calls “a kind of form,” *stérêsis* is something like appearance, it is something like *eidos*, (*eidos pôs estin*, *Phys* 193 b18-20). And, as we will soon see, according to Heidegger this *stérêsis*, this missing, is the hidden essence of *physis*, “nature.”³²⁶ This at first sight quite odd description of *physis* as lack may bring up formulations of Happ on *hylê* as yearning and complementary principle of *eidos*. However, to make plain why Heidegger considers the *Physics* of Aristotle as the hidden foundational work of philosophy, one can take as an example from his vocabulary when instead of using the traditional translations of the term *ousía* as substance or *physis* as nature he simply says: “*Physis* is *ousía*, beingness [*Seiendheit* cf. above p.120]—that which characterizes a being as such; in a word: being (*Jenes was das Seiende als solches auszeichnet, eben das Sein*”, GA 9, 260). Here we can refer back to his earlier explanations of the word *ousía* as “property” and *what lies present* (above pp.69 and 114–15).

In clearing these truly basic notions of Aristotelian thinking *hylê*, *morphê*, *stérêsis* and *physis*, Heidegger takes a brief look at Aristotle’s work On Generation (*gênesis*) and Corruption (*pthorá*), a major source in Part III of this study. Both terms of this title were conceptual terms in the Academy of Plato, but the words are of course much older, known already by Homer, as Heidegger says. It is, therefore, first important to say that “*genesis* does not at all mean the genetic in the sense of the ‘developmental’ as conceived in modern times; nor does *pthorá* mean the counterphenomenon to development—some sort of regression, shrinkage, or wasting away. Rather *genesis* and *pthorá* are to be thought from *physis*, and within it as, as luminous rising and decline (*als Weisen des sich lichtenden Auf- und Untergehens*, HW 342/30). Thus, for Heidegger *gênesis* means emerging from concealment into unconcealment and, similarly, *pthorá* as passing away means abandoning unconcealment and

³²⁵ Brogan 2005, 82; compare Aristotle’s own definition further down the page.

³²⁶ GA 9 297/227. Nature in quotation marks since the Latin *natura* as translation of the Greek *phúsis* is one of those crucial/famous misunderstandings for later philosophical thought avoided by Heidegger. The first part of this GA 9 essay on Aristotle’s *Physics* B,1, is devoted to the ambiguous and overburdened names to denote the original Greek *phúsis*, for which Heidegger is in brackets “(tempted to say ‘emergence’ [Aufgang] but without intermediate steps we cannot give this word the fullness and definitiveness it requires.)” GA 9 259/199. In GA 5, 8, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, Heidegger says: “Roman thinking takes over the Greek words without taking over the corresponding and co-originary experience of what they say – without the Greek word. The lack of groundedness [Bodenlosigkeit] in Western thinking begins with this translating.” See further: Maly 2007, 96.

withdrawing into concealment. It is this two-foldness of becoming into appearance (*morphê/eidos*) and perishing, withdrawing back to concealment as privation *steresis* that is characteristic to *physis* in the already referred sentence from Aristotle's *Physics* (*Phys* II 1, 193 b 18-20): “*morphê* and therefore *physis* as well is spoken of in two ways, for *stêrêsis* too is something like an appearance.” *Genesis* is movement from not-being into being and *pthorá* is withdrawal from being to not-being: “becoming and perishing belong to the *being* of natural beings.”³²⁷

To further clarify the above sentence from the *Physics* Heidegger takes another example from Aristotle. In his work *On Generation and Corruption* (*GC* I 3, 318 b16ff.), Aristotle says to Heidegger: “‘Warm’ is in a sense a way we can address things (*katêgôría tis*) and therefore, properly speaking, an appearance (*eidos*); but ‘cold’ (*psukhrôtês*) on the other hand, is a *stêrêsis*.” Here we have two different expressions for “a kind of something”: in referring to “warm” Aristotle says it is a *kategoría tis*, it is a way of addressing things, but only in a certain sense. Warm is an attribution, a saying something *to* something (*Zusage*). And ‘warm’ is a something said *to* a thing because of the very *eidos* of ‘warm’ (gemess seinen *eidos zusagbar* ist). Similarly, in referring to ‘cold,’ Aristotle says it is *stêrêsis*, which we know is a something like appearance (*eidos pôs*); in a certain sense ‘cold’ is a saying *away* of something, a denial. When we say “the water is cold” *warm* is denied of the water. As Aristotle said (above p.43): “privation is the negation of a predicate to some defined genus.” But here it is not only a question of saying this or that, instead, ‘cold’ is said *away* (*Absage*) because of the very *eidos* of ‘cold’ itself (gemess seinen *eidos absäglich* ist). Thus, what is at stake here is “*that which is attributable or deniable* in accordance with its *eidos* (*was gemäss sein eidos zusagbar oder absagbar* ist). [...] For privation, too, – i.e., what is denied or ‘said-away’ – is a kind of appearance”, GA 9,296/226).

We will see in the third part [III.2.4] of this study that a fundamental distinction in the theory of “four natures” (of hot, cold, dry and moist) is that between active (hot, cold) and passive (dry, moist) qualities. Here Heidegger refers through Aristotle to two opposite active qualities of hot as a *kind of category* and cold as a *kind of appearance*, hot is like something actively added and said *to* something, and in this sense it is like *genesis*, whereas cold is like something actively missing and said-away from something, and in this respect it is like perishing and withdrawal, *pthorá*. Therefore, Heidegger says: “In the coldness something appears and is present, something, therefore, that we ‘sense.’ In this ‘sensed something’ that is present, something else is likewise absent, indeed in such a way that we sense what is present in a special way precisely because of this absencing. In *stêrêsis*, ‘privation,’ it is a matter of ‘taking something *away*,’ but always and above all it means something falls away, has gone away,

³²⁷ Brogan 2005, 107

remains away, becomes absent. If we bear in mind that *ousía*, beingness, means presencing, then we need no further long-winded explanations to establish where *stérêsis* belongs.”³²⁸

In all writings of Heidegger where the Aristotelian *stérêsis* is mentioned or taken up, it is done with great care and weight.³²⁹ Likewise here, when Heidegger declares that “*in stérêsis is hidden the essence of physis*” (*denn in der stérêsis verhüllt sich das Wesen der physis*; GA 9, 297). And with this we finally come back to above treated heightened sense of *morphê* as *mallon physis*. In the already quoted *Phys.* 193 b18-20 sentence with the word “two-foldness” (*dikhô*) characterizing both *morphê* and *physis* means that *morphê* as becoming, as *genesis*, is a path or passage (*odós*), “the being-on-the-way of a ‘not-yet’ to a ‘no more,’” i.e. it is both. (Ibid.) This is a *genesis* where something becomes “present in such a way that *in* the presencing an absencing simulatenously becomes present [“*Anwesenung der Abwesenung*”]. While the blossom ‘buds forth’ (‘aufgeht,’ *phúei*), the leaves that prepared for the blossom now fall off. The fruit comes to light while the blossom disappears.” (GA 9 297/227) Similarly, as Aristotle says, “*Physis* is a path (*odòs*), a being-on-the-way, to *physis*” (*Phys* II 1.193 b13). *Physis* is the origin and ordering of itself. It is both a kind of *energeia* and it is a kind of *ousía*; it is “from out of itself, unto itself.” Like in the above examples of blossoming and withering of trees or flowers: something is put forth and at the same time something is withering, but even in this withering *physis* does not cease to be. The tree bears fruit and these may eventually turn into new trees. Thus, “with its very coming-into-life every living thing already begins to die, and conversely, dying is but kind of living, because only a living being has the ability to die. Indeed, dying *can* be the highest ‘act’ of living.” (GA 9 297–98/227) Thus the dual possibility of being addressed in terms of matter and form is based on the very essence of the twofold *physis* itself: “*physis* is itself the origin and ordering of itself. [...] Unlike *tekhnê*, *physis* does not first require a supervening *poiêsis* that takes just something lying around (e.g. wood) and brings it into the appearance of ‘table.’ Such a product is never, of and by itself, on-the-way and never can be on-the-way to a table.” Instead, *physis* is on-the-way from itself onto itself. (Ibid.)

³²⁸ GA 9 296/226. In his own Philosophical Lexicon (*Met* V.22) Aristotle says of *stérêsis*: “We speak of ‘privation’: (a) in one sense, if a thing does not possess an attribute which is a natural possession, even if the thing itself would not naturally possess it: we say that a vegetable is deprived of eyes [we say so but not in the proper sense of privation]. (b) If a thing does not possess an attribute which it or its kind would naturally possess. Thus a blind man is not deprived of sight in the same sense that a mole is; the latter is ‘deprived’ in virtue of its genus (a genus thought to be blind), but the former in virtue of himself (blind as an individual).

³²⁹ For my later purposes it is relevant to note here with Forman: “In Hebrew philosophical terminology, *efes* represents the Aristotelian concept of *steresis* (privation) [...]. One may say that a thing comes into being from its privation, but not from naked privation, only from a privation in a substrate. A new thing comes into being from that which it is potentially but not actually.” K.C. Forman 1990, 133 and n.59 p.151 He refers to a Hebrew translation of Maimonides’ Guide of the perplexed 1:17 from which the original Arabic term ‘*adam*’ is translated into Hebrew as *efes*. We will later meet this essential Arabic term of the mu’takallimûn and Ibn al-‘Arabî in many connections.

PART III: Ibn al-'Arabí between Philosophy and Mysticism

III. 1. Ways of Ibn al-'Arabí

*But seek Him not among existents—or you will be wretched
and worn out seeking the unique and strange.*

Anqa' al-mughrib I.I, Elmore 236

*Everywhere we are seeking for the unconditioned
Yet always find only things.
("Wir suchen überall das Unbedingte
und finden immer nur Dinge.")*

Novalis. Motto in Heidegger, GA 1, 399

"Biography as we know it is a modern invention, and the fact that we think it important to know the details of people's personal lives tells us more about ourselves than about them. Nothing like a thorough account of Ibn al-'Arabí's life was available before the twentieth century. In the premodern Islamic world, it was enough to know that he was a great scholar, or a great saint, or a great heretic. Those who wanted to learn about him were not attracted by his life but by his ideas."¹ In the first part of this study, devoted to Aristotle, any apology for the lack of biographical details seemed superfluous, but with later writers, such as Ibn al-'Arabí, this does not seem to be the case. During the last decades, however, the situation has changed dramatically and now any writer on the teachings of Ibn al-'Arabí can safely refer for biographical details to several excellent studies dealing specifically on the life of the Greatest Master, *Shaikh al-akbar*, the "Riviver of Islâm", *Muhyî l-Dîn*², or, The Seal of Saints, *Khatam al-Awliyâ*, Muhammad Ibn al-'Arabí, who was born in in the Spanish Levant (*sharq al-Andalus*) in the

¹ Chittick 2007, 8. On the other hand, a work like the *Futûhât* is full of anecdotes and actual descriptions of lived experiences giving a vivid picture of the author as a human being. This is seldom the case in Latin scholastic works or, indeed, philosophical works in general.

² This is the honorific epithet with which Ibn al-'Arabí is known specially among Turks and Persans. Such honorifics [*alqâb* sg.*laqab*] were not customary in the *magreb* area, but it seems he acquired the title fairly early in his career, whereas the other two mentioned epithets were not used during his lifetime. Elmore 1999, 14 Instead, the name Son of Plato, claimed by Burckhardt and Corbin to be his honorific does not seem to have much support in the sources. See Conclusion above.

province of Murcia during the sacred month of Ramadan, 560 A.H. [= July–August, 1165 C.E.] and died in Damascus in the month of *Rabî' al-Thânî*, 638 A.H. [=November, 1240 C.E.].³

The focus of the present study is emphatically on the teachings of Ibn al-'Arabî, and, more precisely on a very specific, though also infinite theme of his teaching, “an ocean without a bottom” (*bahr^{un} laysa la-hu qa'r^{un}*),⁴ namely, his notion of prime matter, possibility and potentiality [*hâûylâ, imkân, qouwwa*; Gr.*hylê, dúnamis*], the corner-stone of not only Aristotelian philosophy but “the ultimate concept of all philosophy, the determinable in contrast to the determined, the actual.”⁵ In Heideggerian terms the question is of Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being (*Seinkönnen*, SZ 144, above 106), and therefore, a capacity or appropriateness for completeness. “As long as it is, Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities” (SZ 145). Or, seen from a slightly different angle: **potentiality is the imperfection demanded by existence, by life itself, as an ongoing process of genesis and corruption.** When a human being is born, only God knows what will become of her or him, all possibilities being unique historical occurrences, inner realities flowing out into the vivified moments of lived reality. Hidden possibilities becoming manifest, “emerging from potentiality into actuality”, as an early Arabic work on alchemy is called.⁶ “The ontological level of possibility lies between Sheer Being and sheer nonexistence; through that of it which gazes (*nazar*) upon nonexistence, it receives nonexistence, and through that of it which gazes upon Being, it receives existence” (F II 426.30-31; MR I 51). Or, yet in other words, as William Chittick paraphrases Ibn al-'Arabî to make a theological point: “by knowing himself God knows all the possibilities of *wujûd* [Being], which are all things. Hence God is the One/Many (*al-wâhid al-kathîr*)—One in His *wujûd* and many in His knowledge.”⁷

The elaboration of this theme does not need biographical references. However, there is a well-known biographical fact in the life of Ibn al-'Arabî that seems illuminating both historically and doctrinally. Ibn al-'Arabî spent the first half of his life—until the age of 37—in the “furthest West” [*al-maghrib al-aqsâ*⁸] of the Islamic world, after which he in 598/1202 migrated to the East never to return. He spent the rest of his life in the [Middle] East [*al-mashriq*] of “the rising sun”, settling in 1221 C.E. in Damascus where he also died at the age of 77 [75 solar years]. Thus, his life began on the western-most fringes of continental Europe, the most Occidental lands of the “setting sun” [Abendländer] and ended in the very heartlands of the rising sun [Morgenländer], the “Oriental” Middle East.

³ See: Addas 1993, Austin 1971, Elmore 1999, Hirtenstein 1999.

⁴ *Anqâ*, Elmore 1999, 348.

⁵ Kisiel 1995, 131

⁶ Jâbir Ibn Hayyân: *Kitâb ihrâj mâ fi'l-quwwa ila'l-fi'l*, Book of the Passage of Potentiality to Actuality, (Kr 331). Kraus 1935, 92, Haq 1994, 278

⁷ Chittick 1996, in HIP Vol.I, 505 “There is nothing in existence but the One/Many” F III 420.15

⁸ A term with eschatological connotations, see Elmore 1998, 175–177 and further down here.

However, just few months before his migration from the West to the East, Ibn al-‘Arabí had finished one of his best known early mystical works called “*The Fabulous Gryphon concerning the Gnosis of the Seal of the Saints and the Sun of the West*”. This “gnosis”, deeper inner knowledge, refers to the perfected human *heart capable of receiving* the Word of God as God’s Self-disclosure [*tajallî-hi*, Theophany] in a mystical experience (*madhâq=dhawq*⁹), as Ibn al-‘Arabí says in the opening poem of this work. Therefore, he was presenting an “invitation to the reader to search out his/her true meaning in the depths of his/her own God-reflecting image.”¹⁰ One can thus say that Ibn al-‘Arabí was not migrating to the East empty-handed; instead, he had with him a full-blown and spiritually radiant compendium on the ultimate ends of human existence. He had something to say and he was presenting himself “as a new, authoritative voice of Sûfism, a veritable ‘Sun rising in the West’ as a token of times, the very brilliance of his doctrine being proof of its miraculous nature”, as Elmore writes.¹¹ And, as we will see, this East – West polarity plays an important role not only on the material level of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s life but also in his early spiritual perspectives on the “sun re-rising from the west.”

We do not actually know the reason for Ibn al-‘Arabí’s migration from the West to the East—by no means exceptional at the time of the already foreseeable bitter loss of *al-Andalus*—and probably there was no *one* reason.¹² What we do know is that in the year 598/1201 Ibn al-‘Arabi left the Islamic West and headed towards the East to perform his pilgrimage. And we also know it was in Mecca during the same year that he was to receive in a visionary experience the essential contents of the work which was to occupy him for the next thirty years: having seen what he saw in Mecca, he wrote down the 560 chapter-headings of the “*Meccan Revelations*” [or, *Meccan Openings*, *Futûhât al-Makkîya*], a plan which remained essentially intact during the coming thirty years that it took him to “fulfil” those 560 chapters into the 37 handwritten volumes that he finished just two years before his death in 636/1238.¹³ Yet, according to Ibn al-‘Arabi, also this veritable ocean of learning and highly sophisticated exposition of the human situation in its entirety was given to him already way back in his youth “in one single look

⁹Spiritual savouring, intuitive knowledge as “tasting”, defined by al-Qashânî as the first level of witnessing the truth by truth (*shuhûd al-haqq bi-l’haqq*) as God’s self-disclosure (*Istilâhât* 1981, 162) or as “the first beginning of God’s Self-disclosures” by Ibn al-‘Arabí, *Istilâhât* 1948, 6.

¹⁰Elmore 1999, 88

¹¹ Elmore 1999, 190

¹² Apart from the numerous and detailed accounts of his own we actually know very little on the reception of Ibn al-‘Arabí in his native West, but it is clear that his life and doctrines were never debated as fiercely in *Maghreb* as they were in the East. Knysh considers it possible, that this lack of recognition could have been one motive for him abandoning the West. Knysh 1999, 281.n23

¹³ OY I Intr 6 This was the second revised edition of the *Futûhât*; the first edition, with the name still in the singular form, he finished in 629/1231

of the One Entity [‘*ain l-wâhida*] comprising the universal reality [*al-‘amr l-kullîya*]]”¹⁴. Everything he thereafter wrote was the differentiation of that one look. One could even describe all of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s writing as **differentiation** [*tafsîl*]¹⁵, as this implies also the idea of its opposite, **undifferentiation** [*ijmâl*]: we grasp things first in an undifferentiated mode and only slowly more clearly as they are in themselves through differentiation. And as we have already seen, this is how also Aristotle describes his philosophical method, proceeding **from what is clearer to us** [*safestera êmin*] **towards that what is clearer by nature** [*safêsera tê fûsei*]. With Ibn al-‘Arabî this early moment of vision was the true beginning, the first opening [*fath/futûh*], of the possibility that was to become Ibn al-‘Arabî—“for the beginning was ‘the what it was to be’”¹⁶. Thus, in some quite literal sense this origin was also its future in the Qor’anic mode where “a good word is as a good tree— its roots are firm, its branches are in heaven.” (Q XIV; 24) And indeed, in his dictionary of the technical terms of the mystics (*Istîlâhât al-sûfiyya*) the word “tree” is glossed as “the perfect man” (*insânu ‘l-kâmil*).¹⁷

Ibn al-‘Arabî lived the end of an era, witnessing during his lifetime both the grandeur of the Islamic civilization and a haunting sense of the beginning of an end of the old order. Osman Yahia may well be right in seeing his *Magnum Opus*, the *Futûhât al-Makkiya*, as an encyclopaedic “ray of hope” from the bygone splendour of a civilization now facing menacing threats from all directions: in the west the Spanish *Reconquista*, in the heart-lands of the Middle East the crusaders and, worst of all, the Mongols from the east, who invaded and blundered Baghdad within just eighteen years after the death of Ibn al-‘Arabî.¹⁸ On the other hand, the deep upheaval caused by the Mongol invasion in the Islamic society explains much of the reactionary intellectual atmosphere surrounding the later controversies around Ibn al-‘Arabî: the question of “authentic” Islam amidst the “alien” elements brought by the Mongols “made

¹⁴ F II 548.14–15; see SPK 221. For the scholasts the pure Thing in itself, *nafs al-mâhiya*= ‘*amr kullî*=*universalia*, van Ess 1966, 87. “One single look”, or, “glance of the eye” is like the Platonic *exaiphnês* of *Parmenides* 156 D-E and 7th Letter 341 C-D where he speaks of a learning that comes to be “all of a sudden”... “like a light that is kindled from a spark leaping of fire.” F. Schleiermacher translated this Platonic term into German as *Augenblick*. Kierkegaard translated this into Danish as *Øieblik*, Glance of an Eye, a moment of existential intuition. McNeill 1999, 116 n28 Heidegger refers to it in SZ/BT 190n.1, 235n.1 and 338n.1. The concept is later given a fundamental dimension by Heidegger as “opening a possibility for a new epoch in philosophy.” GA 29/30, 225 Similarly, Aristotle uses the term with reference to the right moment, the *kairos*, where one possibility is chosen instead of another at the spur of the moment without previous thought. NE III.1 and 2, 1110 a 13 and 1111 b10

¹⁵ A term usually contrasted in philosophical terminology with *genus*, thus, *differentia specifica*. But Ibn al-‘Arabî uses the term in a broader sense as an opposite of that which is undifferentiated [*ijmâl*] or of that which is associated or joined [*wasl*] with something else. These terms are discussed in two separate chapters in F II 480–81.

¹⁶ *wa kâna mabdâ ‘uhâ ‘ainuhâ* F II 548.14, “its beginning was itself”, SPK 221; The word ‘*ayn*, meaning the very being of a thing, identical with, and in cases also quite close to the word essence, rendered best by the Arabic *dhât*. Therefore the Aristotelian phrase “the what it was to be” is quite accurate translation here, though in the Arabic translations of Aristotle this expression is usually rendered as *mâ huwa bi-l-anniyati* or simply *mâ huwa* and rarely as *mâhyya*. Wisnovsky 150 n. 12 For the Aristotelian phrase, see Part One of this study.

¹⁷ Rasâ’il 1948, II, *Istîlâh al-sûfiyya* 12

¹⁸ OY I, Intr.5 Whereas the fiercest opponents of Ibn al-‘Arabî of later centuries could view the spread of his works as a “spiritual malaise that afflicted the Muslim community on the eve of the Mongol invasion”. Knysh 1999, 32

some Muslim scholars particularly anxious to safeguard the “unadulterated” Islam of the pious ancestors [*al-salaf al-salih*].¹⁹ Be that as it may, one thing is fairly sure: had Ibn al-‘Arabi remained in the West, we would hardly know of him as we do now. Despite the great cultural flourishing of al-Andalus in the 10th and 11th centuries, these western outskirts of the Islamic world remained provincial in comparison to the cosmopolitan and sophisticated eastern heartlands of Islam with all its well-known centres of learning and scholarship.²⁰

Spiritually Ibn al-‘Arabi had reached [according to his own hierarchy] the highest possible stage for any *waliy*, “friend of God”²¹, already before leaving the *maghreb*, but as his later literary achievements clearly show, he had a great deal more to say and for a far wider audience, eventually surpassing all geographical and historical boundaries. The second half of his life in the *mashriq*, the lands of the rising sun, manifested a veritable explosion in literary output and soon his works found their way into every local library of the Islamic world²², and, eventually, reaching out all the way through the centuries up to present era, during which Ibn al-‘Arabi has again become a major source of spiritual inspiration and scholarly achievement both in the East and the West. There is no doubt of him being amongst the most influential Muslim thinkers and mystics of all ages.

“He who migrates for the cause of Allah will find much refuge and abundance in the earth.”

Q 4:10

¹⁹ Knysh 1999, 50 the expression *al-salaf al-salih* became the catch-word of Ibn Taymiyya’s [d.1328] ferocious criticism on Ibn al-‘Arabi. Ibid, 87–111. Ibn al-‘Arabi refers himself also to “The venerable Ancestors among the [Prophet’s] companions”, but for him these are those wise companions of the Prophet who concealed their deeper knowledge in their dealings with affairs not accessible to the multitude. ‘*Anqa*’ I.8, Elmore 1999, 303.

²⁰ It is quite telling that in the West even a well-informed biographer, like Ibn al-Abbâr [d. 1260], while mentioning the many works of Ibn al-‘Arabi on Sufism, yet sees “his worth as a scholar determined by his expertise in *hadith* studies that he acquired under his Andalusí teachers”. Knysh 1999, 35 It took another century for the controversies around Ibn al-‘Arabi to reach the Maghreb.

²¹ Elmore 1999, 73; see above pp 243–44 and 256.

²² Yahia reports that the Süleiman library in Istanbul alone had over hundred copies of the *Futûhât*. Y I, 6 paradoxically, however, the paramount feature of most disputes around the doctrines of Ibn al-‘Arabi throughout the centuries has either been the lack of first hand knowledge of his writings or knowledge based solely on the *Fusûs*. Giving lavish and sound evidence on this is one of the great merits of Alexander Knysh’s excellent study on *Ibn al-‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*. The subtitle of his work tells it all: *the Making of a Polemical Image*.

III.1.1. How to situate Ibn al-‘Arabí in the Islamic tradition?

*I hear the grinding, but I don't see any flour.*²³

Arabic proverb

Ibn al-‘Arabi was introduced for the modern western audience through his earlier writings as three of them were first critically edited and philologically commented—though not translated—by H.S. Nyberg in his dissertation *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-‘Arabi* at University of Uppsala in 1919. Despite its age, this earliest source in the West on Ibn al-‘Arabi is remarkable and still thought-provoking.

Apart from the pioneering editing-work of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s early writings Nyberg also wrote an introduction of some 150 pages in German on the thought of Ibn al-‘Arabi, an introduction still worth reading by anyone interested on Ibn al-‘Arabí. Here is a fine piece of western learned scholarly tradition, examining Ibn al-‘Arabi within the broad context of literary-intellectual currents of late antiquity, Christianity and the Islamic world itself—of course as these were known in the West a hundred years ago. Yet, in reading scholarly works like this, one may wonder whether the passionate *ideengeschichtliches* viewpoint of scientific enquiry actually clarifies the highly inspirational thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabi himself in bringing it into comparison with *Gnosticism* and *Hermetism* here, or, with *Hellenism* and *Manichaeism* [*zanâdiqa*²⁴] there, to name but few of the obvious candidates. This of course is a philosophical problem of all comparative studies: comparison may help understanding, if, and only if, the other member of the comparison is fully understood. With subtle and esoteric doctrines of late antiquity this is seldom the case. There is no doubt of the “astonishingly receptive mind” of Ibn al-‘Arabi as a “focal point of various idea-complexes”, weaving together the whole religious doctrinal mixture of late antiquity.²⁵ But if Ibn al-‘Arabi were a mere *compiler* there would be no point in studying his writings.

²³ F II 319.25–26 A saying Ibn al-‘Arabí here uses to refer to the endless discussions of the dialecticians and the philosophers.

²⁴ Spiritual descendants of the Manichean dualists who “presented their religion in a scientific form without appealing to irrational conviction...” They wanted to explain the world, not God; a principle which “remained valid so long as the concept of God was strictly apophatic”. van Ess 2006, 88

²⁵ Nyberg 1919, 9

On the other hand, Nyberg is careful to point out for example that even though we run into many central Neo-platonic terms and notions in the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabi “one should not call Ibn al-‘Arabi a Neo-Platonist”.²⁶ And, indeed, Ibn al-‘Arabi says quite generally of the speculative philosophers that “dispite all their knowledge they wish for that which cannot be wished for, which is disengagement from all matter (*tajarrud ‘an al-mawâdda*). This will never happen, neither in this world nor in the last world. This – I mean disengagement from matter – is an affair that is rationally conceivable but not witnessed (*ya’qil wa lâ yashad*). The speculative thinkers (*ahli ‘l-nazar*) have no greater mistake (*ghalat aghzam*) than this” (F III.509.7-8). Therefore, Nyberg’s assessment seems fair: here we have clearly a “hylo-morphic” or “body-mind” mystic, not “fleeing” from the world of the senses. Ibn al-‘Arabi is not a Neo-Platonist, but isn’t this true also when one finds him using concepts akin to those of Hermetism, the Valentinian Gnosis, the Stoics or the Pseudo-Clementinians, or, indeed, those of Plato and Aristotle? Yet, when discussing Ibn al-‘Arabi’s position in the *kalâm* –controversies [*i.e.* among the dialecticians of Islam], Nyberg finds the overall intellectual background for the “concept of God” in Ibn al-‘Arabi in the doctrinal framework of the *Mu’tazila*²⁷ whose argumentation is, according to Nyberg, fully Aristotelian [*noêsis noêseôs noêsis*] (*Meta*XII.9, 1074 b34); that is, a “knowing knowing”, “knowing that knows itself”, “a self-thinking intellect”; for example, I thinking about myself thinking about philosophy. Therefore Nyberg finds that “this is the proper place for Ibn al-‘Arabi”.²⁸

But, surely, as one can not call Ibn al-‘Arabi a Neo-Platonist nor would calling him an Aristotelian philosopher or a *Mu’tazili* dialectician describe his thinking anywhere adequately, even if many of his

²⁶ Nyberg 1919, 83 Here is how a modern philosopher, Henry Bergson, saw the problem of western metaphysical tradition: “metaphysics was led to seek the reality of things above time, beyond what moves and what changes, and consequently outside what our senses and consciousness perceive. As a result it could be nothing but a more or less artificial arrangement of concepts, a hypothetical construction. It claimed to go beyond experience; what it did in reality was merely to take a full and mobile experience, lending itself to a probing ever-deepening and as a result pregnant with revelations—and to substitute for it a fixed extract, desiccated and empty, a system of abstract general ideas, drawn from that very experience or rather from its superficial strata.” H. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 16–17; and 166–167, quoted through Hankey 2006, 107. A few pages earlier Bergson puts this even more clearly: “faithful to the spirit of Plato, he [Plotinus] thought that the discovery of truth demanded a conversion of the mind, which breaks away from the appearances here below and attaches itself to the realities above: “Let us flee to our beloved homeland!”—But, as you see, it was a question of “fleeing.” More precisely, for Plato and all those who understood metaphysics in that way, breaking away from life and correcting one’s attention consisted in transporting oneself immediately into a world different from the one we inhabit, in developing other faculties of perception from the senses and consciousness.” Ibid 163–164, Hankey pp.108

²⁷ *Mu’tazila*: a school of dialecticians, flourishing in Basra and Bagdad in the 9th century with a vivid interest in Greek science and philosophy and favoured by the ‘Abbâsid caliphs (750–1258). The name *al-mu’tazila* comes from their basic tenet, “*manzila baina l-manzilatain*”, *i.e.* the intermediate state between belief and unbelief. Hyper-rationalists, propounding the doctrine of man’s free will as opposed to the *Ash’arite* position of predestination. And, as W.Chittick writes: “Ibn al-‘Arabi’s allusions to the theologians most often occur in this context”. SPK 205, the whole passage pp.205–211 summarizes well the various tones of the discussion. For the philosophical background of the *kalâm*-discussions on the reality of God’s attributes, see Wisnovsky 2005, Ch.13, 227–243, Rescher 1967, 69–71

²⁸ Nyberg 1919, 45. According to a major early *mu’tazila* theologian, Abû l-Hudail (d. 840 or 850 C.E.), God knows Himself by Himself in an act of knowing that is His self: *huwa ‘âlimun bi-‘ilmin huwa huwa*. Rudolph, 1989, 134: “*Er [=Gott] ist wissend durch ein Wissensakt, welcher Er ist*. On Abû l-Hudail, see van Ess III, 1992, 209–91.

followers and commentators have been peripatetically oriented!²⁹ Ibn al-‘Arabí benefited greatly from the dialectics of the *mu’tazila* but he is not himself a dialectician. Maybe we would do well to see this connection as an overall liberal attitude of an age towards learning and cultural exchange, a factor that probably influenced Ibn al-‘Arabí in his migration from the parochial West to the central mainlands of Islamic learning and civilization. But, then again, what is a reader of Ibn al-‘Arabí to think, now that Nyberg has pointed the proper philosophical and *kalâm* –background of the Shaikh, when he comes across Ibn al-‘Arabí’s own claim that both the *Ash’arites* and the *Mu’tazila* had “blinders over their eyes”?³⁰ And, as we will see, Ibn al-‘Arabí is clearly amongst “those who propound the doctrine of *Primordial matter*” [*ashâb al-hayûlâ*] against whom the *Mu’tazilî* dialecticians argued vigorously, and with good reason. We will come to this and Ibn al-‘Arabí’s notion of *hayûlâ*, the primordial matter [*mâdda ûlâ*], or, the “Root of roots,” on several occasions later on. To understand the controversy, it is here enough to point that the dialecticians were against all genetic theories of life, their main interest being to safeguard God as the sole agent in existence.

On the other hand, one could also note the general reluctance of Ibn al-‘Arabí in being affiliated with any schools of thought. Indeed, not being attached (*abgeschiedenheit*, in the sense of Meister Eckhart) to any doctrinal sect or group could well describe the general position of Ibn al-‘Arabí as a thinker. And although Ibn Masarra al-Jabalî (“*il Serrano*” 883–931 CE) obviously influenced profoundly Ibn al-‘Arabí, he certainly lived a very different kind of life in comparison to this fellow countryman of his, living a solitary monastic life with his followers. Ibn al-‘Arabí was by no means a hermit, quite the contrary, his social contacts were profuse and they are also well-documented by Claude Addas (2005). Indeed, a reader of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s “Meccan Revelations,” or even more so of “The Conference of the Pious” (*muhâdirât al-abrâr*), comes acquainted with a great amount of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s contemporaries in annotated conversations, anecdotes and reminiscences—not to mention all those historical figures he met in the “intermediary realm” (*fi mashhad barzakh*, f.ex, F II.573.14). Indeed, it is quite telling that we will hear later of three separate meetings with his famous contemporary philosopher, Ibn Rushd (1126–1198 CE), first in real life in his youth, then in a dream and finally in the latter’s funeral: three different existential realms, but all informative in some respect.

²⁹ Ibn al-‘Arabí’s foremost early commentators were his step-son, Sadr al-Dîn al-Qûnawî (d.1274) and the direct disciple of him, Mu’ayyid al-Dîn al-Jandî (d.1291). It was Al-Qûnawî who systematized the Shaikhs teachings, coining also the general heading of *wahdât al-wujûd* under which Ibn al-‘Arabí’s teachings came to be both known and also severely criticized. Qûnawî was much more familiar than his mentor with the Aristotelian metaphysical tradition of “*wujûd q u a wujûd*”, thus setting the tone for the next generation commentators of the *Fusûs al-Hikâm*, namely, ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Kashânî (d.1330) and Dâwûd al-Qaysarî [d.1350]. Cf. Chittick 1978 and 1984, Addas 1993, 76 and 227–233, Hirtenstein 1999, 210–212 and 237–38; on later criticism see Knysh 1999, 153–158.

³⁰ F II 513.21

One historical figure Ibn al-‘Arabí quotes quite often as his own mentor (*shaikhunâ*, whom he never actually met) is Abu Madijân of Bugia (d.1197), who exhorted his followers to “Feed us with ‘fresh flesh’ as God said; feed us not with dried meat” [alluding to Q 35:12]. Ibn al-‘Arabí explains: “tell us only about what has been opened to you in your own hearts. Do not tell us about the opening of others” (F II 505.19–20). The type of knowledge and wisdom towards which it can lead is fundamentally a personal affair according Ibn al-‘Arabí: you can truly know only for yourself; *understanding is in each case mine* [*je meine*, the first principle of hermeneutics, see p.73]. **The issues in what he writes are not based “on relations established by speculative thought (*fîkr ‘l-nazarîyya*) but on inspirational and revelatory sciences (*al-‘ulûm al wahbîya ‘l-kashfîyah*),”** as he says (F II 655.5.–6). This needs to be emphasized because **the opposite direction of mainstream learning and knowing**, the idea of mastering a field of expertise not in the least rooted in any personal experience. This comes clear, for example, when he tells us—with an obvious twist of humour—that “among the Muslim thinkers bewilderment [*hayra*] is much greater than among those of the other religious communities. When a [Muslim] thinker gets tired of thinking, he stops where fatigue has overcome him. Some of them have stopped [...] at the secondary causes [*i.e.* like the philosophers and the *Mu’tazila*, holding that the universe functions in strict accordance with causal relations]. [...] Some have stopped in bewilderment, and said ‘We do not know!’ Yet another group has hit upon one aspect of truth, then stopped in exhaustion. So, each man has stopped at the point where fatigue has overcome him, whereupon he turns to his mundane needs in order to have a rest and satisfy his natural desires. Having rested from his fatigue, he returns to the point which he has reached in his consideration and proceeds from there to wherever his thought takes him until he either gets tired again or dies...”³¹

Instead of certain religious or philosophical schools, what Ibn al-‘Arabí proposes for his reader is to “**be in yourself utterly receptive** [*“fa-kûn fî-nafsak hayûlâ”*] for the forms of all beliefs,” and to “be aware of becoming delimited by any specific tenet [*aqid mahsûs*] and disbelieving in everything else, lest great good escape you.”³² **Here we have a decisive and fundamental formulation for the present study:** the foundational basis of *materia prima*, the *hylê*, is equated or at least best understood according to Ibn al-‘Arabí as *the domain or level of the human existence itself* [*nashâ’tu l-insân*, a term we will come back in detail later], that is, the *Dasein* of human being, as one could say anticipating the Heideggerian position. It is precisely in the being of the human being as such that possibility gets its fullest and widest existential context and meaning as a *possible non-being* [*al-‘adam al-imkânî*], a non-existent [or potential existent] with all its inherent possibilities to become something in contrast to

³¹ *Uqlat al-mustawfiz*, ed. Nyberg p.90, 6–14, tr. Knysh 1999, 271, modified.

³² Fus 113/137, SPK 355. The name *Fusûs al-Hikâm*, “Bezels of Wisdom” refers to “Receptacles of Wisdom,” the pure potentialities of 27 prophets (parts of the book were translated into French by Titus Burckhart as *La Sagesse des Prophetes*, 1955) as being “informed” or given actuality in various forms of wisdom. Thus the bezel stands for *in qua* the forms appear, the “locus of manifestation,” as Chittick translates the important term *mazhar* of Ibn al-‘Arabí. SPK 16, 89

absolute non-being [*al-‘adam al-mutlâq*], the impossible, that, which never can be. According to Ibn al-‘Arabi existence in the first stage of possibilities “is like the existence of universals [in God’s knowledge], and in the second stage existence is like the existence of particulars or individual entities [*a’yân*].”³³

For Ibn al-‘Arabi, though a “dedicated intellectual”, as Franz Rosenthal calls him, the human discursive reason is in itself all too feeble an instrument for setting “the agenda” of human existence: in our reason/thinking [*fikr*] “there is only *that what is in it*; it does not go beyond its own level”.³⁴ Ibn al-‘Arabi was not and never claimed to be a philosopher—except in the literal sense of the word as *a lover of wisdom*.³⁵ However, in saying this it is necessary to keep in mind the notable difference between Christianity and Islam when it comes to questions on the role of reason and faith in religion: “for Muslims, reason, *‘aql*, has always been the chief faculty granted human beings by God... [T]hat divine gift was accepted and appreciated everywhere, even among ascetics and mystics”.³⁶ This is voiced well in the Prophetic saying: “Faith is a knowledge [*mâ’rifâ*] in the heart, a voicing with the tongue, and acting [on its basis] with the limbs”.³⁷ In the case of Ibn al-‘Arabi one could quote the mysterious Youth [*fatâ*] appearing to him in Mecca revealing in silent speech the whole contents of his major work, *the Futûhât al-Makkiyya*, and telling him: “I am the knowledge [*al-‘ilm*], the known [*al-ma’lûm*], and the knower [*al-‘alîm*]; I am wisdom [*al-hikmah*], the work of wisdom [*al-muhkâm*] and the sage [*al-hakîm*],” these last three rendered by Corbin into French as “*la Sophia, la philosophie et le philosophe*.”³⁸ Here reason is indeed invaluable but clearly not the point.

To counterbalance Ibn al-‘Arabi’s above critique on discursive reason, consider how he sees the human “rational soul” [*nafs l-nâtiq*]: “There is nothing but rational soul, but it is intelligent, reflecting, imagining, remembering, form-giving, nutritive, growth-producing, attractive, expulsive, digestive, retentive, hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, and feeling”.³⁹ Thus, here we have exemplified all

³³ Cont.I, 2001,23 and 26 n.5

³⁴ Rosenthal 1988, 13; F IV 156, 11–12, the expression *Fîhi mâ fîhi* is a name with which a work of Jelâl ed-Dîn Rûmî became known, translated by A.J. Arberry in 1971 as “The Discourses of Rûmî”.

³⁵ A rare case of a Greek low-word: the Shaikh uses the word *failasûf* in the original Greek sense and translates it as “lover of wisdom” F II 523.14. Some scholars, however, have referred to Ibn al-‘Arabi’s “Mystical Philosophy”, Affîfi 1939. For a good scholarly summary on Ibn al-‘Arabi’s views on philosophy, see Rosenthal 1988, 1–35, who ends up calling Ibn al-‘Arabi “both a philosopher and a mystic”.

³⁶ van Ess 2006, 154

³⁷ Ibn Mâja, *Muqaddima* 9, cited from Chittick 1992, 6

³⁸ F I 48.24–25, Corbin 1976, 302 n 331 For the unifier of the three, see Porphyry above in n 119, and further above n 238

³⁹ F II 459.25–26, tr. SPK, 84 In the first part (I.A.2) we already quoted Aristotle saying that the nutritive soul underlying the other souls. Stephen Menn has emphasized in his analysis of Aristotle’s *DA* the centrality of the nutritive power of the soul as its nature and, therefore, “inserting the soul into the process of nutrition: the soul feeds the body with food.” The nutritive power is thus “a principle and cause of motion [*kineîsthai*] and rest in the thing in which it is primarily present, *per se* and not *per accidens*” (*Phys.* II.1, 192 b21-23). Aristotle is arguing that “the nutritive power is a soul: since it is nature,

previously mentioned *five Aristotelian powers of the soul* “ordered serially, such that the possession of one implies possession of all the others that come before it”.⁴⁰ It is precisely in this sense that Ibn al-‘Arabí can claim that “there is nothing but rational soul”: the rational soul implies all the other powers of the soul. Therefore, the above mentioned “agenda of human existence” cannot be covered by only our discursive reason, rather, covering or embracing it takes the whole soul with all its might and all its powers. For Ibn al-‘Arabí the rational soul is to cover all of human teleology as a natural and spiritual being, the *telos* and *pros ti* of the whole living human being—and not only the logically formulated intentionality—that is, on the whole, as the entirety of human *being-in-the-world*. For him intentionality is certainly not a merely theoretically and logically oriented correlation between the *noetic* and its *noema*, like in Husserl, instead, here intentionality covers the whole gamut of our existence and denotes to the act of finding (*wajada*) something *there*, whether the question is of perceptual physical or intellectual mental existence (*wujûd al-dhihnî*). We have seen in connection with Heidegger that intentionality, though an important theme of medieval philosophy, was viewed upon quite differently by the medieval thinkers and Heidegger than it was by Husserl, who concentrated on the [Cartesian] side of consciousness in intentionality, whereas the medieval thinkers, both east and west, and Husserl’s pupil Martin Heidegger, focused their attention more towards the “real being” intended. Ibn al-‘Arabí is a good example of this: for him full-blown intentionality is actual *finding* (*wujûd*). This question of intentionality was our theme in the second part of this study.

Here, however, we can refer to an important parallel of the above serially ordered (Gr. *efexês* an important Aristotelian⁴¹ notion used in various contexts like *Met* IV.2, 1005 a10 or *Met* XII.1, 1069 a20, expressing a hierarchy (*pros hen*) of earlier and later where the later forms are dependent on the former ones) soul depicting the ontological level of Man in the world, that is, Man as a microcosm, an “all-comprehensive engendered thing” (*al-kawn al-jâmî’*, *Fus.* 48/50⁴²), the human being as reflecting in itself the macrocosmic totality. This all-inclusive nature of the human being explains the point of a well-known *hadîth* that says “He who knows himself knows his Lord”: in knowing itself this most perfect or

it is the *entelékheia* of a natural body.” Indeed, it “is the most universal power of the soul” *DA* II.4, 414 a24-25. And since the *telos* and *pros ti* of the nutritive power is the the generation of another living thing and the preservation of the species for eternity, it is more proper to call this power of the soul not nutritive but generative” (*DA* II.4.416 b23-25). For Aristotle “nutrition is not simply adding new material to already existing organs, but continually *remaking* organs that are in constant decay” (*GC* I 5, 321 b21-28). Therefore, the nutritive power is defined as “a power of preserving the thing that possesses it, *qua* thing that possesses it (*DA* 411I.4, 416 b17-19). “This is therefore an efficient cause which constantly produces the same effect, which for Aristotle shows that the cause must itself remain in the same persisting state, i.e. that it is an unmoved mover.” Menn 2002, 119-122. See above Ibn al-‘Arabí on nutrition n.239

⁴⁰ Johnson 2005, 173, above p 24, 42 and 95

⁴¹ Happ 1971, 4.2., p.340–377

⁴² as translated by Murata 1992, 34 R.W.J.Austin translates this somewhat misleadingly as all-inclusive “object,” *Fus.*1980, p.50

all-inclusive part of the world will also be able to know the Absolute [*al-haqq*] to the utmost limit of possibility as it is the mirror that reflects the Absolute in all its possible manifestations—as al-Affīfī notes on his commentary on the *Fusûs al-hikâm*.⁴³ Only a living human being can have a view on actually opening possibilities, and this, as we will see is the distinctive human feature depicted in the Islamic tradition through the creation of Adam, who knew “all the names” and taught them to the angels who knew them not because of their own full actuality without any further possibilities. To this decisive Qur’anic passage we will come back later on.

Anyone actually reading the works of Ibn al-‘Arabī will immediately notice a constant and super-abundant presence of one element not mentioned by Nyberg in the above list of schools or thinkers: the Qur’ân and Hadîth-literature.⁴⁴ Of course Nyberg does not dismiss this central source of Ibn al-‘Arabī, but, as a western orientalist, he evaluates this particular source in a decisive manner that he himself summarizes quite succinctly: in the Qur’ân the “concept of God” is basically “ethical”, not “metaphysical”. Therefore, according to Nyberg, these non-Qur’anic metaphysical notions of God were filtered into the Islamic world through historical channels, these being mainly three. (1) Neo-platonically formulated philosophy of late antiquity.⁴⁵ (2) Theology through the Syrian and Egyptian churches⁴⁶ and, finally, (3) various Christian and non-Christian mystery-religions of which the Gnostic “system” was the most influential.⁴⁷ But what does this [not at all exceptional] distinction of early and

⁴³ Affīfī 1946, 324–25

⁴⁴ This needs to be emphasized particularly in the case of Ibn al-‘Arabī. For example, although he expressly denied being a follower of ‘Alī Ibn Hazm (d. 1064)—probably the first theologian attempting to refute completely the doctrine of the eternity of the world—and the juridical-ideological school of “literalism” (*Zâhirism*) attached to him in the Maghrib, we actually know he valued greatly Ibn Hazm’s traditional monument of *fiqh*, limiting the basis of law solely to the Qur’an, hadîth and the consensus of the Prophet’s companions. Thus, the basic tenets of this *Zâhirism* (clear in a summary F II 162–66) are obvious in the writings and thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabī, particularly in his reading of the Qur’ân: it is precisely the exact revealed words that need all our attention, the particular *outward* form expressing the *inward* dimension. This emphasis on the actual words of revelation explains his general disdain for all *ta’wîl*-type exegesis, putting him clearly at odds with Henri Corbin and his (*Ismâ‘îli*-based) core-element of esoteric interpretation of sacred texts. However, it is also obvious that what this “exoteric” reading of the Qur’ân comes up to in the hands of Ibn al-‘Arabī is quite different from what it would become in the hands of *Zâhiri*-scholars. See, Elmore, 41–45. On Ibn Hazm, see Majid Fakhry: “The Classical Islamic Arguments for the Existence of God”, *The Muslim World* 47:1957, 137. On *Zâhirism*, see Goldziher 1971.

⁴⁵ The long-enduring conviction of scholars that Arabic philosophy was based on very few Greek sources has been carefully updated in Wisnovsky 2003.

⁴⁶ The Syrian Christian ascetic tradition in relation to early Islamic mysticism has recently been studied by Seppälä [2003]. The Syrian tradition of ascetism is the theme of a monumental study by Vööbus 1958–88. We will soon see that Syria on the whole is indeed a central source and channel for the rich doctrinal heritage of Antiquity into the Islamic world. It was also through the Syrian living tradition of Aristotelian logic that the Islamic world inherited the vast philosophical tradition of Hellenized centers of the Near East; Haq 1994, 231. The well-stocked libraries of Syrian monasteries were an important source for the translators and the whole translation movement was very much based on Syrian multilingual human resources. Most of the translators, with the notable exception of Hunayn ibn Ishâq, knew better Syriac than Greek. Vagelpohl 2008, 17–23, 26

⁴⁷ Nyberg 1919, 57–58. Assessments on this last mentioned channel of influences have changed probably most radically since the days of Nyberg. Were one now to start a research on the Gnostic and Hermetic roots of Ibn al-‘Arabī, a lifetime would not be enough to reach Ibn al-‘Arabī himself. However, a brief summary is attempted of this in the next chapter on alchemy. A good and brief (and, therefore, naturally also contestable) summary on the sources and multiple aspects

later scholars between “ethical” and “metaphysical concepts of God” stand for? Surely the Qu’rân is neither a metaphysical nor an ethical treatise on the “concept of God”; it is not a manual for successful human speculation. Furthermore, the philosophical key-word “existence,” *wujûd*, is not found in the Qu’rân—although, according to Chittick, “*wujûd* is [for the Shaykh] a philosophical term equivalent to the name ‘Allah’.”⁴⁸ Yet, for a Muslim the Qur’ân is “the criterion” [*al-furqân*, Q 25:1], and this is obvious on every page Ibn al-‘Arabi ever wrote: the full range of the human endeavour is constantly both backed up and revealed through quotations from the Qu’rân. The most abstruse intellectual *aporias* of existence as well as the commonest questions of our everyday proceedings are woven into the same matrix of divine words of the Qu’rân—provided they are questions anchored into what *being* human means. That is, provided they retain a sense of wonder [Gr. *thauma*] and mystery [Ar. *sirr*] of existence to awaken a “divine attraction” (*jadhbah*) for wisdom (*hikmah*) in the human being.⁴⁹ It is therefore not the case that the Muslims gained their theoretical ideas on God from the Greeks or the Syrians and their general ethical principles for comportment from the Qu’rân. Instead, whatever “concept of God” a believer might run into is inevitably understood and meditated upon in the light of his or her own heart, soul and understanding of God, and the fundamental source of reference in this for the Muslim is naturally in the language of the Qu’rân.⁵⁰ Here one could side Aristotle, who still could write in the most natural mode that “all men have a conception of gods, and all assign the highest place to the divine, both barbarians and the Hellenes”, or, as he says elsewhere, concerning the ancients who “supposed the primary substances (*tàs prôtas ousías*) to be gods, we must regard it as an inspired saying; and reflect that whereas every art and philosophy has probably been repeatedly developed to the utmost and has perished again, these beliefes of theirs [our ancestors] have been preserved as a relic of former knowledge.”⁵¹ This is a surprisingly Islamic point of view, and also the basic message of the Qur’ân: revelation is a recurring phenomenon in the history of mankind and this repetition is due to human forgetfulness (Q 2:285; 4:164, 5:69 *inter alia*). Therefore, indeed: for every community there is a messenger (10:47). Furthermore, anyone familiar with the Islamic tradition on the whole, meaning both the Qur’ân and the *Sunna* (=custom, usually referring to the Prophet’s deed’s, utterances and unspoken approval, *fi’l*, *qawl*, *takrîr*), that is, the theory and practice of the Islamic community as a

involved is Kingsley 1995, Ch.24: “*From Empedocles to the Sufis: ‘The Pythagorean Leaven’*”. Here Kingsley approaches the subject as a scholar of Antiquity, bringing to the fore many neglected aspects of Classical studies as well as many of the distorted mainstream assessments of these in the western scholarly tradition.

⁴⁸ SPK, 80 The legally minded theologians were eager to bring up this fact against the “Sufi philosophers.” See Knysh 1999, 102

⁴⁹ *Jadhbah*, “(divine) attraction,” is the word with which a modern thinker, Allâmah Tabâtâbâ’i, describes the way of knowledge combined with love, and, therefore, literally *philo-sophia*, at the heart of all religions. Tabâtâbâ’i 1988, 112-13 On this term, see Murata 1992, 340 n.78

⁵⁰ This applies also for the *kalâm* discussions, where the role of the Qur’ân has traditionally been that of a criterion. See van Ess, 1966 p.VIII. Accordingly, God’s existence, in these discussions, is above the sphere of human speculation, not “given birth in our speculation” [*mutawallad ‘an nazarinâ*], rather, God’s existence is a *darûra fitrîa*, an intuitive necessity based on innate disposition. Ibid. p.161–62

⁵¹ *Cael* I.3, 270 b 5-7; *Met* XII.8, 1074 b10-13

whole, knows the already mentioned centrality of the idea of *knowledge* as a great value and gift of God to mankind. The intellect [‘*‘aql*’] is viewed on the whole as a positive human power, though alone insufficient for the understanding of Reality [al-Haqq] in its fullness. It is, therefore no wonder that many modern scholars emphasize the role of Qur’ânic hermeneutics as the basic feature of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s teaching.⁵²

This question on the split of reality into ethics and metaphysics, brought up by Nyberg, has something to do with a question concerning Heidegger, who never wrote a separate work “on ethics”. He says: “The thinking that inquires into the truth of being and so defines the human being’s essential abode *from being and toward being* is neither ethics nor ontology. [...] such thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It comes to pass [*ereignet sich*] before this distinction. Such thinking is, insofar as it is, recollection of being and nothing else.” This is what Heidegger meant in saying that “the human being is the shepherd of being”.⁵³ Therefore, a split between ethics and metaphysics is artificial.⁵⁴

Ibn al-‘Arabî emphasizes the same fundamental nature of thinking as “recollection of being”: for him in all research and thinking no authority will be of any avail, unless “I envisage the ‘being of the Sultan’ [*kawn al-sultân*, the “ruling” being, the being at hand,proceeding] *from me and to me* [*min-nî wa ilayya*]”. And this “essential abode of being”, as he explains next, is what the Prophet meant in saying: *Each of you is a Shepherd* [*râ’in*] [...].⁵⁵ Each one of us is a shepherd for the incoming thoughts [*khawâtir*], for the use of her ownmost dispositions, possibilities, and so on. What is essential here is that, for Ibn al-‘Arabî *being* [*wujûd*] and existence are not theoretical concepts of a supposed

⁵² For example SPK xv-xvi, Morris 2005, 2 and Ch.1, pp.12–44 this aspect is not so eminent, however, in the present study due to the clearly philosophical perspective of Aristotelian elements in the thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabî.

⁵³ GA 9, 188, 162 Pathmarks 1998, 271–72 and 252, italics mine.

⁵⁴ This claimed incongruence between theology and philosophy, or *mythos* and *logos*, between Jerusalem and Athens, is of course a much debated theme of its own into which I will not enter here—though the question is by no means irrelevant for the subject of this study. Here I simply mention the above stance of Heidegger and hope that its reverberations in the forthcoming material on Ibn al-‘Arabî will warrant its assent. For a fine discussion on this topic, see Wayne J.Hankey 2006; and more generally Momigliano 1990; for Plato and the irrational, see Dodds 1951, Ch VI–VII, pp.179–235. “The debate on this question, in our opinion”, writes the historian EricVogelin, “is inapposite because it misconceives the symbolization of divinity as a matter of theoretical systems. It rests on the assumption that ‘religion’ consists in adherence to a system of ‘propositions’ concerning existence and nature of god [...]. In opposition to this rationalistic attitude I should like to recall a dictum of Goethe: ‘As a moralist I am a monotheist; as an artist I am a polytheist; as a naturalist I am a pantheist.’” Vogelin 1989, Vol.II, 179

⁵⁵ ‘*Anqâ* I.II, Elmore 240-41 A well-known tradition, see *Concordance* 273a. I think Elmore misses here the fundamental philosophical point in considering it possible that the Shaikh is here expressing a “kind of Stoic existentialism” in relation to mundane power. Elmore 241 n.38 For Ibn al-‘Arabî there can be no other Sultan of being except Being itself, the “essential abode of human being”.

metaphysics⁵⁶, instead, by stressing the literal sense of the Arabic word *wujûd*, these concepts refer to actual finding, a confrontation and an actual having the world “there” as reality. Thus, what is crucial for Ibn al-‘Arabî is *finding God*, not arguments for or against the ultimate reality and meaning.

In terms of doctrinal background, what we do know is that Ibn al-‘Arabi himself considered all doctrinal or doxographical⁵⁷ studies distracting for any “seeker of increase in spiritual understanding”.⁵⁸ This refers to the purpose of his writing just mentioned: he wants to help his reader in finding God, not in passing an examination on doctrinal subtleties.

Here Ibn al-‘Arabî would also surely agree—and showing this is one of the aims of the present study—with Heidegger who over 700 years later, and certainly with no connections what so ever with Ibn al-‘Arabi, insisted on *purely philosophical grounds* for the necessity of realizing *the ontological priority of the question of Being*. “All research is an ontical possibility of Dasein [*eine ontische Möglichkeit des Dasein*]”. This priority denotes to an understanding which is rooted in “Dasein’s ownmost being” which, precisely because of that, tends to be suffocated under the overwhelming conceptual tradition of philosophy/theology.⁵⁹

When Ibn al-‘Arabî decided not to include in his major work a “doxographical” section, he wanted to prevent his readers from entering into endless discussions on standpoints of philosophical activity. Instead of this he wanted to guide his reader towards his or her own grounds of understanding, that is, the only solid basis for any spiritual growth and true “tasting” [*dhawq*] and “verification” [*tahqîq*] of the realities he was describing.⁶⁰ Here Ibn al-‘Arabî is an ardent follower of the legendary master of Sûfî mystics, Empedocles, who advised his pupils: “(All these remedies)... you will learn, because *for you*

⁵⁶ Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* was translated literally into Arabic as *Mâ bâd al-tabî’a*, or *fawq al-tabî’a* “What comes after /or is above physics”, but this did not become a name for a separate science. On the contrary, as Ess notes, philosophers working on “Greek metaphysics” identified their studies with Islamic theology. van Ess 1997, IV, 359 and n.44. The term *ilâhiyyât*, the “divine sciences” was used as the equivalent of the Greek *metaphysics* as it was used in Greek with *tâ theologiká* together for *First philosophy*.

⁵⁷ F I, 31.2 The Arabic word ‘*aqâ’id*’, from the root meaning ‘to knit, knot or tie’, means all formulas shaping the human understanding be they beliefs, ideas, doctrines, feelings or inclinations. This is the sense also of the Greek word *doxa*, which was often rendered by Ishâq Ibn Hunain in his Aristotle translations as *i’tiqâd*, i.e. “what is held as doctrine”. van Ess 1966, 71, 105; For ‘*aqâ’id*’ in Ibn al-‘Arabi, see *Imaginal Worlds*, III.9, 138–41

⁵⁸ Ibid. *muta’ahhib* from verb *ta’ahhaba* to make oneself ready for the “voyage of the soul”

⁵⁹ SuZ § 6

⁶⁰ This important Akbarian (see p.75) notion of “verification” as “spiritual intelligence” is given a thorough study in *The Reflective Heart* by James Winston Morris, 2005.

alone will I make these things come true” (Fr.111).⁶¹ Ibn al-‘Arabi is not teaching doctrinal formulas but he is leading each and every one of his readers towards his or her own self-realization. However, this he did “in the rational and didactic language of the scholarly tradition”.⁶² Here the point is not the tradition but, rather, the things expressed with it: “things as they in themselves are” [to use a common phenomenological phrase of Ibn al-‘Arabi: *al-‘amru alâ’mâ huwa alaihi fî nafsîhi*]. For example, he writes: “knowledge is for the heart to acquire (*tahsîl*, gather) something (*amr*) as that thing is in itself (*mâ huwa alayîhi fî nafsîhi*), whether the thing is existent or non-existent. [...] The knower is the heart and the object of knowledge is that acquired thing” (F I 91.19–20, SPK 148–49).

Rationality as such is merely an empty form and can not gain any positive contents without an object, without that something which is focused upon and thought about in the language of the philosophical tradition.

*Distinguish the manifest from the nonmanifest
and the nonmanifest from the manifest.
For of the cosmos, you are the spirit of the cosmos,
and the cosmos is your manifest form.
The form has no meaning without a spirit,
so the cosmos has no meaning apart from you.*

F III 363.2-3 (SDG 232)

Therefore, in the present study, I try to make and keep a difference between tradition as the history of ideas and the understanding of the issues themselves, and it is the latter that is at the focal point of interest here. Therefore: *Zur Sachen Selbst*

⁶¹ Italics mine. On Arabic Empedocles (*Anbaduklîs*, in EI²) or *tâifat Anbadaqlîs*, “followers of Emped.” see *K.al-Ahjâr*, II.27, Haq 1994 143, tr.p.185. See Rudolph 1989, 130–42; Asin Palacios 1975 (1914), refuted by Stern 1971, pp 325–37. Further, see Ess III 1992, 444; Kingsley 1995, 371–91

⁶² Chittick 2007, 28

III. 2. Towards a Science of Balance: *peri physeôs* tradition in Islam

“*Kamâ badâkum ta’udûna*” (*As He [God] brought you into being
so return ye [unto Him].*)

Q 7:29

*When we ask about the mystery of the composition of the elements,
we inevitably run into the mystery of manifestation.*

Denis Grill, MR II 111

*The morphology of natures (tasrîf al-tabâ’i’) bears a parallel in the morphology of letters
(tasrîf al-hurûf).*

Jâbir ibn Hayân: *Kitâb al Tasrîf*, Book of Morphology.⁶³

Phenomena, appearances, or non-existent possible things and their underlying matter (*mawâdd* / *mâdda* / *hylê*) as a possibility for all manifestation (*mazhar*) play a central role in the thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabî. “[He] radically affirms the revelatory nature of phenomena. That which appears is in fact Being, the Divine Reality itself.” The word Ibn al-‘Arabî most often uses to explain these ideas is “mazhar”, a word meaning “manifestation, outwardness, appearance.” He even “claims to have been the first to employ the term to explain the nature of existence” (SPK, 89). Therefore, it is essential to put this thinking in its proper context in his philosophy of nature on the whole and, consequently, a theory of matter at its foundation. Otherwise it would be impossible to understand the high status he gives to the appearing forms of the material world and the bodily instruments of the soul, the perceptive faculties and sensation, that is, to “the eminence (*sharaf*) and worth of sensation (*al-hiss*) and the fact that it is identical with the Real (*annahu ‘ainu’l-haqq*),” as he boldly exclaims (F III 189.11-12).⁶⁴

⁶³Kraus 1935, 393.13-15

⁶⁴ Thus, Q 6:73: “He is the Knower of the Unseen and *the visible*,” *al-shahâda*: what presently is, what is *there*, that which is confronted (*das was gegenwärtig ist, einem vor augen steht*). van Ess refers to Sextus Empiricus and an “*aitiological*” method based on the idea that the visibly obvious (*tâ phainómena*) covers something hidden and non-manifest (*aphanês*), namely, the *aitia*, *die Ursache* of the appearance. Already Anaxoras guided his pupils to proceed through the visible to the invisible (*ópsis adêlôn tâ phainómena*). See: van Ess 1997, Vol IV, 665. Here, however, we have something more immediate, not a representation but a full identity.

Understanding such claims requires thorough studies in *alchemy* and its basic tenets as these certainly are central for the era in which Ibn al-‘Arabí lived, an era that did not yet separate as tightly the material physical order from the psychological and spiritual ones as modern world has done. Ibn al-‘Arabí was himself known amongst his followers as *Kibrîť al-ahmar*, the fiery discriminating and activating Red Sulphur of alchemy. This honorific probably describing adequately the “scintillating personality and thought” of Ibn al-‘Arabí, as Franz Rosenthal notes. This is also a name chosen by Claude Addas for her thorough biography of Ibn al-‘Arabí: “*Quest for the Red Sulphur, the Life of Ibn al-‘Arabí*.”⁶⁵

Furthermore, though maybe surprisingly, alchemy provides a natural access to some of the earliest and fundamental Aristotelian elements entering into the Islamic world and the thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabí in the form of “philosophy of nature.”⁶⁶ This, of course, is the sole purpose of the present section of our study, not an overall introduction on alchemy. It is also important to note from the start that the common stereotypical idea of an alchemist, “the wildly-impractical *amateur* alchemist, wasting his substance on fruitless researches, was emphatically a creature of medieval Europe.”⁶⁷ One should keep in mind that in the early Islamic world the founders of the *kalâm*-dialecticians “lived in the shadow of centuries of Hellenistic influence on the central lands of the Middle East; influence which had deeply penetrated the intellectual and religious life of this region. [...] This is particularly evident [...] in the cosmological speculations of the founders of *kalâm*.”⁶⁸

Here alchemy is at the heart of these cosmological interests by providing us with nothing less than some of the basic notions and perspectives on how the constitution of reality/physics (*tabî’a / physis*) was understood and conceptualized over a thousand years ago. Through Ibn al-‘Arabí we will meet also the greatest early alchemist and scientist in Islam, the “Sûfî from the city of Tûs”, Jâbir ibn Hayyân,

⁶⁵ Rosenthal 1988, 33; *Ibn ‘Arabí ou La quête du Souffre Rouge*. See Addas 1993, n112 n.10. The name of the chemical arsenic (As) meant originally “masculine”, “strong”, “manly” (*ársên*). Thus in Arabic “Red man” (*dhakar akhmar*) is a name for arsenic, often used in alchemy, not as the poison but as referring to the means whereby Sulphur and Mercury are combined as the *lapis philosophorum*. See, Ruska 1926, 52 n3, and Jung 1989, 164. Sulphur is the “divine” inaugurating principle, called *theîon* in Greek. According to alchemical theory all metals are formed out of combinations of sulphur and mercury and these are further constituted from natural elemental qualities of heat, cold, humid and dry, ordered as pairs of opposites in inner and outer natures of the metals. Kraus 1986, 1–2. This basic Sulphur—Mercury—theory of alchemy was the foundation of later *acid-base* theory; Nasr, 1968, 266.

⁶⁶ “Philosophy of nature” here used in the sense of the Hellenistic notion of *phusikê*, “which includes topics that we might be more inclined to regard as metaphysical, such as theology and the theory of causation.” Hankinson in CCG 2008, 236 n1. Rosenthal shows through many quotations the high esteem held by Ibn al-‘Arabí on physics (*al-‘ilm at-tabî’î*), a science he saw as part of *falsafah* and hikmah pertaining to the ordering of the world; Rosenthal 1988, 14–18. This is further backed by Ibn al-‘Arabí who sees it as a weakness in *Kalâm* that it has no entrance to cosmology and knowledge of nature. F I 261 6–8, see Chittick 1996, in HIP, 500

⁶⁷ Toulmin & Goodfield 1962, 119

⁶⁸ Dhanani 1994, 1

traditionally (and also by Ibn al-‘Arabî) said to be the pupil of the 6th Imâm, Jâfar al-Sadîq (d. 765 CE).⁶⁹ Thus, not only the central Aristotelian concept of *hylê* originally introduced as an underlying universal material principle (appearing as *al-hâyûlâi ‘l-kull* in the *Futûhât*, F III 195, 26) explaining what happens in all becoming and change, but also, as anyone at all familiar with philosophical ideas knows, “one thing leads to another,” and so, with the basic ideas attached to *hylê/dúnamis*, a whole plethora of perspectives were opened up for germinating ideas and new formulations as Aristotelian natural science or philosophy of nature.⁷⁰

According to the theme of this study, the idea of **potentiality**, a being that is, but is not yet or perhaps never will be, **is a profound new perspective to challenge the eternally present sense of ideal absolute being in Greek thinking** (see above n.26). Through the basic ideas of alchemy, we will, therefore, soon meet again many modifications of the themes brought forth in the first part of this study on the teleology of Aristotle and his concept of *hylê*, a concept developed on the earlier Pre-Socratic *Peri fuseôs* tradition and further developed and enhanced by Plato in the Academy and finally, after him, conceptualized and brought together as a universal principle of *hylê* by Aristotle.

A telling concrete example of this recognized kinship between Aristotelian philosophical cosmology and the concrete perspectives of Islam into nature as the totality of what exists (*mâ siwâ Allâh*, “what is other than God,” cf. pp 269 and 71 above), is expressed in a story included in the *Letters/Essays* of the “Brethren of purity” (*Ikwân al-Safâ*), an eclectic but very well known 10th or 11th century collection of 52 essays on all known fields of reality in the Islamic world. According to this account, “the Prophet Muhammed claims that, had Aristotle lived to know the Islamic message brought by him, the Greek philosopher would have undoubtedly converted to Islam.” (R IV, 179)⁷¹ Whether that would have been the case or not is irrelevant. Here the point is more on the side of the Brethren of Purity and their conviction of nature as infinite and proper source of knowledge in Islam; thus, the two compatible aspects of human capacity to understand and nature making sense. This mixture of what is objectively given and what is spontaneously understood, marks the Aristotelian way towards the principles (*epi tàs arkhás*), as was noted in the first part of this study (see: I.B.1, p.15). Aristotle says, referring to

⁶⁹ It is worth noting that in discussing the abstract and concrete nature of the Aristotelian elements, Happ has a note pointing to “the very important” discussion of Kraus in *Jâbir* IV.4. Kraus (1942) 1986, 161–185.

⁷⁰ Happ notes both the strong ties of Aristotelian thought in the organic and inorganic elemental sphere to previous Presocratic Greek tradition of two principles (*hen—áriston duás*), that is, in a sphere where his three-part model of contrary opposites and their underlying substratum as *materia prima* (*Phys.*I.6) is only implicitly in the background or has no part what so ever. On the other hand, as he also notes, these Aristotelian studies influenced profoundly the further developments of studies in botany, medical and alchemical theories; Happ 1971, 555–56

⁷¹ Quoted through Netton 1996, in HIP I, 1997, 226

Anaxagoras:”someone suggested that Intellect (*noûn*) was present in nature, just as in animals, and was the cause of the cosmos and of all order (*taxeôs pásês*)” and after noting that already before Anaxagoras Hermotimus touched on these explanations, Aristotle concludes: “Those who made these suppositions postulated that the cause is at once an origin of goodness in things and the sort of origin from which change comes to things” (*Meta* I.3, 984 b16–20). And, commenting this, Ammonius notes “Thus [Aristotle] praises those who posited Intellect as both final and productive (*poiêtikon*) cause.”⁷²

Here I pinpoint a central and essential vein, an almost *Stoic element* in this study: **the central role of natural processes in understanding the fullness of “being a human being.”** This is summarised well by Martha Nussbaum – and very much on the lines of Ibn al-‘Arabí: “Reasoning, on the Stoic view, is not just divine internally: it is our piece of the divinity that inhabits the whole framework of the universe.”⁷³ Or, as is the role of the Active Intellect seen by Alexander of Afrodisias: “Giver of Forms, that is to say not only as a source of the intelligible forms arising in the human intellect, but also of the *forms embedded in the material world*.”⁷⁴ Or one could also say “if essences are *in* the natural world, it is by penetrating deeper into that world that we get beyond it,” as Jonathan Lear puts the Aristotelian position.⁷⁵ Ultimately, the question is of the “how” of confronting the cosmos in all its manifestations; the world on the whole as it opens up in the fullness of human experience. Therefore, in one of his many, many explanations of the famous Prophetic/Delphic dictum: *He who knows himself knows his Lord*, Ibn al-‘Arabi comments: “if you knew yourself, you would know your Lord, just as your Lord knows you and He knows the cosmos through His knowledge of Himself. You are His form, so there is no escape from your sharing with Him in this knowledge. Thus, you know Him from your knowledge of yourself.” (F III 189.19-20, SDG 290)

⁷² Sorabji 2004, Vol.II, 166 “Basically Aristotle’s God, unlike Plato’s, is... a thinker, not a creator. He only causes the heavens to rotate, acting as final cause (*telikon*) whose continuous thinking inspires them,” as Sorabji explains to put this Ammonian synthesis between Plato and Aristotle in perspective. The Aristotle of the Islamic world is of course filtered through the long commentary-tradition and a strong tendency of synthesis and reconciliation between Plato and Aristotle, called by Wisnovsky the “greater *sumphônia*” whereas with the term “lesser *sumphônia*” he refers to the tendency of commentators to forge “a single, consistent doctrine out of the sometimes incongruent theories found in Aristotle’s many treatises.” Wisnovsky 2003, 15

⁷³ Nussbaum 1996, 317 As we will soon see, Stoic influences are obvious also in the alchemical theories. And even though it is clear that the fundamental theory of natural elements was transmitted through the Aristotelian expositions in *De Generatione et Corruptione* and his *Meteorology*, it is also clear that these elements were from early on interpreted through Stoic lenses. See Kraus 1986, 168–75. One clear channel for these Stoic influences was the *Placita Philosophorum* of Ps.-Plutarchos, translated by Qustâ Ibn Lûqâ (c. 820–912 CE.), see Daiber, *Aetius* 1980. There is a long passage (I 25-26 and IV 2-6) from this important “doxographical authority” (PP 1990, 5) translated perhaps already earlier by Jâbir in his *Kitâb al-hâsil* (Kr.323) given in Greek and Arabic by Kraus 1986, 332–37.

⁷⁴ Genequand 2001, 22, italics mine Genequand notes that the conception of nature characteristic of [Alexander’s] *Mabâdi* became almost standard from the 10th century onwards.” Like the Stoicly tainted all-permeating *pneuma* in the *Rasâ’il* of the Ikhwân al-Safâ’, R II.145: “*quwwa rûhâniyya tasrî fî jamî’ al-‘âlam*.”

⁷⁵ Lear 1988, 28-29.

Here we also have a basic difference between the lines of reasoning among the philosophers and mystics like Ibn al-‘Arabí. Consider a philosopher, let us say the just mentioned arch-peripatetic philosopher and commentator of Aristotle, well-known also in the Arabic world, Alexander of Aphrodisias (early 3rd century), who wanted to show that although there is nothing prior to the first principles of Universe (*al-mubâdî-l’kull*), which therefore cannot be demonstrated, yet insists that proofs of demonstrative reason (*al-burhânyya*), things that are evident, manifest and well-known, necessarily lead up to higher principles ascertaining *the theory of first principles according to Aristotle’s opinion* (*al-mubâdîy’bi-hisbi râ’i Aristutâlis*).⁷⁶ This relentless approach was a cause of many headaches throughout the centuries amongst the scholastic commentators and *defenders* of their Master—apologists who all had a strong urge to harmonize between the different approaches of Aristotle, whom Arthur Hyman has elsewhere called “a pluralist in his metaphysics” who “saw no need to harmonize his views.”⁷⁷ The case of a mystic like Ibn al-‘Arabí looks quite different: he had no such burden of proof for the agreement of truths he came to realize through unveiling with any existing system of philosophy: *finding* reality was his sole point. Many of his realizations agree also with Aristotelian perspectives, as I intend to show in this study, but for him the sole “criterion” (*furqân*) for any truth is in the unveiling itself and in the revealed words of Qur’ân (see above pp. 143-45), not doctrines of the philosophers or (kalâm) dialecticians, be they mu’tazilites or Ash’arites. (See F II.523.15–16)

The principal motive, however, for starting here with alchemy is its inherent principle of the *sense of unity* between the material and the spiritual, that is, in terms of Islam, *tawhîd*, the declaration of unity as an innate intuition of all reality, and as such, also the ultimate foundation of Islam. This is the unitive *context* for both material and spiritual orders within the perspectives of both Islam and the “Sacred Art of Alchemy,” as it was historically also known, or, in terms of Ibn al-‘Arabí, the “Science of the Saints” (*‘ilmu’l-awliyâ*).⁷⁸ According to Ibn al-‘Arabí this declaration of unity is the formula *lâ ilâha illa Allâh*, there is no divinity but God, with its four words as “divine foundation for all existence”⁷⁹; the four natures (*tabî’i* of heat, cold, moistness and dryness) as the basis of all corporeal composites and of the

⁷⁶ Italics mine. Genequand (ed.) 2001, 42–43.

⁷⁷ Hyman 1965, 394

⁷⁸ *De magna et sacra arte*, a 7th century Alexandrian work on alchemy attributed to Stéphanus the Sage (*Istâfânus al-hakîm*), for whom alchemy had become the way of transformation of the human being. Kraus 1986, 34–35 and 40. Instead of using the word Alchemy, Ibn al-Arabí usually speaks of the Science of Balance or Letters, or Science of Saints, based on properties (*khawass*) or natures of the elements, referring to the pupil of the legendary 6th Imâm Jâfar al-Sadîq, that is, Jâbir ibn Hayyân (F I.190.25).

⁷⁹ Often referred to as quaternity (*tarb’î*) upon which existence stands; see MR I, 245 n.63. One example of such “fours” are the “four pillars of prayer (*salât*)”, standing, bowing, prostrating and sitting, which are the states of spiritual quaternity: “The forms of the meanings arrive newly from the commingling of these four states, just as the forms of the corporeal, natural, progeny arrive newly from the commingling of the elements.” F II 49.10-13

four elements (‘*anâsir*, named further down as *aithîr*⁸⁰, air, water and earth), the constituents of all generated beings (*muwalladât*); the four humors⁸¹ as basis of all living creatures and the four truths of human being [body, nutrition, perception and (rational) speech (*nutq*)] and the four fundamental divine attributes of life, knowledge, desire (*irâda*) and word (*qawl* or power, *qudra*)” (F II.406.1-3, cf. Ch.225, F II 520-21). Thus, the declaration of unity is the resonating sum of this universal totality.

However, to start with, alchemy is an Art (*san’a*, *Gr.tekhnê*, *poiêsis*). It is an **art “of refining and purification of the three: body, soul and spirit”**, as Jâbir says.⁸² The inclusion of spirit in this list betrays the fact that the question is not merely of psychological or philosophical distinctions but, rather, a personal affair, something that requires actual experience and commitment. In the Islamic world this art ultimately boils down to the idea of *Balance*, or *Science of balance* [*mizân*, ‘*ilmu l-mizân*, Gr. *zugós*, like in *Tim*.63B]⁸³, a balance that the human being himself both ultimately *is*, and, on the other hand, a balance he/she can accomplish between the sensible physical world and the intelligible spiritual world.⁸⁴ The idea of balance can become true only between things, like musical tones in “symphony”, in sounding together⁸⁵: every balance has two pans and an indicator, a tongue (*lisân*), levelling them and setting the weighed things in relation to one another like the tongue articulating letters of language and combining them into expressable and meaningful units. Thus, the tongue of a balance is pointing at the sense of unity between the measured and weighed entities, be they the elemental components of

⁸⁰Curiously the simple elemental quality of heat is connected here not with upward moving fire of sublunar elements but *aithîr*, the celestial sphere or “fifth element” (*pémpton soma*, as it was later called, see Daiber 1975, 66-67) of fire referring to the eternal circular rotation of the stars as the cause and source of motion (*kineseôs arkhê*, *Meteor*.I.1, 339 a30-1) in the sublunar four elements (appearing once in Aristotle also as form for the other elements seen as *hylê*, 379 a15ff); Happ 1971, 534. Similarly, according to Aristotle, Empedocles used the four elements as dual, treating fire by itself, and the three other elements as opposed to it. (*Met* I 4, 985 a 29-35). The fiery celestial sphere is referred to as ungenerated (*agéneton*), indestructible (*áphtharton*), and susceptible neither to growth (*anauxês*) nor alteration (*analloiôton*) 270 a 13-15. According to *Aetius Arabus*: “for Aristotle the celestial body of the sun is a globe of the fifth element”, *Aetius* II.20.11, Daiber 1980, 157; the sun being furthermore for Aristotle the principle of all motion and terrestrial life, *Meta*XII.5, 1071 a15ff.; *Meteor*.I.9, 346 b20ff. The Aristotelian celestial *aither* was further equated by the Stoics with the divine creative fiery principle of *pneuma* penetrating the whole cosmos (*pneuma diêkon holou tou kósmou*), SVF I 159 and 533. Cf. Daiber 1975, 66-69 n.6. For Jâbir and the fifth principle is the substrate of the four natures; Kraus 1986, 153 n.2 and 154. On the term *aither* see above ch. III. 2.3. p.188

⁸¹Physiology of Hippocrates based on four humours was highly influential in the Islamic world. See Daiber 1975, 68, further referring to Manfred Ullman: *Die Medizin im Islam* 1970 not consulted. See above: p. 155–56, n98, n102, p.180, and n209.

⁸²*Kitâb al-mulk*, quoted through Ruska 1924, 56.

⁸³“The Art called *al-kîmya* is nothing but knowledge of measures and weights (*ma’rifatu’l-maqâdir wa’l-awzân*),” as Ibn al-‘Arabî says in Ch 15, F I 152.31-32, summarizing the basic ideas of alchemy, where he also notes that gold is not sought after in hope of riches but for beauty and perfection of the human being, referring to Q 95:5 [God] *Created man in the fairest stature*; the four humours balanced in the small world of the human being like the four elements in the great, macrocosmic world and in God creating the human being out of the mixture (*mizâj*) of earth (*turâb*) and water into which He breathed breath and spirit (*nafsan wa rûhan*). Ibid 152.20-21 and 152. 29– 153.1

⁸⁴Travaglia, 1999, 79-80 writes: This science is a measuring system which quantifies the ratios governing not only the natural world but also the astral and spiritual ones. Basically the balance governs everything and it is via this that one can gain precise knowledge [...]. Jâbir’s progression can be traced to astronomical-astrological science, and particularly to ps.Apollonius of Tyana.”

⁸⁵This originally Pythagorean theory of numerically expressable musical harmony governing the heavens is often referred to in the writings of Jâbir. The symphony of elemental qualities in nature is similarly constituted in quantities reflecting musical intervals. See Kraus 1986, 309.

incorporeal language, or the elements of corporeal nature.⁸⁶ For Jâbir this Art is the *Path of Balance* (*tarîq al-mizân*).⁸⁷ Also, according to Ibn al-‘Arabî, “God created man’s body in the form of a scale; He made the two pans his right hand and his left hand, while he made the ‘tongue’ the pillar of himself.” (F III 6.19-20) He (God) also placed “health and well-being in the equilibrium of the four natures (*al-tabâ’i*) [...]. Hence equilibrium (*i’tidâl*) is the cause of subsistence, while disequilibrium (*inhirâr*) is the cause of destruction and annihilation.” (Ibid. III 6.31-33) Thus, as just quoted in n 83: “The Art called *al-kîmya* is nothing but knowledge of measures and weights (*ma’rifatu ’l-maqâdir wa ’l-awzân*),” as Ibn al-‘Arabî says in Ch 15, F I 152.31-32, a chapter that will be central in III.5 above.

“Know that there is no *Art* (*san’a*, see note 97), level, state, or station which does not have a scale ruling over it in both knowledge and practice. Meanings have a scale in the hand of reason known as ‘logic’ (*mantiq*); it includes two pans, known as ‘premisses’ (*muqaddimatain*). Speech has a scale known as ‘grammar’ (*nahw*), by which words are weighed in order to verify the meanings which the words of that language denote” as Ibn al-‘Arabî says referring to Q 55:7 “And He [God] has set up the Scale/balance” (F III.6.16, SPK 172). Or, as the Qur’ân also says “There is no thing whose treasures are not with us, and we send it down but in a known measure” (Q 15:21).

This last quotation is perhaps closest to how the concept of balance was understood in early alchemy and later by Ibn al-‘Arabî, as we will see in more detail further down: balance is an overall principle acting between substance and the elements (*ustuqussât* / Gr. *stoikheia*⁸⁸), or between the [Stoicly/Neo-

⁸⁶ *Mizân* from the root w-z-n, to weigh, is used in the Qur’ân in sixteen verses summarized by Ibn al-‘Arabî in Ch 301 (F III.6) referring particularly to Q 55: 7–9. Cf. SPK 173. In the *El*² article, Kraus /Plessner note: “the fundamental principle in the science of Jâbir is that of *mizân*”. Among his writings there is a division of 144 treatises called “*Kutub al-Mawâzîn*” (Books of Balances) containing the theory and philosophy of alchemy. Corbin (1986b, pp.55–131) on the other hand based his study on the “Science of Balance” on Haydar Âmulî (1320–1385 C.E.), a Shî’î spiritual disciple of Ibn al-‘Arabî, and his vast commentary on the *Fusûs al-hikâm*, partially published as Vol.22 of the Bibliothèque Iranienne 1974. One may also note in passing that a modern monumental commentary of the Qur’ân by the well-known scholar and philosopher of the 20th century, Allâma Muhammed Husayn Tabâtâbâ’î, is called *al-Mizân*. In general philosophical usage the term “science of balance” (*‘ilm al-mizân*) denotes also to logic, the instrument of distinguishing between true and not-true.

⁸⁷ *Kitâb al-sana’*, in Ruska 1924, 50 Empedocles seems to be the first to explain bodily generation and corruption in terms of mixing (*mîxis*) and dissociation (*diállaxis*) of elements. He also claimed to know the elemental constitution of bodily parts, a thesis that Galen vigorously refuted, saying that all “philosophically minded physicians (*ashâb al-tabâ’i min al-falâsifa*)” agree that only God knows the exact composition of such things. Kraus 1986, 307–08. This Empedoclean position was known in the Arab world through the translation of *Placita Philosophorum* of Ps.-Plutarchos, see Placita V 22, ed. Daiber 1980 74-75. In the *Timaios* passage mentioned above the scale is used to balance the elements and, therefore, in this Jabirian sense. However for Jâbir, as we will see, there is a balance for each and every thing. In his vocabulary balance is a principle.

⁸⁸ In Aristotle the elements (*stoikheia*, GC II 3, 330 a30) are the first formations of matter (*hylê*). The word *stoikheion* was rendered into Arabic through the Syrian *estûhâ* as *ustuquss*. Thus in the *Aetius* the Empedoclean elements are rendered as *ustuqussât* (I, 26) and in IV.2.7, and the soul is said to be the harmony of the four elements (*tâ’lîf al’arbâ’ al-ustuqussât*), Daiber 1980, 190-191; Kraus 1986, 336 and 332. However, although *hayûlâ* (along with *mâdda*) is the most common term for matter, the Greek *hylê* is translated in *Aetius* systematically as *unsûr*, a clearly archaic word in that sense; see Daiber,

Platonically] understood Universal Soul and its desire (*shauq /tawqân /shahwa*⁸⁹) for the various elemental qualities or natures (*anâsir* sg. '*unsur*') of heat, coldness, dryness and humidity in the formation of all corporeality. Thus each being endowed with a soul has its cause in the principle of balances.⁹⁰ Galen even attributes the whole elemental theory not to Empedocles or Heraclitus, but to Hippokrates:

“The doctrine that ‘all bodies... are composed of hot, cold, wet and dry’ is ‘common to virtually all the most reputable doctors as well as the best of philosophers [like Chrysippus and Aristotle]... but I call them ‘Hippokrates’ elements’ because I think it proper to bear witness to him who first propounded and demonstrated them.”

And he [Galen] wrote a work *On the Elements according to Hippokrates* to prove it.⁹¹ And, incidentally, besides Plato, Galen seems to be the only Greek thinker cited by name in the *Futûhât* (F III 113.6).

This widely accepted and originally physiological notion of correspondence between the macrocosmos of the world and microcosmos of the human being serves here as the *explanans* of all generation.⁹² In the same way as the nutritive soul for Aristotle (see above pp 47, 49, 141 and n 239) in the human microcosmic scale was said to “feed the body”⁹³, here, likewise, the Universal Soul on the macrocosmic scale is the organizing principle of the elemental qualities in the cosmic “body”.⁹⁴ The possibilities of

Aetius, 284; 615; Genequand 2001, 38. Instead, this word in plural is common for the four elements ('*anâsir*'), or, in the case of four elemental qualities, as '*anâsir uwal*', or, *al-'anâsir al-basâ'it*, first/simple elements, to distinguish them from the secondary / composed elements (*al-thawânin / al-murakkabât*) of Air, Water, Earth, and Fire. Jâbir and Ibn al-'Arabî both refer to the elements quite often also as 'natures', *tabâ'i* ("nature is four-fold." F II 367.23). These terms will become clearer as we proceed.

⁸⁹ For the originally Platonic tripartition of the soul, downgraded by Aristotelian tripart division in *DA* II.3, 414 b2 of human appetite (*éfeis*, *órexis*) into desire (*epithumia*, Ar. *shawq*), inclination (*thumos*, Ar. *ghadab*) and wish (*boulesia* Ar. *irâda*), see: Genequand 2001, 7 and 37; Daiber, *Aetius* 593. For these Greek terms referring to the parts of the soul see discussion in Sorabji 2004, Vol.1, chapter 6. Here these terms are used by Jâbir synonymically, see *Maydân al-'Aql*, in Kraus 1935, pp 211-12; Haq 1994, 58.

⁹⁰ “Le principe et l’origine des Balances (*mawâzîn*) dérive donc du désir (*tawqan*) éprouvé par l’âme envers les éléments. D’où il suit que chaque être doué d’une âme a sa cause [Ou: sa justification, '*illa*'] dans (le principe des Balances).” *Kitâb maydân al-'aql*, quoted through Kraus 1986, 159

⁹¹ Quoted through Hankinson in: CCG 2008, 211; for a discussion on this work of Galen by Ibn al-'Arabî, see pp 225–26.

⁹² For an example of correspondence between macro- microcosm in Galen see Hankinson in CCG 2008, 228.

⁹³ Similarly Ibn al-'Arabî refers to the subtle (*latîf*) reality of the human being which is mounted on the body, its locus of governance (*tadbîr*), and the instruments (*âlât*) for gaining both sensory and suprasensory objects of knowledge. F II 503.10 Further down (I.31-32) he specifies that he does not mean instruments merely as faculties but as carriers of meanings, as functioning organs as hearing, eyesight and smelling, not ears, eyes or nose.

⁹⁴ Jâbir takes explicitly this theme up in his *Kitâb al-hudûd* (Book of Definitions) where he refers to his “Refutation of the De Anima of Aristotle” where the soul is the form or actualization (*entelecheia*) of an organic body *DA* II.1, 412 a19ff. A theory criticized also by Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.7.8 (Tr. in Sorabji 2004, Vol.1, pp 245-46). In his refutation Jâbir’s point is in extending the definition of the soul in a Platonic/Neoplatonic sense to the macrocosmic level as a World Soul (*Tim.* 35 A), the root for harmony in nature. For Jâbir the soul is a *divine substance* donating life and vivifying the body. Elsewhere he defines the soul in a quite different Pythagorean sense as a numerical harmony (*tâlif dhû 'adad*) indicating his notion of balance. Kraus 309-10 and n 18 For various Pre-Socratic definitions of the Soul accessible for the early medieval Arabic reader, see: Placita IV.2, Daiber 1980, 190-91. The much debated and complicated soul-body thematic in antiquity and early Christianity is well documented in Sorabji 2004a, Vol.1, chapter 6(b), pp 204–08.

combinations and transmutation (*istihâla*) of the elements are infinite—obvious in the infinite diversity of nature—just like the possibilities of letters and phonemes combining into meaningful words are infinite in language. But these combinations do not come about randomly, instead, they are governed by the all-pervasive principle of *balance*: “it is by means of this principle that man is able to make sense of the world,” as Jâbir ibn Hayyân writes.⁹⁵ Thus here we have the highest principle of all existence, the Supreme principle (*qâ’ida ‘uzmâ*), as Jâbir also calls it (see p.167).

Another earlier important source of alchemy already mentioned in connection with Jâbir—and also applying the fundamental principle of *mizân*, *balance* (according to Jâbir)—expresses well the all-pervasive nature of alchemy in its name: “The Secret of Creation and the Art of [reproducing] Nature (*al-sirr al-khalîqa wa san’at al-tabî’a*)”, a treatise falsely attributed to *Balînâs al-Hakîm*, Balinas the Sage, Apollonios of Tyana, a Neo-Pythagorean philosopher who lived during the first century CE.⁹⁶

As claimed above, one of the basic tenets of alchemy is the conviction that the essential secret of this *science of art* (*‘ilm al-san’a*⁹⁷, pl. *sanâ’i*) lies hidden as a possibility to be discovered through the balance of human nature itself as a key of all understanding. Ibn al-‘Arabi says, referring to the non-dimensional unitive essence of the human being (F I 62.29; OY I 281.11) :

“O you who are seeking to attain the being of Truth (*wujûdu’l-haqq*),
Turn back to your own essence (*irjî’ li-dhâtik*). The truth is in you, hold onto it!”

This fundamental human equilibrium of all elements is based on the physiological notion of the four Hippocratic elemental *humours* (*akhlât*).⁹⁸ Indeed, the notion of a total mixture of *qualities* seems to go

⁹⁵ *Bakth*, f.15b, quoted through Haq 1994, 67.

⁹⁶ On Apollonios of Tyana, see above n 96, n 100, n 287 and n 315 see further the article by Plessner on Balînûs in *ET*² Vol.I p.994; Haq 1994, 29–30; Kraus 1986 V.5, pp.270–316; L.Massignon in Festugiere 1989, Vol.1, 395; Ruska 1926, 126, 149, where the last part of the book’s name, *san’at al-tabî’a*, is translated as *Darstellung der Natur, d.h. die chemische Kunst*. The intellectual background of this name is the Aristotelian *mimesis* between *physis* and *tekhnê*: Art imitates nature by reproducing its processes. *Meteor.* 381 b 6; *Phys.* II.2, 194 a 21–22 and *Phys.* II.8, 199 a13–15 Ruska 1931, 26 and 258 has the Latin forms *Bonellus* and *Bellus* for Apollonios, and Massignon the Arabic *Bâlînûs Tûwânî*, In Festugiere 1989, Vol.1, 395.

⁹⁷ Like in the title of Jâbir ibn Hayyân’s *Fourteen essays on the art of alchemy* (*Arba’ ‘ashrata risâla fî san’at al-kîmiyâ*, ed. Pierre Lory, Damascus 1988). Thus, alchemy is not a theoretical science. Bausani points out from the *Epistles* [=R] of Ikhwân al-Safâ’, *the Brethren of Purity* (see further down), an equivalent for the Latin *Ars longa, vita brevis* in the form: *al-‘umr qasîr wa’l-sanâ’i’ kathîra*. Bausani 1977, 125

⁹⁸ This physiological background of the elemental theory is essential. The four Hippocratic (d.ca. 370 BCE) humours (blood, black and yellow bile and phlegm) and their respective qualities of heat, dryness, humidity and coldness constituting a balanced physiological equilibrium (Gr.*eukrasia*, Ar, *i’tidâl*) was the foundation of ancient medical theory. Therefore, referring to Q 82:7 where God “creates”, “proportions” and “balances” the human being, Ibn al-‘Arabi says “the acceptance of balance is good itself” as these natural elements and humors are the “mother of the soul” and the Holy Spirit is its father. F III 182.34–35 and F II 504.19 A bodily constitution is a “mixture” (*mizâj*) and a “commingling” (*imtizâj*) of the elements and the humors. This fundamentally empirical medical theory of Hippocrates/Galen (129–c.216 C.E.) was accepted as such

back to the 5th century BCE. medical theories of Alkmaion of Croton, Hippokrates and later Galen with both Pythagorean and Empedoclean influences, showing that in Greek science biological concepts and distinctions were applied and projected to physical theory, thus transforming the cosmos into a living organism.⁹⁹ Therefore, the practitioners of alchemy were called (sg.) *sahib al-san'a*, masters of the art, or (sg.) *sahib al-mizân*, Masters of Balance, or *hukamâ*, philosophers, sages (sg. *hakîm*), who, through their subtle science (*'ilm daqîq*¹⁰⁰) reach an “understanding of the real characteristics of natural existent things” (*idrâk haqâ'iq ahwâl al-mawjûdât*).¹⁰¹

In Arabic the term *san'a* has a much clearer “arts and crafts” connotation than the Greek name of alchemy as *hieratikê tekhnê*, Sacred art, “chemische Kunst”, or “heilige Kunst” as Ruska renders. The Arabic form expresses the same Greek idea of art (*tekhnê*) imitating nature (*physis*), or, nature working as a craftsman (*Phys.* II.8, 199 a13–15), but now this is to be understood in an elevated sense. Here the human artist/sage (*sâni'*) resembles the creator (*bâri'*), the *demiurgos* of *Timaeus* 42E in the sense that he, Plato, understood the plastic arts as imitating the divine Artist (*Rep.* 601 C–D). Thus, a sage is like a “retort”, a “vessel”, or a “theatre” (all typical alchemical expressions, East and West) and a stage for the spiritual and the material to become manifest as **a mixture** (*mizâj/krasis*) of the universal and the particular in the ennobling work of alchemical refining.¹⁰²

by later Greek and Arab physicians but also developed considerably towards an exact science by Jâbir ibn Hayyân. Haq 1994, 64–67; Kraus 1986, 189–90 Ibn al-‘Arabî takes full advantage of this theory as a synthesis of the four [Empedoclean] elements and four elemental qualities [of the Stoics and Jâbir] mixed together in [Aristotelian] combinations as the four [Hippocratic] humours of human “most beautiful constitution” referred to in the Qur’ânic dictum of God creating the human being in the fairest constitution: *halaqa 'l-insânu fî ahsana 'l-taqwîmi* (Q 95:4). Ch 15 of the Futûhât, F I 152.29–153.2. This chapter will be the theme of the last part of this study. Mixture, see Sorabji 2004a, Vol.2, Ch.20, pp.290–315.

⁹⁹Sambursky 1959, 16 and 27; Happ 1971, 526–29 Aristotle, a son of a physician, says: most natural philosophers (*perî fuseôs*) end by studying medicine, and those physicians who take a scientific (*philosofôtêrôs*) interest in their art base their medical theories on the principles of natural science. *De Sensu* I, 436 a20–b 2 See above the “philosophically minded physicians” of Galen, p.154 n 87.

¹⁰⁰ See Haq 1994, 98 n.8 on the use of *daqîq/latîf* in kalâm discussions: *Daqîq* (fine, subtle) refers to fine philosophical distinction whereas the term *jalîl* refers to fundamental problems, the “roots of all things and their mothers” (*usûlu 'l-ashy'â wa ummahâtuhâ*) as referred to in the words of the *Sirr al-khalîqa* of ps.Apollonios; cf. Kraus 1986, 140 n.1; further, see van Ess 1994, Vol.III, 138 and IV, 70, 730.

¹⁰¹ *K.al-Baht*, f.110a, text in Kraus 223 n.7

¹⁰² Mixture: Greek *krâsis* for liquids, *mixis* for non-liquids, Arabic *mizâj* (see above note 85) For Aristotle, see GC. I 10. The Stoic “total mixture” (*krâsis di'hólôn*), of a gas they called *pneuma*, or *pneuma* as God and, thus, God as a body (*Placita* I.6.1), permeating and holding together the whole of cosmos (*Placita* I.7.33, Daiber 1980, 120–21) and also individual bodies. **A total interpenetration of the components in a fully homogenous mixture is an important early analytical term to describe earthly existence in its “latency”, “concealedness” or “interpenetration.”** In the chapter on Abraham in the *Fus* Ibn al-‘Arabî reads the Arabic name of Abraham, al-Khalîl, in another, intensified form II of the root as *khalla*, permeation or penetration—and therefore the title of *Rapturous love* of this chapter where the lover is wholly permeated by the beloved. Abraham serves thus as an example of divine permeation in general. “That which permeates, the agent, is disguised by that which is permeated, the object of permeation. Thus, the object in this case is the manifest, while the agent is the unmanifest, hidden [reality]. The latter is as nourishment for the former, even as a piece of wool [also the example of Plotinus, Sorabji 2004a vol.2, 295] swells and expands because of the water that permeates it” *Fus* 81/92 Further, God as creator permeates his creation as the water permeates a piece of wool, or, to use another metaphor of Ibn al-‘Arabî in this same chapter, as “food penetrates to the essence of the one fed, permeating every part.” *Fus* 84/95) In the medical theory of Galen his work *Peri Kraseôn/De Temperamentis* was translated into Arabic as *Kitâb al-mizâj*. van Ess 1992, Bd. III, 340 n.46 Indeed, the notion of total mixture of *qualities* in Greek science seems to go back to the medical theories of

For Jâbir this concept of mixture, *mizâj*, is no less than the *principle of creation*: “the world is a mixture and the balance is a mixture” (*al-‘âlam mizâj wa’l-mizân mizâj*), a quotation showing how flexible the Jâbirian notion of balance is. In the same vein he also tells us that “science is the essence of both intelligence and balance,” and, furthermore that balance is the essence of justice (‘*adl*).¹⁰³ As these formulations already indicate, ultimately, the goal of this Art is not something exterior to the experiencing mind; rather, it aims at uncovering and *finding* the very substance of being and reality.¹⁰⁴ Thus, paraphrasing one of the oldest alchemical sources with already a clear philosophical basis, namely, Zosimos of Panopolis (= *Akhmîm* in upper Egypt), a 4th century C.E. Jewish (?) alchemist (referred to as *al-‘Ibrî*, “the Hebrew”¹⁰⁵), Julius Ruska writes: “the true and sacred Art is not in making gold but in the knowledge of God and in knowing oneself.”¹⁰⁶

Hippokrates. In Manicheism, on the other hand, *krâsis* appears as the mixture of light and darkness. The just noted “gas” of *pneuma* is of course only one meaning of the word denoting also God, reason, spirit, soul or the holding power (*hexis*) that holds together inanimate things; Sorabji 1988, 85. “Chrysippos supposes that all substance is unified, and that there goes through it all a certain *pneuma* by means of which the universe is held together and persists and is sympathetic with itself” Sorabji 2004a, Vol.2, p.299. *Mizâj* was an important term also in Islâm for the so-called *Physicists* or *Eternalists* (cf. above n 254 and pp 276, 288), for whom all accidents are hidden or latent in corporeal bodies. Similarly, “the relation of the two natures of Christ was described by many Christian writers in terms of the Stoic theory of mixture” Sorabji 1988, 120. For the actual text of Nemesius referring to Porphyrios’ interpretation on the two natures, see Sorabji 2004a, Vol.1, pp.204-08. On the doctrines of *mixture*, see van Ess 1992, Bd.III, 335–342; Sambursky 1959, 11–17; Sorabji 1988, 79–105.

¹⁰³ *Kitâb al-hawass al-kabîr*, Ch.5, where he is refuting Manichean dualism; quoted through Kraus 1986, 311-13.

¹⁰⁴ Alchemy was after both “gold” and the “idea of gold.” Thus there are two distinct traditions in alchemy: one concrete and practical (like Jâbir ibn Hayyân); a chemical and physical art operating within the bounds of nature. And the other tradition as spiritual or metaphysical art, operating within the “phenomenological” sphere of experience (like Ibn al-‘Arabî). The first is a concrete science/magic obtained by imitation of nature and the secrets of creation, and thereby establishing an art of reproducing nature in a “second creation,” and, ultimately, reproducing also the human nature, the art of combining medicine and alchemy as ‘*ilm al-takwîn*, science of (artificial) generation through which Jâbir frequently refers to Porphyry (c. 232–305 CE.), and which is applicable in all three sublunar kingdoms as generating minerals (*takwîn al-hajâr*), generating plants (*takwîn al-nabât*) and generating animals (*takwîn al-haywân*) Kraus 1986, 104. In the second form, alchemy is an art of spiritual refinement, a phenomenology of experience; a way and path of the mystics by polishing the “mirror of the heart” for it to fully reflect the divine light of perfection (see n119 above). Jâbir, like modern molecular-biologists, is a fully-fledged mathematical scientist and a technical magician who sees the ultimate goal of the natural sciences as a question of correctly balancing the elements to reproduce a living being “*like us and all animals like us*” (*nahnu wa amthâluna min jamî’ l-hayyawân*) (Ibid.). Jâbir is still closer to the Hellenic world of Antiquity and its natural ontology and cosmology, whereas the three or four centuries later pure spiritualist, Ibn al-‘Arabî, is more clearly in the spiritually understood Qur’anic world of Islam. For him “becoming like the divine so far as we can” of Plato *Theat.* 176 B or Aristotle *NE* X.7, 1177 b32, expressed in the philosophical theme of *al-tashabbu bi’illâh* (gaining similarity to God, F II 126.8), is fully understood only as a spiritual investing oneself with the divine qualities, *al-takhalluq bi akhlâq Allâh*, of the mystics (see, Chittick 1994, 45) or, as gaining similarity to the *root* (*asl*), equalled with perfection and ones true nature F II 272 2–3, Cf. SPK 283. These two traditions are of course not water-tight compartments: Jâbir too claims that alchemy “is the greatest of all arts for it [concerns] an ideal entity which exists only in the mind (*qâ’im fi-l’aqal*)” (*Ahjâr* 38.4). On the idea of reproducing living things, see also the long Neoplatonic tradition of “effective images,” statutes with living powers: Iamblich.III.28–30, 2004, 189–195; Augustine, *De.Civ.Dei* VIII, 23 and Scott *Hermetica* I, 338; Ruska 1926, 127-34.

¹⁰⁵ Ruska 1926, p.43 According to Holmyard, Zosimos had a fairly wide experience of chemical operations with metals and minerals. It is also through Zosimos that we know that this “priestly art” was strictly controlled in ancient Egypt and that it was “illegal to publish any work on the subject.” However, already by the time of Zosimos no one could decipher anymore the hieroglyphic texts that might have had some information on this art. “The Jews, however, had been initiated in the mysteries and afterwards transmitted them to others.” Holmyard 1990, 28

¹⁰⁶ “*Die wahre und heilige Kunst besteht nicht in goldmachen, sondern in der Erkenntnis Gottes und des eigenen Selbst.*” Ruska 1926, 22–23.

Furthermore, another basic idea of Alchemy which could be formulated in many ways is: “the highest comes from the lowest and the lowest from the highest, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.”¹⁰⁷ This basic formula appears in the Latin *Tabula Smaragdina*, *The Emerald Tablets*,—“the arch authority”¹⁰⁸— the original of which in Arabic (*al-lawh al-zumurrud*) was included in the already mentioned *Sirr al-Khalîqa wa san’at al-tabî’a* of ps-Apollonius of Tyana. This short text was also attached both to the widely known *Secretum secretorum* (*Sirr al-Asrâr*) of ps-Aristotle, a work in comparison to which Ibn al-‘Arabî wrote his *Tadbîrat al-Ilâhîyah* (see above III.3.2.2), and it was also attached to the *Jabirean corpus* and re-written into its present form probably during the reign of al-Ma’mun (813–33 CE).¹⁰⁹

The dates for Jâbir and works attributed to him are still debatable and, indeed, the stakes are high as the traditional 8th century dating¹¹⁰ is at odds with the whole “scientifically accepted” order of transmission of the Greek science into Arabic, based on the translations of Ishâq ibn Hunayn (d.910 CE.) and the output of the *Bayt al-hikma* in the 9th and 10th centuries. (see above p.165 n138)

But even here, at the midst of hot debates on dates of history, we also have an important intellectual point with this perhaps best known and most variably applied alchemical formula of “as above so below.” Here one should note that the foundational roots for this saying go back to the theory of composed elements (*anâsir*, i.e. fire, air, water, and earth) and elemental (simple) Natures (*tabî’a*, i.e. heat, cold, wetness and dryness), that is, the “terrestrial” and “celestial,” the corporeal and incorporeal

¹⁰⁷ This wording is from the Jabirean Arabic text (*inna l-‘âliyya min al-asfal wa al-asfal min al-‘âliyya ‘amalu l-ajâ’ib min wâhid*), in Latin formulated slightly differently as: “*Quod est inferius, est sicut quod est superius, et quod est superius est sicut quod est inferius ad perpetranda miracula rei unius*”, Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina* 1926, 112. See also Burkhardt 1977, 196–97 and Jung 1983, 140: “matter in alchemy is material and spiritual, and spirit spiritual and material” – a sentence that actually says it all.

¹⁰⁸ Jung 1989, 101 The short text was attached to the already referred work, the “Art of Nature” of Ps. Apollonios of Tyana, who lived “a few years before the Christian era”, as E.J. Holmyard, an early editor of the Jabirîyan corpus says, and who “acquired a great reputation in the East.” Holmyard also thinks the *Tabula Smaragdina* is “one of the oldest alchemical fragments at all.” Quoted through Ruska 1926, 121 The jewel “emerald” (Ar. *zumurrud*) in the name of this short text refers to the traditional gemstone attached to Hermes/Mercurius. Therefore, in the Latin world, this text was known as *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis Trismegisti*. Ibid. p.116 On Apollonios see above n 96.

¹⁰⁹ Kraus 1986, 275. This gave Kraus his date of *post quem* of the Jabirean corpus and thus dating this figure to the 9th instead of the traditional 8th century CE. Probably referring to Kraus, S.H. Nasr dates the *Sirr* also to the reign of al-Ma’mun, CHI Vol. IV, 413. Haq, however, disagrees with this dating, and, referring to the critical edition of the *Sirr* by Ursula Weisser and the two extant versions of the *Sirr*-text of which she dates the earlier to be a translation from the Greek in the 8th century. Accordingly, Haq finds this as one example of the problematic datings of Kraus, considering instead the traditional 8th century a more plausible date for Jâbir. This text of the *Sirr* is attached in the Jabirean corpus to the *Kitâb al-ustuquss al-ass al-thânî*, The Second Element-book of Foundation. Ruska 1926, 119–20 The Arabic text refers further to an original text inscribed on an emerald tablet, written in the “language of Suryânî, the first language” an expression used for both the language of Syria and a primal language of mankind, thought to be of Indian origin. Denis Grill in MR II, 133 and 144 Ruska 1926, p.115 and n.1, comments on this as a way of emphasizing the supposed ancient nature of this text as revelation of Hermes. Guenon points out that “sûryâ” is the Sanskrit word for sun. Guenon 1992, 49 Jung also quotes a strange parallel between sun of alchemy and sûryâ of the Vedas. Jung 1989, 516 n.209

¹¹⁰ Massignon refers to the traditional date of Jâbir’s death as 776 CE, in Festugiere 1989 Vol.1, pp.396; similarly Travaglia 1999, 79 n.2 speaks of “...Jâbir Ibn Hayyân (who lived in the VIII century).” These assessments are of course no proofs since both of them are based on accepting the traditional date without any further evidence.

constituents of all realities.¹¹¹ Thus, the “as above” refers to intelligible “celestial” elemental qualities (like “moistness”), and the “so below” refers to respective “terrestrial” sensible elements (like “water”).¹¹² This “bottom line” explanation between intelligibles and sensibles (*noêton / aisthêton*) also enlightens the universal idea of “science of balance” (*‘ilm l-mizân*), a balance between the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual “breath-like” *rûh/spirit/pneuma*¹¹³, but, notably also, between *theory* and *practice*, *sophia* and *phronêsis*, *‘ilm* and *‘amal*.¹¹⁴ Referring to these latter two, knowledge and work/action, Jâbir indeed paraphrases this basic alchemical principle of *as above so below* of Apollonius from a slightly different point of view. He says: “The last in thinking is the first in action and the last in action is the first in thought, wanting for completion” (*Inna âkhira-l’fîkr aww’ala-l’amal; wa inna âkhira -l’amal awwala-l’fîkr jurîdu anna-l’tamâm*), or—the beginning is attached to the end and the end to the beginning.¹¹⁵ This formula will come up later in several connections. Concerning the writings attributed to Jâbir, Kraus writes: “Again and again, emphasis is laid on the idea that in science practice (*‘amal*) can lead to nowhere unless theory (*‘ilm, qiyas, burhân*) has had its due.”¹¹⁶

III.2.1. Hermetic tradition and the Jabirean problem

During Ibn al-‘Arabî’s life-time alchemy was already an ancient science, legendarily going back to the Egyptian God Thoth, Lord of Wisdom and “Lord of the Holy Words”, to whom this “hermetic” tradition was on the whole referred through the figure of *Hirmis muthallath bi l-hikma*, Hermes “the thrice endowed with wisdom,” known in the Greek form as *Hermes Trismegistos* and referred to in the

¹¹¹ Jâbir Ibn Hayyân, in Kraus 1986, 151 In his *de Essentiis* (60rF-60c), Herman of Carinthia (see n 251) expounds in a same vein a universe arranged basically into a higher order (Essence) and lower order (Substance). Burnett 1982, pp.91-92 and 249

¹¹² Kraus quotes an exclamation of Democrit: “*ô natures célestes, créatrices des natures (d’ici-bas)*”. Ibid, p.38 This thought seems to be fundamental in al-Kindî’s (c.a.800 CE.) theory of correspondence between astral and elemental rays. See: Travaglia 1999, 23 and 38.

¹¹³ For the important *Breath of the All-Merciful* in Ibn al-‘Arabî, see SDG xxxii-xxxiv and 149; Sells 1995, 66-67.

¹¹⁴ Kraus 1986, 32 “In the sky the elements (*stoikheia*) exist in a celestial way, in the soul in a psychic way, in the intelligence in an intellectual way and in the Demiurgos in a demiurgic way,” as Proclus says (*In.Tim. II, 48,3*, quoted through Kraus 1986, 176–77). This thought is pervasive in the widely known Proclus’ *De Causis, Kitâbu ‘l-aîdâh [al-Aristutalis] fî l-hair al mahd*, “Über das reine Gute”, *The Book of [Aristotle’s] explanation of Pure Good*. Originally this Neoplatonic work is an Arabic compilation of *Elements of Theology* (*Stoicheiosis Theologike*) of Proclus (412–485 C.E.), translated from Arabic into Latin in the 12th century and used as an Aristotelian elementary book on philosophy until St.Thomas recognized its Proclean origin. This work emphasizes the primacy of Being/Sein/esse (*annîya*) over eternity (*dahr*), life, humanity and reason (*nutq*). Accordingly: a thing has first to Be before it is a living or human being (*annahu yanbaghâ an yakûn al-shai’ annîyatun awwalan thumma hayân thumma insânan*), “therefore, though Being is a more distant cause (*‘illa, Ursache*) for the human being than (the closer ‘Ursache’ of) life, it nevertheless is the ‘stronger’ (*ashaddu*) ‘Ursache’, as it is the cause of life too,” as this work states, p.59. The text was translated from Arabic into German already in 1822 by O.Bardenhewer in Freiburg im Breisgau, incidentally, the home-town of Martin Heidegger.

¹¹⁵ *Kitâb al-Bakht*, f.44b, quoted through Kraus 1986, 281.n.4. Cf. Stern 1971

¹¹⁶ Kraus 1930, 24, see Haq 1994, 13.

Ebers Papyrus as “*Leader of Healers*.”¹¹⁷ According to Jâbir ibn Hayyân, who in this connection further refers to Porphyry (quoted often as an alchemical authority; Haq 1994, 50), this triple name of *Hirmis* indicates the three intellectual capacities: imagination (*khayâl*), memory (*dhikr*), and thought (*fikr*).

However, while discussing these three capacities of the mind, Jâbir also refers—with a typical Jabirean twist—to the “morphology” or physiological structure of our brain, the three sections of the encephalon, now alluding not only to the authority of Porphyry but also to those of Galen and Homer (*sic!*).¹¹⁸ For Jâbir these three capacities of the mind—imagination, memory, and thinking—underlie the unitive character of true wisdom brought into fulfillment as *the triple-sage*, a term which he elsewhere equals also with the three substances in the make-up of the *Elixir* (*al-iksâr*), as it was referred to also in ancient Greek alchemy. Thus the “*telos*”, the “*for-the-sake-of-which*” of alchemy, the *Elixir*, is constituted as a balanced combination of imagining, remembering and thinking!¹¹⁹ No wonder that Jâbir claims, as quoted in note 104 above, that alchemy “is the greatest of all arts for it [concerns] an ideal entity which exists only in the mind (*qâ'im fi-l'aql*).”

The above reference to Homer, however, seems surprising in this connection, but is perhaps understandable as Jâbir claims that Homer replaces this triplicity of the encephalon with that of a pentacle (*mutahammis*)¹²⁰ referring to the five senses—an explanation which Kraus reads as an

¹¹⁷ Witt, R.E. 1971, 108. Hermes as “*Führer der Ärzte*”: Ruska 1926, p.50. Hermes was also referred to as *muthallath bi l-ni'ma*, “thrice endowed with grace”, as an early 6th–9th century alchemical treatise (*Kitâb al-Qarâtis al-hakîm*) calls him. Ruska 1926, 52

¹¹⁸ Kraus 1986, 117-18. Contrary to Aristotle, Galen knew that the origin of nerves lies in the brain and not in the heart. Thus, he wrote: “where the source of the nerves is, there too is the ruling part of the soul.” Quoted through Donini in: CCG 2008, 190-91

¹¹⁹ Similarly, 400 years later, still in the footsteps of Ibn al-‘Arabî, Mulla Sadra (1572–1640 C.E.), wrote his *al-iksâr al-‘arifîn*, The Elixir of Gnostics, which has nothing to do with alchemy in the chemical sense, and yet the question is of the *al-iksâr* of the *ahl al-iksâr*, the alchemists, and their quest “to transmute the souls into mirrors reflecting God and the cosmos.” (*Intro xxii*) Here philosophy is the most direct means for the soul to realize its full potential through self-knowledge, knowledge of the soul, the “receptacle of the sciences (*qâbilatu l-‘ul ûm*)” (II.1., p.16), through knowing its own essence. The ‘alchemist’ aims at the “unification of the intellecter, the intellect, and the intelligible” (*al-‘âqil/al-‘aql/al-ma’qûl*), a philosophical goal which was formulated properly, according to Mulla Sadra, by Porphyry, “the most excellent student of Aristotle. *Intro, xviii–xix*, and Ch.4, Chittick 2003, 19. Porphyry is called “The Great” (*al-‘azîm*, Gr. *ò megas*) also by Jâbir, who even mentions Porphyry’s journey to Sicily and the vulcano Etna (*nâr Siqiliyya*). Kraus 1986, 122 n.3. The essence of the soul is thus seen as a receptacle like Ibn al-‘Arabî presented it in the *Fusûl* 113/137 as *hayûlâ*, Prime Matter, capable of all forms. This equation between prime matter and soul as well as prime matter and substance (*jawhar*) as “receptive for all forms” appears already in the *Book of LXX*, by Jâbir i. Hayyân: “it [*hayûlâ/habâ’/jawhar*] contains all things [potentially] and all things are made out of it and all are also decomposed in it.” See Kraus 1986, 154. See also above III.1.7

¹²⁰ In the *Anqâ al-Mughrib* (Elmore 1999, 232) Ibn al-‘Arabî says somewhat cryptically: “Our ‘Individualities’ are Five and Five and Five” (*fa-ashkhâsu-nâ khamsun wa-khamsun wa-khamsatû*) which clearly refers to some basic human distinctions like here the five senses or a doctrine of pentacles (like in F II 310.6) or like the five elements or cosmic hypostases of Empedocles (F I 92.7) of “first matter, intellect, soul, nature, and second matter.” Formation of doctrines into pentacles was fairly common in Antiquity, like the five Platonic solids or the five Aristotelian elements. Elmore refers here to the study of Asin Palacios (1975 p.53–54) on Ibn Masarra, a compatriot of Ibn al-‘Arabî whom (and his *Book of Letters*, see van Ess 1997, Vol.IV, 273) he mentions quite often and favourably (like in Ch 13 on the Supported Divine Throne F I 147–49; also F II 581.30). “The five cosmic hypostasis” a doctrine attributed in the Islamic world to the so-called *pseudo-Empedocles* tradition. see: above p.320 and Asin Palacios 1978; Rudolph 1989, 135–36. According to Jâbir the five Empedoclean eternal substances are the principles of all created things, namely, the Eminent First Substance, Matter, Form, Time and Space,

allegorical interpretation of a passage in the *Iliad* where Homer speaks of a “troop of five following their leader” (here: *hêgemonikôn* = the intellect).¹²¹

On the other hand, Ahmad Y. al-Hassan refers to a more legendary tradition to explain the traditional honorific of Hermes, the *triple-sage*: “About Hermes Trismegistus (of the Triple Wisdom) Arabic sources say that the first Hermes was the Prophet Idris (the Biblical Enoch) who preceded the Flood and built the pyramids of Egypt. Hermes the second was from Babylon and he lived in Mesopotamia after the Flood and he had given life to sciences. Hermes the third lived in Egypt after the Flood and he developed several sciences and crafts. These three personalities of Hermes combined are the source of alchemy, astronomy, astrology, philosophy and the remaining sciences.”¹²² An explanation like this is of course not a description of historical facts, but it may well describe the context in which a medieval Muslim sage was working. Furthermore, the earliest alchemists did inherit two traditions about the nature of matter: the tradition of Egyptian craft and religion, and that of Greek philosophers. “Each of these traditions was strong where the other was weak” (i.e. the Egyptians were strong in highly developed techniques and practice of craftsmen and the Greeks in speculative theory and generality). Thus, the intellectual principles of alchemy were derived almost wholly from Greece.¹²³

According to the famous Egyptologist, E.A. Wallis-Budge, amongst the many theological traditions of ancient Egypt “the theology of Thoth was of a highly spiritual character.”¹²⁴ This claimed origin suited well the extremely multifaceted and esoterically oriented later Hermetic tradition both in the East and West. On the other hand, it should also be borne in mind that this attribution to ancient ancestry was made during a time when ancient Egypt was already an ancient bygone and dead era.

which he might be confusing with the principles of Râzî or five essences of al-Kindî, as Kraus suggests. Jâbir has also a pentacle of principles involved in all generation: Substance, Quality, Quantity, Space, and Time. Kraus 1986, 137 n.1 Further, for al-Kindî these were matter, form, movement, place and time; also ps. Apollonios speaks of “the five properties of all creatures.” Burnett 1982, 242

¹²¹ Kraus 1986, 117 and n.9 and 10 Here Kraus notes that such physical and physiological allegories were quite commonly read into Homeric verses, particularly by the Stoics in antiquity. And, indeed, the word *hêgemonikon* is the Stoic word for the Platonic *logistikon*, although for the Stoics, for whom the passions are judgments issued by reason, the seat of this *hêgemonikon* was the heart and not the brain. See Donini in CCG 2008, 186–192 and Travaglia 1999, 34, notes interestingly that for al-Kindî (born ca. 800) “the intellectual faculty through which every individual understands according to universal forms the objects he perceives through the senses” is called [in Latin] *regitiva*, and is therefore “similar to the Stoic *hegemonikôn*.” According to her “it would be inappropriate to reduce its significance to a mere intellectual faculty, because it also includes desire, hope and fear”, referring to al-Kindî’s *de Radiis*, 228 (*Risâla fî shu’â’ât*). Unfortunately Travaglia operates only with Latin translations of al-Kindî.

¹²² See the article by Prof. Ahmad Y. al-Hassan in: www.history-science-technology.com/Articles/. See also *Hirmis* in *EI*² Vol. III, 463–64 by M. Plessner.

¹²³ Toulmin & Goodfield 1962, 123

¹²⁴ Wallis-Budge 1934 (1988), 155 Thoth was not known in Arabic sources except by name: in the *Kitâb al-Qarâtîs* (see above n.98) *Tât* is mentioned as one of the sages (*min al-hukamâ*), a righteous and spiritual man (*wa huwa râgil al-sâlih al-ruhâniyya*). In a work on Alchemy and Jewels, attributed to Jâfar al-Sadîq, this *Tât* is defined as “the son of Hermes” and this is also how he is mentioned in al-Nadîm’s *Fihrist*. Both quoted through Ruska 1924, 94 and n.3.

However, as the modern editors of Iamblichus, a third century CE Syrian philosopher and a pupil of Porphyry, who considered himself as part of this Hermetic tradition and through whom “Platonism became more explicitly a religion,” explain: Iamblichus was “aware that Hermetic and Pythagorean works were *attributed* to Hermes and Pythagoras, and clearly understood these figures as the origin of or the inspiration for such works, rather than as their direct authors.”¹²⁵ In the Islamic world, Thoth-Hermes, or *Hirmis/Harmis*, was identified, as just noted, with another legendary ante-deluvian figure, namely *Idris*¹²⁶ (Q 19:56–57; 21:85–86). On the whole the history of this vast Hermetic tradition is saturated with spiritual lineages going back to ancient and glorious past. I see no reason to doubt the notorious ancient history of Hermetic or Alchemical lore, but the truth is that very little apart from these claims for great ancestry has survived from the bygone ages.

What is relevant for the purposes of the present study, is that during the Islamic era the name Hermes/Idris was firmly attached from early on as one of the founding sources for the 8th–10th century highly prolific Harranian (ancient Carrhae) “city of philosophers and scholars” in Mesopotamia, near Edessa.¹²⁷ And even more, besides these Hermetic sources, the Harranians cherished ancient indigenous Chaldean notions, as well as Gnostic and Indian/Sanskrit metaphysical and astronomical influences.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ *De Mysteriis*, 2004, xx and xxxi. “In Porphyry’s *Life of Pythagoras* 7-8, we have quite an elaborate tale of Pythagoras’s Egyptian studies.” Ibid I.2, p.9 n.14

¹²⁶ See the article *Idrîs* in *EI*² Vol III pp 1030–31. Corbin refers also to Ibn al-‘Arabi explaining the knowledge of philosophers being different from knowledge of positive religion: whereas the latter is based on the law of Muhammad, the former is based on the law of Idrîs. According to Corbin this means that Ibn al-‘Arabi would be referring the philosophers to the hermetic tradition as their origin. Corbin 1988 14; see also Corbin 1977, 35. This thought is repeated also in the above Idris article of the *EI*². I actually doubt if Ibn al-‘Arabi would use the word *failasûf* in this connection (as he did not want to call himself a philosopher either) and philosophy was traditionally called in the Islamic world a “foreign science,” whereas “love of wisdom”, *hikma*, could well be at stake here too. Unfortunately, and exceptionally, Corbin gives no reference to the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabi in either case. For the term “foreign science”, see Peters 1996 in HIP Vol.I p.40 This term refers to the distinction in the encyclopaedic “Keyes of the Sciences”, *Mafâtihu’l-‘Ulûm*, composed by Yûsuf al-Kâtib in 876 C.E. in which the science were divided into “Indigenous” and “Exotic.” Cf. E.J.Brown 1977, Vol.I.382

¹²⁷ “*Shahr-e falâsifa o dânesmandânî*”, known also as the city of Abraham, as the modern edition of *Nâsir Khosraw’s Sâfer nâme* (1977, p.136) says of Harrân. Al-Shahrastânî (d. 1153) refers to the Sâbians of Harran as “those who admit spiritual substances” (*al-rûhâniyyat*) which have the power (*quwwa*) to “transform bodies and transmute physical masses.” Haq 1994, 100 n19. They recognize as their first teachers two philosopher-prophets, ‘*Adhimûn*’ (Gr. Agathodaimon = the good spirit) and Hermes who have been identified with *Seth* and *Idris* respectively. Orpheus is also said to be one of their prophets and so are Mary the Egyptian (*Mâriya al-Qibtiyya*) and Ostanês, the last-named occurring frequently in the Arabic alchemical tradition. Like Ibn al-‘Arabi, the Sabeans also called the seven planets as “fathers” and the four elements of nature as “mothers.” See Scott, *Hermetica* IV.258-59. For a Homeric source for these expressions, see Kraus 1986, 117 n.10; see also article in *SEI*, al-sâbi’a, p.477. On Harran and Hermetic tradition, see Massignou in Festugiere 1989 Vol.1, pp.384-85; Harran and Alexandrian school of Philosophers, Netton 1989, 8-9;15-16 and p.34 n33; It has also been shown that the works of Democritus (Ar. *Dimuqrât* or *Dîmuqrâtîs*) on atomism were translated first into Syriac and then into Arabic in the pre-Islamic era by the Harranians. Kraus 43 n 2 and 44 n3 Furthermore, Indian/Buddhist atomistic notions of time entered into Islamic theological discussions through this channel. Haq 1996 in HIP, 54 Indeed, according to the *Ikhwân al-Safâ’*, R III, 16 Pythagoras was of Harranian origin (*min ahli ‘l-harrân*). Cf. Kraus 222–23, n 1

¹²⁸ These newly recognized Indian influences were predominant in the late 19th and early 20th century oriental studies, visible for example in the already discussed H.S.Nyberg’s 1919 study on Ibn al-‘Arabi’s minor works, through its many quotations from Horten, or in the studies of Emile Bréhier who found the source for Plotinus in the Upanishads. Cf. Hankey 2006, 120-30. Within Islamic studies these influences were, however, regarded as “isolated coincidences” already by Massignou and later by Wolfson in his *Philosophy of Kalâm* 1976. But, on the other hand, we also know of an Arabic version of a Persian translation of a Sanskrit work on Tantric Yoga (*Mir’ât al-ma’ânî*), attributed to Ibn al-‘Arabi.

Interestingly, the Harranians were also widely known since pre-Islamic times as highly skillful mechanics producing fine balances!¹²⁹ It is to these alchemical circles (*tâ'ifat*, group, circle) of Harran that the already discussed semi-legendary figures, the 6th Imâm, Jâfar al-Sadîq (d.765), and his pupil, one of the principal representatives of earliest Arabic alchemy, namely Jâbir Ibn Hayyân (8-10th century)¹³⁰, who was born in Tûs and therefore also called the *Sûfî* of Tûs, were connected.¹³¹ If such a historical figure did exist¹³², he certainly must be counted amongst the greatest polymaths of all times—often referred in the Latin world as *Geber*.¹³³

Paul Kraus (1904–44) is the remarkable Jewish Arabist and scholar to be thanked for a large part of our knowledge on Jâbir. His dedication brought forth a highly learned and monumental study in two volumes on Jâbir, completed and published in Cairo in the early 1940's. However, as is often the case with paramount scholars, their assessments tend to become definitive. Being the pupil of another illustrious scholar of alchemy, Julius Ruska (1867–1949), these two scholars of the “german school” have been the unquestionable authorities in the “Jabirean-Problem,” that is, “the question of identification of author(s) of the texts attributed to Jâbir.” and their dates.¹³⁴ Both scholars found the traditional dates and claims of authorship contestable.

These two questions of the author(s) and the dates of the Jâbirean corpus are closely linked to one another, though on the whole beyond the scope of this study. Therefore just a brief look is here in order.

The Jabirean corpus consists in the catalogue of Kraus¹³⁵ of no less than 2982 items! A number that alone is likely to make anyone suspicious of claims for a single author behind a whole “library” of this

Brockelman in: Austin 1980, 23. For this Indian connection, see further S.N.Haq in HIP 1996, 54–55, who thinks that “the whole problem needs to be examined afresh.”

¹²⁹ Haq 1994, 219; Harran was also known for high quality astrolabes and alchemic utensils and instruments, Massignon in Festugiere 1989, Vol.1, 386.

¹³⁰ Instead of the traditional dating of Jâbir as an 8th century figure, Kraus and Plessner give the year 330 A.H. / 942 C.E. as “terminus ante quem” in the *EI*² article, Vol.II, p.359, thus believing Jâbir lived sometime between 830 and 942.

¹³¹ Ibn Khallikân quoted through Ruska 1924, 10. For Jâbir in general, see Haq 1994 and *EI*² II, 357–59. Further Kraus 1986; Corbin 1986; Copenhaver 2000, xlvi For the highly influential *Sâbi'ans* of Harran in early 8th–10th centuries in the hermetic tradition, see: Scott, *Hermetica* Vol.I, pp.97–111 and a collection of translated alchemical texts from the Arabic in Vol.IV.

¹³² Already in his *Fihrist*, al-Nadîm asks “did he ever exist?” But he also dismisses all doubts emphatically and categorically: “Jâbir did exist,” he writes in the *Fihrist*, “his case is certain and famous, his compositions being most important and numerous.” Quoted through Haq, 1994, 3 see the *EI*² article in note 120.

¹³³ This is only partially true as many of the works distributed in the Latin as works of Geber do not have any Arabic original. Haq 1994, 4-5.

¹³⁴ “Probleme der Gâbir-Forschung”, *Der Islam* 14, 1925, pp.100–04. Haq 1994, 33 n.2. Holmyard criticized Kraus and Ruska, maintaining that they have developed “an exaggerated and unreasonable scepticism concerning the authorship of any early Arabic alchemical work”; Holmyard 1990, 65-66

¹³⁵ Kraus 1935, p.3–171

magnitude—and Kraus is highly suspicious of Jâbir being the single author of this corpus.¹³⁶ What Kraus proposed, then, was that instead of one, there were several authors behind these works which, furthermore, were written during a period extending the lifespan of any one author. He also disagreed, following Ruska (1924), with the traditional annexing of Jâbir as the pupil of the 6th imam, Jâfar al-Sadîq, whom we know died in 765 CE.¹³⁷ According to Kraus, the 8th century was simply too early with respect to the wide use of Greek texts witnessed throughout the Jabirean corpus. Instead, Kraus concluded, these works were written by several authors starting from the latter part of the 10th century. This postponement of respective traditional dates with a full century had many advantages: now there was no difficulty in explaining the profuse use of ancient Greek texts in the Jabirian corpus. The Jabiryan authors came after the great *Translation movement* and could therefore take full advantage of all the translations produced by the *House of Wisdom* established in Baghdad by Caliph al-Ma'mun (813-833CE) (*Bayt al-Hikma* and its forerunner *hizâna-l'hikma*, “treasury of Wisdom” established by Harûn al-Rashîd, ruled 786–809), “apparently the first institution solely devoted to the transmission and study of the scientific heritage.”¹³⁸

But what if there were earlier translations? Though this question is certainly beyond the scope of this study, it should be noted that both Fuat Sezgin and later Syed Nomanul Haq have disagreed with Kraus. The latter, in his *Names, Natures and Things* (1994), being the first scholar to tackle thoroughly the Jâbirean problem since Kraus, and who in fact challenges his account with quite convincing arguments, making it at least possible that there was one sole historical author for the large *Corpus Jabirianum*, the size of which was considerably exaggerated in the reckoning of Kraus, and diminished down to roughly 500 book-size works in the consensus of Haq, making it thereby comparable with the size of the oeuvre of Ibn al-‘Arabî.¹³⁹ Haq also has good arguments to support the genuinity of the traditional legend of Jâbir being the disciple of Imâm Jâfar al-Sadîq, as the author of these writings himself constantly claims, and also judging by authentic Shî’i biographical sources—sources that Kraus failed

¹³⁶ Kraus 1986, 40 Yet, Kraus notices the “surprising coherence and unity of thought expressed” in the Jabirean corpus. Ibid pp134

¹³⁷ According to Ibn Khallikân (1211–1282 CE.), this Imâm was borne on Tuesday-morning the 8th of Ramdân in 83AH. or, according to others in 80AH. (699/700 CE.), and died during the month of Shawwal in 148AH./765CE. Quoted through Ruska 1924, 11

¹³⁸ Vagelpohl 2008, 23-24, referring to Endress 1987 and Gutas 1998, who maintains that the *bayt al-hikmah* was a library, established a generation earlier by the caliph al-Mansûr and responsible for housing of documents and translations relating to the history and culture of Sasanian dynasty in Persia (226–651), which ended with the conquest of the Persian empire by Muslim armies. Vagelpohl 2008, 24 n.78

¹³⁹ One explanation for the dramatic difference in these accounts is that many of the works of Jâbir bear numerical names, like *The Book of 70*, *One Hundred and twelve Books*, *Five Hundred Books* etc., all of which were counted by Kraus as independent works of 70, 112 or 500 etc. books, whereas Haq notes that the *Book of Seventy* consists of less than 250 folios, the *Book of Five Hundred* consists of less than 120 folios etc., arguing that the name does not indicate individual works but often brief texts or even just one or two paragraphs. This fact was noted already by Ruska 1924, 47

to find or which were not yet available for him.¹⁴⁰ Kraus wrote: “If the Jabirian writings are authentic, then the Arabic translations of the works of Aristotle, of Alexander of Aphrodisias, of Galen, of ps.-Plutarch, must have been carried out more than a century before the date admitted by all.”¹⁴¹ But as the comparisons of Haq show, the Jabirian quotations of Greek works do not match stylistically with the 9th century translations and actually show the authors considerable independence of these later translations. In fact, Jâbir gives seldom exact translations; and, instead of the sophisticated technical language of Hunayn ibn Ishâq and his son Ishâq ibn Hunayn (d.910), Jâbir usually paraphrases the texts by using archaic expressions (like Syr. *k^eyânâ/kiân* for *tabî’a* (*Gr.phusis*) and *mîmar* for “chapter” instead of *maqâla* of Hunayn school).¹⁴² Furthermore, Fuat Sezging says: “We should free ourselves from the earlier illusion that the time of translations of Greek works into Arabic began only in the 3rd/9th century.”¹⁴³

The remarkable textual discovery of Haq of an early version in Arabic of Aristotle’s discourse on *Quality* from *Categories* 8, 8b25-11a37, is a strong case of evidence that indeed, there were translations on Greek texts earlier than commonly accepted. The text edited, translated and commented by Haq is clearly independent of the translation by Ishâq ibn Hunayn, generally accepted to be the first rendering of this text into Arabic.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, the first entry of Aristotle in general into the Muslim world seems to have been through the Arabic translation of Porphyry’s introduction to the *Categories* in his *Eisagôgê*. The modern editor (Danishpazhuh) of the text agrees with the traditional attribution of this translation to Abû Muhammed ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d.760CE).¹⁴⁵

III.2.2. Morphology of Letters and Natures

In any case, as is obvious from the above pages, it is to this monumental figure of early Islamic sciences, Jâbir ibn Hayyan, that Ibn al-‘Arabî refers to with his own refined alchemy, a complex *science/theory of balance* [‘*ilmu’al-mizân*] or, *balance of letters* [‘*ilmu’l-hurûf* sg.harf], that is, balance in the sense of harmony and equilibrium of all orders of knowledge and the foundation of all

¹⁴⁰ Haq 1994, 19-21

¹⁴¹ Kraus 1942-43 Vol I, p.XLVIII

¹⁴² Haq 1994, 26-27

¹⁴³ GAS 1967Vol. IV, 132 ff. and 170, see Haq 1994, 25 Daiber agrees with Sezgin and thinks we should at least ask whether the corpus Jabirianum has a kernel antedating the assessment of Kraus, noting that the earliest Mu’tazili dialecticians had brought concise Greek elements into Islamic discussions clearly antedating the Translation movement. Daiber 1980, 6 and 15, van Ess reminds us that the whole problem of the chronology of Corpus Jabirianum is still an open question. van Ess 1992, Vol.II, 366. Above Massignon and Travaglia have been quoted similarly, though not as evidence

¹⁴⁴ Walzer 1962, 67

¹⁴⁵ Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus* 1968, 11; Haq 1994, 231, for a succinct sketch on Porphyry’s work, see Netton 1989, 9

determinations.¹⁴⁶ In his “Science of Letters” (*‘ilm al-hurûf*) explained in the long second chapter of the *Futûhât*—considered by Grill to be one of the keys to the whole work¹⁴⁷—the letters of the alphabet are treated head on as elemental particles (*basâ’it*) of language in the same sense that the four elements and their constitutional qualities are infinite possibilities of the physical cosmos.¹⁴⁸ In this respect, both letters and elements are taken in a genuinely Aristotelian sense of *hylê*/matter as *first cause*: that “out of which” somethings comes about, and even more, as we will later see: that “in which” their transmutation takes place, that is, as some kind of *substance*.¹⁴⁹ Thus, as was noted above, in Greek science the biological categories were projected into physical world making the world a living organism, here, similarly, language provides material for the further understanding of the spiritual cosmos. What ibn al-‘Arabî here says is fully in line with Jâbir ibn Hayyân, who extends the idea of balance of elements as a sovereign in all three “kingdoms” (*al-ajnâs thalâtha*) of the sublunar world: minerals, plants, and animals: “all things fall under the principle of balance” (*kull shay’ taht al-mizân*), and, therefore everything is knowable by the human being. Thus, here *mizân* equals “definition” (*Ar.hadd*=*Gr. horimos*) as a metaphysical principle of all knowledge, making it as such the already mentioned **Supreme Principle** (*qâ’ida ‘uzmâ*).¹⁵⁰ “Some people consider me a fool,” wrote Jâbir, “for proposing a relationship between the letters and the natures.” But, continuing in a very Cartesian spirit, “these people are ignorant: for this relationship is founded upon something that is as firm and indubitable as the foundation of mathematics.”¹⁵¹

Jâbir writes: “There are balances for measuring the Intellect, the Soul of the world, Nature, Form, the Celestial Spheres, the stars, the four natural qualities (*al-tabâ’i’l-‘arba’*), the animal world, the

¹⁴⁶ F I 190, see p.155 above. Also Nyberg (ed.) 1919: *Uqlât*, 67.12, referring to the pupil of the 6th Imâm, Jâfar al-Sadîq. This connection between letters and definitions become undersatandable as the word “letter” (*harf*) stands for consonant but also the cutting edge, border and verge, (Q 22:11, rendered by Arberry as “at the very edge” [of religion]) thereby intersecting with the meaning of *hadd*/pl. *hudûd*, definition (*Gr.horimos*). See MR II, 187 n.4

¹⁴⁷ MR II, 105. The complete title of chapter 2 is: “On knowledge of the hierarchical degrees of the consonants and the vowels in the Universe and their counterparts among the Divine Names [i.e. “existents”]; and of knowledge of words and of knowledge itself, of the knower, and the object of the knowledge” F I 51.31-32, MR II 108. Here my equation between divine names and existents is the upshot of: “God’s knowledge of himself is identical with his knowledge of the cosmos” (F I 90.23-24), or, “God’s knowledge of the things is His knowledge of Himself.” F II 390.35 Here we have several subtle points that will come to the fore later on (III.3.4.2), see Takeshita 1982, 249. According to Chittick “what corresponds to the Platonic ideas in Ibn al-‘Arabî’s teachings is the divine names, while the immutable entities [*‘ayân al-thâbita*, see above pp. n 196, n 478 and n 555] are the things themselves’before’ they are given existence in the world” SPK 84. Bashier 2004, 98, however, is convinced that the immutable entities and Plato’s Forms are similar in meaning.

¹⁴⁸ Simple letters are here said to be *mu’jam*, separate, like lexical units in a dictionary before their various combinations giving them meaning as syllables and words in a similar fashion as the simple natural elements of heat, humidity, dryness or frigidity become tangible only in their reciprocal combinations and interpenetrations (F I 52.20).

¹⁴⁹ In *Met* VIII. 1, 1042 a 24-b8 Aristotle says: “The substratum is substance (*ousia*) and this in one sense is matter.” According to Hyman “a distinction must be made between those passages in which Aritotle speaks of ‘first matter’ in a general way and those in which he investigates whether it is a substance. In the former passages he seems to have thought of ‘first matter’ as an underlying subject analogous to the bronze of the statue (cf. *Phys.*I.7, 191 a 7-12), while in the latter passages he identified it with potentiality.” Hyman 1962, 394 n 49

¹⁵⁰ Kraus 1935, Vol I.140, and Vol II.187, n.4, see above p 155

¹⁵¹ *Tajmî’* f.106b, in Kraus 1986, 252–53; Haq 1994, 89 Comp.*Cratylos* 425D

vegetable world, the mineral world, and lastly there is the Balance of letters, which is the most perfect of all.”¹⁵² In the same work he gives another variant list of measuring “the Form, Movement, Nature, Soul and Intellect, these Five Principles are essentially one [...]. But the position of the Intellect is superior as it is the formator of the Form, the ‘naturator’ of Nature, the mover of Movement and the perferctioner of the Soul (*mutammim*, the *soul-entelechy*, *tamâm* of Aristotle).” Here Kraus points out the probably Arabic origin of Scholastic distinction of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* in the Jabirean form of *al-tabî’ wa’l-matbû’*, nature and what is *natured over*.¹⁵³ This passive participial linguistic structure of a relation between the formator and the formed is essential for Ibn al-‘Arabî in describing God as Creator and Lord (*Rabb*), that is, God in a relational sense, in expressions necessarily implying that which is created and that which is “Lorded over” (*marbub*; see SPK 59-62).¹⁵⁴ A similar structure was discussed in connection of Aristotelian hypothetical necessity in I. B.7 above.

On the whole Jâbir’s philosophical theory is based for the most part on Aristotle’s *Meteorology*, *On Generation and Corruption* and *Physics*, but the author/authors knew well all extant works of Aristotle in Arabic and they “apply systematically the language of the Syrian translator *Hunayn ibn Ishâq* (d 870) in their quotations,” as Plessner claims and Haq disclaims.¹⁵⁵ Jâbir/jabirîyans also knew well the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, Simplicius, Porphyry and Ps.-Plutarchos; he/they further quote Empedocles (*tâ’ifat Anbadaqlîs*, followers of E.¹⁵⁶), Plato, Theophrast, Galen, Euclid, Diogenes (*al-kalbî*, “doglike”, the Cynic), Ptolemy, Archimedes, several by whom the Greek original text has not survived. On the whole, if Ibn al-‘Arabî had a more than casual access to this source to which he occasionally refers, and which, incidentally, according to Kraus/Plessner, is also behind the *Rasâ’il* [= *R*] of Ikhwân al-Safâ,¹⁵⁷ then this would well explain the extensive scope of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s knowledge of technical philosophical and scientific vocabulary and the scope of his

¹⁵² *Kitâb al-hamsîn*; Kraus 1986, 187-88

¹⁵³ Kraus 1986, 137 and n.2

¹⁵⁴ “There is no such thing as an agent until it meets with a patient, nor any patient until it meets with its agent,” as Plato says in *Theat.* 157A.

¹⁵⁵ Plessner 1972, 212, Haq, however, states bluntly that “this is false.” See: Haq 1994, tr.pp 188-192 and commentary pp.230-242.

¹⁵⁶ *K.al-’Ahjâr*, II.25.16, Haq 1994, 143 The doctrine of five eternal substances is generally referred to Empedocles in Arabic literature. Kraus 1986, 46 n.2 Referred to as Pandolfus in the Turba, Ruska 1931, 24, and in the latin world often as Pantocles like in *De Essentiis* of Herman of Carinthia, Burnet 1982, 174, where the Platonic (*Phaidr.*248B–249B) doctrine of soul’s purification in the world and its final return to its original sublime state is referred to Empedocles. The same “Empedoclean” idea appears also in the Arabic *Teol.Arist.* I.31 (tr.Lewis 227)

¹⁵⁷ See the *El²* article on Jâbir by Kraus/Plessner. Haq considers this simply not true, referring to comparative studies with contrary results between the two eclectic sources by Marquet 1988. However, the similarities between Ibn al-‘Arabî and the Ikhwân al-Safâ’ were noted already by H.S.Nyberg 1919, see above n.330. See also Chittick 1996, who admits a deep kinship between the type of philosophizing, but does not consider the *Rasâ’il* a direct source for Ibn al-‘Arabî, in HIP 499. The Epistles or “Essays”, *Risâlât* of Ikhwân were introduced into Spain in the early 11th century, Massignon, in Festugiere 1989, Vol.1, 397-98.

scholarly knowledge in general – and this is said by no means to belittle his own account of the divine origin of all his wisdom. In any case, Ibn al-‘Arabí does refer both directly and indirectly to Jâbir and “his people” (‘*alâ ahlihi*) on several occasions, referring particularly to “their” writings on the “science of physics” (F I 56.14 = OY I. 250.10). Both his cosmology and physical explanations are fundamentally in tune with those of Jâbir and the Ikhwân, but this is more due to the nature of things than literal borrowings.

Apart from the general elemental theory with clear Aristotelian/Empedoclean roots, the just mentioned Aristotelian way of using the concept of *hylê* in a general sense as “material cause”, that “out of which” (tò *ex ou* *Meta* VII.7, 1032 a15-17 “That from which things are generated is what we call matter”), and thus applied not only to physical elemental properties in general but also to constituents of any composites, like letters as material constituents of words, is indeed a case of example for this concordance. This connection between elements and letters is made by Greek *grammarians* who say that the word “element” (*stoikheion*) stands for both letters in language as well as natural elements in physics.¹⁵⁸ In Arabic this is not the case: the word (pl.) *ustuqussât* refers never to letters—except in the Science of letters, *ilm al-hurûf*, or, the Balance of Letters, *mizân al-hurûf*, of Jâbir ibn Hayyân and Ibn al-‘Arabí.¹⁵⁹

Apparently the first philosophical text taking up this connection between the elements as principles (*archai*) of nature like the letters are of language is to be found in Plato’s *Timaeus* (48 B-48 C1). Here Plato, however, exclaims that the elements are not even comparable to syllables [not to mention letters] (48 B 8-C 2). Thus, according to Plato, the elements should be analyzed further down to their constituents (*ex ôn tauta gégonen* 51 A5) before one could speak of them as principles. Plato is here

¹⁵⁸Kraus 1986, 165 and n.7; 177-78 and 237 n.9. The elements are the theme of the middle part of Plato’s *Tim.* 47 E3-69 A5. Oddly, according to Kraus 1986, 177-78, Jâbir, though applying its basic idea in his writings, was not familiar with this Platonic doctrine, though it was fairly well known since the early treatise (see: Rescher 1967) on the Platonic Solids by al-Kindî (d 873 CE, *Fî ‘l-sabab alladhi nasabat al-qudamâ‘ al-ashkâl al-khamsah ilâ ‘ustuqussât*, which is a discussion of *Tim.* 53c-56c) mentioned in this connection also by Kraus. al-Kindî had access to the whole of *Timaeus* which was translated into Arabic around 820 by Yahyâ ibn al-Bitrîq. Rescher writes: “The earliest generation of Arabic philosophers apparently considered this work to be of greatest importance for the understanding of Greek philosophy, and it excited great interest upon its first entry in an Arabic milieu.” Rescher 1966, 16-17. The infamiliarity of this work by Jâbir would of course be natural if he was already dead by the time of al-Kindî and the mentioned translation. This Platonic theory was also known through Galen’s paraphrase of *Timaeus* translated into Arabic. *Plato Arabus* I, 10.

¹⁵⁹With few minor exceptions and a brief mentioning in the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldûn (see further above p177) noted by Kraus 1986, p 264 n.8. The translators of Aristotle rendered in *Ret* I.2. 1358 a35 *stoikheia kai tâs prôtáseis*, “the elements and premisses” [of different genders of rhetorics] with the Arabic “*al-hurûf ay al-ustuqussât*.” Ibid. 237 n.9

This does not, however, mean that there were no parallels for the science of letters as such in the Arabic, as there were in fact several, the closest to Ibn al-‘Arabí being that of Ibn Masarra and his *Kitâb khawâss al-hurûf wa haqâ‘iqihâ wa usûlihâ*, “The Book on the properties of letters, on their essential realities and their principles,” which was based on the work of Sahl al-Tustarî (d.896). Ibn Masarra’s father had travelled widely in the Middle East, and had contacts with the *mu‘tazilites* in Basra. Cf. *MR* II, 140-47 and van Ess 1997, Vol.IV.pp.273-74 and 285.

referring to his elemental theory of five geometrical solids as abstract geometrical constituents of the four elements.¹⁶⁰

Plato wrote:

We must, in fact, consider in itself the nature of fire and water, air and earth, before the generation of the Heaven, and their condition before the heaven was. For to this day no one has explained their generation, but we speak as if men knew what fire and each of the others is, positing them as original principles, elements (as it were, letters [*sic!*]) of the universe; whereas one who has ever so little intelligence should not rank them in this analogy even so low as syllable (*stokheia*).¹⁶¹

As we see, Plato does not accept the natural elements being irreducible and immutable factors like the letters of the alphabet are for language, instead, even more so the syllables are far from being fundamental and comparable with these natural so-called elements. The true elements, therefore, are something much more fundamental and simple. And, according to Plato, truly elemental constituents must be looked for in the intellectually more principal underlying geometrical shapes of the four primary bodies that are further built up from even more elementary triangles. However, adding also to this that “the elementary triangles themselves are reducible to numbers and number is perhaps to be derived of unity; but he will not push the analysis so far. Or it may be that no one can ever really know the ultimate constitution of body, because there can be no such thing as physical science, but only a ‘probable account.’”¹⁶² In any case it is obvious that for Plato the natural elements have already a long “ancestry” in simpler and more fundamental forms. It is also quite obvious comparing with the science of balance according to Jâbir that here we have a notable parallel to his thought, probably due to some deep common roots in Pythagorean tradition.

Also Aristotle uses quite often the analogy between syllables of language and elements of nature (*Phys.* II.3, 195 a16–21; *Met* V 2, 1013 b17–21, *Met* VII 17, 1041 b12–34, *Met* XIII 10, 1086 b 22), or, further, the word “nature” (*physis*) can also be used to express the primary composition of a thing, quoting for example Empedocles: “Of nothing that exists is there nature, but only mixture and separation of what has been mixed; nature is but a name given to these by men” (*Met* V 4, 1015 a1-3; Diels *fr.*8).¹⁶³ Ibn al-

¹⁶⁰ See above n.158.

¹⁶¹ Cornford 1997 (1937), 161 n.1 provides us here a note referring first to *Theaetetus* dialogue as the first occurrence of the word *stokheia* in the sense of both elements of nature and letters as elements of language (see above p 156, 162 n 114, 180, 171, 191), but continuing: “It is [...] not unlikely that Leucippus or Democritus illustrated the infinitely various combinations of atoms by the rearrangement of the same set of letters to form a a tragedy or a comedy (Diels, *Elementum* 13). See above pp.134 n.292. See also van Ess 1997, Vol.IV, 466.

¹⁶² Cornford 1997 (1937), 162 For a discussion in later Platonic tradition on this theme, see Annala 1997, 5–6.

¹⁶³ Empedocles says: “All that occurs is a mixture, and an exchange of ingredients; and ‘substance’ is only a name given to things by mankind. For, when the elements have been mixed and come to light in the form of a man, or as some kind of wild animal, or plant, or bird, then men declare that these have ‘come into existence’; and when the elements separate, men call this sad destiny ‘death’.” This people believe, although “it is impossible for anything to come to be from what is not.” (The

‘Arabi says essentially the same by defining that “nature possesses intelligible existence (*wujûd al-‘aqlî*) but not entified existence (*wujûd al-‘aynî* F IV.150.14). In Aristotelian terms, here elements and letters are a cause “out of which”, that is, “the things which, when they are, this must be,” as Aristotle refers to this cause in his *Analytics* (*An.post* II.11) without using the word matter.¹⁶⁴ Thus, in its contents the Aristotelian *hylê* is not fixed, instead it is a member of a relation, that out of which (*ex ou*) something becomes or is made into (*eis ô*). As the (material) cause explaining how elements and parts relate to certain functions of the “for the sake of which,” the structures of language and words provide a rich case of inquiry just like the elements of nature do in their multiple combinations of natural bodies. “Letters are the cause of syllables, their matter of artifacts, fire and the like of other bodies, their parts of wholes, and the hypotheses of conclusion, as the cause out of which (*tò ex ou aitia*); and the one group, the parts and so on, are causes as the underlying thing (*hupokeimenon*), while the other group, the whole, the composition and the form, are the causes as ‘the what it was to be’” (*Phys* II 3, 195 a16-21; *Met* V 2. 1013 b17-21).

However, the idea of revealing or evoking elemental structures of nature through the elemental structures of language is not an Aristotelian “invention.” Nor is the idea Plato’s although it is discussed and also criticized in the *Cratylus* (389A–391A) of Plato and vestiges of it are found also in *Theatetus* (201 B–08 E) and the above quoted *Timaeus* (48 B-C; 51 A; 52 D-E; 53 A-B). Accordingly, there is a fundamental connection between names and natures, and therefore the act of giving names, forming or creating of words (*onomatourgós*, “namegiver”) is compared with legislation, the imposing of laws (*nomothêtês*, “lawgiver”).¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, al-Farâbî in his commentary on Aristotle’s *de Interpretatione* writes: “The relation of the thoughts within the soul to the entities outside the soul is based on nature. By contrast, the relation of of thought to speech, i.e. the relation of being signified by speech, is based on sheer legislation.”¹⁶⁶ This basic linguistic structure propounded by Plato, the Academy and philosophers of late antiquity, is, according to Jâbir, also held by the “Dialecticians of substance” (*ahl al-kalâm al-jawharî*), as Jâbir refers to the distinctions of the philosophers on language into noun, *ism* = *onoma* and verb, *kalima* = *rêma*, (the components worked with in Plato’s *Cratylus* 431B and *Sophist* 262 B-C) which together makeup discourse, *qawl* = *logos*, instead of the distinctions of Arabic grammarians (*ahl al-lugha*) and their division of language into three basic grammatical elements of *ism* (noun), *fi’l* (verb) and *harf* (particle).¹⁶⁷

principle of “*Ex nihilo nihil*”) First quotation from Toulmin & Goodfield 1962, 53 original fragments, see PP, fr.8–9 and 12 (350-53), pp.291–92.

¹⁶⁴ Johnson 2005, 44

¹⁶⁵ van Ess 1997, Vol IV, 325

¹⁶⁶ Zimmermann 1981, 12

¹⁶⁷ “Speech is composed of three (kinds of) things: nouns verbs and particles”, as Ibn as-Sarrâj’s major work on Basic concepts of Arabic Grammar begins. Quoted through Zimmermann 1981, cxix, cf. Kraus 1986, 250 See also *Met* I.4, 985 b 17-19

Though Plato clearly enjoyed playing with words and their splendid explanations and etymologies, he is at the same time criticizing linguistic theories going back probably to atomistic theories of Democritus.¹⁶⁸ From a Platonic point it would be utterly futile to discuss any meanings simply as linguistic forms without referring to ideas giving them meaning: for Plato the existence of language presupposes the existence of ideas. On somewhat similar lines, Ibn al-‘Arabí says that words are ultimately “established (*wad’*) by the founder of the language, who is God. Hence the words are perfect expressions of their meanings, and the meanings are the entities known in God’s beginningless knowledge.”¹⁶⁹

A famous example of playful etymologies is Socrates’ claim that man is called “*anthrôpos*” in Greek because he is ‘*anathrôn ha opôpe*’, “observing closely what he has seen.” (Crat 399 c5–6). Similar etymological investigations were systematized by the Stoics for “a deeper understanding of truth” between words and natures. These theories influenced to some extent even the Syrian translators of Greek texts to Arabic. Thus, for example, the word “phonem” (*phonê*, Ar.*al-saut*) was equaled with “intellectual light,” *fôsh noû*, “enlightenment,” and explained to be a linguistic connection in the Greek language by the translator of *Aetius* from Greek into Arabic.¹⁷⁰

On the other hand, through what is known of the transmission of Greek texts into Arabic, it is quite improbable that Plato or Democritus would be the source of Jâbir, who’s *Balance of Letters* (*mizân al-hurûf*) or balance of language (*mizân lafzî*) is far more sophisticated than any theory known from antiquity. According to Kraus the strongest candidates as sources of Jâbir for his linguistic theory of balance go back to Pythagoras and the many Neopythagorean schools of thought flourishing during the early centuries of common era; ideas that are quite prominent in the often quoted and already mentioned work on the Secret of Creation (*Sirru ‘l-khâliqa*) by *Balînâs*, that is, ps-Apollonius of Tyana.¹⁷¹

However, already in antiquity it was generally accepted that simple and separate letters cannot be vocalized and are not yet meaningful. This is what Jâbir also says: A single isolated letter (*harf*, phoneme) cannot be pronounced, and “we cannot speak by means of an isolated letter [phoneme], unless we attach to it another letter [phoneme]. Similarly, it is not possible to us to know the weight (*wazana*) of a Nature [sc. to know that it exists in relation to us], unless it unites with another Nature and thus becomes intelligible—so know this principle.”¹⁷² Only when letters are combined do we have words and meanings attached to them (*Theat.* 203 B-C). The same is, according to Socrates, also

¹⁶⁸ For a list of authors referring to doctrines of Democritus and also Pythagoras as the origin of these theories, including A.E. Taylor in his *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*; Kraus 1986, 237, n.8

¹⁶⁹ SDG 42 *Wad’* is often used as synonym to *thesis*, that which is posited, *wada’ a*, to posit.

¹⁷⁰ See *Aetius* IV.19.1. see *Aetius*, Daiber 1980, pp 59-60

¹⁷¹ Kraus 1986, 238–39

¹⁷² *Hâsil*, f.96a, quoted through Haq 1994, 82

applicable to elementary particles of nature (ibid.201E–02 A). Jâbir expresses this clearly: “An individual thing cannot exist with less than two elements [sc.natures] ... it may have three elements, but it cannot exist with a single element—this is impossible.”¹⁷³ Similarly, Aristotle contrasts a heap and a syllable. A heap is not really a unity at all and thus may be thought of as a agglomeration of its material constituents. The syllable *ba*, by contrast, cannot be thought of as mere heap of its constituents *b* and *a*.¹⁷⁴ Aristotle says: “the syllable is some particular thing; not merely the letters, vowel and consonant, but something else besides. And flesh is not merely fire and earth, or hot and cold, but something else besides [...]. This ‘something else’ is something that is not an element, but is the cause that *this* matter is flesh and *that* matter a syllable [...]. And this is the substance of each thing, for it is the primary cause of its existence.” (Met VII 17, 1041 b12-32)

This is not the right place to delve into the complexities of Jâbirean or *Akbarian* (*sheikh al-akbar*, the greatest master, as Ibn al-‘Arabî was called) *mizân* or *‘ilm al-hurûf*, balance or science of Letters, which would involve also extensive studies in mathematics and music.¹⁷⁵ What is central at this stage of our study is the conviction shared by both *Masters of the Art* regarding the origin of language and its relation to existence: language is not a human convention or invention; on the contrary, it is an embodiment of reality itself.¹⁷⁶ Language is something belonging to the human nature and therefore relating and opening an access for the human being to proper realities [as expressed in different sciences] (comp. *Crat.* 389 D). Jâbir believes that the structure (*tasrîf*, morphology) of language corresponds to the structure of existing things: “the morphology of the natures (*tasrîf al-tabâ’i*) bears parallel in the morphology of letters (*tasrîf al-hurûf*).¹⁷⁷ “See how the letters are compiled (*wada’i*) with natures (*tabâ’i*) and how the natures are compiled into letters; how natures are transformed (*tantaqil*)

¹⁷³ Ibid Haq 1994, 83 Kraus 1986, 180–81 Comp. *Theatetus* 201E–202B: “the first elements (*stoikheia* said to be the first occurrence of this word as applied to physical elements, Cornford 1979, 143 n.1) of which we and all other things consist are such that no account can be given of them. Each of them just by itself can only be named; we cannot attribute to it anything further or say that it exists or does not exist. [...] Elements are inexplicable and unknowable, but they can be perceived; while complexes (‘syllables’) are knowable and explicable.”

¹⁷⁴ Lear 1988, 21

¹⁷⁵ The musical idea of harmony of the spheres is important for Jâbir and comes from the Platonic tradition of Timaeus and the Greek theories of music behind the creation of “the soul” (*Tim.* 35 A-B). Also, these ideas between mathematical, musical and linguistic relations in poetry are briefly brought together as Pythagorean doctrines criticized by Aristotle at the end of his *Metaphysics* (*Meta* XIV.6, 1093 a 28–1094 b4). One may also note in passing the central role of music in the *Epistles* of Ikwân al-Sâfâ, R I and III.

¹⁷⁶ Haq 1994, xiv: At the core of Jâbir’s thinking there is “a powerful idea of an ontological equivalence between language and physical reality.”

¹⁷⁷ *K. al-Tasrîf*, quoted in Kraus 1935, 393: 4–6 and Haq 1994, 83. The name of this *Book of Morphology* (*tasrîf*) denotes to this structural common basis or reality (“following homological methodological procedures”, as Haq states) both in physics/chemistry and language/grammar. In quoting the same passage Haq makes a note on the cosmological doctrines of the Sâbiens [of Harran], who, according to Sharastânî, considered spiritual substances (*al-rûhâniyyat*) to be those which had the power (*quwwa*) to “transform bodies and transmute physical masses (*tasrîf al-ajsâm wa taqlîb al-ajrâm*). Also, for the Sâbiens, spiritual substances were ‘acting freely upon bodies, transforming them and transmuting them (*tatasarrifu fi’l-ajsâm tasrîfan wa taqlîban*). See Haq 1994, 100 n.19

into letters and letters into natures.”¹⁷⁸ Agreeing with Pythagoras (Kraus is referring here to Sextus Empiricus), Jâbir claims that grammar and physics proceed with homological methods.¹⁷⁹

Similarly, for Ibn al-‘Arabî, just as the letters come together to produce words, so the Names come together to produce existent things (F I 51, Ch.2. heading, see MR I 245 n.64). Referring to how Ibn al-‘Arabî conceives of language, Chittick says (SDG, xxvii) “every language, whether meta-, cosmic, human, or infrahuman, is an articulation of Unarticulated *Wujûd* [being, existence].” In this sense all of creation is an articulation of *wujûd* as the Breath of the All-Mercifull (*nafas al-Rahmân*). “The entities (*al-‘ayân*) become manifest within the Breath of the All-Merciful, just as the letters become manifest within human breath” (F II 401.32; SPK 128).¹⁸⁰ Or, in another example of Chittick (Ibid.): language “is an image of the self and the world outside the self,” a formulation expressing the above pointed idea of language relating with realities. “Words are perfect expressions of their meanings, and the meanings are the entities known in God’s beginningless knowledge” (SDG 42). Thus, there is a direct ascending or descending order, depending on the point of view, from [immutable] entities in knowledge to meanings and, further, from meanings to words, or, in the reversed order, from words to meanings and back to *immutable entities* in knowledge.¹⁸¹

Jâbir, on the other hand states that language is a substance with a natural (*fúsei*) origin (*waq’at bi’l-tabî’a*) derived from an intention formed in the soul... And further, like all natural things, language too is a natural substance made of composite elements. This constitution, again, is in accordance with a natural hierarchy where a higher ontological level is reflected in the lower forms from which they derive (like in a Neoplatonic emanation), or, seen from the opposite [Aristotelian] angle, the tendency of the lower forms towards the higher ones as their dynamic power, their yearning for the forms. In specifying this linguistic formation, Jâbir explains writing (*al-katab*) as “indicating what is announced in words (*dallâ ‘alâ mâ fî lafz*= Greek *phônê*), and that which is in enunciation, signifies what is in the

¹⁷⁸ *K.al-tasrîf* fol.144, in Kraus 1985, 239 n.6

¹⁷⁹ Ibid 24

¹⁸⁰ Further in the same cosmological Ch 198 Ibn al-‘Arabî likens the human breath to the primordial “Cloud” withing which the divine breath was before creation: the manifestation of the cosmos when the Cloud extends into the Void/vacuum (*al-khalâ’* – a “supposed extension” *imtidâd al-mutawahham* F II 395.9, that is, the void is not a reality but “a tool” of human thought) is like the human breath extending from the heart to mouth.”The manifestation of letters in the path of the breath and in words is similar to the manifestation of the cosmos from the Cloud.” F II 395 6-10; SPK 129 The vacuum (*to kenon*) is a space empty (*kenon*) of body, *Phys.*IV.6, 213 a30. The atomists, Leucippus and Democritus held the void as necessary to explain motion, growth, contraction and absorbtion. Later the Stoics and Epicureans reverted to postulating vacuum. Aristotle objects to vacuum that a cubic object already has its own volume (*onkos, sôma*), so that it is redundant to postulate also a three-dimensional space for it to fit into, *Phys.* IV.8, 216 b2-12. Sorabji 2004, 251; On Stoics an the void, Sorabji 1988 , 142-59; see also Algra 1995, 41 who quotes the Eleatic Melissus (fr.B7 DK) stating: “...there is absolutely no void. For void is not-being and the nothing could not exist.”

¹⁸¹ On Neoplatonic *próodos* and *epistrophê* and the Immutable or fixed entities, the *ayân al-thâbita* (to be discussed further down), a central technical term of Ibn al-‘Arabî; see Sells 1995, p.76 and n 2; Izuzu 1984, p.37.

intellect (*mâ fî 'l-fikr*), and what is in the intellect signifies the quiddity of things (*mâhiyat al-ashyâ*).”¹⁸²

This explanation, as Jâbir himself tells by quoting the corresponding passage, goes back to both Aristotle’s and his own *Peri Hermeneias* [*Bârîr Mîniyâs*¹⁸³] (16a): “The letters show the sounds (*phônê*). The sounds show the passions (*pathêmatôn*) in the soul, and the passions in the soul show the matters (*pragmata*) that arouse them.”¹⁸⁴ Similarly, in his *Generation of Animals* (V.7, 786 b20-22) Aristotle states that “the sounds are the matter of language” (*tou de lógou hylên einai tên phônên*), but they can become meaningful symbols for impressions in the soul (*tôn en tê psyche patêmatôn súmbola*) of “concrete things” (*pragmata*) only through articulation.

Similarly, Ibn al-‘Arabí refers to this structure on several occasions (like F I.45.34, here I quote *Inshâ*’ 7.16–8.1/tr.p.18 with auxiliary terms in the passage of *Futûhât*): “All existing things may be considered in four modes, with the exception of God, may he be exalted. [...] The first mode is the existence of a thing in its concrete essence (*‘ayn*) [i.e. God’s knowledge of potential things...]. The second mode is the existence of a thing in the mind (*‘ilm*/ F: *dhihn*). [...] The third mode is the existence of a thing in speech (*al-lafz*). The fourth mode is the existence of a thing in script (*ruqûm*/F: *hattî*). In the ‘*Anqâ* there is also a concrete example of Ibn al-‘Arabí himself finding the proper name for his ‘*Anqâ*. He says: “Indeed, I did not find in myself an expression (*nuktaḥ*) for this impression (*al-simah*, Gr.pl. *sêmeia*) [in my soul],” but then, on a Friday while listening to the Preacher (*al-khatîb*, in the mosque) in full swing, the [precisely suitable] name “unexpectedly (*li-l-ghaflah*) occurred to me—the prompting of the heart (*dawâ’i’l-qalb*) actively abounding because of what the impressions (*al-simât*) brought to it”¹⁸⁵” Thus, here the impressions are carriers of a meaning (*ma’ânⁱⁿ*) maintaining a passion in the heart which finally comes up with the proper expressions (*‘ibârât/kalimât*) in the act of creation.

Jâbir goes further and sees this four-fold structure of meaning and truth in terms of the four elements of nature. Thus, for him, language and world are intrinsically connected and their connection is what he calls the *balance*. But this is just as Ibn al-‘Arabí also explains us with his Science of Saints, ‘*ilm al-awliyâ*, and the properties of names (*hawass al-‘asmâ*’) mentioned above (referring to F I 190.4.20-35), where Ibn al-‘Arabí uses the Qur’ânic example of “Be! and it is”, *Kûn fa-yakûn*, a phrase appearing eight times in the Qur’ân (Q 2:118; 3:47; 3:59; 6:73; 16:40; 19:35; 36:82; 40:68) denoting the act of

¹⁸² *Khamsîn*, f. 134a, quoted through Haq 1994, 92, 108

¹⁸³ There is a text in the Jabirian corpus with this name, Kr 2583, a work that has not been found.

¹⁸⁴ Quoted through Kraus 1985, 258-59 in another quote on p 259 n 4 we have: “*fa’l-katâbât dâllat ‘alâ ‘l-lafz wa ‘l-lafz dâlla ‘alâ sûrati ‘l-wahmiyya aw al-aqliyya wa tilka’s-sawâr dâllat ‘alâ al-‘ayâna ‘l-mawjûda.*”

¹⁸⁵ Elmore 1999, 289

creation.¹⁸⁶ For Ibn al-‘Arabí the word *K u n, Be* (Lat. *Esto!*), expresses the form (*sûra*) of reality (*haqiqa*) proper to each thing through which it comes into existence, it is the *force* (*quwwa*) with which God addresses immutable entities in His knowledge to bring them into existence, and, therefore, they are called the *mukawwanât*, things produced by *k u n*. This word *kun* is a combination of two letters (“k” and “n”), and joining together is what words are made of. But not only words, as for Ibn al-‘Arabí, combinations also make up language and ultimately the whole of cosmos, ruled by the two central notions of Jâbirean/Aristotelian cosmology, namely: “compound” (*murakkab*, Gr. *sunthêtos*) and “simple” (pl. *basâ’ita*, Gr. *haplôs*), or “noncompound natures.”¹⁸⁷

Ibn al-‘Arabí writes, “The fact of coming together bestows a form that the letters could not bestow without the relation that brings them together. Such is the *composition of the entities of the cosmos* (*tarkîb ‘ayân al-‘âlam*)—which is compounded from the noncompound things within it. The eye witnesses nothing but something compounded from noncompounded things. The compound thing is nothing superadded to its noncompound things save the relation of the coming together of these noncompound things (Ch. 384, F III 524. 32-35, SDG 116).” Thus, the whole cosmos in all its entities, also the human being, is a “compound of simple natures (*al-murakkab min al-basâ’ita*), just as a word is a joining of its composite letters in accordance with the intention of the speaker; in spoken words we hear noncompound simple letters and in visible entities we see noncompound simple elements brought together as mixtures. This coming together qualifies with existence (*wujûd*) things that were previously qualified as not existing (F III 525.6–7).

”On the already mentioned page F I 190 of the Ch 26 of the *Futûhât*, referring himself directly to Jâbir ibn Hayyân, Ibn al-‘Arabí draws a diagram showing the corresponding letters under each of the four natural elemental qualities. This diagram lists the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet under elemental qualities precisely like the table given, and (oddly) attributed to Socrates, by Jâbir in his *Kitâb al-Ahjâr*.¹⁸⁸ As this table in a way formulates the *axiômata* of the Science of letters, the very basis of balance between the elements of nature and language, it clearly shows the depth of common theoretical basis in the thought of Ibn al-‘Arabí and Jâbir ibn Hayyân. Indeed, in his *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldûn (1332–1406) describes this “science of signs” (*‘ilm al-sîmya* Gr. *sêmeion*) connecting the elements of language with those of nature (*‘âlam al-anâsir*) and which is to help in lifting the veil of mere external

¹⁸⁶ Here the possible is receiving existence through a process of divine intention (*irâda*) and formation (*takwîm*). For an analysis of this process, see Massignon, *Passion*, 520.

¹⁸⁷ These “first simple motherly natures” (*awâ’il ‘l-ummahât basâ’it*) are heat (*harâra*), coldness (*burûda*), dryness (*yabûsa*) and humidity (*rutûba*), studied further down. Kraus 1986, 173 and table in n.1. In the elemental theory of Jâbir the term *murakkabât*, elemental combinations, composites, and its opposite, a singular or non-composite simple body, *mufrad*, were a direct application of the Aristotelian elemental doctrine where each element is composed of two elemental opposite (*ênantía*) qualities, as we know from the first part of this study.

¹⁸⁸ Haq 1994, 92–93, the Arabic text pp.136-37, tr.p.179

sensation (*kashf hijâb al-hiss wa zuhûr*), mentioning both Jâbir and Ibn al-‘Arabî as exponents of this science.¹⁸⁹

It is important to emphasize here, that in the Islamic context the revealed speech of God manifests itself in the form of three books: the “book of horizons” (*Kitâb âfâqî*), namely, the cosmos on the whole, and second, the “Book of Souls” (*Kitâb anfusî*), the human Self, and finally, the Book of Qur’ân (*Kitâb al-Qur’ân*) itself.¹⁹⁰ These three terms are referring to an often quoted Qur’ânic passage: “We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that this is the truth...”Q 41:53. This expresses the crux of the matter of revelation itself in Islamic perspective: certainly the media is not the message; instead, the message is expressed in different mediums. The Book, the cosmos and the Self all agree. The “signs” of God are both “outside” and “inside”, both in the meaning of the “revealed text” as understood, and in the appearances of the “experienced cosmos”. In each case it is language that provides the fundamental and determining element of all reality and understanding. Ibn al-‘Arabî says: God mentions in this passage “the two configurations (*al-nasha’atain*) – the configuration of the cosmos through his words “the horizons”, and the configuration of its spirit through “in themselves”, for this is one human being possessing two configurations. *Until it is clear to them*, i.e. the viewers, *that it is the Real* – i.e., that the viewer in what he sees is the Real, nothing else (F III 189.21-23). “The universe is a book, it is the ‘Great Qur’ân’ (*al-mushaf al-kabîr* like in Ch.5, F I 101.32)[...] Conversely, the book is a universe.”¹⁹¹ All language is an articulation of breath (*nafas*), *the life force*,¹⁹² and as such language represents a domain between the immaterial and the material, between awareness and embodiment, meaning and form. Thus, on the cosmic scale the whole of creation is an articulation of the divine breath: it is divine speech and the Breath of the All-Merciful (*nafas al-rahmân*).¹⁹³ This breath is a fine substance, the finest elemental breeze between the pure intelligible and corporeal entities. “The matter (*al-mâdda*)¹⁹⁴ within which the words of God—which are the cosmos—become manifest is the breath of the All-Merciful” (F IV.65.31-32, SDG 43). This is also the “in-between” area that manifests the realm of the possible. Furthermore, it is because of this universal speech echoed in all of existence that Ibn al-‘Arabî does not accept the classical Greek definition of the human being, *dzôon*

¹⁸⁹ Quoted through Ruska 1924, 43–44

¹⁹⁰ Corbin 1986b, p 59 and 82

¹⁹¹ Chodkiwicz, in MR II, 2004, 27

¹⁹² In the Kalâm-discussions *life* was used as an attribute of animated beings (*hayawân*) in a restricted sense and not, like in Aristotle, including plants. According to van Ess this is due to Stoic doctrine connecting spirit (*rûh*), *pneuma*, with blood. van Ess 1992, III, 245–46

¹⁹³ See intro to SDG

¹⁹⁴ This structure of language as carrier of meaning, becoming manifest and meaningful through the subtle matter of breath, “speech that is in matter” (*kalâm fi’l-mâdda*, F IV 25.10) is a fundamental example for Ibn al-‘Arabî on form and matter as prerequisite of all manifestation. Thus this informed speech is also the basis of understanding, where something is conveyed: “when someone does not understand, nothing has been conveyed to him.”(SDG 316) For the terms *mâdda*, *hayûla*, and *hayûla ‘ûla*, see Wolfson 1977, 377-392

logos ekhon, Lat. *Homo Sapiens*, Ar. *hayî al-nâtiq*, a living being endowed with speech, as the human definition¹⁹⁵: “Rational speech (*nutq*) pervades the whole cosmos. It is not the specific characteristic of man as imagined by those who make his constituting differentia (*al-fasl al-muqawwim*) the fact that he is rational animal. [...] Man is defined specifically (*hadd al-insân*) by the Divine Form (*sûratu ‘l-ilâhyya*).” (F III 154.18, SPK, 276)

III. 2.3. On Aristotelian cosmos: principles, elements, and qualities

*Praise belongs to God, who creted the heavens and the earth
and appointed the darkness and the light.*
Q 6:1

*He brought into existence the heavens, the World of the Spirits,
and the earth, the World of the Body. He configured within the World of the
Body the darknesses of its levels, which are veils dark in their essence, and
within the Spirits the light of knowledge and perception.*

al-Qashânî: al-Tâwîlât, commentary on Q 6:1 Vol.I, 80-81.

The very basis of Aristotelian philosophy, the hylo-morphic structure of all reality, or the *materia prima* (*hylê*) receptive to all forms and underlying all different forms of elemental (*stoikheia*) bodily compounds of Earth, Water, Air, and Fire, is also the foundation of alchemical tradition. Although we know this already from the first part of our study, let us once again recall the basic structure of all change and becoming according to Aristotle, now in the words of de Haas (1997, 70):

Aristotle introduced the notion of matter as a result of his analysis of becoming, described in *Phys.* I. 7-8. There he argued that becoming requires two principles, opposites, which in their turn require a third principle as their substrate (*hupokeímenon*), because, being opposites, they cannot affect each other. The substrate is one in number, but has two aspects which are formally different: on the one hand matter (*hylê*), out of which that which becomes (*tò gignómenon*) becomes in a non-accidental way; on the other privation out of which that which becomes, becomes accidentally. Privation is in itself non-being and is not immanent in that which becomes; matter is non-being only accidentally; and is immanent (*henupárkhon*) in that which becomes.

Therefore, in speaking about the elements of nature changing one into another, or natural generation and corruption in general, an underlying matter is supposed as a substrate and as that specific potentiality out of which its corresponding actuality is realized. This structure makes change and continuity possible under the influence of something already having the same actuality (man begets man, *sibi simile*) or at

¹⁹⁵ This definition was known through the earliest introduction of Aristotle in the Arabic world, the *Eisagogê* of Porphyry. The point of Ibn al-‘Arabî is easy to understand in the light of *Qur’ân* which, of course, does not treat the human being only as a rational animal but as a person endowed with both soul (*nafs*) and spirit (*rûh*) of which the intellect is a part. For a discussion of this subject, see van Ess 1997, Vol.IV, 513-20

least some relevant actuality (the house in the mind of the architect).¹⁹⁶ It is this unlimited *tertium quid* of *hylê*, the source of all potentiality (*dúnamis*), a possibility for a relation; receptivity for each and every form as *first matter* and pure potentiality which provides the “mount” and foundation for all forms and changes.

In applying basic Aristotelian structures to alchemy, Holmyard writes:

According to Aristotle the basis of material world was a prime or primitive matter, which had, however, only a potential existence until impressed by ‘form.’ By form he did not mean shape only but all that conferred upon a body its specific properties. In its simplest manifestation form gave rise to the ‘four elements’: fire, air, water, and earth, which are distinguished from one another by their qualities. [...] In each element one quality dominates over the other: in earth, dryness; in water, cold; in air, fluidity; and in fire, heat. None of the four elements is unchangeable; they may pass into one another through the medium of that quality which they possess in common. Thus fire can become air through the medium of heat; air can become water through the element of fluidity; and so on. [...] In all these changes it is only the ‘form’ that alters; the prime matter of which the elements are made never changes, however numerous the changes of form may be.¹⁹⁷

Although these changing elements bear familiar names, they do not stand as such for the elements of our everyday life: what we drink as water, breath as air etc. are already mixtures of different elements. The four elements of the early natural philosophers are ideal and abstract elements not found in *concreto*. Instead of later philosophical abstract concepts like “substance”, “accident” or “form” and “matter” the earlier thinkers of nature (*peri fuseôs*) were working with experientiable bundles of powers, “roots”, “gods” or “souls” (Empedocles) and qualities in nature, like heat, cold, wet and dry or light and darkness, day and night, hard and soft, loud and silent, bitter and sweet etc. and their mutual relations and compounds—as is obvious with all Pre-Socratic thinkers or with physicians like Hippocrates and later Galen, for whom balance between the bodily humours became the theoretical key-notion in the art

¹⁹⁶ De Haas 1997, 70-71; referring to *Meta*1048 a36-b6; 1042 a 27; 1045 b17-19; 1032 a13-19; 1033 a10-11; 1069 b36-1070 a2; see also *PA* I.1, 640 a25-26. In his dissertation Philip Roseman has studied this Aristotelian “*Omne agens agit sibi simile*” principle which he calls the “horizontal causality,” Roseman 1996, 52 ff. Similarly, Ibn al-‘Arabí commenting on Q 25:2: “He created every thing, then He ordained it very exactly” says: “hence, the first divine effect in creatures was ordainment, before they came to exist” and that “the divine ordainment in their case is like the architect who makes present everything he has devised in his mind concerning what he wants to bring into appearance. Hence the first trace in that form is what the architect has conceptualized without any model [*má tasawwaruhu l-muhandis ‘alá ghairi mithál*]”. F II 62.4–5 SDG 49 Here Ibn al-‘Arabí is closer to the philosophers than the theologians. The (*antiplatonic*) theological formula (of al-Tabârî, *Tafsîr*³ II 581,8) being “*min ghairi aslⁱⁿ wa-‘alá ghairⁱ mithál*”, quoted through Ess 1994, Vol.iv, p.451. See also Rudolph, 1989, pp.118–19 and 129. Here Ibn al-‘Arabí is more like Aristotle: “Things are generated artificially whose form [*eidôs*] is contained in the soul (by ‘form’ I mean the essence of each thing [*tò tí ên êinai*], and its primary substance [*protê ousia*])” *Meta* VII.7, 1032 b1–3. Here Ibn al-‘Arabí’s ‘*ayân al-thâbita*’ are like the Aristotelian *tò tí ên êinai*. Thus, perhaps the earliest commentator of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s *Fusûs*, al-Tilimsânî, criticizes the Master for “observing the levels of rational faculties of those who are veiled.” A strong remark by a reverent commentator! See, Chittick 1996, in *HIP* Vol.I, p 517.

¹⁹⁷ Holmyard 1990, 22-23

of medicine. It is also worth mentioning here that in his monumental work on Aristotle's *Hylê*, Happ uses the term “*qualitative-eidetic*” (*qualitative-eidetischen Naturphilosophie*) in referring to Aristotle's philosophy of nature.¹⁹⁸

Thus, all elemental theories should be understood as *qualitative* experiential explanations of nature. In her study “The doctrine of rays in al-Kindî” (born ca.800 CE.), Pinella Travaglia writes: “The theme of the elements and their qualities (hot, cold, dry and humid) came originally from Greek philosophy [to al-Kindi] and especially from the attempt made between the sixth and the fifth century BC. by the pre-Socratic philosophers to reduce the variety of natural phenomena to original substances: water for Thales, fire, or rather the action of heating by the sun for Anaximander, and air for Anaximenes. Later on Empedocles, for whom the origin of natural reality was the four elements, was to propose the idea of the elements having qualitative properties which were lightness and heaviness as well as heat and cold [...]. Al-Kindî's theory [on pharmacy based on elemental qualities] refers once again back to Greek science which had already developed the doctrine of the four primary qualities and their proportions in simple medicaments. [...] Al-Kindî works out a mathematical procedure through which it is possible to determine at what degree or between which degrees a medicament is exactly found. [...] A similar attempt of qualification can also be found in the Arab world in “The Balance Theory” of Jâbir Ibn Hayyân, who lived in the VIII century.”¹⁹⁹

With qualities we are always dealing with both concrete and abstract things: **one can immediately feel wetness, or, “fluidity” (*hygrôtês*), and yet it is an abstract quality: it is the sense of touch through which the elemental qualities of hot, cold, dry and wet, are perceived and differentiated** – “for perception is a form being acted upon” (DA II.11, 423 b 27–424 a 2), something is affecting our ability to perceive, and, “sense is that which is receptive (*dektikòn*) of the form of sensible objects without the matter (*áneu tês hylês*, II 12, 424 a18–19).” However, it is not all that easy to say what these immaterial sensible qualities (*poiotês*, “such-and-such-nesses”)²⁰⁰ actually are: “How, then, and in what terms are we to speak of this matter?” as Plato asks in *Tim.* 49 B. And Plato has a variety of expressions to

¹⁹⁸ Happ 1971, 491 For various bundle-theories in antiquity, see Sorabji 1988, Ch.4, pp.44-59; and Sorabji 2004, Vol.2, pp.158-161

¹⁹⁹ Travaglia 1999, 77-79 and 79 n.2 Cf. Kraus 1986, 234 See also a note above on al-Kindî circles as translators, n 664

²⁰⁰ The term *poiô-tês* was introduced by Plato in *Theat.* 182 A as a general term for all characters like ‘hotness’, ‘whiteness’, ‘heaviness’ etc. “Perhaps this word ‘such-ness’ strikes you as queer and uncouth and you don’t understand it as a general expression; so let me give you particular instances. The agent does not become hotness or whiteness, but hot or white, and so on with the rest. No doubt you remember how we put this earlier: that *nothing has any being as one thing just by itself*, no more has the agent or patient, but, as a consequence of their intercourse with one another, in giving birth to the perceptions and the things perceived, the agents come to be of such and such a quality, and the patients come to be percipient” (italics mine). Cf. above p.108. We will come back to this in connection with the divine names and their fundamental relational character according to Ibn al-‘Arabî. For a discussion of *qualities* in later Platonic tradition, see Annala 1997, 198-213.

describe these qualities: he calls them *ideai* 50 D7; *genê* 50 E5; *morphai*, *pathê* 52 D6; *dunameis* 52 E2. For Plato what we perceive as qualities are mere “transient appearances in the *receptacle*. The receptacle itself alone has some sort of permanent being.”²⁰¹ These **qualities** are therefore **extrinsic** imprints received from outside the receptacle. In itself the receptacle is for Plato without any properties or qualities (*Tim.* 50 C). It is therefore not that out of which (*tò ex ou*) things are made; instead, it is only that in which (*en ô*) they appear.

But here one could ask like 12th century Bernard of Chartres: “if the *tertium genus* [the receptacle] is only a locus where bodies come into existence, where do they find the concrete material which makes them visible and tangible?” In his answer he refers to different phases in matter: first a kind of confused matter, created from nothing or lacking a beginning; this confused matter passes then by means of *formae nativae* first into disengaged elements (*elementa* [i.e. *calor*, *frigor*, *siccitas*, *humor*]) and finally into the *elementaria*.²⁰² These *formae native* existed in *hylê* in its primitive state (*ante exornationem*). The four pure elements, according to Bernard, are the *fundamenta* on which corporeal world is founded.²⁰³

These two phases would correspond to Jabirean elemental natures (hot, cold, moist, and dry) and the actual compound elements of fire, air, water and earth, or, as Ibn al-‘Arabi says: every elemental body is natural, but not every natural body is elemental; the elements themselves are natural but no longer elemental [as they are already compounds] (F II 335.9-10) They are compounds of their underlying elementary qualities, like cold and wet for water or hot and dry for fire. What makes the similar interpretation of Bernard even more interesting if seen from the perspective of Jâbir or Ibn al-‘Arabî is the Platonic analogy lurking in the background between the elemental natures and letters of the alphabet (*Tim.* 48 B, to which we will come soon). In Plato’s description (*Tim.* 52 D-E) these prime characters or

²⁰¹ Cornford 1997 (1937), 178

²⁰² Paraphrasing the question of Bernard of Chartres, see Annala 1997, pp. 3. This ingress into the School of Chartres would be an important topic for another discussion. It is clear that through the medical School of Salerno and the 11th century Arabic philosopher and physician known as Constantinus Africanus (1020-1087 CE, a major source for Hermann of Carinthia) several Greek and Arabic texts were translated into Latin with a particular bearing on the doctrine of elements on the lines followed here. The distinction between simple (*basâ’ita*) natures (*tabâ’i*) and compound (*murakkabât*) four elements (*anâsir*), or, between first/primary elements (*anâsir uwal*) and [secondary] elements (*anâsir [thawânî]*) was translated into Latin as *elementum/elementatum*. “This distinction was introduced into Latin world, where they were defined by William of Conches as, respectively, ‘quantitative minimum, which is qualitatively simple, has no extension and is not perceptible to the senses’ and ‘something which is already composed of two qualities and is therefore perceptible’.” Travaglia 1999, 86, providing a note to T. Silverstein, “Elementatum: its appearance among the twelfth century cosmogonists”, *Medieval Studies* 16 (1954), 156–62, not consulted here. However, it seems William of Conches denied vigorously that heat, dryness, cold and moisture are elements on the ground that these are *qualities*, thus disagreeing with both Constantine Africanus and Abû Ma’shar, the most often quoted author of Hermann of Carinthia in describing “the principles of Physics” Burnett 1982, pp. 259–60 and 32.

²⁰³ Ibid p 7 Like Jâbir, Bernard sees the *elementaria*, Jâbir’s simple natures, as this foundation, not as the actual elements. He says: “*in huius mundi constitutione hyle est primum elementum, secundum illa quattuor pura, tertium haec quattuor mixta*,” Quoted through Annala, ibid.

letters and qualities in the above mentioned first phase within hyle/receptacle are in a state of chaotic turmoil. This “shaky” state is due to the contrary (elemental) qualities struggling against each other, being tossed into different directions within this “nurse of Becoming.” The passage bears obvious resemblance with Ibn al-‘Arabí’s cosmological myth on the quarrelling Divine Names having been blinded by their nonexistence and yearning for existence and manifestation “so that their entities might become distinct through their effects” (*hattâ tatamayyiz a’yânahâ bi-âthârahâ* F I 323.4; for the whole passage see 322.33- 323.27 in SPK 54-55).

Furthermore, still on the basis of Plato’s *Timaeus*, one could also wonder how the receptacle, or *hylê*, being without any properties, can yet be called receptive, and thus having a capacity to receive forms? Receptivity, after all, is already a property and if we admit this receptivity as a property of *hylê*, prime matter, then matter is no longer unanalyzable, as Haq points out in describing the Jabiryan position of dismissing the Aristotelian *First Matter*, noting also that Plotinus called it a “mere shadow upon shadow.”²⁰⁴

In antiquity the Stoics represented an opposite view to this: for them the qualities are *intrinsic* in matter becoming apparent from the very nature of matter itself.²⁰⁵ This is worth noting as both Jâbir and Ibn al-‘Arabí, despite the general Arabic image of *nature as impression* (*tabî’a*²⁰⁶), at least occasionally, seem to explicate **qualities** as something **intrinsic**: you cannot feel wetness unless it is “there,” given in the water, or what ever. This is not a mere logical distinction, as Jâbir might say: properties (*khawâss*) of entities depend on the physical constitution [*tabî’at*] of things [and ultimately their *substance*, *jawhar*] from whence they appear, or in which they occur and become accessible (*khawâss al-ashya’ lâ takûn illâ bimâ fî tabî’at dhâlika l-shay’*) because **if such properties were not potentially** (*bi’l-quwwat*, as a tending force, latent) **in the appearing things themselves they could never actually appear** (*lam yumkin ‘an tazhar li’l-fa’el*).²⁰⁷ Similarly, on a more general principal level Ibn al-‘Arabí says, in a passage devoted to elements and elemental qualities to which we will come back later on: “we know things through their essential realities” (*fa-na’rif al-haqâ’iq ‘alâ mâ hiya ‘alayhi*), whether they are taken singly (*al-mufradât*, like uncompounded elemental qualities) or via the composition (*tâ’lîf*) into elements (F I 56.19). Here the term *al-haqâ’iq* is to be understood as indicating the ontological

²⁰⁴ Haq 1995, 53, for Plotinus, objecting to the lack of reality in Aristotle’s conception of prime matter and followed by Porphyry and Simplicius; see Sorabji 1988, 44–45, who also mentions an argument by the Christian Basil of Caesarea: “if you mentally stripped away a thing’s qualities, there would be no subject left.” This would be much in line with Jâbir’s critique.

²⁰⁵ This difference of Platonic and Stoic tradition is expressed well in the commentary of Chalcidius on Plato’s *Timaeus*: he states that the generated forms (*generatae species*) do not become flourishing from the breast of matter, as the Stoics maintain, instead they are extrinsic, being impressed like a seal impresses wax (*...non ex gremio silvae generatae species florescent, ut putant Stoici, sed extrinsecus obveniunt ut in cera signacula*). In *Tim.* 321, ed Waszink, 317:4–7.

²⁰⁶ *Taba’a* “to impress with a seal, signet, to mint, coin money; in the Qur’ân Allâh “sealing” the hearts of unbelievers (Q 5:155; 9:93; 16:108; 47:16), referring to an activity coming from above.

²⁰⁷ K. *al-khawâss*, ch.9, Kraus 1989, 95 n 4 Cf. above p.209

“real state of things,” things as they are, in contrast to *haqq* as truth in a logical sense.²⁰⁸ Similarly, in the first chapter of the *Fusûs* he says: “not a thing of Reality is known unless it be given by the essent itself” (*fa’in mâ ya’raf ‘ahadun min al-haqqi ‘illâ mâ tu’tyuhu dhâtuhu*: *Fus* 50/52), and in the *Futûhât*: “A thing is known only through its face, i.e., its reality” (*F I* 83.29-30). Here essence (*dhât*), reality (*haqîqa*) and self (*nafs*) or “face” of a thing are all confounded: that which shows itself, that is, “the face of anything is its essence” (*wajhu kullu sha’i dhâtuhu*; *F II* 684.3).²⁰⁹

Very similarly, one can read in the study on al-Kindî by Travaglia that the four primary elements [i.e. fire, water, air, earth] possess the nature of their source and therefore represent the outward radiation of the four simple elements [‘*anâsir*, i.e. hot, wet, cold and dry] and consequently their causal action. The consistency of the primordial elements (as such) would be entirely energetic [*en-ergon*, “in action”/activity, a word coined by Aristotle] i.e. the centre of irradiation of the primary qualities.²¹⁰ Thus, here, the qualities are treated like *virtues* or “powers” [*dúnameis* in the second sense in note 209] of bodies, for which radiation is an apt expression: an influencing energy. Thus, one could picture the outlooks of “wetness” and “coldness” as different “powers”, *dúnameis*, appearing (*energeia*) as water: these qualities become accessible in water with all its visible and tangible functions being the outcome of the two radiating complements of its underlying elemental qualities. Having first explained al-Kindî’s exposition on the primary emission of rays from the stars as the foundation of astrology and astral causality, Travaglia concludes “it is this cosmological link which, having a real and substantial dimension, provides the ontological basis of the emission of rays from the elemental world” (*op.cit.* 21). Thus, here we would also have causality between natural phenomena without physical contact—hardly an Aristotelian position.

²⁰⁸ For difficulties in translating Ibn al-‘Arabî’s *al-haqâ’iq*, see Takeshita 1982, 245-47 and n.10. In the sg *al-Haqq* is of course also the divine name: The True [One], The Real.

²⁰⁹ Compare *Theatetus* 157B-C and *Soph* 247 A; commenting on the latter, Cornford discusses the meaning of *power*. “[Gr.] *Dúnamis* is the substantive answering to the common verb ‘to be able’, *dúnasthai*,” covering both ability to be acted upon and ability to act on something else. This notion had acquired technical significance in medicine: finding substances that have healing powers or virtues. In medical usage [of Hippocrates] the term comprises two mutually complementary ideas: 1) Substances manifest by their qualities; things are made sensible through their qualities. And that is what we are in the present discussion talking about. These properties, ‘hot’, ‘cold’, ‘bitter’, ‘the salt’, “are so many *dúnameis*, distinct entities which constitute, so to say, the ‘exteriorisation’ of the substance” [and to this we will come next in our discussion]. Cornford continues: But 2) these entities can only be known in action; their action is their *raison d’être*; action characterizes and individualizes them. ‘The cold’ differs from ‘the hot’ or ‘from the bitter’ or from ‘the salt,’ because it produces a certain determinate effect. It can be combined with the other qualities, but will never be confounded by them, because its action is not identical with theirs. This action of qualities, again, is their *dúnamis*. The term designates at once their essence and their proper manner of manifesting themselves.” Cornford 1979, 234-35 Comp. Ibn al-‘Arabî’s text on pp 221–22

²¹⁰ Travaglia 1999, 86. Terminology may cause here some confusion as al-Kindî seems to use the word ‘*anâsir*’ for simple elements whereas Jâbir would call them *first elements* (‘*anâsir uwlâ*’) or, more often “natures”, *tabâ’i*, or what Ibn al-‘Arabî refers as simple or compound elements. In any case the point is clear. For a thorough discussion of elemental terms see: Wolfson 1977, pp.377-392

Here we come to a thorny question with Aristotle's elements and their qualities: are qualities substantial or accidental, or perhaps both, as Happ asks?²¹¹ Is wetness or dryness something as such, *in se*, or are these to be seen only as immaterial logical distinctions, mere accidents first in need of a substance to become tangible or theorizable. Happ points out that in earlier Greek thinking of the Presocratics qualities or powers were ontologically in no way secondary to substantiality, and therefore they could also be seen as acting effectively without any support of an underlying substance.

According to Plato "when we are told to think of fire as what is such and such and ever recurrent, it is a recurrent combination of qualities which is so described. According to Aristotle's rival interpretation, the properties which characterise fire *do* have a subject, and that subject is *space*. He identifies Plato's space with his own prime matter (*cf.* below p.121; *Phys* IV 2, 209 b11–13; *GC* II 1, 329 a14–24)."²¹²

However, in the fourth book of his *Meteorology* (378 b10 and in *Meteor* I 2, 339 a13) Aristotle calls the basic qualities of warm, cold, wet and dry *elemental principles* (*aitia tôn stoikheîôn*, and in *PA* II 2, 648 b9: *arkhai tôn phusikôn stoikheîôn*) instead of calling them accidents. As principles they seem to have a being of their own, and yet they are immaterial and abstract. And that is what Jâbir also says: "the four natures [sc. hot, cold, moist and dry] are the principles (*usûl*) of everything."²¹³ Furthermore, all four qualities are treated by Aristotle as objects of touch: wet and dry more concretely, but also hot and cold are something verified by touch, and other distinctions like thick and thin, heavy and light are further distinguished from these (*GC* II 2 and *DA* II 12). And, as Happ notes, there is only a very small step from this to the doctrines of Aristotle's pupil Strato, who understood warm and cold as corporeals or to Stoic doctrines where all qualities are treated as corporeals.²¹⁴ We will later see that it is precisely through the revaluation of elemental qualities into this substantial direction that Jâbir or Ibn al-ʿArabî disagree with Aristotelian qualities as merely abstract logical distinctions.²¹⁵

On a more principal Aristotelian level one can say that the object of natural science is mobile and mutable substance; and, further, for him "nature is an internal principle of motion. Nature is always in a body, a body that moves in accordance with a principle."²¹⁶ Natural things can both be affected and affect other things (they are *pathêtikón* and *poiêtikòn*). "Something that could cause change without itself being changed, or affect others without being affected, would no longer be natural" (*Phys* II 7, 198

²¹¹ Happ 191, 530

²¹² Sorabji 1988, 33 He also notes that "the identification of his [Plato's] 'receptacle' [*khôra*] ... with prime matter... was practically universal in antiquity." Thus Plotinus calls matter the place of all things. *Enn.* 6.18(37–8)

²¹³ *Sabʿîn*, Kraus 1935, 482: 5–6; Haq 1995, 54 and 78

²¹⁴ Happ 1971, 531–32 ; 557 n.182 and 809–11

²¹⁵ Even if Aristotelian qualities are mere abstractions, we should remember the proper nature of abstraction as an "*a priori* essential intuition" ("Wesensschau") in Aristotle: see above II.B.5, pp 35, 39 see further 251, 293.

²¹⁶ Johnson 2005, 132

a 28). Thus, Aristotle separates between hot and cold as active qualities in elements and dry and moist as passive, receptive qualities (*Meteor* IV 1, 378 b; *GC* I 6–7, 322 b–324 a and II 2. 329 b–330 a). All this refers to the so-called sublunar natural sphere of all generation and corruption: “everything that is generated comes into being out of an opposite (*ex enantíou*) and a substrate (*hupokeiménon*), and is destroyed only if it has a substrate, and through the agency of an opposite, and passes into its opposite” (*Cael* I 3, 270 a 15–18). Here it is obvious that different qualities, contraries, have the same matter (*hylê*) as their substratum (*Ibid.* 286 a25).

To understand the elemental theory of Aristotle one must look at it in its **cosmological contexts**, the Aristotelian universe, a universe with both an extremity (*eskhaton*) and a centre (*mésón*), and which is succinctly depicted in his early work called *On the Heavens* precisely through the Greek word *ouranos* itself, a word generally translated as the heavens, or sky, but here given by Aristotle a far vider meaning in three distinct senses:

(1) In one sense we apply the word *ouranos* to the substance of the outermost circumference of the world..., in which also we believe all divinity to have its seat. (2) Secondly we apply it to that body which occupies the next place to the outermost circumference of the world, in which are the moon and the sun and certain of the stars [i.e. planets]; for these, we say, are in the *ouranos*. (3) We apply the the word in yet another sense to the body which is enclosed by the outermost circumference; for it is customary to give the name of *ouranos* to the world as a whole (*Cael.* I.9, 278 b1-21).

For Aristotle Generation (*genesis*) and Corruption (*phthorâ*) of natural things and compounds happen continuously and eternally as a consequence of eternity of motion (*GC* I 3; II.10, 336 a15–16). “Each thing that has a *function* (*érgon*) exists for the sake of this function.”²¹⁷ The activity of god is immortality, i.e. eternal life, and so it is necessary for the movement of the divine to be eternal. But the heaven is this kind of thing, for it is a divine body, and for that reason it is given the circular body whose nature is to move always in a circle” (*Cael* II 3, 286 a 8–12).

Thus the world is enclosed by the outermost circumference and is composed of the whole sum of natural perceptible body, for the reason that there is not, nor ever could be any body outside the heaven. This universe is one, solitary (*monos*) and complete (*téleios*). There is neither place, nor void nor time beyond the world as a whole.

²¹⁷ This general principle of *agere sequitur esse* appears already in Plato: “the function of each thing would be that which it produces” (*Rep.*I, 353 A10). Each thing is known through its “capacity/ability” (*dynamis*). Aristotle says: “everything is defined in respect of its function, for when something is able to perform its function, it is truly that thing; an eye for example, when it is able to see.” (*Meteor* IV 12, 390 a10–12)

And like the word *aeon* means the total length of life of every creature, similarly, also the sum of existence of the whole heaven, the sum which includes all time even to infinity, is *aeon*, taking the name from *aei einai* (“to be everlastingly”), for it is immortal and divine. In dependence (*exêrtêtai*) on it all other things have their existence and their life, some more directly, others more obscurely (*Ibid.* 279 a26-30).

Furthermore, this universe is divided into two completely separate realms of our familiar sublunar world of the four elements, and beyond it the above mentioned eternally revolving celestial sphere of *aither*. It is in this closed and spherical universe where the elemental qualities and elemental principles work as dynamic constituents of all generation and corruption, organized according to their natures (weight and lightness) around the center of the sublunar universe. Earth is the heaviest and fire the lightest:

All compound bodies, which exist round about the location of the centre, are composed out of all the simple bodies. For earth is present in all [of them] because each [of the simple bodies] exists especially and in greatest quantity in [its] appropriate place; and water [is so] because what is compound must be delimited, and of the simple bodies only water is very easy to give a shape to, and again even earth cannot endure without the fluid, but this is what holds it together – for if the fluid were removed from it completely it would fall to pieces. Earth and water then are present in [them] for these reasons, and air and fire [are so] because they are opposites of earth and water (for earth is opposite to air, and water to fire, so far as a substance *can* be opposite to a substance.) So since coming-to-be takes place out of opposites, and from [each pair of] opposites one extreme is present in [compounds], so must the other be, so that in every compound all the simple bodies will inhere. (*GC* II 8, 334 b 30–335 a 9)²¹⁸

Thus the whole cosmos is spherically ordered, starting from the uppermost First body and ending down to the ever-heavier spheres of the sublunar elements. The first body is neither light nor heavy, since lightness implies motion away from the centre, and heaviness implies motion to the centre, the two directions of rectilinear movement. Furthermore, all movement in respect to place being either rectilinear or circular (*Phys* VIII 8–9), the natural movement of this [neither light nor heavy] first body must be *circular*, and it is one and continuous, without beginning or end nor is there any opposite to circular movement. Having no opposite, its movement, rotation, is eternal and therefore also “ungenerated” (*agenêton*) and “indestructible” (*áphtarton*), that is, this highest sphere is without any *generation and corruption*, instead, it is ageless (*agêraton*) without growth and unalterable (*analloiôton*) (*Cael* I 3, 270 b 1-5). Therefore, the primary body of all (*prôtôn tôn sômatôn*) is eternal (fixed) and divine (in the sense of ideal movement and perfect (spherical) form representing the eternal

²¹⁸ Translation by Alan Lacey in Sorabji 2004, Vol.II, 314–15

divine perfection in the corporeal world without any theological connotations, see also *Tim.*32 and 40A).²¹⁹ For Aristotle, and quite interestingly, the fact that the ancient thinkers of very early times have handed down to us the idea that these heavenly bodies are gods bespeaks for a still earlier knowledge retained as relics in the form of a myth (*Met* XII 18, 1074 b1–14).

As a genuine phenomenologist, Aristotle goes on to say: “I think too that the argument bears out experience (*toîs phainoménois*) and is borne out by it (*kaì tà phainomena tô lógon*).” This is worth emphasizing to show that Aristotle is seeking explanations and reasons for the given *phainomena* and not, for example opinions of his own (comp. *Cael* II 13, 293 a25–27). He also humbly notes that “we have very little to start from, and that we are situated at a great distance from the phenomena that we are trying to investigate” (*Ibid*, II 12, 292 a15; and also: “very few of their attributes are perceptible to our senses” *Cael* II 3, 286 a7-8). Nevertheless, for example, in noting that the moon is closer to earth than the planets, Aristotle says a few lines earlier that he has “seen the half-full moon approach the planet Mars, which has then been blotted out behind the dark half of the moon, and come out again on the bright side,” an observation that gave already Kepler the facts to estimate the date being the 4 April 357 BCE, later precisioned by a modern astronomer as 4 May 357 about 9 p.m. Athens time!²²⁰ Furthermore, *phainomena* as Aristotle understands them are not only the givens of sensual perception. In the above mentioned connection of the primary body being eternal, the experience that he says is backing up his hypothesis is not only that of present experience, rather, throughout the ages, “according to the records handed down from generation to generation, we find no trace of change either in the whole of the outermost heaven or in any of its proper parts” (*Cael* I 3, 270 b 15). And, according to Aristotle’s commentator, Simplicius, it was believed that the astronomical records of the Egyptians went back for 630,000 years, and those of the Babylonians for 1,440,000.²²¹ “We owe many incontrovertible facts of the planets to each of them,” as Aristotle says (*Ibid*. 292 a7-9).

But, to return to the First body under discussion here:

it seems too that the name of this first body has been passed down to the present time by the ancients, who thought of it in the same way as we do, for we cannot help believing that the same ideas recur to men not once nor twice but over and over again. Thus they, believing that the primary body was something different from earth and fire and air and water, gave the name *aither* to the uppermost region, choosing its title from the fact that it ‘runs always’ (*aei theîn*) and eternally. (*Ibid*. I 3, 270 b 17–25. On the etymology, comp. *Cratylus*, 397 C–D and 410 B)

²¹⁹ Happ 1971, 513

²²⁰ A note provided by Guthrie in his translation of *Cael* here used.

²²¹ *Ibid*, a note by the translator, p 25n a

This eternally revolving ether was later called the “fifth nature,” *pempton ousia* or *quinta essentia*, and still later in the Arabic world also as *rûh* (*pneuma*) or the fifth substance.²²²

Furthermore, in the sublunar world, the four elements are also organized spherically (*sphaireidê*): “water is found around the earth, air around water, and fire around air” (*Cael* II 6, 287 a 33–34).

The “five elements” (*stoikheion*) of Aristotle, his version of the Empedoclean *Roots* (*ridzômata*, Ar. *‘asl, usûl*) are explained by Johnson as: “ether, whose nature it is to move eternally in circle, and earth, water, air and fire, whose nature is to move rectilinearly, the former two towards the centre of the cosmos, and the latter two away from it (paraphrasing *Cael* I, 2, 268 b14–9a9).”²²³

When Aristotle is speaking about the elements of nature and their cyclical processes of changing from one to the other, he also needs something which stays the same, survives motion (*Meteor* I 3, 339 a 36–b 2). Aristotle says the transmutation of elements is imitating (*mimêtai*) the circular motion of the spheres, and therefore being continuous; “for when water is transformed into air, air into fire, and fire back into water, we say the generation has completed the circle, because it returns to the beginning” (*GC* II 10, 337 a 4–7).²²⁴ But instead of referring to his overall material concept of *hylê* in the book of *Meteorology* these changes are explained by the effects of active qualities (*poiêtika*, warm and cold = *eidos* = *energeia*) and the states of the respective passive qualities (*pathêtika*, dry and moist) in the elements (*stoikheion*) themselves (*Meteor* IV 1, 378 b26–28). Thus, here we have both the general equation between *Qualities* = *Elements* = *Hylê*, but also one between *pathêtika* = *Hylê*.²²⁵ Similarly in *Meta* IX.8 it is stated that “imperishable things are imitated (*mimêtai*) by things which are always undergoing transformation, such as earth and fire; for these also are ever-active; for they have their movement of themselves and in themselves” (1050 b 28–30). Thus, these active and passive qualities are the universal causes for all nature’s metabolisms (*metabolê phusikê*).²²⁶ These active or passive qualities are also those that are “overpowering” (*krateisthai*) or those that are overcome (*êttasthai*), regulating the changing of elements from one into another (like in *GC* II 4, 331 a 20–35 and *Gen An.* 766 a15–21). This terminology comes from *Timaeus* 56 E6; 57 B2, and the idea from 47 D5ff. where intelligence (*noûs*) overrules (*êttesthai*) Necessity (*anankê*) by persuading her towards the best.²²⁷

²²² Daiber 1975, 66–68 mentions the “philosophers of nature” (*ashâb al-tabâ’i*) in the Islamic world as holding to four substances of heat, cold, humidity and dryness and others, who hold to five substances, the fifth being the spirit enclosing the other four “substances” like the Stoics were teaching. We will come back to these.

²²³ Johnson 2005, 136 In alchemical tradition these two directions of linear movement, up and down, are reflected in symbols of fire and water: a triangle pointing upward corresponds to fire (activity), and a triangle pointing downward corresponds to water (passivity).

²²⁴ A similar passage by Plato on the transmutation of the elements, see *Tim.* 49 B–C, quoted above p.108.

²²⁵ Happ 1971, 534–35

²²⁶ Happ 1971, 522 and n.11

²²⁷ For further references on *kratein* also as a physiological term, Happ 1971, 537 n 82 see also Annala 1997, 4.

Furthermore, Aristotle also distinguishes between that which surrounds as active, informing (*eidos/enérgeia*), and that which is surrounded as passive, matter (*hylê/dúnamis*), and the same applies for that which is above (form/*eidos*) and that which is below (matter/*hylê*); (*Cael* IV 4, 312 a12–21; *DA* III 5, 430 a 18–19). On the whole, Happ sees here a long Presocratic tradition, and particularly medical theories on active and passive principles surfacing in the *Meteorology* of Aristotle only waiting to be crystallized as *hylê* – *eidos*. There is one other similar discussion on biological development discussing Empedocles in *de Resp* (XIV, 477 b 24). The whole discussion is on elements and the wet and dry are equalled with matter/*hylê* (like the Platonic *ekmageion* and the *tîn* or *turâb*, “clay”, i.e. water+earth of Adam in the Biblical and Islamic tradition).

But what actually are the elements? And what is it that makes considering them still worth while? There are, of course, several good answers, but Aristotle gives a valid general reason:

Since knowledge is always to be sought through what is primary, and the primary constituents of the bodies (*tôn henuparkhóntôn*) are elements (*tà stoikheia*), we must consider which of such bodies are elements, and why, and afterwards how many of them there are and what is their character (*Cael* III.3, 302 a11-15).

For Empedocles, however, the elemental theories concern both the *roots* (*ridzômata*) of being and thinking. These *roots* make the principal doctrine of his philosophy “whose object is to reconcile the apparently contradictory notions that birth, death and in general change exist, and yet that, as Parmenides held, being is unchanging and everlasting or eternal.” This doctrine is sometimes called the “cosmic cycle” since the process of the roots “growing to be one alone out of many” and, again, their growth apart to be many out of one (*fr.* 17) recurs ceaselessly. “A unity will always form from a plurality and vice versa: and it will always be the same unity and the same plurality.”²²⁸ According to Empedocles, Strife (*Neikós*) is at odds with the roots but Love (*Philotês*) is in harmony with them, causing their various combinations.²²⁹ In the word of Empedocles the elements “are equal and coeval, but each has a different prerogative and each its own character, and they prevail in turn as time comes round. And besides them nothing further comes into being nor does anything pass away. [...] No, there are just these [four elements], but running through one another they become different things at different

²²⁸ PP 1990, 288

²²⁹ Aristotle’s critique on Empedocles is directed at this claim of a mere “combining and divorce of what has been combined.” According to Aristotle this can only refer to an incidental collection of elements and tells us nothing about nature. For Aristotle all generation takes place necessarily in accordance with each nature, that is, in accordance with the substance of each thing. For Aristotle’s critical assessment of Empedocles’ theory, cf. *GC* II 6.

times and yet ever and always the same (*fr.*17, a fragment quoted also by Aristotle in *Met* I.3, 984 a8-12).

Here we have one basic feature of the Empedoclean elements taken over by Aristotle: the mixture of roots, the elements intermingling, “running through one another,” thus making possible the infinite variety of existing things in the sublunar world: “so let not deception overcome your mind and make you think there is any other source of all the countless mortal things that are plain to see, but know this clearly, for the tale you hear comes from a god” (*fr.*23, PP 294).²³⁰ Finally, to put these Empedoclean roots in their respective order through the separating force of Strife and the unitive force of Love back into the mixture of our cosmos we could quote the *Placita Philosophorum* of Ps.Plutarchos in its Arabic translation from the 10th century preserving an ancient fragment on Empedocles with the title: “*From what first elements God started the creation of the world*” (*min ayî ustquussât uwal ibtada’ ‘llâh bi-sana’ tu’l- ‘âlam*)?

Accordingly, Empedocles “believed (*yarâ*) that *aither* was the first to be determined from the elements (*yamayiz min al-ustuquussât*), next was fire and thereafter earth. Being gathered together and compressed the earth gushed with water which then became air through evaporation; the sky was generated out of air and the sun out of fire and all existent things on earth were fashioned from the other elements.”²³¹

It is precisely this eternal circular change of the elements from one to another that makes Plato critical on the substantiality of the elements: as none of these things ever makes its appearance as the *same* thing, we ought to stop calling them a *this* – whatever it may be. Instead we should speak of them as “what is of such and such a quality,” or, “the this-like which ever recurs as similar.” Here is how Plato described the perpetual change of the so-called elements (*Tim.* 49 B–C; E):

[T]ake the thing we now call water. This, when compacted, we see (as we imagine) becoming earth and stones, and this same thing, when it is dissolved and dispersed, becoming wind and air; air becoming fire by being inflamed; and, by a reverse process, fire, when condensed and extinguished, returning once more to the form of air, and air coming together again and condensing as mist and cloud...., and thus, as it appears, they transmit in a cycle the process of passing into one another [...]. In fact, we must give the name ‘fire’ to that which is at all times (*dià pantós*) of such and such a quality; and so with anything else that is in process of becoming. Only

²³⁰ Here one could point back to pp.148 above where Ibn al-‘Arabî was quoted speaking of the “the eminence (*sharaf*) and worth of sensation (*al-hiss*) and the fact that it is identical with the Real (*annahu ‘ainu’l-haqq*, F III 189.11-12).” And the above words “for the tale you hear” remind one of Heraclit: Men should try to comprehend the underlying coherence of things: it is expressed in the Logos, the formula or element of arrangement common to all things. “Listening not to me but the Logos” as Heraclitus guides. (*fr.*50) PP, 189

²³¹ *Aetius* II.6,3, Daiber 1980, 142

in speaking of that *in* which all of them are always coming to be, making their appearance and again vanishing out of it, may we use the words ‘this’ or ‘that’.

For Aristotle, on the other hand, there is no need for further analysis of these passive and active *qualities* as they (the elemental qualities as contraries, *enantionês*, not the elements) remain eternally constant on the elemental level – and this is what Ibn al-‘Arabí also states (F II 459.23). Thus, when the elements go through changes, it is only with respect to quantities and relations of their underlying elemental qualities that this takes place. Furthermore, it is worth noting that a serial ordering (*ephexês*²³²) of lower and higher forms is found already on the elemental level of existence, starting from the inorganic chemical basics, the passive qualities being the receptive carriers of effects in forming higher compounds, building up first homogenous bodies (*homoioimerê*, inorganic and organic, *Meteor* IV.8, 384 b30-32) of same qualities and elements and later heterogenous (*anhomoioimerê*) formations of differing qualities and elements, and finally, their compounds joined into organisms and bodily parts of a living being, each according to their respective functions. But here the process is an upside-down order in comparison with the Platonic model of Element Metaphysics: here the simpler elemental basis is *not* the ontologically higher element or principle of the compound; instead, it is the individuating material (*hylê*) for the higher compound. **Here the later form is somehow embedded in the earlier form and not, as with Plato, the earlier in the later.** For Aristotle on all levels each lower form is a *hyletic* carrier for the next higher form (*eidos* which serves thus also as a *telos*), or the higher form is “mounted” on the lower one.²³³ The higher form is posterior in time but ontologically primary. This ontological primacy means simply that “A is prior to B, if A can exist without B, but B cannot exist without A.”²³⁴

“That which is posterior in generation is prior in the order of nature, and that which is genetically last is first in nature” (*PA* II.1, 646 a25-27; *GA* II.1, 734 a16-32). Thus, the heterogenous parts are made of the homogenous ones (*Meteor* IV.12, 390 b14-22). For Aristotle “**all matter is engaged in a process of self-realization and perfection comparable to that of living organisms.**”²³⁵ Or, as Johnson concludes: “the cosmos is entirely made up of end-oriented substances.”²³⁶ It is finally here that the above mentioned *hylê*-principle in Ch.12 of the *Meteorology* becomes prominent: if one asks what is the

²³² See p. 213 though “order” on the lower level becomes more and more loose and less and less defined in its possibilities excluding any mathematically conceived sense of order. See Happ 1971, 367 and *Meteor.* IV.12, 390

²³³ For this *Scala naturae*, the serially ordered processes of nature, see Happ 1971, pp 358-77 and 768-69.

²³⁴ Johnson 2005, 168

²³⁵ Toulmin & Goodfield 1962, 105

²³⁶ Johnson 2005, 144

activating power in all this natural formation? What is guiding these chemical operations leading from lowest homological formations to higher organisms and living beings? The answer is simple: *logos*, introduced here as *logos tês mixeôs* (*Meteor* IV.12, 379 b25ff.), a structural and chemical formula, the organizing principle of all qualitative and later material and corporeal combinations and solutions, in short, the organizing principle of all becoming working on the lines of the general Aristotelian principle of: ***nature does nothing in vain***.

“We say that ‘this exists for the sake of that’ every time some end is evident, towards which the motion proceeds if nothing impedes it. Thus it is obvious that there is such a thing, and it is in fact that which we call nature [...]. Therefore, a seed (*sperma*) is a starting point and a making of something out of something. For these things are by nature [...]. Yet still prior to these is that of which they are the seed. For the seed becomes (*gênesis mên gâr tò sperma*), but the end really exists (*ousia dè tò télos*). Prior, however, to both is the organism from which the seed was derived [...]. Further, the seed is potentially something. It is potential insofar as it is in a state oriented towards a state of completion (*pros entelecheian*)” (*PA* I.1, 641 b23–2 a1). Thus the starting point of explanation is “what you end up with in the process of generation. It is only once the ‘effect’ or end (the aim of the beneficiary) is established, that it is possible to discuss the process that lead up to this development and are thus prior to it in time.”²³⁷

Aristotle defines an element in bodies “as that into which other bodies may be analysed, which is present in them either potentially or actually, and which cannot itself be analysed into constituents differing in kind” (*Cael* III.3, 302a16-18). For example, a piece of wood or flesh, and all such substances, fire and earth are potentially present, for they may be separated out and become apparent. But flesh or wood are not present in fire, either potentially or actually; otherwise they could be separated out. After lengthy discussions on the number of elements Aristotle concludes:

it is not shape that differentiates the elements from one another. In fact the most essential differences between bodies are differences in properties (*pathê*) and functions (*érge*) and powers (*dunámeis*), for these are what we speak of as pertaining to every natural object. (*Ibid.* 307 b 20–25)

This point is taken up often in a Platonic vein by Ibn al-‘Arabí: without the body’s specific preparedness, the spirit would be indistinguishable from the Divine Spirit (SDG 352). Body is the *principium individuationis*.

²³⁷ Johnson 2005, 166 See above p 18

He tells us that in the year 591AH (=1195CE at the age of 30) he was made to understand the difference between “corporeal matter” (*al-aqsâm*) and “corporeous bodies” (*al-ajsâd*) through a “similitude (*shibhu*) of water in a river within which no form was distinct. The water was itself, nothing else (*huwa ‘ayn al-mâ’ lâ ghair*). Then some of the water was poured into containers of different forms and colours. And so the shape and colour of the receptacle (*al-inâ’*)²³⁸ became manifest in the water: water in a jar looked different than water in a pot. “The receptacles exercised their properties over the water by dividing and shaping it, even though you know that something that did not become manifest as a shape when it was in the river was exactly the same as something that became manifest when it was not in the river.” (F III 187.31–34, SDG 352)

In his *Meteorology* Aristotle says: “Everything is defined by its function (*ergon*). For the function of each thing is truly what each thing is able to do... [...] The parts of plants and inanimate bodies like copper or silver are the same. They are what they are in virtue of a certain capacity for affecting or being affected—just like flesh and sinew.” (*Meteor* IV.12, 390 a 10–16) Thus, as was already said it is always the capacity for something, their *dunamis*, which gives us what the thing is: an eye for seeing and a saw for sawing. It is, thus, also obvious that defining a function becomes all the more difficult with the lower forms of compounds and, finally, impossible when it comes to *hylê* as absolutely non-qualified “I don’t know what”, to use the expression of John Locke (see above I.B.3, p.24 n.60). “For the [cause] for the sake of which is least clear there, where matter is most” (*Meteor*.IV 12, 390 a3).

Thus, in discussing the natural elements we should not concentrate on shapes and forms of entities but more to their properties (qualities), functions and powers. And this is what was above referred to as qualitative experimental explanations of nature, or, the Aristotelian basic qualities warm, cold, wet and dry as *elemental principles* (*aitia tôn stoikheîôn*, above pp186, 188, 196 and 221–22). It is these elemental principles and the underlying idea of qualities in general that seems to be at the heart of elemental meditations for the alchemists and mystics like Ibn al-‘Arabî.

²³⁸ The receptacle is also introduced in another fundamental locus where Ibn al-‘Arabî describes the vision he had in Mecca; a vision that inaugurated the whole Futûhât as its themes were inscribed on the skin of a mysterious figure he calls *al-Fatâ’*, “Eternal Youth”, described in many mystical and paradoxical expressions: invested with the light of Eve, beheld in the light of your moon, the secret of existence, not dead nor living, or, a simple compound (*al-murakkab al-basîta*) etc., who starts speaking to Ibn al-‘Arabî by saying: “You are the receptacle and I am I (*anta ‘l-inâ wa anâ anâ*)” F I 51.4. The expression echoes the Platonic *Receptacle* (*pandekhês/upodokhê*) of all becoming, the intermediary realm between intelligible and sensible realms, like “something looked upon in a dream”. *Tim.* 48 E–49 A, and 52 A–C. This passage fits well in what Ibn al-‘Arabî calls the human *hayûlâ* in the *Fusûs* 113/137, the utterly empty and receptive latency for *wujûd*, providing a “situation”, or a “seat” (*Tim.* 52 B1). Here we also have a connection with Aristotelian *goat-stag* (*tragelaphos*) or *sphinx* (Phys.IV.1, 208 a29 and *DI* 16a) serving as examples of “non-existents being no-where,” said by Simplicius to be a parody of this *Timaeus* passage, but the sphinx was translated into Arabic as *‘Anqâ al-Mughrib*, a philosophical stock emblem for *hylê*. Ibn al-‘Arabî describes it as “the one with no essence existent (*mawjûd*); the one for whom no predication is absent (*mafqûd*).” *R.al-Ittihâd al-Kawnî* D.Grill 1981, pp.83–84. A definition of ‘Anqâ as something between the sensible and the intelligible realms, neither existent nor non-existent; F I 130.33–34 further defined as *necessary hayûlâ*, in *Istilâhât* 1981, 133. To this theme we will return, see ch. III.3.1

Fire moves upwards because it possesses a certain characteristic – void perhaps – and no other, and earth moves downwards because it possesses the characteristic of plenitude, so air moves to its own place above water because it possesses a peculiar characteristic and water passes beneath it because it is of a certain nature. (*Cael* IV 5, 313 a 8-11)

As Aristotle sees it, nature is always striving for the better and, indeed, it is better to be than not to be (*béltistion dè tò einai hê tò mê einai*); but not all things can be forever. This leaves but one option for the perishing things to have their share of the immortal and divine: not in numbers but in species (*DA* II 4, 415 b 6–7). Therefore god made generation continual “because generation generating itself perpetually is the closest approximation to substance (*ousias*). The cause of this continual generation is circular motion: for that is the only motion that is continuous. That is why all other things – the simple bodies – imitate (*mimētai*) circular motion. This explains the eternal circular motion of the elements in their changing from one to the other for “it is by imitating (*mimouménê*) that rectilinear motion too is continuous.” (*GC* II 10, 336 b 25-337 a7)

This imitation of the eternal circular movement is operative throughout the sublunar world and thus also on the microcosmic human bodily level: the process of generation and corruption is happening continually not only as generation of species but also in the remaking of bodily organs that are in continual decay (*GC* I 5, 321 b 10-28). “The nutritive power has a special status among the other psychic powers [...]” It is “a power of *producing* the organic parts and the whole of organic body [...], so that the soul can use them for ever; and ‘since it is unable to participate in the eternal and divine by continuous existence, since no corruptible thing can persist numerically one and the same’, each animal or plant within the sublunar world aims to reproduce its kind, and ‘persists, not itself, but something like itself, one not in number but in species’ (*DA* II 4, 215 b3–5, 6–7).²³⁹ “To think of this power of the soul as generative, and to take generation as the paradigmatic act, has implications also for our understanding of nutrition. The generation of an animal is more obviously art-like (and analogous to housbuilding) than nutrition is and Aristotle wants to bring out the art-like aspects of nutrition by reconceiving it on the model of generation [...]. Nutrition is continually *remaking* organs that are in

²³⁹ Similarly, Ch 353 of the *Futûhât* explains that the three “souls ruling over the human beings” are the vegetal, appetitive and the wrathful soul. The vegetal soul (*al-nafs al-nabâtiyya*) is further explained to be seeking for nourishment “to restore thereby what is diminished from the body.” One of its “guards” (*waz’a*) is [a faculty called] digestion (*hadm*) which changes the form of the nourishment. Ibn al-‘Arabî says the name comes from “wrongdoing” (*ihtidâm*) as the process of digestion appears to be corruption but in fact is wholesomeness. “The digestive never ceases transferring the nourishment from form to form, and the retentive retains in its subsistence so that it may govern it in keeping with its knowledge and that over which it has been put to in charge” F III 237.4-15, SDG 343. Compare with n 39 above.

continual decay. [...] The key to this process of remaking is the vital heat, which continually produces blood through digestive cooking.”²⁴⁰

Furthermore, the *On Generation and Corruption* is one of the basic sources for the (pre-Socratic) division of elemental qualities according to their functions, namely, that hot and cold are active qualities, whereas dry and moist are passive. The active qualities can affect and the passive ones can be affected (*GC* I 6–7, 322 b–324 a and II 2, 329b–330a; see also *de Respir* XIV, 477 b 23). This fundamental distinction occurs throughout the works of both Jâbir and Ibn al-‘Arabî.

Due to the universality of its themes, *On Generation and Corruption* could be applied on virtually all fields of natural philosophy. This also explains the early and wide popularity of this late work of Aristotle, Gr. *Perì genéseôs kai pthorás*, Ar. *Kitâb al-kawn wa al-fasâd*, in the Islamic world—it being among the first translated works of Aristotle into Arabic, and, it is no wonder that this occurred precisely in the vast alchemical *Corpus Jâbirianum* with a now lost commentary (perhaps) by Alexander of Aphrodisias.²⁴¹

Finally, *On Generation and Corruption* is a work of Aristotle where he criticizes the Platonic Receptacle or Nurse of all becoming, *pandekhês (khôra) / tithênê*, and replaces it with his own idea of prime matter *prôton hylê* which seems to have an equal role in all generation as Plato’s “*tithênê*, Nurse of all becoming” (*GC* II 1, 329 a23). “Some matter is supposed to persist [*hypomenei*] even when one of the four elements changes into another.”²⁴² But if the elements are truly elementary, then what are we talking about as their underlying matter? The difficulty, as Sorabji notes, “in the case of the four elements is that it is hard to see what this matter is. [...] it is not obvious what more fundamental thing there is that could be first water and then air.

And, indeed, this is what Jâbir ibn Hayyân asks our philosophers: “is it possible for Water to be created from the same prime matter as the one from which Fire is created? If they say yes, they lapse into inconsistencies.”²⁴³

According to Happ instead of being ultimate units (as Empedocles says) each of the four elements is a compound of a substrate, *hylê*, plus two of the four contrary elemental qualities, heat, cold, wet and dry (See table on p.213). The inseparable principle of substrate (*hylê*) and the two contraries constitute only

²⁴⁰ Menn 2002, 121–22 *pépsis*, coction, and its opposite *apepsía* are fundamental physiological terms in the becoming of all chemical substances (*teleiôsis*) through heating. For some basic medical usages by Galen, see CGG 2008, 254–55. Galen also says “The men [like Hippocrates and Empedocles] had an ancient custom of calling ‘unrotten [*ásêpta*] what we call ‘unconcocted’”; quoted through Wolfsdorf, OSAP 2009, 59.

²⁴¹ van Ess III, 1994, 42–43. Jâbir refers to this Aristotelian work with clear headings “Aristotle says” (*qâla Aristu*) or “Alexander says” (*qâla Iskandar*). In his *k.al-tasrîf*, Jâbir gives an almost full translation of *GC* II 2–5 with an extensive commentary probably based on the mentioned lost commentary of Alexander; Kraus 1986, 322 and n 11

²⁴² Sorabji 1988, 11 referring to two important passages: *GC* I 3, 319 29–b 4; II.1, 329 a24–35.

²⁴³ *K. al-Ahjâr* IV.40:11, Haq 1994, 199

together the first physically discernible, potentially perceptible body (*dúnameis soma aisthêton* GC II 1, 329 a 33): what this formula says is that this compound is the first having *the capacity of being an elemental body*. These distinctions in the compound itself serve as an analysis of all becoming into its constituents and, therefore, it only shows that these factors are intellectually separable (*khôrista*) but not ontologically different entities in the compound. Hylê does not exist as such like the compound in which it is a constituent. Therefore, as the *elemental qualities* are ultimate and one cannot further discern a *hylê* underneath them, it is these qualities that serve as the modifying substratum for each compound element in their alterations and transmutations into each other. Thus, the very nature of each element is *inclined* (see: Johnson 2005, 143) towards its natural place (the periphery or the middle, fire up, earth down). *Materia prima* is therefore *not*, according to Happ, a separable substantial part which could be verified “outside” the elements.

Therefore Happ asks: is the Aristotelian prime matter only a logical being? Here he refers back to what we have dealt with in the first part of this study, namely, the Aristotelian *abstraction* (*afairesis*, see above I.B.5) where we stated: “the Aristotelian act of abstraction (*afairesis*) is an insight, an intuitive grasping of an essence, it is an ‘*a priori* Wesensschau.’²⁴⁴ It is thus also clear that this spontaneous act of knowing is always directed towards a given something, it *must be facing an object of knowledge*.” Thus, here, in asking about the being of prime matter, this means that that towards which the spontaneous act of knowing is directed is given *in* the elemental compounds as something “latent” (*dúnamei*), showing that the noetic component is anchored in being and must thereby be thought as such-and-such and not otherwise.²⁴⁵ Accordingly, *materia prima* is for Aristotle a way of being, namely, an inseparable possibility of being (above Ch. I B.4 and Happ, 1971, 305). Therefore, to answer the above question of Jâbir: “is it possible for Water to be created from the same prime matter as the one from which Fire is created?” Happ answers: “No; for matter of both elements is the same, whereas the elementary qualities are different.”

According to Happ, to think of *hylê* as something substantial, wax- or paste-like “stuff” underlying the elemental qualities, is *not* what Aristotle means with his *First matter* (*prôtê hylê*), nor did he mean mere extension (*diastêma*).²⁴⁶ According to Sorabji, what Aristotle had in mind as prime matter denotes to a “thought experiment. One is to take a particular body, say, this table, and in one’s thoughts strip away its properties in layers. [...] There is no suggestion that the first subject could ever exist without having

²⁴⁴ Happ 1971, 587, in the same vein Happ also says that the “Aristotelian *epagoge* is not the modern ‘induction’ ..., instead, it means recognizing the universal in a [given] specific case, which already presupposes an *a priori* knowing of this universal. (“...sondern die Erkenntnis des Allgemeinen am Einzelfall, welche ein apriorisches Wissen um dieses Allgemeine bereits voraussetzt”). Ibid, 588

²⁴⁵ Happ 1971, 303-04

²⁴⁶ Like his commentator Simplicius, see Sorabji 1988, 7-22

properties.”²⁴⁷ However, when everything has been stripped away, Happ reaches “*that which has the capacity (dúnamis) to be an elemental body*” in the sublunar world of generation and corruption.²⁴⁸ Thus, he is not talking in terms of the categories; instead, what we have here is pure potency, *dúnamis*, as the opposite of completed actuality, *energeia*. This capacity or latency is *not materially fixed*, as each form requires a different matter. Therefore, we now learn: matter, *hylê*, belongs to relational terms (*tôn prós ti hê hylê*; *Phys* II 2, 194 b9. In a similar way Ibn al-‘Arabí emphasizes also the relational character of *hayûlâ ‘l-kullî* to each form receipted (F III 560.32). In the above *Physics* passage Aristotle further says that different forms require different matter (*állô gàr eidei állê hylê*) which can be confusing when thinking of prime matter as substrate, but causes no wonder if seen as statement of concrete entities. Certainly each thing has both a form and a matter of its own.

The above answer by Happ would hardly satisfy Jâbir, who of course is not discussing here with Aristotle but rather with a long Neo-Platonically tainted commentary-tradition of Aristotle where the original position has gone through substantial changes. In any case, Jâbir, according to Haq, cannot see the point of “those hellenized philosophers [like the Sâbians] who derive their ideas largely, though not exclusively, from Aristotle.”²⁴⁹

First Jâbir states: “People hold diverse views concerning these [cosmological] issues. Among them are those who give due consideration to the Balances and proceed with the assumption that the principle of everything is the natures.” Thus, as Kraus notes: “the whole of Jâbirean science goes back to the theory of elemental qualities: how they are situated and how they are combined.”²⁵⁰ Here these elemental qualities are called natures [*tabâ’i*, we will come back to these basic terms].

But there are other “thinkers who postulate a unique and eternal prime matter, and they explain the constitution of the entire natural world as having come into being through a temporal cosmological process. They “say that in the natural world one thing was created before another.” (*Ahjar* 38:14)

On the whole, his critique is two-fold. First: he disagrees with those who think of the cosmological process as a temporal development where one stage is overcome by another.²⁵¹ “So a group of Sâbians

²⁴⁷ Sorabji 1988, 5

²⁴⁸ Happ 1971, 777-78 *Italics mine*

²⁴⁹ Haq 1995, 245

²⁵⁰ Kraus 1986, 151

²⁵¹ Herman of Carinthia (present Slovenia) was an important figure in the early blossoming of Medieval Latin natural philosophy. I can only refer to him occasionally without going to any detail as a highly relevant later counterpart in the Latin world for these earlier developments in the Arab world. With his knowledge of Arabic he was an important mediator between the Arab and Latin world, paving the way in the 12th century to “understanding physics in the fully Aristotelian sense.” Hermann shared the above anti-developmental idea of creation here put forward by Jâbir (though not knowing anything of him). For him, “the elemental seeds do not appear before body itself, and species do not exist outside ‘informed’ or actual individuals. Therefore, in the same instant that the principles are created, there appears the fully-formed and substantial universe in its entirety—the first coming-together of form and matter.” Burnett 1982, 11

and their followers believe that some fundamental building blocks of the natural world have, over others, a priority in existence.” And, according to Jâbir, they claim that this priority “is not with regard to arrangement or organization, rather it is a temporal and qualitative priority.” [...] They say “that the first created thing in matter is the three dimensions (*al-‘aqdâr ath-thalâtha*)—length, breadth and depth—whence matter became three-dimensional primitive body (*jism^{an} sadhij^{an}*). Next [they claim], the four qualities (*kaifiyyat*)—hot, cold, moist and dry—were created in it, and from this arose the natures of things and the elements of creation (*arkân al-khâliqa*).” (*Ahjâr* IV 38:15–39:4)

This critique is, of course, quite understandable in a Muslim environment: the theme of natural causality raises the question of divine causality: if God is the sovereign creator of the worlds, natural causes become redundant. Nevertheless, it was precisely the “idea that God’s action happens via intermediaries, or *causae secundae* [that] was to become a central theme amongst the ‘Hellenising’ philosophers such as al-Fârâbî and Avicenna.”²⁵² Here it is interesting to note that Jâbir takes no recourse to the Qur’ân, he does not accuse these thinkers on scriptural basis; instead, for him the opposed arguments do not simply make any sense (*ghairi ma’qûlât*).

According to Jâbir all these supposed developmental stages are unknowable and yet his opponents even explain the existence of the world by such stages, whatever they may be! (Ibid.) Instead of temporal succession, for Jâbir the question is always of ontological hierarchies where all levels of reality exist together in a hierarchy of ontological plurality, created by a single act of God (*daf’at^{an} wahidat^{an}*).²⁵³ This does not mean that the world is static, instead, as with the infinite possibilities of letters combining into ever new meaningful lexical combinations, so do the four natures of Jâbir have infinite combinatory possibilities as they are constantly transformed one into the other.

Secondly, Jâbir criticizes the first stage of creation said to be *tîna*, clay, one of the traditional Islamic terms for matter. In one place Jâbir calls the four elements as “clay, matter and Hylê of this world” (*tînat al-‘âlam wa mâddahu wa hayûlâhu*).²⁵⁴ Here Jâbir is troubled by the idea of an indistructable (*lam tazal*), abstract, imperceptible [like in GC II 5, 332 a35], unknowable and attributeless prime matter”.²⁵⁵ And who wouldn’t! After all, here we are discussing a pre-categorical “I do not know what,” to paraphrase once again the words of John Locke!

²⁵² Travaglia 1999, 12

²⁵³ Haq 1995, 245 According to Jâbir the difference between artificial creation (i.e. alchemical reproducing) and divine creation is in that on the latter the natures are united with substance in one go, in one instant, whereas in the former man is able to bring the natures together with substance only gradually, step by step (*daf’ât*). See ibid.208.

²⁵⁴ In a note Kraus points out that the *eternalists* (*dahrî*), who denied the existence of God or prophecy, considered matter, *tîna*, as eternal. He also quotes al-Maqdisî: “Substance (*jawhar*) is called *tîna*, *mâdda*, *hayûla*, atom (*juz’*), ‘*unsur and stoikheion*.” Kraus 1986, 171 n.1

²⁵⁵ Haq 1995, 245 See above I.B. 4, pp.23–24. The prime Aristotelian locus is *Meta* VII.3, 1029 a20-26: “By matter (*hylê*) I mean that which in itself is neither a particular thing nor a quantity nor designated by any of the categories which define

It seems Jâbir does not go for the thought experiment suggested above by Sorabji: in discussing matter for Jâbir the subject is not logical; instead, it must be material, no matter how subtle it may be.

The picture of this [entity in its first stage], you say, exists only in the imagination, and it is impossible to visualize it as a defined entity. The second stage arrives, you say, when the three dimensions come to pass in this *tîna* whence it becomes a body. This body, [you claim], is not predicated of any of [the four natures], hot, old, moist and dry, nor is it predicated of any colour, taste, smell, or of motion or rest. For, [according to you], all these are qualities, and at this stage qualities do not come to pass in it.

Now all this is nonsense! (*wa hadhâ shai'ûn ghairi ma'qûl*)²⁵⁶

And as if to answer directly to Happ (above p 197) according to whom “the matter [in water and fire] is the same, whereas the elementary qualities are different.”

If they say, Jâbir wites, repeating, as I see it, Happ’s argument:

We see water undergoing transformation and thus turning into fire. [In this process], the substance which was the carrier first of the qualities and characteristics of Water is the carrier now of the qualities and characteristics of Fire. Thus whatever is essentially true of the former is essentially true also of the latter: it is only the accidents of the substance which have changed. Therefore, the eternal prime matter is one and the same—it is carrier of the qualities and dispositions of Water if they come to pass in it, and those of Fire if these latter come to pass in it.

Then in reply we say:

Water does not transform in a single stroke into Fire. Rather it transforms first into vapours and then becomes Air. Next, Air undergoes transformation and, [finally], turns into Fire. If someone says that Water transforms, first, into Air and, then, transforms into Fire, he is indeed speaking of transformation [process] which makes [perfect] sense. [...] Without the intermediary transformations that lie between Water and Fire, this makes no sense! [...]

Here Jâbir somehow loses the track, and one does not quite know with whom is he arguing. Maybe the Sâbians, but certainly not Aristotle, as the latter expressly holds that elements with no quality in common, as here Water and Fire, change only slowly into one another and need first an intermediary through which this change can be completed. Thus Water, which is cold and moist, has first to change into Air, which is hot and moist, sharing the element moist with water and the active quality of hot with

being. For there is something of which each of these is predicated, and its being is different from that of the predicates. For the rest are predicated of substance, and substance of matter, so that the ultimate substrate [i.e. matter] is in itself neither a particular thing, nor a quantity nor anything else.”

²⁵⁶ *K.al-Ahjar* IV.39:9-40:1, Haq 1995 157-58

fire. And only then can Air change further into Fire, with their shared quality of heat (GC II 3; also GC II 10, quoted above pp180 and 194).

Jâbir continues by stating that if *hayûla* is held to be a unique entity, these people will have to postulate as many *hayûlâs* as there are elements. They, (presumably the Sâbians), demonstrate the creation of four eternally indestructible elements which possess different potentialities. But, then, this refutes their affirmation that the First Element [*hylê*] is unique and does not admit of diversity.

Finally, according to Jâbir,

A majority of the philosophers believes that the four natures, which are the fundamental principle of creation and are the elements of the things (I mean [the elements of the primary bodies] Fire, Air, Water and Earth), potentially exist in one another. Thus those people lapse in inconsistencies who say that the four natures exist in something other than themselves, and that they exist in something other than what arises out of them.

Thus here we see the target of Jâbir: an abstract notion of the four natures apparently held by the Sâbians. For Jâbir these four natures exist either potentially in one another, a notion he does not develop further, or they are found in the elements which they constitute—and to this latter we have referred already as his position on intrinsic qualities.²⁵⁷

But this means that for him these natures have, at least in some sense of the word, a concrete existence.²⁵⁸ Earlier we have noted with Happ how close Aristotle might be at times to the notions of his pupil Strato who understood Warm and Cold as corporeals, or even to the doctrines of Stoics for whom all qualities are treated as corporeals (above p.184). In the next chapter we will see that here we have the root of the difference between elemental theory of Aristotle and that of Jâbir.

Above we once again came across the idea of latency as fundamental feature of *hylê*. Ibn al-‘Arabî uses often this distinction between (latent) intellectually existing and actually existing being and, indeed, one typical case of example for him is *nature* which has only intellectual existence (*wujûd ‘aqlî*) but not entified/ontic existence (*wujûd ‘aynî*). Thus “nature” is an intelligible (*maqûl*) and in that sense separable, but not separable in entity. (F IV 150.8–10) There is no such “thing” or entity as nature, just as there is no such “thing” as *hylê*. Instead, nature or *hylê* are only intellectually discernible

²⁵⁷ Through *K.al-Khawass*, quoted on p 185

²⁵⁸ Al-Kindî has an essay “*Risâla al-Kindî fî annahu tûjadu jawâhir lâ ajsâm*”, on that there are substances without bodies, which would be good reading here, though not consulted. For references, see Travaglia 1999, App.#9

“somethings,” but this does not of course implicate their being mere human ideas: they are “there,” but not for groping, except through their effects in what becomes manifest through Nature or Matter.

Thus Nature is the Verified World of the Unseen (*‘alam al-ghayb al-muhaqqaq* F III 397.6). In Nature we see traces and manifestations of the unseen forms: the infinite latent possibilities of Being (*wujûd*) are disclosed through Nature as the cosmos. Thus Nature is fundamentally a non-entified relational realm realizing the forms of the immutable (*thubût*, fixed) Reality into the diversity of forms in temporal existence. Therefore, for Ibn al-‘Arabî the divine names, defined precisely as relations (see above p 273 and 275–76), are the keys to this unseen (ibid. III 397.8). Furthermore, according to Ibn al-‘Arabî, “Nature is more worthy to be attributed to the Real than anything else.”

In fact, he seems to divide even Nature into two: the Mother and the daughter, where the Mother refers to a principle, “the highest and greatest mother” (*al-ummu ’l-‘aliya tu ’l-kubrâ*), whereas the daughter would be equal to our “mother nature.” As the highest receptive principle Nature is all-inclusive, receiving both active and passive qualities (*‘umûmu ’l-hukmu ’l-tabî’a* F IV 150.17). Thus, the Real and Nature, God and cosmos, make a kind of couple, and all of creation, all that is, *al-kawn*, is said in two ways [Aristotle: *Physis* is spoken in two ways (*dikhôs*) *Phys* II 1, 193 b18–20, see above p131], divided by the One Real into two “modes” (*qismayin* F IV 150.5), the Absolute, or Unmixed Real (*al-haqqu ’l-sirf*) and the Absolute, or Unmixed Nature (*tabî’atu ’l-sirf*) separated by an intermediary isthmus (*barzakh*, ibid. line 6) which is neither Him nor either one of the of the two “modes” mentioned.

Indeed, when Ibn al-‘Arabî discusses Nature as principle he seems to have in mind something like Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, referring to *tables of opposites* or two “columns”, “series” (*systoikhia*, *Met* I 5, 986 a 23), or *Selection of Contraries* (*eklogê tôn enantiôn*, *Met* IV.2, 1004 a 3) as they were discussed in the tradition of the Academy.²⁵⁹ Aristotle is referring to a work or maybe a writing called *Peri enantiôn* now lost where these columns of contraries were treated. In *Meta* IV 2 he explains: “Nearly everyone agrees that substance and existing things are composed of contraries—some as Odd and Even [the Pythagoreans], some as Hot and Cold [Parmenides], some as Limit and Unlimited [the Academy of Plato], some as Love and Strife [Empedocles] [...]. It is clear, then [...] that it pertains to a single science to study Being *qua* Being; for all things are either contraries or derived from contraries, and the first principles of the contraries are Unity [*tò hen*] and Plurality [*plêthos*]” (1004 b30– a5). Thus, Aristotle refers to a long line of philosophers who have held a doctrine of contraries, fundamental in the study of Being *qua* Being, and into which he brings now his own pair of contraries, that of Unity and Plurality, the latter standing further for *sterêsis*, “privation”, or lack and “yearning” for a form, and thus *dúnamis*, “possibility”, “force” and “hylê.”

²⁵⁹ For other references see above I.B.6, p 42

Ibn al-‘Arabí refers to Reality on the whole as the One/Many (*al-wâhid al-kathîr*): “there is nothing in existence but the One/Many” (F III 420.15, SPK 140). In His relations with the worlds God is Many and described as such through the divine names. But all these names refer to the One Essence, God. Thus, taken together these two perspectives, these two contraries are the One/Many.

Indeed, Ibn al-‘Arabí says: “like Allah is the name that receives all names, so is universal *hylê* receptive for all forms” (*al-hâyûlâ al-kull qâbilatun li-kulli sawâr* F III 195 26; III 560.32). It seems this receptivity to all forms is that which makes the material principle universal for Ibn al-‘Arabí in contrast to “artisanial *hylê*” (*al-hayûlâ al-sanâ’ya*), like wood of carpenter which is receptive to all wooden forms but not for mantles, shirts or pants. Similarly, each element is receptive for specific forms. And the subtler (*altâf*) the matter is the more receptive it also is. And subtlety is something understood but not witnessed. Therefore, God is named both *the Subtle* (*al-latîf*), *the Experienced* (*al-khabîr*), as He is not witnessed and yet understood as the support of each thing (F I 285.11–22).

When we soon come to the reception of these elemental theories in the Islamic world we will particularly delve into qualitative relations of the natural elements. Sachiko Murata (1992), in her fine study on Ibn al-‘Arabí and his followers writes: “examination of the elements helps explain how heavenly qualities become manifest in different degrees within the earth. The earth as a quality represents the quality furthest from heaven, while fire represents those earthly qualities that are closest to the heavenly qualities. Hence the four elements represent four qualitative degrees of earthly existence, degrees that ascend from the lowest to the highest, the densest to the subtlest, the darkest to the brightest, and so on.”²⁶⁰ She also notes that “this qualitative understanding of the elements is found throughout Islamic texts.” Thereto I would like to add that it is my conviction that one of the major sources for this “qualitative understanding of the elements” is to be found in the works of Jâbir ibn Hayyân.

III.2.4. The lowly Mothers and the high Fathers

In the sublunar world there are four pillars (arkân). These are the mothers through whom the things that are borne – the animals, plants, and minerals – subsist.
Ikhwân al-Safâ’, R II 466

In his article on Aristotle’s “First Matter” Arthur Hayman calls Aristotle a “metaphysical pluralist”: “Though there are passages in which Aristotle by describing “first matter” as “substratum,” (*Phys* I 9,

²⁶⁰ Murata 1992, 136

192 a 31–32) “receptacle,” (GC I 3, 320 a 2–3) even “substance” (*Met* VIII 1, 1042 a 24–b 8) seems to suggest that it is a substance apart from its potentiality, his final view appears to be contained in a passage in *Metaphysics* VII.3 in which he states: ‘by ‘first matter’ I mean that which is neither a particular thing, nor a certain quantity, nor assigned to any other category by which being is determined.’ ‘First matter,’ for Aristotle, possesses none of the characteristics of substance.”²⁶¹

According to Hayman, unlike his commentators, Aristotle saw no need to harmonize his views. Instead, he “envisaged at least two kinds of metaphysical explanations – one according to categories (or [...] according to substance), the other according to potentiality and actuality.”²⁶² Thus, Aristotle says “Our doctrine is that there is a [first] matter..., but it has no separate existence.” (GC II 1, 329 a24–26)

At the end of our previous chapter we saw that with Ibn al-‘Arabí one comes across a similar “metaphysical plurality.” Ibn al-‘Arabí is perhaps best known for a doctrine named by his followers as “Oneness of Being” or “Unity of Existence” (*wahdat al-wujûd*), a term he never uses himself though making frequently statements approximating it. Chittick writes: “we cannot claim that ‘Oneness of Being’ is a sufficient description of his ontology, since he affirms the ‘manyness of reality’ with equal vigor. Hence we find that he often refers to *wujûd* in its fullness as the One/Many (*al-wâhid al-kathîr*).”²⁶³ This “metaphysical plurality” is prominent when we enter cosmological questions of causality and what is called in Islamic thought the *muwalladât*, “things to which birth has been given”, that is, the compound (*murakkabât*) things of the three kingdoms (*ajnâs al-thalâta*) of sublunar world, *animals, plants and minerals*.²⁶⁴ In the above quotation from the *Rasâ’il* the “mothers” of these born things are the four pillars (*arkân*) or the four elements, which Ibn al-‘Arabí calls the “low mothers” (*al-ummahât al-sufliyya*), contrasting them with the “high fathers” (*al-âbâ’ al-ulwiyya*) (the heading of Ch.11 in the *Futûhât*²⁶⁵), meaning the seven heavens. This family metaphor known also from Plato’s *Timaeus* (50 D) is further qualified as consisting of passive and active principles, the mothers receiving effects and the fathers exercising effects. On the whole, here we are on the common ground of

²⁶¹ Hayman 1965, 394

²⁶² Ibid, 390, where Hayman makes a note (27) on yet a third sense of ‘being’ in Aristotle, namely ‘being’ as truth, a sense not relevant to the subject of Hayman’s paper. As we know, Heidegger noted the same: “Beings are said and addressed sometimes in the mode of categories and sometimes in that of *dúnamis—enérgeia*, thus in a dual way, not in a single and simple way. What is the origin of this distinction? [...]. Aristotle offers no explanation or reason for this, neither here [*Met* IX.1 1045 b 32–35] nor elsewhere.” And he asked: “How does Aristotle comprehend the unity of being as manifold [*pollakhôs*]?” GA 33, §25

²⁶³ Chittick 1994, 15

²⁶⁴ Also in the Latin tradition, like in Hermann of Carinthia: *primary / secondary generation*; Burnett 1982, pp 11–12 and 260. The general idea was that we know how things given birth come about, but there were dialecticians who claimed for example that perceptions are given birth in that we, for example, open our eyes, even though we do not know how the perception actually comes about. van Ess 1997 Vol.II, 136; Vol.IV.496–89. SDG 303–04

²⁶⁵ See above n.366. For the Harranian origins of astral fathers and elemental mothers, see n 127. For Hermann a similar parental image of all generation and corruption is given as marriage of Sun and Moon (*De Essentiis* 76 vF), two principles like mother and father, lower and higher. He also quotes from the *Tabula Smaragdina* of ps. Apollonios a sentence referring to the already quoted (above pp.159–60, see n 391) sentence on “as above so below” (65 vC), see commentary in Burnett 1982, 279.

Aristotelian or generally Hellenic theories of natural philosophy. These themes are amply discussed by Ibn al-‘Arabí throughout his work and very much in the same vein as they are discussed by Jâbir ibn Hayyân. And, as we already noted (above p. 198) with Travaglia: the “idea that God’s action happens via intermediaries, or *causae secundae* was to become a central theme amongst the ‘Hellenising’ philosophers such as al-Fârâbî and Avicenna.”

However, causal explanation is merely one half of the truth, which could perhaps be called in the above terms of Hayman discussing Aristotle’s “explanations according to categories” or “according to substance:” like the four elements combining into more complex entities from minerals to plants and animals; this coming from that. According to Hayman, the other “half” in Aristotelian explanations would be according to potentiality and actuality, the possible and the real.

Seen in terms of the first half, the whole cosmos is filled with “occasions” where one thing seems to lead to another. With such occasions the human understanding as if finds a “rope” or “cord” (*sabab* pl.*asbâb*) as that “by which one thing is connected to another,” and, therefore, a means to an end, a *cause*. But, as Travaglia above notes, these causes were seen in the Islamic world as “intermediaries or *causae secundae*.” These “cords” leading from one thing to another are secondary or apparent causes with respect to the real or fundamental cause, known as the Causer of Secondary Causes (*musabbib al-asbâb*). Here we are talking in terms of the second Aristotelian” half, namely, in terms of being, in terms of potentiality and actuality, i.e. whether something is or is not. “God established (*wad’a*) the secondary causes (*al-asbâb*) and made them like veils (*hijâb*)” (F III 416.19, SPK 45). By calling them veils, Ibn al-‘Arabí exposes their mediary nature: behind a veil there is always something. Through secondary causes we can come to know their “veiled” Causer, their true being, the fact that all these caused things actually are “there,” they exist and one can find (*wajada/wujûd*) them. Things that are at hand irrespective of all possible previous connections, incidents or effects that could be “blamed” for their being here now (“responsibility” being the basic idea of Greek *aitia*, most often translated as cause).²⁶⁶ In other words, as Ibn al-‘Arabí says elsewhere: these veils [of secondary causes] must be lifted to hear the divine word *Be!* (*kun*). This hearing of existence means listening to being, listening to the way of “being-the-there”, in short, and in terms of Aristotle’s *de Anima*: the human capacity to receive (*DA* III 4, 429 a21-22). Mind in the passive sense is analogical to *hylê*, which is potentially all individuals; similarly mind is passive because it becomes all things (*pánta gínesthai*, 430 a15).

We will come closer to this topic in our last chapter on the encounter of a mystic and a philosopher, but here we can anticipate what is expounded later by saying that in defining the human *psyche*, the human soul, as the essence of human being and, further, that this essence lies in its capacity to receive (*óti*

²⁶⁶ Johnson, 2005, 40

dunatón), Aristotle is speaking of the human being as an essential opening, “the place of forms” (*tópon eidôn*, DA III 4, 429 a28). This “place” is a vessel (*qâbil*) or an opening (*futûh*), in terms of Ibn al-‘Arabí, a receptacle and apperture, “being the open” for the world to appear, *l’overture*, as Jean Beaufret interpreted the Heideggerian *Dasein*.²⁶⁷ Thus, commenting on Aristotle’s DA III 4 and the human being as possibility, Heidegger writes: “every being that is there as a being requires a fundamental illumination in order to be there” (*bedarf jedes Da-seiende als Seiendes einer grundsätzlichen Erhellung, um da zu sein*, GA 18, 201/135). This is what the *Meccan Illuminations* (*Futûhât al-Makkiyya*) is all about. Thus, here one can perhaps understand why such diverse thinkers as Aristotle, Ibn al-‘Arabí and Martin Heidegger are treated in this study together. This is why Ibn al-‘Arabí exhorts his reader in Aristotelian terms to be the *prime matter*, *hayûlâ*, that is, to be receptive through and through. Similarly, that is why Aristotle says that “perception is a form of being acted upon” (*tò gàr aisthánesthai páskhein ti estín*, DA II.9, 424 a1), or that thinking is a form of being acted upon (*tò noeîn páskhein tí estin*, DA III.4, 429 a25). Ibn al-‘Arabí says “I have opened (*fatahtu*) for you a door to true knowledge (*ma’ârifa*) not attained by reflection (*fikr*), though rational faculties can attain to its acceptance [...]: “The rational faculty will accept what is given to it by self-disclosure (*tajallî*)²⁶⁸ and it will know that what has come is outside its own power in respect of its reflection and that its reflection can never give that to it.[...] Its acceptance is nobler than its reflection (*qubûlu^{hu} ashraf min fikra^{hu}*) (F I 305.21-24, SPK 238). And therefore: possibility preceeds actuality!

Here Ibn al-‘Arabí seems to be countering Aristotle and anticipating Heidegger for whom the “human being as living into finite possibility, and as aware of its own possibility, precedes actuality in the order of understanding,” as Catriona Hanley puts it. For Aristotle, on the contrary, “the eternal and fully actual [*aei ón*] is primary in establishing the meaning of being, and the way that human being understands his or her own being. Eternity is the basis of Aristotle’s ontology and his ethics: being is eternal,” as Hanley summarises.²⁶⁹ Yet another possible way of contrasting these thinkers could be through the notion of rest (*êremia*) as the perspective through which Aristotle looks at the movement of life whereas Heidegger and Ibn al-‘Arabí look at it from the perspective of restlessness, a “Bergsonian *élan vital* and flowing stream,” a process, or flux, the happening of life, a temporal unfolding etc.²⁷⁰ But all this we have discussed already in the second part of our study.

²⁶⁷ Quoted through Sheehan 2001 in HIM, p 8

²⁶⁸ *Tajallî*: theophany, God’s Self-Manifestation, to appear in glory. Chittick says Ibn al-‘Arabí “employs the term to mean that God shows Himself to the universe inasmuch as *wujûd* is present in all things [...]. Everything other than God is God’s self-disclosure.” He also says: “self-disclosure is the name of the ‘situation as it is in itself’ (*al-‘amr ‘alâ mâ huwa ‘alayhi fî nafsihi*), the actual situation of the creatures in *wujûd*.” SDG 52 Cf. Elmore 1999, 328-30 and n.18. The Qur’anic locus for this term *tajallî* is Q 7:143: “When the Lord [of Moses] revealed (His) glory to the mountain He made it crumble to the dust...”

²⁶⁹ Hanley 2000, 163

²⁷⁰ van Buren 1994, 282

In terms of Ibn al-‘Arabí, reasoning and understanding of the cosmos in causal connections comes to understand that everything is “not He”, that is, through reason we see what is meant with God’s “transcendence”, *tanzîh*. In witnessing the plurality or manyness of existence we simultaneously realize that this is not God, God as the absolute other resembling no other thing (*shay lâ kal-ashyâ*).²⁷¹

According to Ibn al-‘Arabí every created thing has *two faces* – face being an important Qur’ânic term (Q 2:115) used also as a synonym for *dhât* (essence) and *haqîqa* (reality). This is the outer appearance, *eidos* and *morphê* listed above (p.120) as the “fifth being-character of Aristotle.” According to Ibn al-‘Arabí every created thing looks with one face at the occasions [*sabab*, “causes,” “Ursache”], and with the other it looks at the Real, as Chittick formulates (SDG 135). The first face would be the face of natural philosophy looking for reasons and causes for the existent things.

These terms may also have their origin in Ibn Sînâ whose famous sentence, “Nothing proceeds from the One but one,” Ibn al-‘Arabí has just refuted (F I 260.5) and turns now to his own term *wajh al-khâss* (F I 260.6 see SDG n17 on p.403), a specific face “that every existent thing has from its creator.” (F I 260.6) However, the word face is used in this sense also by Ibn Sîna, a sense suggested to be of Isma’îlî (De Smet 2001) origin. Writing on the Soul Ibn Sîna says (*K. al-Nagât*, tr. Rahman 32–33, quoted through D’Ancona 2008, 55):

“It is as if our soul has two faces: one turned towards body, and it must not be influenced by any requirements of the bodily nature; and the other turned towards the higher principles, and it must be ready to receive from what is there in the higher plane and to be influenced by it.”

In the broader perspective of Ibn al-‘Arabí which includes all created things, receptivity with both “faces,” there are no intermediaries between God and the thing. This second face Ibn al-‘Arabí calls the “specific face” (*al-wajh al-khâss*), “the very essence and reality of a thing, the face of *wujûd* within it that never perishes, precisely because it is *wujûd*” (SDG 137) [i.e. being / existence / finding]. Here we could lift up the fundamental phenomenological phrase of Ibn al-Arabí quoted above in n.268: from the viewpoint of this specific face what it sees is *al-‘amru ‘alâ mâ huwa ‘alayhi fî nafsîhi*, that is, a *phenomenon* as it announces itself, the “situation as it is in itself:” a “Gift”, a “favour” (*Gunst*²⁷²), pure and simple.

However, in the above terms of Arthur Hayman on Aristotle this aspect would be a metaphysical account of potentiality and actuality of being. This “specific face” stands for the unity of existence, and, therefore, in terms of theology for what is called *tashbîh*, similarity and analogy: everything in the cosmos signifies and denotes to God, there is nothing but *wujûd*. The One/Many. If through causal

²⁷¹ For the theological formula, see van Ess 1997 Vol.IV, pp.136. In the words of the Qur’ân (Q 42:11): “*Laysa ka-mithli^{hi} shay^{un}*, Nothing is as his likeness.”

²⁷² See n 483 for references in Heidegger, see Caputo 1986, 164. The theme of *Gift* was further developed by Jacques Derrida in his reflections on *Given Time* (*Donner le temps* 1991) and *The Gift of Death* (*Donner la mort* 1992).

connections we come to understand God as the absolutely incomparable other, the transcendent, *al-tanzîh*, then here, in terms of pure existence and its possibility, all we have is likeness and similarity, *al-tashbîh*, the all-encompassing one. Through this point of view all secondary causes become futile and theories based on this point of view are best known as the *occasionalism* of Ash'arite theologians.²⁷³ In Ibn al-'Arabî this is the doctrine of "renewal of creation at each instant" (*tajdîd al-khalq fî 'l-ânât*).²⁷⁴ Here we have a clear example of the previously mentioned perspective of restlessness, a "perpetual transformation" in contrast to Aristotelian rest, *êremia*.²⁷⁵ Each instant, each moment (*ân*) is witnessed as *wujûd*, the situation as it is in itself, not only in the cosmos of the theologians but in the very source of witnessing itself: "Allah manifests himself in every breath" (*Inn 'Allâhi yatajallî fî kulli nafas*^{i n 276}) and the manifestation never repeats itself. If the transcendent point of incomparability is captured in the Qur'anic "Nothing is as his likeness," then the "immanent" point of similarity is captured in the continuation of this Qur'anic passage: "He is the Hearing the Seeing" (Q 42:11).

Let us now take a new look at natural genesis, to "all things given birth," the *muwalladât*. According to Chittick "it is well known that few if any sacred texts pay as much attention as the Koran to natural phenomena, which the Koran calls the 'signs' (*âyat*) of God. Add to these texts the indigenous knowledge of the Arabs and the Greek and Persian legacies that were very early taken over by the Muslims, and one begins to have an idea of the rich sources of Islamic cosmology" (SPK 13).

On secondary causes Ibn al-'Arabî writes (F II 414.1-4, SPK 45):

He [God] sent down the rain, so it fell. People tilled the earth and sowed the grain, and the sun spread its rays. The grain sprouted and was harvested, milled, made into dough, chewed with teeth, swallowed, and digested by the stomach. Then the liver took over and made it into blood. Then it was sent through the veins and divided among the parts of the body. Then a vapour (*bukhâr*) rose up from it, and it became the life of the body for the sake of the soul. These are the "mothers" of secondary causes, along with the movement of the spheres, the travelling of the planets, the shining of (astral invisible) rays (*al-shu'â'ât*)²⁷⁷ [line 5] on beams of (visible) light thereby reaching down, God willing, to the [lowest] nadîr of the Universal Soul empowered by the Intellect (*wa-lqâ' al-shuâ'â't 'alâ matârikh al-anwâr ma 'l-nadîri 'l-nafs al-kulliyya bi-idhni 'llâh ma 'imdâdu 'l-'aql*).

²⁷³ van Ess 1997, Vol.IV, pp.459 and n.133; 474-76

²⁷⁴ Here van Ess (Ibid n133) refers to SPK 18: the word *ân* pl. *ânât* means an indivisible moment. All things change constantly, because "Each day He (God) is upon some task" Q 55:29

²⁷⁵ "Perpetual transformation" as Sells 1994, p.89 calls Ibn al-'Arabî's theory.

²⁷⁶ Fus126/155, see also Sells 1994, 106-07

²⁷⁷ Here one can almost for certain read a trace of al-Kindî's *Risâla fî shu'â'ât*, Epistle on the Rays, studied by Travaglia 1999. See her App. #24. In this study al-Kindî treats the astral basis of astrology, that is, the influence of cosmic rays in sublunar world as an interpretative model of explaining natural phenomena. Al-Kindî was influenced by Iamblichus and Proclus from the Greek world, the Hermetic astrology of the Sâbeans from Harran and the Ikhwân al-Safâ' as Travaglia says, 1999, 17-18. This last source is not probable for al-Kindî who lived before the *Rasâ'il* were composed. However, depending on the timing of Jâbir, he could well have been one influential source. Al-Kindî was commented and criticized in Andalusia both by 11th century Ibn Hazm (d.1064) and Ibn Rushd, both through whom Ibn al-'Arabî could come to his writings. We know that Ibn al-'Arabî wrote a summary of Ibn Hazm's *Ibtâl al-Qiyâs* (above n.44). Elmore 1999, pp. 4 n6 and 41 n153

Here the last line (5), left untranslated by Chittick, is complicated and my translation is barely tentative, but the passage is important in the sense that here Ibn al-‘Arabí really widens the scope of secondary causes to include all causal connections in nature, both visible and invisible. Here the scope of perspective is the whole universe from its highest spheres (the zenith) all the way down to its most elemental spheres of the Universal Soul as the opposite and receptive pole of zenith, the *Nadir*. All this, starting from rainwater and ending up to highest intellectual spheres belongs, according to Ibn al-‘Arabí, to the realm of secondary causes. Thus, on the one hand, all of nature, all that is (*al-kawn* as other than God) is a veil waiting to be lifted; a matrix of secondary causes covering the ultimate “Engenderer of Secondary Causes” (*mukawwin al-asbâb*, Ibid.line 7). Veils covering the face.

However, this connection between the zenith and the nadir of the universe could explain another passage from the *Futûhât* in which the Shaikh explains the “fifth element,” which is outside or beyond the “four mothers”/natures. Accordingly, there is a “substantial” (*al-jawharîyya*) correspondence between *aither* and *al-jawhar hayûlânî*, to use the expression of *Fusûs* (*Fus* 144 and 200); a correspondence between the revolving high and aerial, ethereal (*‘ulwîyah*, above the sublunar world) fifth element and the (circular and continuous) change in the underneath and lowly (*sufîyah*) terrestrial natures of water and dust. (F I 92 6–10). Thus the fifth element would explain both the eternal revolving of the spheres and the ongoing change of natural elements from one to another. This is what Aristotle thought also, see page 188 above. (Compare also Johnson’s formulation of Aristotle’s fifth element on p. 221–22 and Jâbir’s on same page: “all the constituents of all things follow a circular pattern of change.” See also n80 above)

To explain: here we would meet the elemental rays of al-Kindi from below corresponding to astral rays of the stars from above. In al-Kindî’s theory of rays the idea of reciprocity is universal, covering the heavenly and terrestrial bodies. The highest astral spheres with their radiation and the lowest elemental qualities radiating in their compounds are mutually affecting and causing action in one another through invisible rays. The complexity of this reciprocity goes way beyond any human calculations: thus, knowing a thing “means knowing all the elements, forces and conditions which have produced it [...]”. The truth of a thing is its very cause” as Travaglia writes (pp.25, 33). The word truth has here an ontological meaning. To find out all pertinent conditions of any single occurrence in the universe from all eternity up to now is beyond all calculations, whereas the actual occurrence itself is a singular “ereignis,” as Heidegger would say, an appropriation of truth. This line of thought is developed by Michael Sells in his study on *Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Polished Mirror*, where he calls this occurrence the **Meaning Event: realization is an event**. Similarly, “the term “Dasein”, being-there, means that being

is always *hic et nunc*.²⁷⁸ Thus, to put the two faces Ibn al-‘Arabí discusses in brief form we could now say that strictly speaking the causal connections in each case are beyond calculation but being is always here and now.

However, as Ibn al-‘Arabí also maintains, God did not establish the secondary causes in vain (*sudan*): rather, it is precisely through these veils that we can reach the truth of things, their ultimate or immutable and fixed (*thâbit* [*al-thâbita* = the fixed stars]) cause, which is in their very existence. Thus we come again back to the “situation as it is in itself.” Travaglia quotes a sentence of al-Kindî beautifully translated into Italian by D’Ancona Costa, a sentence that could well be written by Ibn al-‘Arabí²⁷⁹:

Ma non possiamo trovare la verità senza la causa; e la causa dell’essere (wujûd) di tutte le cose e della loro stabilità (thabât) [sic] è il vero (al-haqq), perché tutto ciò che ha l’essere (annîya), ha la verità (haqîqa); e il Vero è necessariamente esistente (mawjûd); perciò le cose sono esistenti (mawjûdât).

Here we have yet another metaphysical approach mentioned by Aristotle and passed by Hayman above (p.203–04) as irrelevant for his purposes there. However, in his *Metaphysics* (*Met* IX 10, 1051 a 34–b 1) Aristotle, states among the many ways Being is said not only the primary way of substance in different categories or through potentiality and actuality, but also, as he now claims in a third way, namely being as truth: being is said “in the strictest sense (*dè kuriôtata*) to denote truth and falsity.” According to Heidegger’s translation “but the most authoritative being [*das Seiende*] is true and untrue being.” (GA 31, §2) Thus Aristotle is a metaphysical pluralist in that he is discussing being at least in three ways. And it is this third mode of being as truth that is prominent in al-Kindî’s sentence.

One way of appreciating the above sentence of al-Kindî is to think of the Greek appearing or emerging (*fúein*) entities in their totality as the *mawjûdât*, the existents all together as *physis*, and then equate this with truth (al-haqq), the Greek *alêtheia*: thus, *physis* = *alêtheia*. In this formula everything endowed with existence has the truth, and is therefore, emerging into existence: *la causa dell’essere è il vero*. The cause of being is truth, and, therefore, everything that has being has truth. “The Real is Being/existence/finding itself!” (*Inna ’l-haqqu huwa ’ayni ’l-wujûd*; F III 429.5), as Ibn al-‘Arabí succinctly puts it.

But to get back to natural genesis and how being is said in categories and, primarily, as substance, that is, as all the compound things of sublunary world ultimately constituted by the elemental qualities and their compounds, the four natural elements.

²⁷⁸ van Buren 1994, 293

²⁷⁹ D’Ancona Costa, “Aristotele e Plotino nella doctrina di al-Kindî sul primo principio” 1992, 377, quoted through Travaglia 1999, 35–36.

To speak of **nature** (*tabî'a*, literally: “impression”, a typographic imprint) in Arabic, and in terms of Islam, recalls to mind the idea of *passive receptivity* (*qubûl*) toward an activity descending from above, and thus, a basic *hylo-morphic* structure (albeit often in a Stoically modified Neoplatonic framework); or it could be called a “*khôra-eidetic*” structure in the sense of *imprints* or *impressions* entering the Platonic *khôra* (*ektupôma*, *typôthen*, *ektupoumenon* *Tim.*50 C5; D 4; D6).

We have seen (above p.189) that in the Aristotelian universe (*Cael* IV 4, 312 a12–17) “that which surrounds is on the side of form, and that which is surrounded is on the side of matter [...and further] that which is above belongs to the determinate, and that which is below to matter,” because “the agent is always superior to the patient and the originating cause (*arkhê*) to the matter (*hylê*)” (*DA* III 5, 430 a18–19). In the Islamic world these qualities are exemplified with the Heavens and the Earth making a couple denoting highness and lowness (*al-ulwî wa al-sufî*, *F* III 197.8–9): the high always bestows benefits while the lower always acquires benefits. And here the point is more on giving and receiving, as Ibn al-‘Arabi emphasizes, not in the high or low position. In abstract geometrical terms these two principles of Heaven and Earth can be rendered as the center and circumference of a circle, and thus, the earth as the center of the ever widening spheres of the globular (*kurî* or *kurî mudawwar* *Gr.sphairikos*, see below pp 44, 186–88, 214, 230 and n 288) universe (the theme of Ch 360 [*sic.*] of the *Futûhât*). “God sent the earth down to the station of the central point of the circumference. Hence through its essence it stands opposite every part of the circumference [...]. If the earth should disappear, the circumference would disappear. But if the circumference should disappear, this would not necessitate the disappearance of the earth. It remains and subsists (*fa-hiya al-dâ'ima wa 'l-bâqiya*) in this world and the next. It is similar to the Breath of the All-merciful through bringing into existence (*fî takwîn*).” (*F* II 455.10-13, tr.Murata 1992, 140)

For Ibn al-‘Arabi this spherical form applies also to human life, indicated in the words of the Qur’ân: *and unto Us they shall be returned* [Q 2:245]: a rectilinear movement cannot be recurring or returning. And even more: this spherical form is the fundamental form of all existence. “Every existent thing is a circle that goes back to that from which it had its origin” (*F* I 255.18).²⁸⁰ Ibn al-‘Arabi draws a diagram of a circle on the page 181 of the third volume of the *Futûhât* to help us imagining the realities in modal categories of the *necessary* (*al-wâjib*), the *impossible* (*al-muhâl*) and the *possible* (*al-mumkin*):

“The circumference is nothing but the circle of the possible things, and the center point that entifies the points on the circumference is the *Necessary of Existence*” (*wâjib al-wujûd*; *F* I 260.8–9, SDG 229). “The center point is the root of the *wujûd* [existence/being/finding] of the circle’s

²⁸⁰ Similarly Jâbir in his *k.al-hamsîn*, fol.129: “*kullu mawjûd mudawwar wa kullu mudawwar kurî*.” This is due to the Universal Soul communicating the spherical form to substance, see Kraus 1986, 156-57; “Know that the cosmos is spherical in shape” *F* I 255.14. Like Plato and Parmenides before him: reality, the All (*tò pan*) is “like the mass of a well-rounded sphere” in *Soph.*244 E and *Tim.*40 A–B

encompassing circumference. The circle has become manifest through the point. In the same way, the possible thing becomes manifest only through the Real.”

He also says that “knowledge of the possible realm is an all-embracing ocean of knowledge. [...] It is an ocean that has no shore save its two sides” [i.e. the necessary and the impossible] (F I 275.16). Thus the possible is that which is halfway between existence and nonexistence and therefore it stands also for the realm of imagination. Having stated that the circumference becomes manifest only through the Real, the center, he then goes on saying that the whole circumference has a similar relation to the point, like in the words of God: *He encompasses everything* (Q 41:54), for *He is the first and the Last* (Q 57:3). He is the first of every possible thing, just as the center point is the first of every line[...]. And *To Him is the whole affair returned* [Q 11:123]”

“Nature in relation to the Real (*al-haqq*) is like the female in relation to the male” (F IV 150.2).²⁸¹ For Ibn al-’Arabí nature is “the highest and greatest mother” [*al-ummu ‘l-’âliyatü ‘l-kubrâ*, F IV.150.15] and a “mother” is that which brings together (*jâmi’*; F II 134.22) like the Qurân, “which brings together all praises and is therefore called *qur’ân*, that is, bringing together (*jâmi’*)” (F II 88.22) or, to translate with the ancient Latin expression: nature is the *Magna Mater* giving birth to all things, though she herself is never seen.²⁸² Nature thus has only an intelligible existence [*wujûd al-’aqlî*], not entified existence [*wujûd al-’aynî*] (F IV 150.9).

Now, to put all this **in terms of the elemental qualities** or elemental **natures** Ibn al-’Arabí says: “all of the four natures [*al-tabâ’î’ l-arba’a*]: heat/*harâra*, cold/*burûda*, humidity/*rutûba* and dryness/*yubûsa* are acted upon (*infî’âl*) in relation to that from which they have emerged” (i.e. the higher always acting upon the receptive lower forms; F I 293.17, SPK 141). Therefore, they are also called the daughters of the spheres (*al-banât al-aflâk* 292.30). Here we have the same basic structure as in the various Aristotelian serial orders (*ephexês*), where the higher forms act upon the lower ones as their matter. All four natures are thus like mothers since they are receptive in relation to the First Intellect.²⁸³ Thus, we should note here that these natures are as such something higher than the four concrete elements of their combinations. Yet these higher natures, elemental qualities are said to be receptive to still higher intellectual realities above them. Or, seen the other way round: the lower forms are supporting (*hâmil*), they are underlying *substratum* (*mawdu’*, Gr.*hupokeimenon*) like the soul is the carrier of the

²⁸¹ Like Hermann of Carinthia: “that which is active, lays down the seeds; that which is passive receives them; the seeds are mixed in the mating itself. Likewise, the active partner brings form to what is conceived, the passive partner conserves it. [...] These are called the material and formal causes.” *De Essentiis* 73 vG, Burnett 1982, 191

²⁸² F IV 150.15; SPK 141 Comp. *Phys.*I.9, 192 a22-25: matter longing for form is likened to the female yearning to the male.

²⁸³ Mother is a natural expression of origin, source or foundation appearing in both concrete and abstract connections like “the mother cities, ‘*ummu ‘l-qurâ*’ for Mecca or “the mothers of the questions, ‘*ummahât al-matâlib*’ in the sense of “four causes” (*ai aitiai tettarês*), the four different questions of *whether* something is, *what* it is, *how* it is, and *why* it is. F I 193.31 See also Aetius I.11.2, Daiber 1980, 124-25; Johnson 2005, 43

intellect.²⁸⁴ This carrier is often expressed as the mount or **vehicle** (*markab*) for the higher forms to appear, like a “meaning that becomes manifest in the form of an elemental body” (F II 130.3). Thus, as already mentioned, a compound thing is a *murakkab*, which is mounted (*markab*).²⁸⁵ This term appears also in the Qur’ân (82:8) where it is stated that God brought the human being in the form He wanted: “in whatever form He mounted you” (*fî ayî sûratⁱⁿ mâ shâ’ rakkabak*). “Everything other than the Real, who is the way (*minhâj*), is a mixture (*mizâj*) and a commingling (*amshâj*)” (F IV 389.19–20). In every existent thing something is carried (*mahmûl*) by its carrier (*markab*).

The above quoted passage on the four natures as four mothers is from the chapter 60 of the *Futûhât* devoted on the knowledge of elements (‘*anâsir*) and the ruling power (*sultân*) of the higher world over the lower world. Here Ibn al-‘Arabî calls the Natures, that is the elemental qualities of heat, cold, dryness and wetness, **the first elements** (*al-‘anâsir al-uwal*) which through their combinations then produce the physical elements, thus, quite in line with the Jâbirean position. On the other hand, these mothers when seen from the side of the higher worlds, are “children of the spheres [*banât li’âlam al-aflâk*; F I 292.30].” Thus, ultimately, everything in engendered existence (*kullu shay’ min al-akwân*) must be supported by divine realities (*haqâiq al-ilâhiyya*) and every knowledge is a branch of divine knowledge (F I 293. 5–6).

“Nature is four-fold (*mabnâ ‘alâ ‘arbâ’ta ‘umûr*) and understood as two active things and two things acted upon. It makes the four pillars manifest” (F II 367, 23–24, SDG 303). Thus Jâbir says: “In our discourse it is first of all necessary for you to know that hot, cold, moist and dry are absolutely higher than Fire, Air, Water and Earth.”²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ In the cosmology of Jâbir “heat is the support (*hâmil*) of Movement, which is the support of Nature, which is the support of the Soul, which is the support Intelligence.” And, in terms of the elements: “Air is the support of Fire, and Fire is the support of Heat; Water is the support of Air, and Earth is the support of Water.” *Kitâb al-hamsîn*, quoted through Kraus 1986, 136.

²⁸⁵ See above p.171 n.187. Here we can also note a crescendoing order (Gr. *ephexês*) where the higher order is perfecting (Ar. *mutammim*, Gr. *entelecheian*) the lower one and the highest order embraces the all. Kraus 1986, pp.136–37 This quotation gives a good perspective also to the Jewish “transportation mysticism”, that is, the so-called *Markava-mysticism* of Ezekiel and his divine chariot. For this term in Judaism see Schäfer 1992, 77–95; Verman 1992, 15–18

²⁸⁶ *Mizân al-saghîr*, Kraus 1935, 426:12–14, quoted through Haq 1994, 74 n.95. Similarly for Herman of Carinthia, perhaps the most familiar early Latin scholast with the Arab tradition (and also with Apollonios of Tyana, Burnett 1982, 38), who says in his *De Essentiis* (written in 1143): “the individual elements are not ‘body’, but are the principles which have the capacity for producing body wherever they occur. However, they do not act on any pre-existent matter, for the mixture of elements is itself matter (62 rC, italics mine). Hermann seems, above all, to be doing away with matter as primal principle which can be set over against form; rather, the universe becomes more and more actual through successive applications of formal principles. Thus, in terms of Herman the process goes: God—elemental seeds [also called ‘singula’, i.e. ‘*basîta*’] (each stamped with one of four distinguishing marks)—the commixtio (the mixed-up state of the seeds)—the *compositum* (the ‘informed’ arrangement of the seed). The last stage is the first to be defined body. Burnett 1982, 257

Thus we have already a whole **elemental vocabulary**: the four elemental qualities (*tabâ'î' l-arba'a*), are also called natures or elements (*anâsir*), first/simple elements (*anâsir/al-basâ'it al-uwal*) or simple motherly natures (*awâ'il ummahât basâ'it*), and none of these names are yet denoting to the “four natural elements” of fire, air, water and earth, instead, all these names are denoting to incorporeal qualities and uncompounded entities of heat, moistness, coldness and dryness out of which the first compound elements of hot, moist, cold, and dry are formed and it is only when these qualities are further united in couples with a substance that we finally have the Empedoclean elements, usually called *al-ustuqussât* (sg. *ustuquss*) or *anâsir* (sg. *unsur*) or “pillars,” *al-arkân* (sg. *rukn*). Thus:

Hot+dry+substance = Fire

Hot+humid+substance = Air

Cold+humid+substance = Water

Cold+dry+substance = Earth

Nature on the whole is a “totality of opposites (*majmû' addâd* F II 651.1).” Therefore, as Ibn al-‘Arabî also says, because of their compound nature, each pillar (*rukn* = element) is both a “producer of effects (*mu'aththir*) like a father, and receptive towards effects (*mu'aththir fih*), like a mother (F I 138.27) or as “receptive elements,” *al-anâsir al-qâbila* (I.138.30, and Ch 198 on cosmology, F II 453.15). Here Ibn al-‘Arabî explicitly says that he is “calling attention to a fact often not realized: receptivity is also a divine attribute.” And, as was above noted, “nature in relation to the Real is like the female in relation to the male” (above p 211 and n 282), these two fundamental principles of all natural things, affecting and receiving capacities, are like the “science of interpenetration” (*tawâluj*) or of conjunction (*iltihâm*), which denotes the “marriage act” (*nikâh*), pervading every atom of existence” (*al-nikâh al-sârî fî jâmî' al-dharâri*, F I 139.17). This universal interpenetration reminds one of the Stoic *krasis di'hôlou*, the universal mixture (*mizâj kullî* or *tadâhul*).²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ On the influence of Stoicism on the terminology of Jâbir, see Kraus 1986, 168 n.2 and 176. See above p.220 n.298. Similarly Herman of Carinthia speaks of the marrying or mating of masculine and feminine *naturae* and, of the four elements—fire, air, water and earth. This sexual connotation often occurring in hermetic literature is said by Burnett to be a prominent thought not only both in the *De Essentiis* of Hermann and the *De Secretis Naturae* [i.e. the already mentioned *Sirr al-Khâliqa* of ps.Apollonios of Tyana], but also in the *De Radiis* of al-Kindî, a work thoroughly permeated by the thought of sympathy of all parts of the universe [as we have seen through Travaglia]. Burnett 1982, pp. 39–41. Burnett also notes that Hermann did not, however, probably know this work of al-Kindî and thus the general similarity is rather to be sought in their common and very influential source, the *Theologia Aristotelis*, a selection of texts from the *Enneads* of Plotinus by Porphyry and translated into Arabic.

Further, having first explained that the philosophers call the First Cause an *Infinite Circle*,²⁸⁸ Jâbir presents his cosmology in a table of four circles (spheres) one within the other. The largest first circle he calls the Circle of First Cause; the second circle within it is the World of Intelligence, and within it, the third circle is called World of the Soul, which, finally, encompasses the fourth circle called the World of Substance, “also called *dispersed dust* (from the Qur’anic expression *habâ manthûr*, see above n 313, and n 315, n 382 and 417), the World of Substance, out of which our world is formed and which is called by certain people *Hylê*.”²⁸⁹ Thus, it is within this fourth circle that the above discussed elemental combinations take place. He tells us that opinions of the philosophers differ concerning the way this circle of the World of Substance encompasses the elemental qualities. According to Jâbir they ought to be visualized as four equal smaller spheres within the fourth above listed sphere constituting thus up the World of Heat; the World of Coldness, the World Dryness and the World of Humidity. Others think these should be seen as concentric circles so that all four qualities are within one grand circle embracing all elemental contraries (*enantiôseis* of Aristotle).

For a great Alchemist like Jâbir ibn Hayyân, **the appearing particular properties** (*hawâss*, Arist.*idion*, *Top.V*) of entities depend on the nature of things [and ultimately their *substance*, *jawhar*] in which they occur (*hawâss al-ashya’ lâ takûn illâ bimâ fî tabi’at dhâlika l-shay’*) because if such properties were not potentially (*bi’l-quwwat*, as a tending force) in the manifest things themselves they could never actually appear (*lam yumkin ‘an jazhar li’l-fa’el*).²⁹⁰ Thus, for Jâbir the elemental qualities of heat (*harâra*), coldness (*burûda*), dryness (*yubûsa*), and humidity (*rutûba*), that is, the *simple natures* or *first simple motherly natures* (*awâ’il ummahât basâ’it*) are the constituents for the first composites (*awwal al-murakkabât*): *hot, cold, dry and moist*. These combine further as *hot-dry, hot-moist, cold-moist, and cold-dry*, which finally in their combinations make up the elements *fire, air, water, and earth*. Here we come to a central issue concerning the understanding of the ancient elemental theory.

For Jâbir the elemental qualities are not merely logical abstractions but true constituents of entities, whereas it seems that for Aristotle these elemental qualities as well as Prime matter (*prôtê hylê*) are only logical abstractions as potencies (*dunámeis/quwâ*) and qualities (*poiôtês/kayfiyyât*). They have only a logical being. Here Jâbir apparently disagrees with Aristotle (*Top.V* 3, 131 b 20–2). For Jâbir, these qualities are principles (*usûl*) or foundations (*asâs/sg.ass*, Gr. *arkân*), or they are called elements

²⁸⁸ Kraus refers to a medieval text attributed to *Hermes* in which God is called an infinite circle with its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere (*sphaera infinita cuius centrum est ubique circumferentia nusquam*); Kraus 1986, 149 n.5.

²⁸⁹ Kraus 1986, 142

²⁹⁰ Kraus 1986, 95 n.4 Here Jâbir apparently disagrees with Aristotle (*Top.V* 3, 131b20–2). And, also, with this “tending force” we have an important parallel with Heidegger turning the Husserlian intentionality upside down, See Part II.1. For a parallel in Ibn al-‘Arabî, F I 122.1–2

(*anâsir*), and as such referred most often as *Natures* (*tabâ'î*).²⁹¹ Similarly, prime matter (*prôtê hylê/hâuyla*) is not identified with a mere logical being, rather, like with the Stoics, it is identified with the given *ousiá*: these natures are all *mahmûlat fî jawhari 'l-qadîm al-ladhî huwa aslu 'l-ashy'â kulluhâ*. They are all “embedded in the original substance which is the root of all things.” Here the ground is the unitary place of being; it is not a dissected rationally seen necessity of the faculty of understanding, not a synthetic unity of judgment, to use Kantian terms.²⁹² The elemental qualities are active principles informing passive matter to become the given mixtures of the physical elements air, water, fire, and earth. As informing active principle these *Natures* are ontologically higher than the passive four elements, which, once informed, serve as a foundation for all entities that are further formed as combinations of these first elemental compounds.²⁹³ Thus, it is only the infinitely variable proportions between these natures and their respective positions that make the differences among existing entities.²⁹⁴ Therefore, as Kraus says, The Stoics degraded the Aristotelian quality-form (*eidos*) into a corporeal quality, whereas Jâbir elevates the Aristotelian *qualities* (*poiôtês*) into Platonic ideas.²⁹⁵

Some of the ancient medical theories, like that of Galen, as we have seen, were based on the idea of differing proportions of natures, present in animate corporeal beings in the form of the four humours: blood, black and yellow bile, and phlegm. A healthy condition thus meant a proper balance between these humours and the art of healing meant precisely that: re-establishing the proper balance once it was lost by some excess. The means to this re-establishment was to take place through the different active and passive qualities of elements in medicaments.

But simply to say that here Jâbir and Aristotle are worlds apart, is not the whole truth. In answering the question whether the Aristotelian *materia prima* has only logical being, Happ emphasizes the nature of *noêta* in general in Aristotelian philosophy, that is, beings that have reality only as objects of

²⁹¹ Kraus 1986, 165 This theory and terminology comes from Stoics, for whom *ousiá* = *prôtê hylê*; for references see Kraus 1986, 168–75

²⁹² Here a deep structural identity could be detected between the way the concept of ground is approached in the elemental thinking of Jâbir or Ibn al-‘Arabî on the one hand and Heidegger on the other, who wrote in 1928 “On the Essence of Ground” and whose lecture course in 1955–56, critical on the early essay, was published in 1957 as *Der Satz vom Grund*. In the former the ground is expressing something pre-predicative, an *ontic manifestation*, an “unveiledness of being which first makes manifestation of beings possible” (*Enthülltheit des Seins ermöglicht erst Offenbarkeit von Seiendem*; GA 9, 131). Malpas writes: “Although Heidegger does not deny the legitimacy of the question concerning ground, he also maintains that the way the question has been addressed has always been in terms that reflect the metaphysical tendency to look to understand beings in terms of some entity or feature of entities, to understand presence or disclosedness in terms of some principle or structure that is apart from it.” Malpas 2006, 61

²⁹³ GC II 8. This chapter introduces the structure of various combinations, the formula of mixtures (*logos tês mixeôs*, *Meteor* IV 12, 379 b25), of elemental qualities making elemental compounds (*homoioimerês*), that is, both organic and inorganic homogenous bodies as they are found in nature consisting in various degrees all of the elements, *Meteorol.* IV 12, 389 b 26–28. Here Aristotle uses his term *hylê* in a sense that these homogenous compounds serve as material for further non-homogenous higher compounds in which the passive elemental qualities are receptive for the active qualities. Thus, here *hylê* is the carrier of higher forms and a dynamic capacity for reception in a serial order (*efexês*). Happ 1971, 536–39

²⁹⁴ Democritus explained all ‘qualitative’ differences in objects (which are conglomerates of atoms) as dependent solely on quantitative and *local differences*. See PP 1983, 415

²⁹⁵ Kraus 1986, 173

knowledge. He points out that such *noêta* are not free formations of human phantasy; instead they refer to latent (*dúnamei*) aspects of being in things. Thus, speaking of *materia prima*, Aristotle calls it a potentially perceptible body (*dunámei soma aisthêton*, GC II 1, 329 a 33), that is, something that has the capacity to become an element. It does not have separate existence of its own but it is the basis of elements.

III.2.5. Elemental qualities (*tabâ'î*), primordial matter (*hâyûlâ*) and substance (*jawhar*)

For Jâbir the simple elements (*al-anâsir al-basâ'it*) are active principles *informing passive matter/substance* to emerge as the physical elements air, water, fire, and earth. Clearly, as Haq notes, “for Aristotle substance is the subject of nine categories of being, while matter, in turn, was the subject of substance.”²⁹⁶ For Aristotle the prime matter (if that is what he refers to here) is a subject which *in itself* has no particular characteristics (*Meta VII 3, 1029 a 20-26*). Thus, like the Platonic *khôra* Aristotle’s first matter has no characteristics of its own. However, the notion that matter is a substance, is “impossible” for Aristotle, because separability (*khôriston*) and being a ‘this here’ (*tóde ti*) are particular characteristics of substance (*Meta VII 3, 1029 a 28–29*). But unlike Plato’s space, Aristotelian matter cannot be described as a “this” or “being” (*ousia*) (Sorabji 1988, 38). For Aristotle substance is in need of a subject for substance is always predicated of a certain “this”, a something which is defined (*horidzomenon*) and individualized by a form. The expression *tóde ti* stands precisely for a “this something”, it is “a placeholder for a definite, ontologically basic item.”²⁹⁷ And “matter” is not an item, not a “this something,” it is not an ontologically independent entity. For Jâbir, on the contrary, substance is in no need of a subject: it is the subject. His *jawhar* is a confounding of Aristotelian matter and substance: it is that “which has the capacity of receiving all things [all categories of being; *al-jawhar al-qâbil l-kulli shay'*, Haq 78 n51]. It is in everything, and everything arises from it, and everything returns to it.” Here Jâbir refers to the Qur’anic sûra 21:93 “*All shall return to Us.*”

Similarly, Ibn al-‘Arabí uses the words “realities” and “roots” for that which is capable of receiving all forms and survives all “transmutation” of becoming other (*tahawwul* or *istihâla*), like in F III 198.28 and 33; IV.208.33. In the *Fusûs* he refers explicitly to prime matter (*hâyûla*) assumed in every form, which despite its multiplicity and variety in its forms is reducible back to one substance (*sic!*), the prime matter.” Therefore he states that “the whole cosmos is a collection of accidents; hence it

²⁹⁶ Haq 1994, 53

²⁹⁷ Lear 1988, 270

undergoes continual change (*tabaddul*) at every moment, since 'the accident does not remain for two moments (*al- 'aradu lâ yabqâ zamânain*)' "Fus 124–5/153–54.

Thus, contrary to the Aristotelian conception (*Phys* I 1, 190 a–b), for Jâbir the elemental qualities are not accidents or logical abstractions, instead, for him these elemental qualities are incorporeal but concrete and real constituents of the elements and, as already noted, since they are actively informing the receptive passive simple elements, they also belong to a higher ontological level than the receptive material components. Schematically Jâbir differentiates between seven degrees in the composition of natures:

The simple natures, *heat, coldness, dryness and humidity*.

- 1) The first compounds (*awwal al-murakkabât*) as a union between matter and quality: *hot* (*harâra*), *cold* (*barûda*), *dry* (*yabûsa*) and *wet* (*rutûba*).
- 2) The second degree compounds (*al-murakkâb al-thânî*), represented by unions of two qualities: *hot-dry* (*harr-yâbis*), *hot-humid* (*harr-ratib*), *cold-humid* (*bârid-ratib*), *cold-dry* (*bârid-yâbis*).
- 3) The third degree compounds (*al-murakkab al-thâlith*), the four elements *Fire* (*nâr*), *Air* (*hawâ'*), *Water* (*mâ'*), *Earth* (*ard*).
- 4) The fourth degree compounds, the seasons: *spring* (*rabî'*), *autumn* (*harîf*), *winter* (*shitâ'*), *summer* (*sayf*).
- 5) The fifth degree compounds, the four humours: *yellow bile* (*safrâ'*), *blood* (*dam*), *black bile* (*sawdâ'*), *phlegm* (*balgam*).
- 6) The composites of sixth degree, the products of mineral, vegetal and animal kingdoms divided into four constituents: *Colours* (*sibg*), *Oil* (*duhn*), *Water* (*mâ'*) and *Earth* (*ard*).
- 7) The seventh degree, the final composites (*al-murakkabât al-akhîra*), the four natures as they appear in drugs, ailments, poisons etc.

What is crucial for us here is that contrary to what Aristotle says, Jâbir maintains that these elemental simple qualities have an independent, concrete and separate existence. Thus, Jâbir is not simply taking over the Aristotelian/Empedoclean elemental-theory as such, but uses it in a quite different context of

his own with its clear Stoic and Neoplatonic influences.²⁹⁸ In Stoic perspective, all of the objects in the world, including secondary qualities like sounds and odours are the result of mixture of five elements of hot, cold, wet, dry, and pneuma (*rûh*).²⁹⁹ On the other hand, as Dhanani also says, referring to Richard Sorabji who points out “that the Stoic doctrine of the corporeality of secondary qualities, on which this view is ultimately based, is nuanced and does not mean that these secondary qualities are themselves corporeal but rather that they are corporeal in a reductive sense as ways of being that are not to be reified; *dispositions* of bodies.”³⁰⁰ Considering the above seven degrees of Jâbir in the composition of natures we have a clear example of this notion on various dispositions as modifications of the original simple compounds, disposed in a certain way (*pôš ekhon*) on the various levels.

In explaining his elemental theory, Jâbir is avoiding the terms *dunameis* (*quwa*) and *poiotês* (*kaifiyyât*) of Aristotle, instead, he calls the elements most often principles (*usûl*), bases (*arkân*) and often also simply as elements (*‘anâsir*) or “first elements” or “simple elements” to differentiate the elemental qualities from the four compounded (*murakkâb*) elements.³⁰¹ In fact he often calls them *Natures* (pl. *tabâ’i*) a word which Aristotle in its Greek form *physis* could never use to denote elemental qualities, as the word “nature” in Greek philosophical usage implies an independent and concrete reality denied to qualities. Instead, for Jâbir the word (sg.) *tabî’a* implies precisely that: an independent and corporeal or pre-corporeal nature of elemental quality. Thus here we have both a difference in what is meant by *nature* and in how it is meant: bearing in mind the idea of “imprint” (*taba’a*) as a central idea of the Arabic root, it is obvious that the word *tabî’a* has a quite different intuitive background than the Greek word *physis*, coming from *fúô*, to emerge, to surge, come out in the open, thus, in the sense of genesis of growing things (*fuoménôn génesis*, MetaV 4, 1014 b16). The elemental theory is the core of Jâbirean science, but it cannot be explained solely in Aristotelian terms. On the page of the above note Jâbir writes: “Fire, Air, Water, and Earth are all compounds, not isolated (or simple), whereas isolated (or simple) things are Heat, Coldness, Humidity and Dryness and they constitute the basis for the compounds Fire, Air, Water, and Earth.” The simple elemental qualities are also ontologically superior to the compound elements.

Ibn al-‘Arabí says basically the same, yet his point is fresh and in fact quite Aristotelian when he writes: “Mixing (Chittick: constitution) is that through which the entities of the elements (*anâsir*) acquire

²⁹⁸Kraus 1986, 173 Jâbir was familiar with the *Placita Philosophorum*, “*Opinions of Philosophers*,” of Ps.-Plutarch, one of the most important and extensive doxographical authority introducing also Stoic elements into the Arab world at least from the 9th century onwards. PP, 5; Daiber 1980, 2 and 289 n13 Though Jâbir never mentions Plutarch by name he quotes in his *Kitâb al-hâsil* seven chapters from the *Placita* in a highly exact translation into Arabic (Kraus 1986, 332–37). Sorabji fails to see anything in these views owing to the Stoics. “For in themselves they [simple qualities] are said not even to be three-dimensional,” Sorabji 1988, 56 n54.

²⁹⁹Dhanani 1994, 184

³⁰⁰Sorabji 1988, 89–93

³⁰¹Kraus 1986, 151

wujûd. This is called “the nature” (*al-tabā’*, like Jâbir above). Thus it is said that the nature of water or the mixture of water consists of coldness and moisture (*bârid^{an} rutub^{an}*), that of fire of hot / dry, of air hot / wet, and of earth cold / dry. The entities of these principals (*arkân*) do not become manifest save through this mixture of natures, so every mixture is natural [i.e. consists of elemental natures] (F II.456.9–11, SDG 322). Thus before this mixing the elements and their various further combinations are inexistent to the extent that one can say that there are things which do not exist!³⁰² Whereas elemental qualities, as they appear in the compound mixtures of the elements, are “there”, one can feel heat, coldness, moisture, and dryness as existing and touchable qualities.

I will quote here a longer excerpt from the Ch II of the *Futûhât* on “the principles and production of the Physical World” in which Ibn al-‘Arabî expounds the elemental principles of Heat, Cold, Wetness and Dryness in their various mixtures on the lines exposed above (F I 55.15–32, Comp. *Met* VII 17, 1041 b 11–34):

Know that there are marvels in the mixing of these principles. Heat and cold, being opposites, do not mix, and thus cannot produce anything of themselves³⁰³; such is also the case for wetness and dryness. The opposite of an opposite cannot mix with anything other than the opposite of its opposite, so these principles can never engender anything but four elements. This is why they are opposed, two by two, since, if such were not the case, their composition would surpass what their specific realities entail (*/mimmâ tâ’tû haqâ’iqahâ*). Composition would not be able to take place from more than four principles (*usûl*), since the number four includes the fundamental numbers: three plus four make seven, and two more make nine, plus one makes ten.³⁰⁴ Choose any number to compose. No other numeral offers this peculiarity, just as there is no other perfect number³⁰⁵ other than six, since it can divide itself into half, into thirds, and into sixths. Thus heat and dryness mixed with one another, producing fire; heat and humidity produced air; cold and wetness resulted in water; and cold and dryness became earth (*turâb*). See how air is formed from heat and humidity; it is the vital breath (*nafas*) that animates sensate life; through its blowing it moves all things, water (*mâ’*), the earth (*‘ard*), and fire (*nâr*); things move through its movement, since it is life and movement, the effect of life (*athar al-hayât*). Such are the four elements (*arkân*) engendered (*muwalladat*) by the mother principles (*al-ummahât al-uwal*).

³⁰²This Stoic formula sounds of course contradictory, as if there were some things that are not, but what the Stoics reject with this formula is the Platonic identification of *being* with *being something*. On their view, as Caston writes, “to speak of something as a ‘a being’ (*ón*) is precisely to mark an item’s ontological status, in contrast to other uses of ‘to be’, which are unmarked.[...] The genus *Somethin* is thus [for Stoics] wider than *What Is*, or [...] what exists.” Caston 1999, 151

³⁰³As Aristotle said (see above I.B.2, p.32): contrary opposites (*enantíon*) are not one and one cannot make its opposite (*Phys* 189 a12).

³⁰⁴1+2+3+4=10 the basis of Pythagorean *tetraktys*, the *quaternion* or number of numbers, the “eternally flowing source of Nature”, the respective numbers referring to the point, the line, the figure (triangel) and a solid (tetrahedron). Aristotles principal account of Pythagoreanism, see *Met* I.5, 985 b 23–986 b8.

³⁰⁵Gr. *arithmoí teleioi*, see Kraus 1986, 199

Know next that these first motherly principles enter into composites only according to their reality, without mixing (*min ghair-imtijâz*). Heating comes from heat (*harâra*) alone, just as drying and contraction come from dryness (*jabusa*). When you see fire dry a spot where there is water, do not think that it is the heat that has dried it, since fire is composed of both heat and dryness: heat made the water get warmer; the drying took place through desiccation [...]. These contrary (*mutanâfira*) motherly principles are thus incompatible among themselves, and can come together only in form, in accord with the reality specific to each of them. [Thus the appearing forms, the elements, are a combination of two motherly principles.] One of these principles is never found alone in a form; they are always two together, like heat and dryness, for example. Heat could not be there alone, since nothing other than it can come of it.

Thus there are two types of realities (*haqâ'iq*): those conceived by the intellect by itself (*mufradât*, Gr. *khôriston*) like life, knowledge, speech and sensation, and there are realities existing as composites (*bi-wujûd al-tarkîb*) like heaven, the cosmos, man, stone etc., i.e. things existing as mixtures of the elements which are themselves the first products of composition. (Translation from MR II, 156–57 by D.Grill, here modified.)

Finally he says: “if you should come to wonder for the reasons why these contrary motherly principles combine precisely as they do until their combinations manifest in exactly these elemental forms that we witness, I would answer that this is a great mystery and a difficult compound which I am not allowed to reveal and which reason alone cannot fathom. Its truth can only be unveiled in revelation and of that I have to remain silent.” Thus, the ultimate mystery of conjunction may not be put into words: it is an *arrêton*, un-expressable, something one has to remain silent of, like the ultimate mysteries of Demeter and Persephone in antiquity according to Pausanias.³⁰⁶

However, “Glory to God who brought these motherly principles [which lack existence in their singularity (*fî 'ayânuhâ*)] into existence as compounds: He did not first bring them into existence as singulars and then combine these into compound elements, for their realities are not apt to that. Instead, he brought first forth a form (*sûra*) as a combination of (two) existence-giving realities out of these contrary motherly principles (*tâ'lîf al-Haqiqatain min hâdhihi 'l-haqâ'iq*). So, now they appear as if these contraries had first had separate existence and were only afterwards combined. But they had no existence before the form mounted on them and combined them into contraries. And so God created these forms: water, fire, air and earth and He made them transmute (*yastahîl*) into one another (F I 55:32-56.3).”

³⁰⁶ “*Arrêta éstô moi*” Pausanias: I I:4, 1971, Vol.II, 182

Indeed, Ibn al-‘Arabí exclaims elsewhere: “The whole cosmos is confined to three mysteries (*asrâr*): its substance, its forms, and transmutation (*istihâla*). There is no fourth affair” (F III 254.28, SPK 100). Thus, here we have substance (*gawhar*) as underlying substrate (*hypokeimenon*) or first *hylê* for the contrary combinations of first mothers (*ummahât al-uwal*), the elemental principles (of humidity, heat, coldness and dryness) combined into forms. And of these forms Ibn al-‘Arabí further states that they became “manifest as forms within the Being of the Real” (F III 255.16, as there was nothing but the Being of the Real). So, first they are possible combinations of essences given by their reality (= heat, cold, wet and dry as distinguishable essences). “So when God desired to clothe them (*yalbisuhâ*) in the state of existence, so he manifested Himself—and He is identical with Being (‘*ayn al-wujûd*), the Existent (*al-mawjûd*)—to these possible things according to the preparadness (*istidâdât*, “disposition”) and realities of the possible things.”

These forms were further combined with substrate, *gawhar*, (substance + two contraries), which again are transmuted into one another as elements, as was explained in the above longer excerpt from the Second Chapter of the *Futûhât*. What is still worth mentioning here, as we are dealing with the Chapter that expounds Ibn al-‘Arabí’s “alchemy” in the form of *Science of Balance* (‘*ilmû ’l-mizân*) or *Science of Letters* (‘*ilmû ’l-hurûf*) treated above in Ch.III.2.2. (III 2.6), is the connection between the elements and letters. Like Jâbir ibn Hayân for whom “the morphology of the natures (*tasrîf al-tabâ’i*)” bears parallel in the morphology of letters (*tasrîf al-hurûf*)” (above p.174), so does Ibn al-‘Arabí find a common origin for both letters and the first principles (‘*anâsir*). We will come to this in a moment through discussion of the fifth element, the ether of Aristotle, the “first motion,” the circular rotation of the stars, which seems so regular and perfect that “he hypothesizes the existence of a unique material out of which they are composed—ether—in order to account for their impressive regularity.”³⁰⁷

In alchemy this mutability of the elements is further connected with the idea of essence lying at the heart of each entity (as hidden, *bâtin*), from whence it can be “drawn” over to the surface (as the manifest, *zâhir*), thus causing a change in the constitution of the entity. Thus, the transmutation of natural entities consists in an interchange between the external and internal natures. Furthermore, Jâbir states, “all the constituents of all things follow a circular pattern of change,” a statement coming probably from Aristotle’s *GC* II 4, 331 b2–3 on the cyclical coming-to-be of simple bodies and changing of the elements into one another. All bodies in the world having an inner and an outer nature: “the exterior of a body is manifest, whereas its interior is latent, and it is the latter in which lies the benefit,” as Jâbir claims without giving support as to why the interior is more beneficent.³⁰⁸ However,

³⁰⁷ Johnson 2005, 137

³⁰⁸ Ahjâr IV.32

from the context one can easily surmise that this benefit is due to possibility being in a certain sense higher than actuality, as it already contains this possibility for actuality. In a passage on Primordial Matter to which we will soon come closer, Ibn al-‘Arabí says “God is for Primordial Matter eternally outward (*wa kâna-l’haqqu azalan lahâ zâhira*), as it/‘she’ is for Him [eternal] inwardly (*wa hya lahu bâtinu*), since it/‘she’ is an attribute of knowledge and there is no knowledge except through it/‘her’.”³⁰⁹ It seems the theory of latent and manifest qualities were first suggested to Jâbir solely by practical considerations, but finally “developed into a full-blown alchemical theory.”³¹⁰ The external natures exist at the periphery (*muhît*) while the internal natures are located in the inside (*bâtin*), that is, at the center. In any case, taken together these two opposites contain all the four different elemental qualities existing thus either potentially or actually in each entity.

III.2.6 The fifth element as substance

For Jâbir **the Fifth Nature** is fifth not to the four corporeal elements (*laysa huwa ‘alâ taba’ahâ*) but to the elemental qualities or natures as their substrate or *base* (*rukn*) or in a Stoic vein as spirit (Gr.*pneuma*, *rûh*) [*wa al-khâmis al-jâmi’ lihâdhihi-l’arkân al-‘arbâ’ta huwa al-rûh*].³¹¹ Further elaborating on this substrate he says: “in the manner common to philosophers we say that the term “Mass of the Sphere” refers to substance susceptible to receive everything [like in *Tim.* 50 B the *khôra: tà panta dekhoménê sômata physis*]. Therefore, as already quoted: everything is in it (her) and all things are derived from it and everything will also finally return to it according to the plan of the Creator, who says [Q 21:93] ‘*kullu ‘ilainâ râji’ûn*’ [*all shall return to Us*]. Further down he continues: “As to substance, God protect you, it is the thing by which the interstices³¹² are filled (*al-mamlû’ bihi al-khalal*). It is capable of taking any form. Everything is in it, everything is constituted out of it, and everything dissolves back to it. If this account does not enable you to understand what substance is, then [let me explain further that] it is the dust (*al-habâ’*), and its colour is somewhat white. And when the sun radiates on it, it becomes inflamed and visible. Thus you ought to know that it is the mass (*jirm*) of the Supreme Luminous Sphere, may its Creator be praised, and His name hallowed. This is the body

³⁰⁹ Inshâ’ 31.15–16, tr p.36 I have retained the feminine personal pronouns as Ibn al-‘Arabí also calls this Primordial Matter the *Matricial Prototype* (*al-‘umm al-jâmy’a*) or ther receptive *Magna Mater* (*‘umm al-‘âliyatu-l’kubrâ*) F IV 150.15.

“Nature in relation to the Real is like the female in relation to male,” as he says a few lines earlier.

³¹⁰ Haq 1994, 96 See the term mixture/mizâj above as an early analytical term of latency, potentiality, n102.

³¹¹ *Kitâb al-Safwa*, f.117^a, quoted through Kraus 1986, 153 and n2, who notes here a possible parallel to Pythagorean doctrine in *DL* VIII, 28, where the expression *aithêr* is used not as a name of the fifth element but rather as the basis of the four elements, like *aithêr thermos* as the substrate of heat/fire. Kraus also refers to a similar teaching found according to *Ash’ârî’s maqâlat al-islamiyyin* among the physicists (*ashâb al-tabâ’i*). For the Stoic *pneuma/rûh* see above n74, n80, n102, n113

³¹² Comp. *Tim.* 58 B

which is in all three kingdoms of nature, namely animals, plants and stones.”³¹³ Thus here for Jâbir the fifth element is the mass of the Supreme Luminous Sphere in the same way as “Aristotle he hypothesizes the existence of a unique material out of which they [the fixed stars and their spheres] are composed—ether—in order to account for their impressive regularity,” as noted above (p.221). But for Jâbir this is the substance out of which everything in the cosmos is derived.

Ibn al-‘Arabî takes up this substance-principle as “dust,” *habâ’*, when he is explaining the “ascension” (Neoplatonic *proödos*) beginning from the First intellect, called also the *Pen*, the place of “recording and writing down” (*mahall al-tadwîn wa-l’tastîr*³¹⁴) of creation, out of which springs forth the World Soul as the Guarded Tablet (*lawh al-mahfûz*) upon which the whole creation is to be written (like ink flowing from the pen) to depict God’s infinite knowledge. This tablet is green as emerald (*zumurrud*, probably as the colour of all growth but also the colour of the sky in Islamic tradition) denoting the first arising of the dust substance (*al-habâ’*) which is the possibility of the Soul.³¹⁵ Thus, here the whole of creation is depicted as verdant possibilities of God’s knowledge coming into existence through dust-like “simple substance.” Jâbir refers to the fifth principle also as the *fifth root* (*asl al-khâmis*) which is a “simple substance called *hâyûla*” (*wa huwa jawhar basîta al-musammâ al-hâyûla*).³¹⁶

Here we also have an important theoretical basis of Ibn al-‘Arabî for whom it is precisely this *informing force* (*quwwa*) of the higher ontological order of qualities through which the divine names are

³¹³ *Kitâb mizân al-saghîr* tr. by Haq 1994, 55 For tr. into French, see Kraus 1935, 429.3 and 1986, 153–54. Dust-like substance (*jawhar al-habâ’*) from the word *gawhar* (litt “jewel”), which is Persian loanword (*gohr*, *Skr./gotra*) standing in Arabic for “substance.” In his Dictionary of technical terms of the mystics, Ibn al-‘Arabî glosses the word cosmic dust (*al-habâ*) for ‘*Anqâ*’ as that “in which *God hollows out*” the bodies of this world (*fataha-llâhu fî-hi ajsâda ‘l-lâmi*); *Istîlâhât* 1947, 12.

³¹⁴ Q, 68:1. Cf. al-Qashânî, *Istîlâhât* 70 and 98, where the Pen stands for “knowledge in detail” (‘*ilm al-tafsîl*’) and the inkwell (*dawâh*) emblemizes knowledge in its undifferentiated totality (‘*ilm al-ijmâl*’).

³¹⁵ F II 675, 10–11. This *Emerald tablet* we have already studied, see above n.109. Kraus is probably right in reading this *emerald*, the stone of Hermes, as a reference to the esoteric doctrine required for the proper understanding of the actual text of Apollonios. Kraus 1986, 303 The expression for “dust” comes from *habâ’ manthûr*, Q 25:23, a term which has no ontological connotations in the Qur’ânic context. For Jâbir as well as Ibn al-‘Arabî, however, this cosmic dust is equated with substance (*jawhar*) and *materia prima*, *hayûlâ*. Ibn al-‘Arabî explains in the long Ch.198 of the *Futûhât* and its part 14 on the letter *Hâ’* (F II 431–35) that this substance has no entified existence (*wujûd ‘aynî*) and is thus like the the elemental qualities (natures) and is called by the sages (*al-hukamâ*) *hayûlâ* (F II 432.8). *Habâ’* is also called here the substance principle (*arkân*). Further, he notes that he has called it elsewhere the ‘*Anqâ*’ (F II 432.3). It is interesting to note that in the *DA* I 2, 404 a3 and 18, Aristotle refers to Democritus who likens the soul to the “motes (*ksysmata*) in the air, which can be seen in the sunbeams passing through the windows.” The Pythagoreans seem to entail the same view: “some of them say the soul is identical with the particles in the air, and others with what makes these particles move.” Kraus makes a note also of Hunayn b. Ishâq explaining the notion *imperceptible* (*ghair mahsûs: anaisthêton*) by referring to dust-particles (*al-habâ’*) floating in the air invisibly (*lam yatabayan lanâ*) until a ray of sun hits them making them visible. Kraus 1986, 154 n6

³¹⁶ *Sab ‘în*, Kraus 1935, 482: 5–6, Arabic text in Haq 1994, 78 n52 The first matter is sometimes referred to also as *tîna* (clay, like *ekmageion* Tim.53 A-B), the combination of dust and water out of which the human being was created, in contrast of the luminous heaven as a combination of air and fire out of which the angels and the *jinn* were created. See SDG 281. Kraus mentions also the dichotomy between celestial matter (*hayûlâ samâwiyya*) and worldly or lowly clay: (*tîna ardiyya* or *sufâlâniyya*). See Kraus 1986, 171 n.1. The thorny question whether the celestial fifth element has the *same* prime matter as the four terrestrial elements, was also discussed among the commentators of Aristotle. If it is the same, then all bodies are equally perishable (Alexander of Aphrodisias), or equally imperishable (Simplicius), but if not the same, then prime matter is no more “simple, but will be a compound involving differentia and qualities, to provide the differentiation,” as Sorabji formulates in his fine discussion on Simplicius. Sorabji 1988, 14–15.

producing their effects in this world: “to every reality there is a corresponding Name that is specific to it, and that is its Lord” (Ch.4: F I,99.32–33, see Chodkiewicz in MR II.29). For him these names or attributes are no mere logical abstractions, nor do they exist as such, except through the beings they manifest and for which they are the “keyes” (ibid.). Thus, for Ibn al-‘Arabí the accidents (*al-arad*), like the elemental qualities, are inherent in the substance (*qiâmahu bi’l-jawhar*) in the same way as Man is “localized” (*tahayyuz*) in divine knowledge (F I 54.5–6). In fact they are inherent in the fifth element as their substance. **Here we have a far-reaching comparison covering both physical and metaphysical theory**, and, as we now could add, this is also an example of the use of the alchemical principle of “as above so below.” As a physical theory this states that **the elemental qualities** like coldness, heat, wetness and dryness are *in* entities appearing through these qualities as qualified substances. They **are not human mental constructions but simple qualities manifested as properties for sense-impressions**: we can touch and see wetness or dryness even though they as such are incorporeals. As a metaphysical position we have here the equation of **inherence in substance** and inherence in God’s knowledge. **Qualities are latent in entities like entities are latent in God’s knowledge**. Here we have something like the Aristotelian *hylê* striving and “yearning” for forms and its opposite, *eidos* providing forms and informing these material possibilities. Yet these Muslim Sages are talking about *hylê* as something concrete, a *tode tí*, something knowable, and a concrete substance (*jawhar*) receptive to all forms. For Aristotle, instead, *hylê* is unknowable in itself (*Met* VII 10, 1036 a 9–10), it can only be reached through analogy. Furthermore, *hylê* can never be a substance (*Met* VII 3, 1029 a 11–12) since for him substance is always something concrete: an individually existing thing, this scripture, that tree, Ibn al-‘Arabí etc.

Ibn al-‘Arabí refers in his Science of Letters and the First Principles to a difference of opinion in the speculations of the naturalists or *physicists* (*ashâb al-tabâ’i*) regarding the fifth existent (*mawjûd hâmis*), the root of these elements (*arkân*). With regard to his own metaphysical doctrine of Letters the question concerns the position of the first letter ‘*alif*’ as the [all-inclusive] spiritual *sphere* and foundation of all other letters (F I 56.12–13), or the subsistence of letters, *qayyûm al hurûf* (in *K.al-Alif*, 12 line 20 using the important Qur’anic *qayyûm*, like Q II:256): “All the letters come from the essential reality of *alif* [...]. Likewise there is a fifth existent, which is the basis for the elements (arkân). This is a point of disagreement in the speculations of natural philosophers.” And while discussing this fifth element Ibn al-‘Arabí tells us somewhat cryptically that “The Sage (*al-Hakîm*) mentions this problem in his “Elements” (*Ustuqussât*) but he does not give more information on the question.”³¹⁷ Who is this

³¹⁷For a translation, see Denis Grill MR II 158. In Spanish, Asin Palacios 1931, 103

Hakîm and which book of Elements is Ibn al-‘Arabî referring to? And what is this disagreement among the speculative thinkers with regard to the fifth element? He does not specify but simply continues: ” I have no further knowledge on this question which I did not come about through reading physics, *the natural sciences* (‘ilm al-tabâ’i), with *his* followers (*alâ’ ahlihi*)” (F I 56.14).” Ibn al-‘Arabî did not learn about this difference through reading physics with these people—of course not, because he receives knowledge only from God, not by reading. But he does know a school of natural philosophers and now happens to come accross their different opinions concerning the fifth element. He is here obviously referring to the just mentioned Sage, who now also appears to have followers, the school of natural scientists, so to say.³¹⁸ “And, so it happened that one day a friend of mine who was a student of medicine came in with *this* book in his hand. He asked me to expound this question for him (*umashshâhu lahu*) according to our knowledge of intuitive insight (*min jihat al-kashf*), instead knowledge from the books or speculation (*lâ min jihat al-qarâ’at wa al-nazar*). He then read me the book, and I noted the point of divergence just mentioned, otherwise I would not have known that there were differences of opinion on the matter ” (F I 56.14–17).

In a note Kraus mentions Râzî, referring to a now lost work by Galen *On Scientific Proofs* (*peri apodeixeôs*) where this topic is discussed: accordingly, Galen says that substance is the first body (*al-jawhar huwa al-jismu-l’awwal*)³¹⁹, the substrate (*mawdu’* Gr. *hupokeimenon*) of all generation and corruption and which is in its essence non-qualified and therefore indefinite. Râzî disagrees with *hâyûla* being a body (*jism*), a stance held by the *physicists* (*ashâb al-tabâ’i*) mentioned above by Ibn al-‘Arabî, though Râzî too does accept it as substance, *jawhar*. He points out that the philosophers disagree whether the substrate of generation and corruption is a body or not. We have already noted that for Aristotle *hylê* is a “potential perceptible body” (*dunámei sôma aisthêton*; GC II 1, 329 a 34, see above I.B.4 p.37). Râzî, being a famous physician would thus be a possible option as the *Hakîm* and author of the mentioned book, though we do not know of a book on Elements written by him. Similarly, although Asin Palacios (1931), the first translator of this passage into Spanish simply takes the *Hakîm* as referring to Aristotle, as he is usually known in the Arabic world, here, however, Ibn al-‘Arabî is probably not referring to Aristotle, who does not have a book on Elements and is in no way relevant for studies in medicine, implied here. A far fetched possibility considered by Rosenthal (1988, 20) could be a reference to the Book of Letters, as the Metaphysics of Aristotle was known, but this is quite unlikely. Therefore, Denis Grill, the second translator of this passage now into French, suggests that *al-Hakîm* refers here instead to Galen and his “Book on the Elements according to Hippokrates” (*Kitâb al-*

³¹⁸ Referring to Gimaret, Journal Asiatique 1985, Denis Grill notes: The “Partisans of natures”, those *who explain the generation of the universe by the interaction of the four fundamental natures*. MR II 2004, p.203 n.200

³¹⁹ Kraus 1986, p.170 n4; the equation of Materia Prima (*prôtê hulê*) with substance (*ousia*) is the basic Stoic position. DL VII.150

‘anâsir, known also as *fi’l ustquussât alâ ra’y Buqrât*). This is a quite likely possibility as Galen was widely translated and read in the Islamic world and to my knowledge he is the other Greek thinker besides Plato mentioned by name in the *Futûhât* (F III 113.6). Galen would of course also be a natural author for a student of medicine, as is here specified. However, there is also a third option and the reference could be to Jâbir’s ”Book of Elements of Foundation according to the Opinion of the Philosophers,” *Kitâb al-ustuquuss al-uss ‘alâ ra’y al-falâsifa* (Kr. 6–9), in which Jâbir discusses the elemental theory of antiquity in terms of alchemy (and also Galen). This passage of the *Futûhât* is not clear and may have deliberately been written so by Ibn al-‘Arabî, safeguarding his claimed illiteracy.

Haq says in connection with this theme of substance in Jâbir that he was not interested in theoretical speculations or arguments and proofs: he introduces this notion of substance “as a cosmological necessity, only to slip it into the background. As a practically minded alchemist, he did not have much use for substance: it was common to all things of the world, it was unique, and it did not admit any alchemical operations.”³²⁰ This would well suit Ibn al-‘Arabî’s comment that there is not much to learn on this question from the *Book on Elements* of *al-hakîm*. Jâbir would also be fit for the names *Hakîm* and the *ashâb al-tabâ’i*, the physicists mention in the text. In any case, whether Ibn al-‘Arabî is here referring to Râzî, Galen or Jâbir, this passage clearly shows he followed the scientific discussions of his day and was well versed in them. I consider it important that Ibn al-‘Arabî here denies having learned about this controversy between the physicists and philosophers in what he studied by reading with “his people.” With who’s people? —Undoubtedly the one who is here called *Hakîm*. In answering this question I presume Jâbir would be the best guess, as through him we are immediately amidst all the other candidates too.

This passage is also typical in that here Ibn al-‘Arabî is asked to explain a problem argued by the scientists and philosophers through his own intuitive revealed knowledge (*kashf*).

III.2.7 Conclusion of the science of balance as *peri physeôs* –tardition in Islam

We have been following a tradition of natural science in Islam as the cosmological foundation of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s thinking. On the whole here we have a very different kind of channel and motive for Aristotelian influences than in the “onto-theological” (Cf. Part II above) motives of St. Thomas of Aquinas in unifying Aristotelian philosophy with Christian dogma in Medieval Europe. Here the

³²⁰ Haq 1994, 57

interest is more practical than theoretical. In the Islamic context the study of life-sciences, of nature and living things, is “to observe the ‘signs of God’ (*âyat*³²¹) and to derive moral and spiritual benefit from them” [...in order to gain] “a greater understanding of Unity (*tawhîd*).”³²²

Seen from a Greek perspective, the fundamental notion of Aristotelian world is *taxis*, order : “for nature is everywhere a cause of order (*hê gàr physis aitía pâsin táxeôs*, *Phys* VIII.1, 252 a11–14) because nature is a principle of order (*taxis*) and regularity, and, also, “there is an order for all things” (*GC* II 10, 336 b12). On the other hand, here one might argue against the above stated kinship between Aristotelian and Islamic viewpoints on nature by saying that the Aristotelian god is not an ordering or creating God of the universe, and that the Aristotelian order is not imposed on nature by a god precisely because *nature is itself this gathering principle of order and regularity*.³²³ But even here Ibn al-‘Arabí would feel no inconvenience as God in Himself is absolutely beyond creation and has no causal connection what so ever with the worlds. In Himself God is absolutely *agnóstos*, unknowable: “He is not caused by anything (*lâ mâlûl ‘an shay’ⁱⁿ*), nor is He the cause of anything (*wa lâ ‘illat li-shay’ⁱⁿ*). On the contrary, He is the Creator of the effects and causes, the King, the All-Holy, who always was (*alladhî lam yazal*).”³²⁴

However, it was precisely due to this principle of order inherent in nature as a power that governs the universe that the alchemists were working in conformity with nature, not against it.³²⁵ “Nature is a symbol of the Absolute, but *true* nature, not an imaginary nature,” as Bausani puts it.³²⁶ Ultimately, if all manifestation and therefore nature on the whole is understood as the “Breath of the Compassionate” (*nafas al-rahmân*) as Ibn al-‘Arabí does (see pp.174, 178 and 323), then one gets an intimate picture of the alchemist working in his/her universal laboratory, exhaling and inhaling, disseminating and gathering qualities together and developing the everchanging and unique “Self-Disclosures of God” in temporality. “The Shaykh compares the Breath of the All-merciful to the human breath in order to provide an analogy for the creative process. [...] Thus breath is a vapour, relieves constriction in the breast, and is a vehicle for words; in the same way the Breath of the All-merciful is a Cloud [‘*amâ*’],

³²¹ *Âyat* is a word referring to both “signs” and verses of the Qur’ân.

³²² Nasr in *CHI* IV, 401. *Tawhîd*, the declaration of God’s unity as the core of Islâm; see above, pp.152, 255, and 288

³²³ Johnson 2005, 250: “Aristotle would reject both creationism and the ‘big bang’ hypothesis, as pieces of cosmological reasoning, for the same reason: neither can be considered an explanation of natural phenomenon.”

³²⁴ *F* I 90.12, *SDG* 17 *Lam yazal*, “that which has never ceased to be”, a term used by *kalâm* dialecticians to express that an eternal thing cannot possibly not exist, and therefore, an eternal thing is (in Avicennian terms) *necessary of existence* (*wâjib al-wujûd*). Another typical use of the expression appears in an-Nazzâm’s formula: God “never stops being eternal in Himself “[*lam yazal qadîman bi-nafsihi*]. See Wisnovsky 2003, 230, and the whole Ch.13, pp.227–43.

³²⁵ See Nasr 1968, 256

³²⁶ Bausani 1977, 126

relieves the constriction of immutable entities [...], and is the vehicle for God's words, which are the creatures."³²⁷

For the alchemists the decisive moment in all Genesis and Corruption is the mystery of manifestation. This is the basic question in asking how the incompatible and complementary basic invisible qualities of all nature combine into a harmonious whole of the visible elements. There is a reality reached only through intellect and a reality that manifests itself in various compositions of natures. We have seen that one way of bridging these two realities is to be found in the science of letters, where the phonetic syllables of letters are related to the elemental realities of physical nature. In this theory the fifth element was likened to the first beginning of all letters, the silent and unpronounced 'alif with the *hamza* or glottal stop standing for the first intelligence and the medium of the rest of creation. The position of this first letter in the alphabet is like the name Allâh as the gatherer of all other divine names. (F I 65.25)

Thus, in Ch.198 of the *Futûhât* where Ibn al-‘Arabî clarifies “the entire affair’s situation,” he says “the entire affair is God (al-haqq/The Real) and creation (*al-khalq*). It is sheer *wujûd* (*al-wujûd al-mahd*) without beginning and end, sheer possibility without beginning and end, and sheer nonexistence without beginning and end” (F II.426.27-28). God—possible—impossible: here the possible stands between what is impossible and what is necessary, consisting therefor of both light (*existence*) and darkness, nature (*tabî‘a*)³²⁸. These two we have learned to be the High Fathers and the Lowly Mothers. These two realities are also depicted by Ibn al-‘Arabî as Unified original totality of existence (*al-wujûd al-ja‘mi‘a ‘aslan*, F I.64.30) as reality before its differentiation (*tafrîq*) into entified plurality of existents, like all the numbers originate from the number One. This is further backed up (Q 44:3-4): “By the clear Book. We have sent it down in a blessed night [...] Therein every wise bidding determined” and a “distinguishing of everything” (Q 7:145). Thus, the Wise Book was revealed in the single Night of Power (*laylatu ‘l-qadr*, night standing also for pure potentiality) and its unity was dispersed into the plurality of its verses (*ayât*). And, finally this structure of revelation is brought back to the human being as the gathering essence (‘ayn *al-ja‘mi‘*) of the cosmos and the cosmos itself as the essence of dispersion (*al-a‘âlam fî ayin al-tafrîq*). And once again this One/Many is combined together as Adam and Eve: “Adam is for the totality of attributes (*jamî‘l-sifât*), and Eve for the difference of essents (*tafrîq al-dhawât*), since she is the receptacle of Act (*mahall al-fa‘el*) and of dissemination (*badhr*)

³²⁷SPK 127”The immutable entities” or”fixed entities” refers to things in God’s knowledge. See above, n 478, n 555

³²⁸ This is one sense of the word nature, the other being the universal *hylê* and the Breath of the All-Merciful, called also the Greatest Nature (*al-tâbi‘at al-uzmâ*, F III.420.34). In the second respect nature is purely receptive and passive, also called “the daughter.” (F III.420.18-22)

Thus the Qur'ân (Q 45:13) says “*And He [God] subjected to you [sakhkhara lakum] what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, all together, from Him. Surely in that are signs for people who reflect.*”

These eclectic and germinating ideas of ancient physical sciences brought together with the fundamental Qur'ânic principle of divine breath of the All-Mercifull as the existentiating force of all worlds, expounded as the science of balance or Alchemy, are certainly at the heart of that man who was to become Ibn al-Arabî.³²⁹ “Alchemy”, as S.H.Nasr writes, “was a way to ennoble matter. It was both a science and a technique, concerned at once with psychology, cosmology and art. [...] It was moreover, the way in which the spirit of Islam was able to penetrate the material environment in which it breathed and to leave upon it its imprint.”³³⁰

In alchemy this activating principle of transformation is at the heart of refining raw materials, whether the question is of the transmutation of base metals into silver and gold (*ars aurifera*); or, “refining a malignant and coarse personality to become benign and supple; or transforming an unbeliever into a believer” (examples given by Ibn al-‘Arabî). The principle itself is one, but its effects are various depending on the “matrix”, that is, on the nature of the refined and receptive object.³³¹ Therefore this principle is applicable also to objects of thought and spiritual states, though here one would rather of course talk of motives, desires and deliberation as the impetus for thought or action. Ultimately, Red

³²⁹ For an early speculation on possible Hermetic sources of Ibn al-‘Arabî, see Nyberg 1919, 148–151. Nyberg, however, could not know about Jâbir’s work as it was not yet discovered by his time. René Guénon, though not an ideal source for academic studies, is nevertheless right in saying: “Deep down, these two sciences [‘science of balance/letters’ and ‘alchemy’] are actually one and the same. What they express, in quite different ways, is nothing other than the very process of initiation, which is a strict reproduction of the cosmogonic process, *the total realization of being’s possibilities* [la réalisation total d’un être] taking place necessarily, passing through the same phases as those of Universal Existence”. [Italics mine.] Guénon 1992, 53–54. Denis Grill quotes this passage of Guénon in dealing with Ibn al-‘Arabî’s “science of letters” MR II. p.144. Here Guénon is in fact expressing a Proclean teaching of the human soul as the spontaneous recapitulation of the entire [emanative] procession and the “self-constituting” character of all authentic being: “the entire procession is intrinsic to each psycho-noetic subject,” as Trouillard outlines the Proclean position; quoted through Hankey 2006, 195.

³³⁰ CHI Vol.IV, 411–412.

³³¹ *Tadbîrât* 219, 5 a work Ibn al-‘Arabî wrote just before the *Fabulous Gryphon*. In his first Ch. of the *Tadbîrât* Ibn al-‘Arabî tells how he wrote this work on the Sûfî teachings on governing the human [microcosmic] realm after reading the work on secular politics written by “Aristotle” for Alexander the Great known as *Sirr al-asrâr*. This work was translated by Roger Bacon into Latin as *Secretum secretorum*: “*Book of the science of government, on the good ordering of statecraft* .” *Tadbîrât*, ed. Nyberg 1919, 120 and his brief discussion on the work, pp. 15–19, where he finds the *Sirr al-asrâr* to be a work fully in line with the thought of *Ikhwân al-Safâ*. See also ‘*Anqâ* I.II., Elmore 1999, 237. As the quoted examples of Ibn al-‘Arabî here show, he would agree with Carl G.Jung: “Certainly goldmaking, as also chemical research in general, was of great concern to alchemy, But still grater, more impassioned concern appears to have been—one cannot very well say ‘investigation’—but rather *experience* of the unconscious.” Jung 1983, 237 Instead of the Jungian term unconscious “known for close on two thousand years”, as Jung here estimates (p.238), Ibn al-‘Arabî could perhaps speak about “your concealed world” (‘*âlam ghaybi-ka*, see above p.231) as your not yet unconcealed i.e. your potential world. Thus, it is not only an immanent psychological realm but also a transcendent spiritual realm. See also above n.27. W.J.Hankey notes that one initial attraction of the philosophy of Plotinus “for the twentieth-century French philosophy lies in his analysis of consciousness,” and, ultimately, what lies beyond and under it. Further, he writes: “It is not accidental that the unconscious figures largely in the philosophy of Plotinus—indeed he may be the first philosopher to make it fundamental—and a notion such as ‘preintentional consciousness’ is helpful in considering the way in which the One of Plotinus apprehends” Hankey 2006, 113.

sulphur is the “philosophers stone” (*lapis philosophorum*), the coagulating “substance” of the final goal of the alchemical interaction, “work”, *Opus*. On the other hand, this principle is also referred to in its complementary form by Ibn al-‘Arabí as *al-iksîr*, the *elixir vitae* (Gr. *fármakon dzoês*), the equivalent of “*tinctura*” (medicinal solution) in Latin alchemy, or the absolving and dissolving receptive principle, *Mercurius* (Latin form of Greek Hermes): “the healer [*salvator*] of all imperfect bodies.”³³²

The fundamental role of this activating and fiery principle of spirit is well expressed by Jâbir in a passage written as if it were from the dialogue of *Timaeus* by Plato, although it is clearly an exposition of Jâbir’s own basic alchemical notions. Thus we can read from the supposed *Book of Soul* by Plato:

he [*al-Marrâkushî*, the locutor] says, O Timawus, it has been established that the principles and ends of all operations [of the Art] are nothing less and nothing more than the four [elemental] foundations. Know that the maintaining and subsisting of the animal reposes on the spirit [...] And the Spirit is nothing but the space embracing this world [...] and Art [Alchemy] is like the human being; the all-encompassing macrocosmic sphere living like the human being as its microcosm is living [...] or, if it is true that the world or the sphere is living like the human being is living, then the Art, resembling the human being, is undoubtedly also in need of a spirit. Indeed, this Spirit in Art is Mercury. Lo Timawus! Anyone who knows the proper proceedings with this mercury, knowing how to attach it to the other three elements [of the Art], indeed, he can accomplish extraordinary things and work wonders.³³³

Here we have an in-gathering spherical Spirit paralleled by the human microcosmic kernel and the alchemical mercurial double principle depicted as one of the “fathers and mothers” through which the universe operates. According to Jâbir Plato says: “Don’t you now, my son that the world consists of Fire, Air, Water and Earth. If you ever happen to wish combining these elements, you will have to produce a world.”

As a discriminating principle, however, this double principle of sulphur-mercury is also necessarily a *complexio oppositorum*: dry and wet, hot and cold, solid and liquid, light and shadow, the manifest and the hidden, the one differentiating from the other. This double nature is clearly expressed in Islamic mystical literature in the double nature of the Ego/soul, *nafs*, itself: both “as a problem to be overcome, and as the ‘object’ of study for those who would like to situate the human reality within the cosmos.”³³⁴

The soul, like *materia prima*, is negative as it is the source of multiplicity of individuation, but at the same time it is positive in as much as it is the only mirror for the Divine Principle, the only possible way of reflecting the all-inclusive Essence.

³³² *Musaeum Hermeticum*, quoted through Jung 1983, 235

³³³ Quoted through Kraus 1986, 50 Kraus notes that such works referring directly to Plato’s “*Tetralogies*” (Ar. *rawâbu pl. of râbû*) seem to go back to *Harranian* circles in Bagdad. Ibid. 51

³³⁴ Jung 1983, 235–44 SDG, 270

As a principle this “Red Sulphur”, or its compound, Mercury, is beyond good and evil, precisely as it is the working differentiating principle in whatever we present as good or evil: it is truly the *stella matutina*, the star heralding both evening and morning, said to be male in the morning and female in the evening.³³⁵ This original and inherent duality of opposition gives this herald also invulnerability and incorruptibility because it lacks a permanent nature that could be wounded or corrupted. And, indeed, to draw all this together: Ibn al-‘Arabí was himself known amongst his followers as *Kibrîr al-ahmar*, the fiery discriminating and activating Red Sulphur of alchemy. This honorific probably describing adequately the “scintillating personality and thought” of Ibn al-‘Arabí, as Franz Rosenthal notes as well as the Science of Saints he was heralding. This is also a name chosen by Claude Addas for her thorough biography of Ibn al-‘Arabí: “*Quest for the Red Sulphur, the Life of Ibn al-‘Arabí*.”³³⁶

There is no doubt on the vast influence of Plotinus and Neoplatonism in the late Greco-Roman and early Islamic world on the whole, but the Neoplatonic interest is always more on the intellectual and ideal side, to the extent that for Neo-Platonism, the material world lacks any positive reality. Consequently, as “non-being” the material world is viewed as a cause of the weakness of the soul: “while metaphysically nothing it can be morally damaging,” as J.M.Rist formulates the Plotinian stance on matter.³³⁷

In the case of alchemy and Jâbir ibn Hayyân particularly, the order of interest is reversed and derived directly from Aristotle³³⁸, beginning with the theory of elements as principles (Gr. *arkhê*) or *usûl*, “roots” (Ar.sg. *asl* Gr. *ridza*) and their respective passive (*dunámeis*) or active (*poiôtês*) opposite qualities (*enantiotêis*) effecting one another and being effected by one another, like the feminine desiring for the masculine form (*Phys.I.9, 192 a10-25*). Or, in other words, starting from elemental possibilities and proceeding towards (Neoplatonic *epistrophê*) combined actualities as explained in GC II 2 [= *kitâb al-kawn wa’l-fasâd*] and directly applied and quoted by Jâbir (in *Book of LXX*) with their commentaries.³³⁹

³³⁵ Pope 1977, 572

³³⁶ Rosenthal 1988, 33 *Ibn ‘Arabí ou La quête du Souffre Rouge*. See Addas 1993, n112 n.10 The name of the chemical arsenic (As) meant originally “masculine”, “strong”, “manly” (*ársên*). Thus in Arabic “Red man” (*dhakar akhmar*) is a name for arsenic, often used in alchemy, not as the poison but as referring to the means whereby Sulphur and Mercury are combined as the *lapis philosophorum*. See, Ruska 1926, 52 n 3, and Jung 1989, 164

³³⁷ Rist 1967, 128 Kraus, instead, formulates the Jabîrean point: “*Pour Jâbir, le monde intelligible ne représente qu’une prolongation du monde matériel et l’auteur ne s’y intéresse guère que pour donner une justification probante de sa physique.*” Kraus, 1986, 150

³³⁸ Kraus 1986, 163

³³⁹ Kraus 1986, 162-63 and 156, where the eternal Substance (God) and imperfect contingent matter are said to be in a sexual relation with one another. Thus the human sexual desire is compared to the desire of matter for a union with the eternal Substance. The elemental theory was transmitted mainly by Aristotle’s *Meteorology* and *On Generation and Corruption*. Kraus also notes that in the later oriental tradition, like in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadhîm, alchemical doctrines are attributed quite often to Aristotle, but these are very rarely quoted by Jâbir, whereas all generally known works of Aristotle are in frequent use *Ibid.* 45 n.6. On the other hand, Plato’s *Timaeus* is mentioned as Plato’s alchemical teaching for his disciple

Similarly, in Ibn al-‘Arabí his point seems to be so thoroughly embedded in the human potentiality as *dúnamis-hylê* and the overall hylo-morphic structure that it is difficult to say from which principle he derives more inspiration, the *carrier* (*hâmil*) or the *carried* (*mahmûl*) as he also calls them. This probably also explains his high respect for the female principle in the whole of Universe. It is quite telling that his long and central Chapter 198 of the *Futûhât* devoted to the Breath of the All-Merciful and its articulation in language as the cosmos begins at the end of the creation-process. Although it would be natural to start this “emanation” from the highest principle slowly descending into the ever widening and darkening realms of phenomenal existence, Ibn al-‘Arabí takes the opposite direction in his exposition, starting with animals and plants and minerals and then slowly rising to the elements of the sublunar world, the nine heavens above, the Footstool, the Throne, the All Body, the Universal Soul and the First Intellect. “The Breath of the All-Merciful never ceases turning its face, and nature never ceases coming to be as forms belonging to this Breath.” (F II 427.25-26, SDG 370)

III.3. Sun Rising from the West

An intimate conversation with the Self: O Self, You have made us absent to ourselves, and we found ourselves again by starting with ourselves, in absence (ghayb).

Rasâil 1948, Kitâb al-yâ 12, MR II 243.

In the anagram of Part Two in this study above Heidegger spoke of a strange phenomena of not living one’s own life. He wrote: “Dasein as being-with is lived by the Mitdasein of others and by the world that concerns it in this or that way. Precisely in its ownmost everyday activity Dasein as being with others is not itself. Instead it is the others who live one’s own Dasein.” Above, in an intimate conversation with the Self, Ibn al-‘Arabí seems to take up the same problem 700 years earlier. Furthermore, there we had another reference on Aristotle somewhat on the same lines considering it strange if one did not choose one’s own life.

tîmâwus, but only in very few exceptions (*Tim* 27 D; 36 B-C) these references have anything to do with the actual Platonic dialogue. *Ibid.* p.48 and n.7 Socrates is, nevertheless, quite generally called by Jâbir “the Mother and Farther of all philosophers” and the “prototype of all alchemists” and the “Socratic science” (*al-‘ilm al-Sucrâtî*) represents the highest form of alchemical wisdom. *Ibid.* 52. On the other hand, numerous references in the Jâbirean corpus are both to works and philosophers – many of whom are probably of Indian origin – lost or unknown to us.

As mentioned at the beginning of section III.1., Ibn al-‘Arabí’s life can be historically divided into two separate periods: his first 37 years in the “western” lands of *Maghreb* and al-Andalus and the rest of his life spent in the Middle East (*sharq al-wustâ*) and mainly in the city of Damascus, where he also died in 1240 CE. It was also noted that when he left the West he had—according to his own criterion—attained the highest mystical “station,” the *maqâm al-qurba*³⁴⁰, Proximity to God. This being called the last station refers to an end in distinctions: all stations of the mystical path are names for distinct dispositions of the soul as its *definitions* (Gr.*horismos*). They come to an end when all there is is that one single ipseity (*huwiyya ahadiyya*) with a diversity of forms; here the mystic verifies God as the essential identity of all things (‘*ayn kulli shay*’).³⁴¹ Ibn al-‘Arabí describes this last station through an utmost experience of solitude (*al-wahdah*), an alienation (*wahshah*) in the wilderness even in his physical surroundings as this station was opened to him in the remote westernmost fringes of the world, the forlorn costal area of Magrib [in modern Morocco the road from Marrakesh to Salé] in Oct.–Nov. 1200 at the age of 35.³⁴² The name of the station, though explained by the Shaikh to come from a work of al-Sulâmî, refers obviously to passage of the Qur’ân speaking of those “brought near to God” (*muqarrabûn*) [like Jesus, Q 3:45, or “those who are close,” the angels Q 4:172 or, “the foremost of people”, Q 56:11]. This station is the highest and also the liberation from all stations, a completion—but not of course an end as extinction. Instead, this station gathers together the exhortation of the Prophet to know one’s self and the Qur’ânic verse: “We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it [He] is the truth.” (Q 41:53), as Ibn al-‘Arabí later wrote in describing the way through stations to the liberation from all stations (Ch.420, F IV.28.27-28). In the words of Ibn al-‘Arabi (MR II 225):

*There is, in existence, nothing but Him,
look at Him as I have looked at Him, you will find Him in the Self.*

By the time of this early completion of his mystical path he had also finished his first widely read early mystical work known as ‘*Anqâ al-Mughrib*. I will later come back in detail to this early work and its strange title, the *Fabulous Gryphon* [‘*Anqâ al-mughrib*], but here a note should be made on the subtitle: *The Sun of the West* [*shams al-maghrib*]. This is an expression denoting to a well known Islamic

³⁴⁰ The theme of a letter called *K.al-qurba* in the Rasâ’il 1948, where he also mentions a book of al-Sulâmî’s (d.1021 in Nishapur) in which he found the name for this station. In this passage of the *Futûhât* Ibn al-‘Arabí tells of his meeting in his solitude with al-Sulâmî (F II.261.10), who had died (80 years earlier!) in this spiritual high station and could therefore now guide Ibn al-‘Arabí to “realize himself with it” (*fa tahaqqaq bi-hi*, line 21). I did, and a vast station it is (*maqâm azîz*, F II 261.21), concludes Ibn al-‘Arabí.

³⁴¹ Grill, in MR II, 226

³⁴² *Futûhât* II.260.15–261.21 Addas 174–75, Elmore 1999, 70–73, Grill in MR II, 234–38. *Maqâm al-Qurba* as next to prophethood and attached to *mâlamiyah*, the “blamed ones,” on whom al-Sulâmî had written in his *Tabaqât al-Sûfiyah*, and the “Solitary ones” (*al-afrâd*), see Ch.23 in F I 181. For the Blamed ones, see Hujwârî, 62-69.

tradition on eschatological signs [*ashrât al-sâ'ah*], signs of the End. One of these signs is “the sun rising from the place of setting/west” [*tulû' al-shamsi min maghribi-hâ*]³⁴³, quoted by Ibn al-‘Arabî in ‘*Anqâ* I.2. p.258, see also F IV.434.17-19 tr.in SDG 273]. According to Henry Corbin this paradoxical expression of *the sun rising from the west* is one of the oldest symbols of shî’a *gnosis* and its meaning is therefore not to be taken in the literal sense of the cardinal points of the world or according to human conventions as seeing the sun rise or set; instead, says Corbin, the *true* sense is spiritual, denoting here to the closing down or opening up of spiritual seeing and enlightenment. He particularly mentions Jâbir ibn Hayyân in this connection using this symbol as an inauguration of a new cycle.³⁴⁴

In the Fabulous Gryphon Ibn al-‘Arabî presents his teaching of spiritual uprising [*nash'ah al-rûhânîyah*]³⁴⁵ as the moment when the purely intelligible [*al-ma'qûl*] becomes tangible [*mahsûs*] and as the real meaning of this well-known tradition. Moreover, as things of this sort can be known only through personal experience, he presents himself as the one having accomplished this wonder of wonders, the *possibility* of human perfection/completion.³⁴⁶ Thus, concerning the technique of his writing in general, Ibn al-‘Arabî says he is first referring to the Greater (external) world which is better known, like here this eschatological tradition, and only later drawing comparisons between this external principle and its inner Secret deposited in Man: “my purpose is ever [the Gnosis] of that which is in the Human Essence itself [*al-'ayn al-insânî*].”³⁴⁷ This can well be called an “Aristotelian principle”: proceeding from what is more familiar to us [Greek: *tà êmin saféstera*], to that which is clearer by nature [*ta saféséra tê fúsei*, *Phys.* I.1, 184a16; see pp 28 and 135 above]. The complete or perfected human essence as what it was to be, is by itself perfectly clear, though not of course before it opens up as such.

Therefore, here, in the particular connection of the eschatological sign of the sun rising from the west, Ibn al-‘Arabî writes: “The ‘Sun rising from the West’ is the lights of Intellections arising in the world of your Transcendence [*‘âlam ghaybi-ka*, the hidden spiritual interiority, or, as modern man might say: the “unconscious”], that which manifests [*tajallâ*] the Secrets of Particularization and Generalization [*asrâr al-khusûs wa-l-'umûm*] to your heart.” (‘*Anqâ*, I.5, Elmore 1999, 291.) Thus, he is talking about a

³⁴³ Ibn Majâh, *Fitân* 28, quoted through Elmore 1999, 539. See also the article *kiyâma* in *SEI* 265a

³⁴⁴ Corbin 1979, 289-90 and 292 n32 Kingsley also attaches this Islamic eschatological sign to Jâbir ibn Hayyân Kingsley 1995, 377 n19 unfortunately neither one provides any references.

³⁴⁵ The term *nash'ah* is referring often to the human “form” or human “level” (*nash'ah al-insânîyah*) but used by Ibn al-‘Arabî in different connections denoting to growth and upcoming. It goes back to Q 56:62, literally first “arising” or “appearing [in existence], divided further into first and second arising; Q 23:13 “then We [God] made him [man] arise as another creation”; 29:20 “then God causes the second growth to grow”, and 56:61, “We will make you arise within that which you do not know.”

³⁴⁶ In popular piety, and more so amongst the *shî'a* than the *sunni*, the expression “Western Sun” became a metonym for the promised leader and restorer of the last days, the *Mahdî*, also equated with the second coming of Jesus. See *EI*², vol.V, p.1234.

³⁴⁷ An expression referring also to his previous work *On Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom* to be dealt with further down. ‘*Anqâ*. I.2., Elmore 1999, 240

creative act of self-manifestation, the illuminating of latent but inherent possibilities of each human being. And this of course is the connection of this book to the present study: the *'Anqâ* presents the fundamental notion of potentiality in its concrete manifestation and foundation of the human spiritual uprising. Therefore, the highly symbolic and cryptic, though for Muslim ears also highly allusive title and subtitle of the book of *Fabulous Gryphon*, refers to the universal human quest in its entirety, the human possibility and its realization and completion, its *entelecheia* in terms of Aristotle, of which Ibn al-‘Arabî himself is here presented as a true example now actually rising from the West in the “fullness of time”, as Elmore designates his extensive study of this work with an Eckhartian term.³⁴⁸

Thus, roughly by the mid-point of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s life a major change took place, both metaphorically and concretely. A reformative change which he now depicts in the symbolic language of an eschatological sign: the natural course of the sun setting each evening in the west was brought to an end and a new cycle and course, now rising *De Profundis* in the furthest west of his existence, the spiritual sun rising again up from this eschatological end as the “*Sun of the reality of man*” [*shams haqîqat al-insân*]³⁴⁹—as a later commentator was to write. Through this thoroughgoing reformation Ibn al-‘Arabî now declares to be the king of the “city of my being” (*madînat wujûdî*).³⁴⁹ Thus, in Aristotelian terms, this mid-point of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s life would correspond to the soul having reached its first perfection and, now, through its full-blown capacities (like the ability to love and to know), emerging to proclaim the arising of the second perfection in the light of Muhammadan wisdom. And, as we already know from the earlier mentioned (above p.145) saying of the Prophet: “*Each of you is a shepherd (râ’in), and each of you is responsible for his flock (ra’iyatu-hu)*. Thus, [the Prophet] (May God bless and keep him!) established the Imâmate for every human being in himself (*fî nafsîhi*).”³⁵⁰

Here these two perfections are referred to as darkness after dusk and the sun rising from the west (*tulû al-shams al-maghrib*), like a new dawn, “*aurora consurgens*”, the “sun of the reality in man”, the

³⁴⁸ “Fullness of time” is a name Meister Eckhart gave to eternity: “what most characterizes this eternity that we can now experience is newness and the presence of newness now.” “This theme of realized eschatology, of the fullness of time now”, as Matthew Fox writes in commenting Eckhart “is developed at length by Eckhart.” For him being and being young are one. “For eternity would not be eternity if it could become new and were not continually the same” DW III, p.584, Fox 1980, p.111. The idea of continuous new creation (*khalq^{um} jadîd^{um}*, Q 50:15) is fundamental for Ibn al-‘Arabî. This idea of an ongoing creation also demands the infinity of possibility: the possible things in their state of non-existence are infinite in number (*lâ nihâya lah*). “Possibility is an inexhaustible Treasury (*khizâna*) from which God continues to create forever.” SPK 96 Elmore does “not hesitate to compare the Shaykh al-Akbar’s very considerable gifts as a stylist (as well as a thinker) to those of the father of German literature, Meister Johann Eckhart (d. 1328).” Elmore 1999, 96

³⁴⁹ Commentaries of al-Hijâzî and al-Sâ’dî on the *'Anqâ*; see Elmore 1999, 566 and 241 n.41. *De profundis* in Ps.130 refers to the soul crying out of the depths of darkness, waiting more eagerly for the dawn and the rising sun (*aurora*) than the watchmen for the morning.

³⁵⁰ Elmore 1999, 241 and 467 For the hadith quoted twice in the *'Anqâ*, I.2.and III.I; see, Concordance, II, 273a

human being reaching out for her perfection.³⁵¹ Moreover, the somewhat odd metaphorical association of Ibn al-‘Arabî in this early work between sun and darkness, or light of the sun setting and rising from the depths of material or chthonic darkness, is one of the fundamental tenets of a vast alchemical tradition.³⁵² One is reminded here of the “primeval waters” or the Egyptian “Nun”, the muddiness of the nutritive and fertilizing quality of newly emerged annual mounds emerging from the waters as the Nile flood receded. This was like the very beginning of the world itself, “the world-mound rising out of the primeval ocean, containing within it the promise of all that was to come.”³⁵³

There is, however, also in the Qur’ân (Q 18:83–98) a somewhat cryptic passage on a legendary figure called *Dhû l’qarnain*, literally *He of the [two] horns*, said to refer to Alexander the Great³⁵⁴, who travelled in East and West until he reached the westernmost place of the “sun setting in a muddy (dark) pool of water [‘*ain*ⁱⁿ *hami*’*at*ⁱⁿ]” (18:86).³⁵⁵ Thus, we have here a basic idea of a combination or solution between basic opposites like fire and water, love (*filia*) and hate (*neikos*) of Empedocles, or the opposites of *yang* and *yin* as constituents of the *Tao*, but also a basic alchemical theme of sulphur and mercury. In this Qur’ânic passage the dazzling celestial masculine hot and dry sun, and the dark, cool

³⁵¹ I have taken this Jewish parallel of mystical literature to illumine the universality of symbols in describing ultimate features of human life. *Song of Songs* 6:10: “beautiful as the dawn” [*quasi aurora consurgens*]. This is a name of a mystically oriented alchemical text known also as *Aurea Hora*, the Golden Moment. Ed, tr. and commented by Marie-Louise von Franz 1966. This early 14th century alchemical treatise, falsely attributed to St Thomas of Aquinas, is a commentary on various biblical texts, particularly on the *Song of Songs*. The *Canticum* is on the whole perhaps the most commented Old Testament books by both Jewish and Christian mystics, due to the wealth of experimental knowledge of God thought to be invested in its exstatic lines on love. Here, regarding the theme of night and darkness, a relevant line in the *Song of Songs* would be *Song* 1:5, where Wisdom (*Shekinâh*) says of herself: “Black am I and beautiful”, *Nigra sum et Formosa*, attributed also to *madonna nera*, Black Virgin, but also *Afrodite melainis* and the various black stones representing goddesses, including the Black Stone of the *Kâ’ba*. Also, the Indian black/white/red/saffron (her colour depending on the aspect) goddess Kali is said to be both beautiful and horrendous (comp. *Song* 6:10). All this is quite in line with what the alchemists meant with their double-natured mercury as both generative and corruptive female principle. The above line 1:5 of the *Song of Songs* makes St. Bernard in his famous commentary think about the beauty of the colour black in “the pupil of the eye” and he exclaims: “happy the darkness that begets radiance in the mind”. *Sermon* 25:3–5 On the *Song of Songs* 1983, II.51–52. For an exhaustive commentary on the *Song of Songs*, see Pope 1977, esp. pp. 307–19.

³⁵² Jung 1983, 192–250; 1978, 218–221, in this latter text, *Aion*, Jung quotes the *Enneads* VI.9.8, where the natural movement of the soul is said to be circular: “it [the soul] circles around something interior, around a centre [...]; for divinity consists in being attached to the centre.” He also takes up in this connection the common Gnostic idea of “spark” (Gr. *spinhêr*), corresponding to the “little spark of the soul” (*Seelenvünklein*) of Meister Eckart.

³⁵³ Rundle Clark, quoted through Iamblichus: *De Mysteris*, intro xxxix.

³⁵⁴ The expression of *two horns* refers to someone combining distinctive qualities in himself, like the use of sword/might and pen/knowledge in a man of distinction; a century is also called *qarn* as a distinctive passage of time. Similarly, in the feminine form *dhât al-qarnain* (Ruska 1926, 58) refers to the star Venus with its visible two-horned crescent.

³⁵⁵ In al-Qashânî’s commentary (and in clearly alchemical terms like also in the original Qur’ânic text, particularly 18:96), this “muddiness” refers to the mixture of the spiritual sun and the blackness of the compound bodily matter. In the Qur’ânic passage this distinguished figure of the Two Horns is presented as a ruler, a man of faith and might (“he followed a road”, 18:85), either punishing evildoers or showing kindness and reward to those working for the good, functioning thus in the same way as the distinguishing principle of alchemy. In the Yazdî/Alî tr. of the Qur’ân, this muddy fountain is said to refer possibly to real “muddy waters” in Lyncitis, present-day Ochrida, West of Macedonia, “the sources of which are thought to be underground springs of a limestone region owing to which the water could never be clear.” This detail would certainly suit and further point to the general elemental theory of Empedocles and the underground waters of *Nestis* as the spouse of underground fire, Hades. These muddy or dark blue waters and hidden underground rivers of fire and water flowing into a chasm are brought together by Plato in his mythical description of the underground world. *Phaedo* 111 D–E According to Kingsley, this myth is deriving, even down to its smallest details, from a Pythagorean source, equating *Phaidon* 112 a2 with the Homeric *Iliad* 8.14. Kingsley 1995, 192

and mixed feminine chthonic waters are conjoined. Jung quotes this passage from the Qur'ân while discussing the alchemical idea of *nigredo*, the point of melancholy and chaos, of death, decay and corruption (*Gr. pthorâ*), but also the starting point (*genesis*) of the *Magnum Opus* and, thus: *materia prima*.³⁵⁶ Here we again have a fundamental theme of generation and corruption.

In an early treatise on *Divine Governance* (see above pp 236 n 347 and 257 n 437), written slightly before the Fabulous Gryphon, Ibn al-‘Arabî discusses the human possibilities and perfections in alchemical terms of different jewels, saying that the finest of these jewels recides in the human heart, a black spot on the heart like the pupil of the eye, through which all seeing takes place (compare above St. Bernard in n.351). In the remembrance of God, an intense light is generated through this spot of the heart which now illuminates the whole human being with the presence of essential Reality [*al-hadratu ‘l-haqqu l-dhâtîya*], overwhelming the [rational] understanding into a speechless awe. Therefore this black jewel is called the jewel of hilarity or amazement (*hajar al-bahit* or *bâhit*, *bahta*).³⁵⁷ “If God is willing to keep you in this state of intense yearning for Him, then he sends forth a *mist* and places it between that radiating spot and your heart, thus toning down the intensity of that light, making its continuous contemplation thereby possible.”³⁵⁸ Here we have a clear underlying cosmological structure to be discussed further down, as a matrix or “map” of this spiritual refinement.

But let us first look to similar description by the best known commentator of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s *Fusûs al-hikam*, ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Qashânî (d.736/1335) as he describes and defines the word “soul”, *al-nafs*, in his dictionary of the technical terms of the Sûfî’s: “the soul is a subtle *vaporous* substance [*al-jawhar al-bukhârî al-latîf*] carrying the life-force, sense-perception and volitional action, and, which is called the ‘vital spirit’ [*al-rûh al-hayawânîyah*] by the philosophers. It is a mediator between the heart as rational soul [*nafs al-nâtîq*] and the body; and it is referred to in the Qur’ân by the olive tree described as ‘blessed’, [it’s oil coming] neither of the East nor of the West (Q 24:35), [...] that is, neither of the world of abstract spirits [*arwâh al-mujarradah*] nor of the west of dense bodies [*al-ajâd al-kathîfah*].”³⁵⁹ Thus, both in this and the previous quoted passages we have a *mediating element* in the first text referred to as a *mist* toning the intensity of divine radiance, and in the second passage, as a

³⁵⁶ Jung 1989, 30, n.160 and 497 See also Jung 1993, 327

³⁵⁷ This peculiar black gemstone is known from the Arab *lapidaria* attributed to Aristotle and from the Alexander-legend, both possible sources of Ibn al-‘Arabi. According to Suyûtî the pyramids were guarded by an idol carved from this strange stone. And Jâbir also wrote a treatise *Kitâb al-bâhit* describing the properties of this stone. In his *Kitâb al-khawass* he informs us that “a person seeing this stone cannot stop laughing until he dies.” Kraus 1986, 74–75, see also notes 2 and 1 on resp.pp.

³⁵⁸ *al-Tadbîrât*, ed. Nyberg, 216-217

³⁵⁹ *Istîlâhât* p.95

definition of the soul, *a subtle vaporous substance* carrying the life-force and mediating between the heart as rational soul and the body. On the whole, here we have a scorching light and fire, a mediating mist as mixture of air and water, and the concrete compound material body of the human being.

Second: what is this radiant spot in the human heart, or, the “central fire”, a fiery and generative point at the heart of matter itself, expressed in the Greek alchemical sign of the sun, a circle with a black dot at its centre, also known as the “alchemical egg”, supposed to mean? In the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabî one comes again and again across the basic idea of correspondence between the cosmos on the large scale and the human inner cosmos as its explaining counterpart. Here it seems the question is of the very root of both cosmic and human existence at the centre of being: a mysterious creative centre in nature, seen as the sun on the cosmic level and experienced as the life-force on the human level. As we already know, this “central fire” is represented by the fiery principle of red sulphur [*kibrîr al-ahmar*] in the process of transformation of silver into gold, *expressing the exalted state of being, given by God to the believer*, as Ibn al-‘Arabî states with a clear spiritual accent.³⁶⁰

Therefore, it is no wonder that Carl G. Jung, through his extensive studies on the later western alchemical tradition, could recognize this basic idea of a fiery principle of *red sulphur* as the generative point at the heart of matter, well preserved also in the western alchemical tradition in the form of a cosmic egg³⁶¹: the shell of the egg being compared to earth itself. The other elements underneath this “shell” [*qishr*] organized so that water is underneath the earth (*aqua que sub terra est*) as the egg-white, and the fire underneath the water as the yolk. This example is put into the mouth of Empedocles (Lat. “*Pandolfus*”, Arab, *Anbadaklîs*) in the *Turba Philosophorum* (*Gathering of the philosophers*), a Latin text based on an earlier Arabic text called *Mushaf al-jamâ’*, “Tome of the Gathering”, of which only fragments have survived. It seems this Arabic text goes still back to an earlier, but no more extant Greek alchemical texts, judging from its good command of Presocratic ideas. In the Latin version Empedocles adds to the four elements a fifth and decisive fiery principle (*punctum solis*, point of the sun) “in the midst of the yolk which is the chick (*huwa ‘l-ladhî al-farrûj*, see Ruska 1931, 178 n.2).”³⁶²

³⁶⁰ *Tadbîrat al-Ilâhîya* ed. Nyberg 219.6–7 Here we have an example of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s spiritualistic point of view, referred to earlier, as Burckhardt even thinks this spiritualist tendency of “oneness of being” (*wahdât al-wujûd*, attached to Ibn al-‘Arabî) gave the alchemical tradition back its original spiritual horizon, freeing it from “the suffocation of late Hellenistic ‘naturalism’.” Burckhardt 1987, 19

³⁶¹ See Kraus 1986, 37. On the Orphic-Pythagorean cosmic egg and its Egyptian background, see Kingsley 1994 § 1 and refs. n.25. van Ess 1992 Vol I. 438, Vol III. 350.

³⁶² Jung disagrees with Julius Ruska, the editor and modern commentator of this text, who replaces this *punctus solis* with an Aristotelian *saliens punctus*, “springing point” (*Hist. anim.* VI.3, 561 a 9–13 in Ruska 1931, Sermo IV, pp112 and pp 51 for the editors comment). On the ambivalent nature of the sun in alchemy rising from the darkness of the earth and containing

As Kingsley lays out the Empedoclean theory of elements he writes: “The fire at the centre of the earth heats the underground water lying above it; and as this water rises to the earth’s surface the process of evaporation begins which ends in the water being transformed into *aer*—a word that to Empedocles himself meant ‘mist’, but was soon interpreted as meaning the element air.”³⁶³ Thus, in the *Turba*, it is the fire at the centre of the earth which inaugurates not only the atmosphere but also the visible sun! And Kingsley thinks this is quite in line with the teaching of the historical Empedocles.³⁶⁴ Be that as it may, here we have the underlying “map” or scheme for the earlier quoted spiritual “black jewel” of the human heart described by Ibn al-‘Arabi, the jewel of amazement. Moreover, if seen strictly from the point of genesis, this structure of the egg is a clearly understood here in terms of Aristotelian *dynamis* and *energeia/entelecheia* as the dark “point of the sun” amidst the yolk is said to be “the chick.” it is first a pure appropriateness for, but if nature takes its natural course and no malfunctions occur then it indeed evolves into the mature and full-grown adult specimen of its species, *al-farrûj*, the cock or the hen. And, further, if seen as a metaphor for the human being, this gives a clear cosmological example of being-in-a-world, which ultimately opens up to understand the whole structure as Dasein.

In terms of the present study on possibility, it is noteworthy that the very name *al-kîmîya*, according to one etymology is said to refer back to the land of *Kîmit*, Egypt, with its highly fertile “black mud” brought by the annual inundation of the Nile, as was already noted above (see p.236). What about the *mud*? Here is how Iamblichus describes this “Mud” as a symbol, exhorting his readers to “banish the image of the symbolic things themselves, which depends on imagination and hearsay, and rise yourself up towards the intellectual truth. Understand, then, that ‘mud’ represents all that is corporeal and

both light and darkness, see Jung 1989, 94–95. Kingsley finds all this quite in line with the teachings of Empedocles on the elements and, also, with the strong Pythagorean tradition, later attached to Philolaus, of “central fire” in antiquity, preserved by Aristotle (*Cael* II.13, 293 a 20–b21) as a source of many misunderstandings. Quite formidably, this theory attributed to Philolaos, replaces the earth from its central position, anticipating outwardly the heliocentric theory, though we do not know the motives of this move from earth-centered model to one circulating a central fire (probably due to Babylonian influences coming from the East). At least Aristotle, who here asserts that there are other thinkers too displacing the earth from the centre, sees their arguments running *counter to phenomena* simply to suit the theories of its propagators (referring to the “most honourable central position of fire,” probably referring here to Plato and Speusippus, *ibid.*) Instead, also this theory, as Kingsley carefully argues is older than Philolaus and most probably rooted in Empedocles. Its roots are in an even more fundamentally geocentric model where the “central fire” refers to the fiery heart of the earth itself, or, on a still more fundamental level, fire as the centre of the four elements, a notion we have referred with Ibn al-‘Arabi’s *aither*, see n 80. Tartarus as the “prison-house” (Gr.*phylakê*) of Zeus for the Titans is in Greek mythology located under the earth, said by Homer to be “as far below Hades as our earth is below heaven.” However, the connection between Tartarus and fire is not to be found in Homer. This connection occurs in Pindar and Plato, and in both cases attached to mythic geography of Sicily and southern Italy, the homesteads of Pythagoras and Empedocles and also later Philolaus from Tarentum. The thought of “central fire” is not far-fetched for someone living in the vicinity of Mount Etna. Centuries later the idea of a fiery hell or Gehenna gained providence in Jewish, Christian and Islamic literature—“to a great considerable degree as a result of the influence exerted by Italian and Sicilian Pythagoreanism.” Kingsley 1995, pp.193, 49–68 and 172–94 See article: “Netherworld” by B. Kedar in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, xii (1971–72) pp.997–8.

³⁶³Kingsley 1995, 64 where he quotes the *Placita* 2.6.3 According to Empedocles *aer* is a rarefied form of water. See Daiber 1980, 142–43 for the passage.

³⁶⁴Kingsley 1995, 58

material; or that which is nutritive and fertile; or, as such as is the form immanent in nature, that which is carried along with the unstable flux of matter, or some such thing as received the river of generation itself, and settles with it; or the primordial cause, pre-established as foundation of the elements and of all the powers that surround the elements.” (*De Mysteriis* VII.2).³⁶⁵ No wonder, therefore, that this “mud” was equated with *Materia Prima* in the alchemical tradition, that is, pure potentiality and underlying matter and the “carrying” (*hâmil*) ground of everything in the universe except the intellect and the soul (these being, according to Ibn al-‘Arabî the active “father”, the divine spirit, and receptive “mother”, nature, of prime matter).³⁶⁶

In the alchemical tradition “[T]he sun, or gold, is in a certain sense the incarnation of the active and generative pole of existence, whereas the moon or silver incarnates the receptive pole, the *materia prima*. Gold is sun; sun is spirit. Silver, or moon, is soul”, as Titus Burckhardt wrote.³⁶⁷ Therefore, this idea of the “old sun” setting in the darkness of the underworld, expressed in alchemy with a technical term *nigredo*³⁶⁸, decay (Gr. *pthorâ*) and death as dark *mercury*: not only the idea of *prima materia*, but also *ultima materia*, the highest and the lowest meeting as union of opposites.³⁶⁹

Similarly, for Ibn al-‘Arabî, the Sun rising from the West is not merely a common Islamic sign of eschatology to be acted and completed at the end of times; instead, it signifies the genuine spiritual possibilities of Man in his own life, in the “fullness of time, the ultimate point where the end and new beginning meet. Thus, at the age of 37 Ibn al-‘Arabi ascended from his native “*materia prima*” in the furthest west towards the outermost boundaries of his actuality as the realized or completed human being into the central Islamic lands of the Oriental East. In the Christian tradition this basic idea of human transformation is referred to as the transformation of the *hylic* (*jismânî*) into *pneumatic* man (*Adam rūhânî*), or freeing the spiritual possibilities inherent in matter as conceived like Iamblichus in the above quotation.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ Clarke, Dillon & Hershbell 2004, 291–93

³⁶⁶ For the “high fathers and the low mothers”, see above III.2.4 and Ch.11 of the *Futûhât* (F I.138–143), which begins with a line: “I am the son of fathers—pure spirits—and mothers—elemental souls.” See also Murata 1992, particularly pp.144–47.

³⁶⁷ Burckhardt 1987, 77–78. Burckhardt was well versed also in the thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabî and has translated into French parts of the *Fusûs al-hikâm* as “La sagesse de prophètes,” 1955.

³⁶⁸ Nigredo: “Turning into black,” the colour of decay and putrefaction and, therefore, the end before a new beginning.

³⁶⁹ Hermes was replaced by Mercury in the later western alchemical tradition, and depicted as “the beginning, middle and the end of the work”, but also the “healer (salvator) of all imperfect bodies”, and even endowed with the attributes of Trinity as the union of body soul and spirit. Jung 1983, 230–36 The whole essay by Jung “Der Geist Mercurius” (tr. in Jung 1983 pp.192–250) contains a wealth of details on the common ideas behind western alchemical later tradition and earlier alchemical thinking in the Islamic world.

³⁷⁰ Jung 1993, 317–344. The many ways of using the corporeal and spiritual man (*corpus animale/corpus spirituale*) in St.Paul, see 1 Cor. 15:40–49. There would be plenty to say of the intimate relation of Ibn al-‘Arabî to Jesus, in whose “hands I turned to God” as he says (F II 49.32–33). See Hirtenstein 1999, Ch.V, pp52–53 and X, pp 1139–42. For *Adam rūhânî/jismânî*, see Corbin 1983, 160–61; in gnostic mysticism, Festugiere 1989, Vol.1, 269–70.

*If [God] brings to you a Heavenly Wisdom,
it is as though He would make known the Gryphon*
F I.7.16³⁷²

Amongst the best known early works of Ibn al-‘Arabi is the ‘*Anqâ*’ *al-Mughrib*, a work he probably wrote during his last year in the *Maghreb* (595/1199-597/1200)—a period in his life which "appears never to be mentioned in any of his works", as Addas notes.³⁷³ According to Elmore, "[O]f the major 'Ibn al-'Arabian' works *The Fabulous Gryphon* is known to be one of the half-dozen or so earliest."³⁷⁴ "Furthermore, by the accident of manuscript remains it would appear to be the oldest materially-attested text of any book by Ibn al-'Arabi".³⁷⁵ Indeed, the manuscript #3266 of Berlin library on which Elmore has provided an excellent study and translation, is dated in the city of Fez and certified by Ibn al-'Arabi himself in *Jumadâ l-ûlâ* 597a.h., corresponding to 7 February–8 March, 1201. This date roughly coincides also with the farewell to *Maghreb* of Ibn al-‘Arabi who soon after began his migration to East, the heartlands of Islam, never to return to his native al-Andalus. And, as Elmore believes, "the work was to represent himself with a new, authoritative voice of Sûfism, a veritable ‘Sun rising in the West’ as a token of the times, the very brilliance of his doctrine being proof of its miraculous nature."³⁷⁶

The full title of the book is *The Fabulous Gryphon concerning the Gnosis of the Seal of the Saints and the Sun [Rising] in the West* [*Anqâ*’ *Mughrib fî Ma’rifat Khatm al-Awliyâ*’ *wa-Shams al-Maghrib*]. This general—and quite cryptic—heading of the book brings out its central theme: “nearness to God”, *Sainthood* [*walâyah*]³⁷⁷, or “spiritual authority”, a theme that at first sight has scarcely anything to do with the themes developed so far in this study.³⁷⁸ Therefore, it is not this intricate religious-political subject-matter within the Islamic community that draws my attention towards the ‘*Anqâ*’—except in the very specific sense, that through the theme of sainthood the work heralds the beginning of anthropogenesis and the emergence of mystic man, the *Âdâm* of *Gen.* I:26, or, in the words of Elmore,

³⁷¹ I have already quoted the *Istilâhât* where ‘*Anqâ*’ is equated with *al-habâ* and *hâyûlâ*. See n 119, n 315

³⁷² Quoted from the long opening poem of the *Futûhât*, written to Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Tunisian friend *sheikh al-Mahdâwî*, verse tr. by Elmore 1999, 191

³⁷³ Addas 1993, 173; Elmore 1999, 65

³⁷⁴ Though most of these early writings are minor works in size they did include also an incomplete *Qur’ân* commentary [*tafsîr*] in 64 vols, reaching as far as *Sûrah* 18 v.60—the beginning of Moses/al-Khadir passage which is frequently alluded to in the ‘*Anqâ*’. Elmore, 77 n.9

³⁷⁵ Elmore 1999, 78

³⁷⁶ Elmore 1999, 190

³⁷⁷ The English word 'sainthood' does not quite convey the idea of *walâyah* which is a relational term denoting intimacy and friendship. It refers to an intimate *Seinsverhältnis*, as one could express it in Heideggerian terms. Thus, Ibn al-‘Arabi emphasized the last syllable of the word *wa-lîy*, meaning “belonging to me, mine”, as the idea of closeness and proximity to God. F II 23.28 For the complex history of this term in its Islamic context, see Elmore 1998, 109–130, Hallenberg 1997, 118–134.

³⁷⁸ For a comprehensive view on Ibn al-‘Arabi’s *walâya* doctrine, see Chodkiewicz 1986; Gilis 1993, Ch. VI and XV.

the human *entelechy*. And it is this far-reaching idea of a seal, or the realization of all spiritual aspirations inherent in the “Muhammadan Heritage” [*al-irth al-Muhammadî*]³⁷⁹, or in the “Light of Muhammad” [*nûr Muhammad*]³⁸⁰, which makes this early work of the Andalusian mystic philosophically interesting: Ibn al-‘Arabi formulates a connection between his own mission and some highly inflammable spiritual ideals of the Muslim community. Indeed, he incorporated those ideals and integrated them into the very idea of human being as such, that is, as the actual and full-blown possibility of the theomorphic essence of man/woman as the human *entelechy*. In fact, the title of the book refers to *Materia Prima*, Gr. *hylê* and Ar. *hayûlâ* with the metonymic expression of a fabulous creature ‘*Anqâ*, the phoenix or, as translated by Elmore, the *gryphon*. It is also worth noting that in translating the sphinx of Aristotle (*Phys* IV 1. 208 a30), something that is known but does not exist, and similarly the “goat-stag” [*tragelaphos*] in his book *On Interpretation* 16a, the Syrian translator/interpretator Hunayn Ibn Ishâq (d. 870) rendered both into Arabic as ‘*anqâ mughrib*.³⁸¹ In another connection Ibn al-‘Arabi explains this creature as a metonym, or symbol, for cosmic ‘dust’ [*al-habâ*’; “scattered dust” mentioned in Q 56:6, see above n 119, n 315 and n 417], “in which God ‘hollows out/builds up’, as it were, the bodies of this world.”³⁸² This cosmic Dust or, Dust Substance [*al-jawhar al-habâ’i*], has no entity in existence and manifests itself only in the entities that are “hollowed out” [*fataha-llâhu fihi/bihi*] from it—a strikingly similar idea as the Greek *hylê* meaning wood as carpenters material, as we have noted earlier with Happ.³⁸³ Ibn al-‘Arabi equals *al-habâ*’ and the *anqâ* and defines the latter as “neither existent nor nonexistent, for it takes form only in spiritual/ideal vision” [*lâ mawjûd wa la mâ’dûm ‘alâ annahâ tatamaththal fî al-wâqî’a*: F II.130.34]. Or, in another occasion, he makes the ‘Anqâ declare in quite Aristotelian fashion: “I am the one with no existent [*mawjûd*] entity [‘*ayn*], the one for whom no predication [*hukm*] is absent [*mafqûd*].”³⁸⁴ Prime matter does not exist as such and is thus something we can only see intellectually³⁸⁵, but, on the other

³⁷⁹ In accordance with the Hadîth: “The knowers are the heirs of the Prophet” [*Al-‘ulamâ’u warathatu l-anbiyâi*, cited in *Fut* I, 250.34, Bukhârî, *‘Ilm*, 10.

³⁸⁰ This highly seminal notion goes back to Sahl at-Tustarî (d.283/896) for whom the Light of Muhammad represents the primal articulation of God, “a light from His light” [*azhara min nûrihi nûran*], a “kind of prime matter, shaped by God from His own light, from which issue all existent beings [*maugûdât*].” Bowering 1980, 149–150 Cf. Schimmel 1982, 123–143.

³⁸¹ Elmore 1999, 188 n149

³⁸² *Istîlâhât* 1947, 12; Elmore 1999, 187 According to Ibn al-‘Arabi the term *al-habâ* goes back to Alî b. Abî Tâlib, uncle of the Prophet, saying that this substance contains all natural forms. F I.121.35–122.2 However, as we have seen, there are quite many other sources for this equation of *al-habâ* with prime matter; see above p 163 n 119

³⁸³ Another striking similarity is marked by Izutsu in his *Sufism and Taoism* with the Taoist notion of “‘uncarved wood’, which in its ‘simplicity’ contains all kinds of vessels”; Izutsu 1983, 448.

³⁸⁴ *Risâlat al-Ittihâd al-Kawnî*, “Je suis celui qui n’existe pas comme être défini, celui à qui ne manque aucune qualification”, as translated by Denis Gril, 1984, 66. The Aristotelian phrase runs: “The substratum (*hupokeimenon*) is that of which everything else is predicated while it itself is not predicated of anything else;” and (*hylê*) “is not predicated of a subject, but everything else is predicated of it” *Met* VII.3, 1028 b 36–1028 a1 and 1028 a 8.

³⁸⁵ Or, according to Aristotle: “prime matter is imperceptible” *GC* II 5, 332 a35. In Plato’s *Theaetetus* we have the idea that in order to think of something, say, a statue, we need to have the statue’s unique distinguishing properties in mind, in order to think of it, *Theaetetus* 209B–D. In Aristotelian terms we would be thinking of the definition or form of the statue, which is *aneu hylê*, without matter; see above pp 40 and 247.

hand, whatever there is and exists, is necessarily made out of matter (*principium individuationis*), and, therefore: “no predication is absent”. “This *habâ* is called by the philosophers [*al-afkâr, the thinkers*] the universal *hayûla* and it contains potentially [*bi l-quwwati*] the entire world.”³⁸⁶

My interest here is precisely this idea of a *spiritual potentiality* as prime matter finding its fulfilment in the “Seal of Saints”. Here the Muhammadan heritage as a whole is taken to be a revealed possibility yearning for its individuation, that is, something that needs to be lived true or realized, given concrete existence, very much in the same sense that Aristotle regarded both the *hylê* as a universal principle and the soul as the first *entelechy* reaching out for its completion, that is, becoming a second *entelechy* in actively exercising its ability to know for the sake of becoming wise. Here Ibn al-‘Arabi uses instead the Qur’ânic language and speaks of the “First arising” [*nashâ’ l-awwal*] and the “Human arising” [*nashâ’ l-insânîya*].³⁸⁷ The term *nashî’ah* is quite prominent in the early book of the Fabulous Gryphon. But the term is actually quite difficult to translate. In the various meanings given by Lane there is, however, a clear emphasis on producing, presenting, putting forward [*muqaddam*], particularly in the sense that nature brings up something and therefore words like “to arise”, “grow”, “increase”, “appear”, “emerge”.

Thus, the opening up of the religious perspective of Islam in the revelation of the Qur’ân is seen as an open possibility for the fulfilment of all seminal ideas for the human perfection and completion of becoming “the friend of God”. This is referred for example as “the Most-excellent Arising [*husn al-nash’*] for the sake of which we are”, or as the “Adamite Arising” [*al-nash’ah al-Âdamîyah*], or, simply, the “Human Form of Adam” [*al-surah al-Âdamîyah al-insânîyah*].³⁸⁸ But I find it also quite interesting and worth noting here that this Arabic term *al-nashâ’* bears a clear connection, as just noted, to “producing” and therefore equals the German translation of Heidegger for the Greek *entelecheia* as “*her-vor-bringen*”. This term has already been studied in the second part of our study.

This connection between inherent human possibilities and their completion or perfection through the notion of saintliness becomes clear in that the word *waliy* (“friend” or “protector”, as Arberry translates the word in the Qur’ân) is one of The Most Beautiful divine Names: “God Himself is not called by the names ‘prophet’ [*nabiy*] or ‘apostle’ [*rasûl*], but He does call Himself ‘friend’ [*waliy*], and is so described. He says: *God is the friend of those who believe* (Q 2:257), and, *He is the Friend, the Praiseworthy*” (Q

³⁸⁶ F I 119.27; Y 226.14 In his *Istîlâhât al-Qashânî* defines *al-‘Anqâ* also as *necessary matter* (*haûylâ al-mutlaqa*): 1981, 133. The same appears in Latin Platonic tradition when Chalcidus states “*Necessitatem porro nunc appellat hylen*,” *In Tim.* 268 (ed. Waszink), p.273:15-18. We have earlier already noted the universal identification of Plato’s ‘receptacle’ [*khôra*] with prime matter in antiquity; above p 186 n 212

³⁸⁷ For the use of this word in the Qur’ân, see: Q 29:20; 53:47 and 56:62.

³⁸⁸ ‘*Anqa* II.V, Elmore 375–76

42:28), as Ibn al-'Arabi says later in his *Fusûs*.³⁸⁹ Furthermore, Ibn al-'Arabi emphasized (see n.377 and p. 249) the last syllable of the word: *wa-liy*, meaning “belonging to me, mine”—very much in the sense of what Heidegger called the “mine-ness” [*das meinige*] of Dasein, the *je meinige*, emphasizing the particular place and a decisive moment which are in each case opening up for “a me”, experienced as mine (see above, III.1.). Here, in Ibn al-'Arabi the same emphasis is expressed as the idea of God's closeness and proximity to each individual “mine-ness”. Thus, *waliy* is a name common to God and Man, the divine essence brought to its completion in the actuality of a particular human being.

Therefore, in entering the realm of Islam, a new characteristic of “friendship” (or “sanctity”) becomes a major theme in approaching the human condition. Sainthood would hardly be an adequate word for the human “entelechy” in the Aristotelian frame of reference, although there too, as we have seen, the ultimate end of human life is depicted in terms of what comes closest “to the activity of the divine” [to which I will come back soon], and, that in the Aristotelian ontology actuality precedes potentiality: higher forms of development are posterior in time but ontologically anterior, or, all later forms are inherent in the earlier forms. Gerald T. Elmore expresses in less philosophical terms the same point regarding the human being according to Ibn al-'Arabi: “The last of all beings from the standpoint of physical evolution is yet the first as to pristine spiritual perfection... But how can this be? It is because all is cyclic, the last in time becoming the first, all things ending in their beginning. In the downward cycle the intelligible [*al-maqûl*] becomes the tangible [*al-mahsûs*], and in the return, the ascent, the secrets sown in the earth must blossom in mystical *mnêmê*.³⁹⁰ Thus we have here the earlier mentioned Heideggerian “recollection of being.” (above p.145)

*You surely have known the First-arising [al-nash'ah al-'ûlâ] (sci., the "natural man");
Why, then, do you not remember? (Q 56:62)*

Having studied Aristotle we already know that “a thing is more truly what it is when it is *entelecheia* than when it is only potentially so” (see p. 27, *Phys I 2*, 193b7–8), and, that “everything generated proceeds to a principle [*arkhê*, litt. 'beginning'], i.e. an end” (ibid. *Met IX 8*, 1050a7–8). “The last in actuality being the first in intention [*âkhir mawjûdi bi-l fa'el wa in kâna awwal maujûdi bi-l qisd*]”, as Ibn al-'Arabi also says.³⁹¹ Indeed, in this passage from the early work *'Uqla* we find a good example of the Aristotelian flavour in Ibn al-'Arabi's thinking as he continues by explaining the *arkhê*— using here

³⁸⁹ *Fus* 135/168; here we also have one of his teachings rebuked by Ibn al-Taymiyya, claiming that it blurs the difference between God and man. Knysh 1999, 105

³⁹⁰ Elmore 1998, 80–81

³⁹¹ *'Uqla*, ed. Nyberg, 50,18–51.1. This formulation we have met already with Jâbir as one consequence of the alchemical saying “as above so below” in the form: “The last in thinking is the first in action and the last in action is the first in thought, wanting for completion” (*Inna âkhira-l'fîkr aww'ala- l'amal; wa inna âkhira -l'amal awwala-l'fîkr jurîdu anna-l'tamâm*), see p.154 above and Ch III 3.2.2.

the arabic *al-asâs*, “basis”, “foundation”—as the last or ultimate intention in knowledge but the first in actual being [*awwal mawjûd bi-l fa'el*]. Thus, the *asâs/arkhê/principium*, is truly principal as both the originating source and the ultimate end, “like the roof of a house is first in intention [as an idea of a protecting cover] but last in actuality”.³⁹² What the architect has potentially in mind is to build a protecting shelter: the house is “there”, only the building materials are not yet there (*aneu hylê* as Aristotle would say). This potentiality becomes an actual reality with the finishing of the roof. Similarly, in the case of human being this *principium* is “that for the sake of which” of all knowledge and the perfection of the human soul [*‘ain al-insân*, which could here well be rendered again with the Aristotelian *to ti ên einai* discussed earlier]. As Ibn al-‘Arabî says in the *‘Anqâ* : “[the perfect Man] is the Last of all beings from the standpoint of sense [*hiss^{an}*], but the First as to Soul [*nafs^{an}*].”³⁹³ And further down he addresses the reader to “bring together the following:

The World in ‘place/space [*al-ayn*], and Man in the Source/Essence [*al-‘ayn*].”³⁹⁴

Here place is endowed with a gathering quality just like the *ensouled* man is the all-comprehensive engendered thing (*kawn al-jâmî*) in the First chapter of the *Fusûs*. Or one could note a natural unity between my bodily parts and the human essence (imposing good arrangement (Gr.*euthetismos*) like head up and feet down) in contrast to an adventitious position of my being now in the house and sometimes in the market.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, the Sheikh goes on to clarify the idea of this “bringing together” as Man being an “Interval between the two matters” [*barzakh al-amrayn*], that is, between the origin as source and the end as final limit, place and completion. Therefore, the completed human state is also called the End and the Source [*al-nihâyah wa’l-marji*’].³⁹⁶ Furthermore, he says that man is

³⁹² Ibid. 51.3 This “in-being” is of course the centalexistential theme of Dasein being “In-der-Welt-sein” and also intentionality intending things in the world according to Heidegger, a theme of Part II in this study.

³⁹³ *‘Anqâ* II V Elmore 383; here Elmore makes the following note: “The ‘last of all beings’ is the man of clay of the second chap. of *Genesis*, created after the ‘heavens and the earth... and all the hosts of them,’ whereas the essence of man is the light of *Gen.* 1:3.

³⁹⁴ Ibid. Elmore 384. Something like world being a place *enmattered* (Gr.*enulon*) and man as this world *ensouled* (Gr.*empsykhon*). At the background one can hear thoughts on the cosmos as an organism, the parallelism of macro- and microcosmos. For space/place as a dynamic, form-like ordering principle for matter in cosmos, see Theophrastus and Simplicius’ “intellective theory”(*noera theôria*) of place which forms also a part of Iamblichus’ design of defending the harmony of Plato and Aristotle. In this vein Theophrastus says: “things have a place dictated to them by nature (*phusis*, conn. *sumphues*), which is not merely accidental to them.” He also refers to the arrangement of animal’s parts, and compares the parts of the cosmos. Here place is in some sense holding bodies up, even perhaps as “preserving”, “governing” and “controlling” them in terms of the Pre-Socratic philosophers (Sorabji 1988, 205 n.22). The Platonic (*Tim.* 35A) idea of place preserving a thing *in* it by surrounding it was applied by Plotinus, who made the world’s body to be *in* the World Soul as well as the World Soul *in* Intellect and the Intellect in something else (ibid.206). This is the fundamental feature of Heidegger’s *Dasein* as *in-der-Welt-Sein* to. See also *Jâbir* above p.155 n 94

³⁹⁵ Example by Damascius, pupil of Simplicius, Sorabji 1988, 207, and of Ibn al-‘Arabî, see III.3.4.2, p.393

³⁹⁶ *‘Anqâ* III.I, Elmore 1999, 467. “Plotinus saw real self-knowledge as an immediate contemplation of the divine, which is both our origin and ultimate principle.” E. Tempelis, in *Ancient Medieval Philosophy* 1997, 310. *Enn.*I.2.6.23–26, I.6.8.2ff To put it in terms of Heidegger [SZ § 72, p.374]: “*Im Sein des Daseins liegt schon das ‘Zwischen’ mit Bezug auf Geburt und Tod. [...] Beide ‘Enden’ und ihr ‘Zwischen’ sind, solange das Dasein faktisch existiert, und sie sind, wie es auf dem Grunde*

entrusted with an *Encounter* and *Dictation* [*sâhibu liqâⁱⁿ wa-ilqâⁱⁿ*]. As an example of this “encounter and dictation” Elmore mentions the Prophet, who encountered the angel Gabriel and the latter dictated the revelation. However, clearly one can here understand also a more fundamental reference to man’s facticity as being-in-the-world, encountering [*liqâ*] the given world *and*, on the other hand, man as “having language”, as capable of language, and, finally, as a combination of these, the human being having the world in language. “So, contemplate your place and realize your essence!” Again, one could here well translate the word essence, *al-‘ayn*, with the Aristotelian phrase “the what it was to be” [= *mâhiya* or *mâ huwa bi-l-anniyati*], that is, the human source in its fully defined and completed state. Moreover, here the use of these expressions in Arabic is of course further motivated by their rhyming quality: the philosophical term *where* [*ayn*] as locality, place and spatiality making a dynamic pair with its conceptual antithesis *al-‘ayn* as “eye”, “essence”, “identity”, “individuality”, “self”, “source”, the “fixed individual essence”. Likewise, in the case of “encounter” and “dictation” he is also playing with the rhyme [*liqâ—ilqâ*]. However, what these rhyming concepts express is not poetry but the fundamental ontological position of man. “Man is two Abodes [*dârân*]”—he is “the Spirit of the world [*rûh al-‘âlam*], while the World is the Body [*al-jism*] of Man.” Here we have a typical example of the use of the idea of external world as the *macrocosm*, *al-‘âlam al-kabîr*, the universe on the whole, and Man as the *microcosm* [*al-‘âlam al-saghîr*], the human realm—this distinction being one of the basic tenets of the *Ikhwân al-sâfa* in their *Rasâ’il* [= *R*], *Essays*, that were well known in the *Maghreb* in Ibn al-‘Arabî’s time. Elmore adds to these mentioned spirit and body of Man that “Man as a quasi-Divine, belongs to the categories of both the external manifestation of reality [= *al-khalq*, comprising all of the worlds] and its intrinsic, Divine essence, which is the Real [*al-Haqq*].”³⁹⁷

In the above earlier quoted passage from the *‘Uqlâ*, Ibn al-‘Arabî comes to basic axiological concepts of *arkhê/asâs*, the *source* and *final end*, the *first* and the *last* etc. He arrives to these principalities after having discussed a few pages earlier the Prophetic saying in which God speaks in the first person [*hadîth qudsî*]: “I was a hidden treasure and desired to be known [*ahbabtu an ‘urafa*, the verb meaning *love, desire*];” *‘Uqlâ*, 48.6–7]. Similarly, desire is required also of the human being to reach his/her ultimate limit. Having explained these principal points, Ibn al-‘Arabî proceeds in the next chapter to discuss what is meant with the Qur’ânic dictum, “the first thing God created was the pen [*al-qalam*]”, and he [as many other Muslim thinkers have done] connects this pen with the “first intellect” [*al-‘aql al-awwal*], the object of God’s desire. The pen thus manifests God’s creative intention. This pen is to “write down whatever exists in my [God’s] knowledge until the day of Resurrection”, that is, all that

des Seins des Daseins als *Sorge* einzig möglich ist.” I.e. “The ‘between’ which relates to birth and death already lies in the *Being* of Dasein. [...] As long as Dasein factually exists, both the ‘ends’ and their ‘between’ *are*, and they *are* in the only way which is possible on the basis of Dasein’s Being as *care*.” Tr. Maquarrie & Robinson

³⁹⁷ Elmore 1999, 387 n.138

which will be. Therefore, “the attention of the first intellect is turned toward bringing the cosmos into existence.”³⁹⁸ The first intellect is thus “the carrier” [*hâmil*] of everything coming into existence (F I 92.35).³⁹⁹ As an object of God’s desire it contains the undifferentiated unity of being, like the pen contains the ink as undifferentiated future words, but at the same time, it is also heading for the fulfilment of the differentiation of all that is to be, and, therefore, contains potentially the manyness of all knowledge.⁴⁰⁰ In another version of this tradition the Prophet says “the first thing God created was my spirit”⁴⁰¹ and, indeed, a disciple of Ibn al-‘Arabî, al-Qashânî (d. ca. 1330), equals in his commentary of the Qur’ân (Q 7:54) the heart of the Prophet with the Throne of God in which “God manifests all His attributes completely”.⁴⁰²

“Being is said in many ways”, as one could say with Aristotle. And, again, in explaining this differentiation of primal possibilities Ibn al-‘Arabî quotes the prophetic saying “He who knows himself knows his Lord”, where knowledge renders the same verb ‘*arafa*’ as in the above quoted tradition of the hidden treasure desiring to be known.

This *Delphic* self-knowledge, again, is a fundamental point to which Ibn al-‘Arabî returns constantly all through his life. But then again, the idea of the souls return [Gr. *epistrophê*, “turning upwards from matter”] consists of an ascension to *teleiôtêtes*, to final causes by imitation. **This idea of ascension through self-intellection, as Wisnovsky notes, is shared by virtually all Neoplatonic thinkers.**⁴⁰³ **However**, the return of the soul would **not** be exactly the expression of **Ibn al-‘Arabî** who says—as any phenomenologist would! —that he will remain till his death in this “Experiential Return” [*al-raj’ah al-mashhâ’iyah*], that is: for him the return takes place in “the world of sense-perception” [*‘âlam al-shahâdah*].⁴⁰⁴ This points to his commitment both to an ontology of the soul in which the soul is understood as inseparable from the “clay” of the body and, similarly, to a cosmology expressing this ontology in the scale of the cosmos, where God’s creative act is the first instant of the motion and change leading to fulfilment—but not to an end, because there is no end to God’s “Self-disclosures” [*tajallî*]⁴⁰⁵ or the manifestations of *wujûd*.⁴⁰⁶ In the ‘*Anqâ*’ he writes: “there is absolutely no definitive evidence for the existence of any terminus [*nihâya*], nor has any man ever truly realized an end [*ghâyah*].” Here he is quoting the Qur’ân (Q 50:35) on the Garden of Paradise where “they have all they

³⁹⁸ SPK 413 n.23

³⁹⁹ See above pp 214, 234 and 242

⁴⁰⁰ For a fine summary on the idea of this Pen in the Islamic tradition, see Murata 1992, 164–68

⁴⁰¹ Schimmel 1982, 130

⁴⁰² Qashânî, Vol.I p.439

⁴⁰³ Wisnovsky 2003, 98

⁴⁰⁴ ‘*Anqâ*, I.III.2, Elmore 1999, 276

⁴⁰⁵ The central theme of SDG and a term we have quoted above notes 118, 135 and 268 and pp.81, 134

⁴⁰⁶ This closeness and inseparability of “cosmology” and “ontology” is obvious also in the closeness of words denoting to the physical creation [*khalq*] and, on the other hand, the human moral nature [*khuluq*].

desire, and with Us there is yet more [*mazîd*]. This “more”, or addition, excess, refers to what is beyond any human conception of desire; whatever ultimate we might consider, there is always that which goes beyond it.

Ironically, these two Arabic words Ibn al-‘Arabi here uses for an “end”, *nihâya/ghâya*, are expressions with which Averroes rendered the Greek *telos/peras* in Aristotle’s “the *end* is a limit” (rendered into Arabic as *al-nihâyata hiya l-ghâyatu*, *Met* II 2, 994 b 10–15)⁴⁰⁷, where Aristotle argues precisely against any infinite series, a limit being a necessary condition for any intelligence. But of course concepts are here used in different contexts and Ibn al-‘Arabi would naturally agree that only a limited thing can be rationally understood and that without a limit an object would precisely not be an object: “through differentiation [*tafriqa*] limits [*hudûd*] are set between things, and except for the limits knowledge would be impossible” (F IV.146:11–12). Therefore “differentiation is the root of all things” (F II 518.12). And, similarly, for Aristotle, change is eternal and “there never was a time when there was not motion and never will be a time when there will not be motion”. (*Phys.* VIII.1, 252 b 5–6) In fact, Aristotle held both contradictory propositions: that movement and time are eternal, and that every causal series must be finite. (Bashir 2004, 45)

The human completion and perfection involves the entirety of being and not just a perfection of the soul as a separate spiritual entity. However, as Wisnovsky also notes, the precept for this common Neoplatonic idea, namely, the perfection and self-sufficiency of self-intellection as a form of contemplation for the perfect human happiness, appears to originate from Aristotle’s idea in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁴⁰⁸ And, as noted a few pages earlier, according to Aristotle the intellect is the divine element in human nature: “that which is best and most pleasant for any given creature is that which is proper / native to it. Therefore for man, too, the best and most pleasant life is the life of the intellect, since the intellect is in the fullest sense the man. So this life will also be the happiest.” (*EN* X.7, 1178 a 5–8)

Thus, to conclude these remarks on the Fabulous Gryphon, what I wish to accomplish with this brief survey of the early *Akbarian* treatises is to throw some light on two general points relating to the above Aristotelian position.

First: according to the mystical anthropology of Ibn al-‘Arabi, there is a close relation between the concepts of natural man and friendship (*welaya*), between being human and *being-with* [*ma’iyya*]. “He is with you wheresoever ye may be” (Q 54:4). As wudjûd God is with everything, but it is only the

⁴⁰⁷ See the Table 1 for the relevant variants of translation in Wisnovsky 2003, 269.

⁴⁰⁸ *EN* X.7, 1177b15–26; Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.8.1, 7–10; see further Wisnovsky, *ibid.* who also takes up in this connection the Parmenidean dictum (Fr.3): *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*, which he renders as “being is the necessary precondition of, or perhaps even identical to, thinking.” *Ibid* n.29.

human being that can become and is aware of existence. It is this being-with which tends for human spiritual aspiration (*al-himma*) and love, depicted for example in the much quoted hadīth “When someone comes to Me running, I come to him rushing.”⁴⁰⁹ Here we would have a central topic for any discussion on spirituality, but here I merely hint at the existential foundation of this theme. This *withness* is a fundamental constituent of being human. Ibn al-‘Arabī says, paraphrasing the above Qur’ānic verse: “The Real is with us wherever we are” [...] “we become manifest through His withness” [*fa bi-ma’iyyatuhu zuhurunâ*, F III. 392.11]. He is that which is there all along. And, to put this in terms of the central theme of this study, possibility: genuine possibility opens up as the possibility of being-together, that is, as a duality where one thing has another. And this, of course, is the necessary condition for all change and metabolism, something becoming different, as we have seen in the physical thinking of Aristotle. Here, with Ibn al-‘Arabī the same applies also on higher levels of manifestation. That which now opens up as a glimmering possibility reaches its fulfilment in the united reality of togetherness. This means taking a closer look at his seminal ideas—expounded more fully in his later works—on “perfect” Man/Woman [*insan al-kâmil*], a notion corresponding, according to Elmore and Nyberg⁴¹⁰, with the Gnostic-Hellenic idea of *anthropos teleios*⁴¹¹, the human *entelechy*, which will be our theme in the forthcoming chapters.

In the *Anqâ* this idea of human perfection as “mine-ness”, *wa-liy*, is woven essentially into an eschatological perspective of an ultimate end, here expressed with one of the five very well known Islamic eschatological “signs” [*ashrât al-sâ’ah*], namely, the already mentioned “Sun Rising in the West”.⁴¹² It is from the utmost darkness of night that the brightest sun of eschatology will rise and illuminate the whole world with its spiritual light. Ibn al-‘Arabi tells us of a complex visionary revelation that he had in Rabî’ al-Awwal, 595 [=January 1199], “when the gloom of clouds was dispelled from the sun” and this connection between the Seal of saints [*Khatm al-Awliyâ’*] and the “Sun of the West” [*shams al-maghrib*] was revealed to him, initiating thus the process of writing the *‘Anqâ al-Mughrib*.⁴¹³ It is also important to see these ideas in their proper context: we are not talking of isolated extravagant thoughts of a bizarre Muslim mystic, instead, in Ibn al-‘Arabī we have a fine example of the continuity of a rich and ancient philosophical tradition on spirituality that obviously bears a different flavour from the mainstream tradition of philosophy, and yet, has a deep human heritage at the core of its basic tenets.

⁴⁰⁹ Found in standard collections, see Ibn al-‘Arabī’s *Mishkât al-Anwâr*, 27

⁴¹⁰ Elmore 82, Nyberg 1919, 92

⁴¹¹ Yet, one should be cautious with all generalizations heavily laden with baggage and ambiguities that do not really apply to Ibn al-‘Arabī, even if he too is explicating the idea of human perfection.

⁴¹² ‘Anqa 1.2, Elmore 1998, 257–8

⁴¹³ Elmore 1998, 281–87

Second: the mystical anthropology of Ibn al-‘Arabi has an ontological foundation reflecting ultimately his Aristotelian-based cosmological notion of primal matter [*hâuyla/hylê*]. In Aristotle, *hylê*, as we know through Happ, denotes in its most universal sense the possibility “desiring” and “yearning” all and any of the forms actualizing its infinite possibilities. Similarly, in Ibn al-‘Arabi *hâuyla* stands for a receptivity [*qabûl*] and disposition or preparedness [*isti’dâd*, for this term see above p.283 n.537] for all the forms. And, on the other hand, as a “*quwwa*”/*dunamis*, *potency*, it has the capacity to become any and all things given form. Therefore Ibn al-‘Arabi distinguishes sharply between an impossible non-existence [*al-‘adam al muhâl*] and a possible non-existence [*al-‘adam al mumkin*], the first meaning pure and impenetrable darkness [*zulma*], whereas the latter, *hâuyla* as possible non-existence, is like a shadow [*zill*], not darkness (F II.304.9). On the other hand, shadow is precisely the word with which Plotinus objects Aristotle’s prime matter not due to its elusiveness, but to its lack of being and reality. It is close to being a nonentity, a mere “shadow upon a shadow” (*Enn.* 6.3.8,34-7).⁴¹⁴

However, apart from the already mentioned late 12th century external signs of an end of an era, signs of coming to an end, *eskhaton*, it is only natural that in speaking of human perfection one is also heading for a *limit* and the *ultimate* [Gr. *peras/eskhaton*⁴¹⁵] human condition. Not an end of course in the sense of the human being coming to a final stage as such but, rather, the end *for the sake of which* of the human being. As Aristotle says in the already mentioned passage, *peras* is *eskhaton* (*Met* V.17, 1022 a 4). It is precisely the limit that provides the “looks” [*eidos*] of each being, the limit within which the whole of the beings encountered are to be seen. Furthermore, as the limit gives the looks of a being it also provides the “end” of a thing in the sense of completeness [*telos*]. And, indeed, this opening “existential” aspect of the human being heading towards its own perfection, towards an “excellence native [*oikeías*] to it”, towards its own “what it was to be”, is a central theme in the ‘*Anqâ*’ as it depicts the journey on the “human level” or through the “human nature” [*al-nasha’ tu l-insâniya*].

In his dictionary of the technical terms of mystics, ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Qashânî (d.1330)—himself a third-generation peripatetically oriented follower of Ibn al-‘Arabi—defines interestingly “The setting of the sun in the west” as “the veiling of the Real in His individuations [*istitâru l-haqq bi-ta’ayyunâtu-hu*], and the Spirit in the [human] body”.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ Quoted through Sorabji 1988, 45 Plotinus was followed in this by Porphyry and by Simplicius. See above p.177.

⁴¹⁵ Also in Plato, the role of finding ends, the *éskhaton*, limit [*peras*] or completion [*teleutê*], is central for reaching the definition of something, like defining virtue [*arête*] in the methodologically important dialogue *Menon* 72a–76, Thesleff 199, 21. Similarly, Ibn al-‘Arabi’s important notion of *barzakh* means an ‘eschaton’, an ultimate limit in the form of absolute beginning or an absolute end. For him, too, it is only through differentiation [*tafrîqa*] that limits [*hudûd*] are set between things, and without limits no knowledge would be possible. This, of course, becomes paradoxical in knowledge of the One Reality.

⁴¹⁶ *Istilâhât* 1981, 87 The term *ta’ayyun*, “to be or to become an entity”, was one of the heavily criticized concepts of the *wujudiyya* [i.e. espousers of the unity of being] by al-Taftazani [d.1390]. This term seems to have gained more importance as a concept for al-Qûnawî and his followers than it had for their master. Cf. SPK 83. Al-Taftazani seems to be aware of this in

We have come across the basic feature of Aristotelian matter, *hylê*, as the principle of individuation and therefore something unknowable [*individum est ineffabile*]. Here this is expressed as the veiling of the Real [*al-Haqq*] in its ever-increasing phenomenal manifestations of entities. **The individuated entity is thus conceived as a veil of being:** the manifested material entity conceals the spiritual principal order of "what is clearer in itself" (the Aristotelian *ta haplôs saféstera*, *Phys* I 1) but which, precisely as such, is beyond individual entification. Thus, the materialized entities, particular beings, are **concealing the making clear of manifestation itself**. Similarly, in the human case, the material body is the concealing/revealing entification of the non-entifiable spirit. This connection between the utterly indefinable "no-thing" of *hylê*, **the ultimate ineffable material principle as a condition for the dawning and completion of a spiritual being**, brings us again to my second point for studying this relatively early work of 'Anqâ' *al-Mughrib*. This second point is obvious if one takes heed of the very name of the work, as described above: "*The Fabulous Gryphon*" is the standard metonymic expression in Arabic for the notion of *hâyulâ*, the Aristotelian *hylê*, *materia prima*, or its metonymic religious expression *al-habâ'*, cosmic "dust" or "mist", the Eternal Potentiality [*al-qudrah*⁴¹⁷ *al-azaliyah*] or an Ocean without a bottom [*bahr^{un} laysa lahu qa'r^{un}*], to use some auxiliary expressions of Ibn al-'Arabî for *hâyulâ*, the "ultimate" [*eskhaton*] material principle in this work. Earlier (p.243) I noted that Ibn al-'Arabî says this *al-anqâ'* or *al-habâ'* can only be visioned ideally [*tatamaththal fî l-wâqi'ah*⁴¹⁸] in the spiritual heart, as matter in itself lacks any intelligible form. We came across this same impossibility to grasp the Aristotelian *hylê* in any concrete form, because matter as a principle is a non-tangible spiritual reality [*noêton*]: *hylê* can be "perceived" only in intuition, *Wesenschau*.⁴¹⁹ Similarly, Ibn al-'Arabî states that "nature possesses intelligible existence (*wujûd al-'aqlî*), but not entified existence (*wujûd 'ainî*). (F IV 150.9, SPK 141.)

Earlier we have come across a similar use of the Greek word *eskhaton* in relation to Aristotle's third definition of *hylê* as the "ultimate and all-inclusive principle of being" (See p.9–10). Thus, to put this concept into a wider religious perspective, Elmore quotes T.J.Altizer, who "has shown how the *eschaton* of prophetic religions is the phenomenological equivalent of Hindu and Buddhist conceptions

supporting his argument against Ibn al-'Arabî with a reference not to his works but to a text by al-Qûnawî: "If you wish to see this meaningless gibberish [of theirs] for yourself". Knysh 1999, 153–54. Al-Taftazani probably never really read any works of Ibn al-'Arabî, missing thus even the theoretical possibility of understanding what he was talking about. But, then again, the ultimate motive of this criticism was rather moral than philosophical. See Knysh, 162–165.

⁴¹⁷ *Qudra* is used both in philosophical sense as potency [*qûwah*] and theological contexts as God's "power". For *al-habâ'*, see Istilâhât 1948, p 12 where this [or in the Hyderabad edition wrongly printed as *al-hawâ*, air] is given in explaining the word *anqâ'*, the correct form in the *Istilâhât* of the *Futûhât*, F II 130.34, see also for the doctrine of *al-habâ'* in F I 118 and its background in the teachings of *al-Tûstarî*. Böwering 1980, 150 and above notes 119, 313, 315 and 417.

⁴¹⁸ *tatamaththal fî l-wâqi'ah*, "to appear in the image of", "to be imaginalized" in an "event", "incident", "true vision", "*Ereignis*". This refers to a heightened wakefulness in which one intuitively grasps spiritual realities, which are thus given imaginal form. In the Qur'ân this verbal form *tamaththala* appears only once and is used in connection of Mary when "We [God] sent unto her Our Spirit that presented himself to her a man without fault" (Q 19: 17).

⁴¹⁹ Happ 1971, 804, above p 8

of annihilation and the void".⁴²⁰ And, indeed, Ibn al-'Arabi explicates his vision leading to the composition of the 'Anqâ' with the prominent mystical notions of *fanâ'*/*baqâ'*, that is, the extinction or annihilation of temporal qualities and the survival or continuity of that which is essential.⁴²¹ Thus, the outward sign of the sun setting in the West heralds the eschatological Sun rising out of the West, that is, the new arising of spiritual Man. Here the ultimate end, the void as "no-thing", is envisaged as pure possibility, nothing but possibility: it is precisely the *hylê* as **materia prima of the elements**, the grounding possibility that **is always already "there"**; it is the **"that out of which"** of all becoming. "This darkness is the place from which the lights rise [*matla' al-anwâr*] [...] and the [original] matter of the elements. From this darkness I have brought you into being, to it I make you return and I shall not remove you from it"⁴²² The four elements [*'anâsir*] are known as the "pillars" [*arkân*] of terrestrial existence: everything "derives from an elemental reality [*haqîqa 'unsuriyya*]. The elemental reality never disappears through the diversity of what becomes manifest within it." (F II 459.22–23) These four pillars are also called, as we have seen, the "low mothers" [*al-ummahât al-sufliyya*], "and Ibn al-'Arabi was in complete agreement with the philosophers on their importance for grasping the structures and order of the cosmos".⁴²³ He writes: "Nature is four-fold and understood as two active things and two things acted upon."⁴²⁴ It makes the four pillars manifest" (F II 367.23) That is, heat and cold are active, dryness and wetness passive: "earth" (cold and dry), "water" (cold and wet), "air" (hot and wet) and "fire" (hot and dry), as we also already know.

III. 3.2. The human possibility as God's vicegerent

III.3.2.1. Journey to the heart of existence

When Ibn al-'Arabi departed from the West with his lifelong companion 'Abd Allâh al-Habâshi (d.1223) in the year 1202 CE.⁴²⁵—a year of terrible famine in Egypt on which Ibn al-'Arabi gives a vivid account— he was heading towards Mecca to perform his pilgrimage [*hajj*], a major spiritual moment in every Muslims life. Spiritually the life of each Muslim is divided into two parts, life before

⁴²⁰ Elmore, 54 n.39

⁴²¹ 'Anqa' 1.3, Elmore 1998, 278–9

⁴²² Cont.II 33, 37; here materia prima is of the elements. Otherwise like Jâbir, see p.212: (substance) "which has the capacity of receiving all things [all categories of being; *al-jawhar al-qâbil l-kulli shay'*]. It is in everything, and everything arises from it, and everything returns to it. But this is also very much like "*noche oscura*" of St.John of the Cross, the darkness of the night referring here to the soul at its point of origin, free and empty of things. Cf. de Nicolas 1989, 102 and 167.

⁴²³ SDG 137

⁴²⁴ Here we have the Empedoclean cosmology in a nutshell: the four-fold nature with two active and two passive qualities, F II 367.23, SDG 303. This is why "quarrels derive from nature, because it is a totality of opposites" F II 651.1.

⁴²⁵ Ibn al-'Arabi expressly mentions this year (598 a.h.) as his year of departure for Mecca (F I 98.28). Here he also mentions the *Anqâ* as a work finished, and that he started to write the dense *Inshâ' al-dawâir* in the same year.

and after the pilgrimage to the “House of God” [*Bayt Allah*], “The Ancient House” [*al-bait al-‘atîq*⁴²⁶] at the heart of the “Mother of cities” [*‘umm l-qurâ*, K 6:92], Mecca. In Islam the canonical pilgrimage, *Hajj*—explained by Muslim theologians to mean *qasd*, intention (because there may be valid reasons for this intention never to become a reality)—combines the concrete physical and the invisible spiritual realities normatively and even geometrically: the intention of travelling once in a lifetime along the “ray” from the circumference of one’s physical location to the centre of the whole Islamic community is incumbent on every Muslim. The *Harâm al-Sharîf*, The Noble Shrine of Mecca, is the centre *par excellence*, the axis and the heart of not only the Islamic world but also, according to Ibn al-‘Arabi, the “Heart of existence/universe” [*Qalb al-wujûd*]⁴²⁷. Thus the pilgrimage represents the idea of a “journey of the heart to the heart”.⁴²⁸ Ibn al-‘Arabi says: “the Real is the house of all existent things [*bait al-maujûdât*], because He is *wujûd*. And the heart of the servant is the house of Real, because it embraces Him—that is, the heart of the one who has faith, none other.”⁴²⁹ It should therefore be no surprise, that for a mystic like Ibn al-‘Arabi, this concrete duty of all Muslims becomes a major symbol in the spiritual itinerary of the human being from its phenomenal existence towards its essential reality and meaning [*rihla il’a l-ma’nâ*, as the pilgrimage is still commonly referred to]. He “defines” the pilgrimage as “the sustaining of Intent [*takrâr al-qasd*] toward the One-Alone [*al-Wâhid al-Fard*].”⁴³⁰ Here we again have a fundamental issue requiring the sense of Aristotelian duality of something resting [sustained] in motion.

This complex symbolism of the periphery and the centre is depicted in the ‘*Anqâ*’ in terms of Islamic eschatology, the East–West polarity, that is, between the East as the existential periphery of “phenomenal manifestation” [*mawdi’ al-zuhûr al-kawnî*]⁴³¹ and the West as the new dawning of the spiritual reality of the human “configuration” [*al-nasha’ah al-rûhânîyah*]. These two dimensions are depicted in *The Fabulous Gryphon* both as the perennial journey of the human being and as the concrete journey of Ibn al-‘Arabi himself migrating as “the Sun rising from the west”, an itinerary of not only the mind but the whole of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s existence to God, his itinerary from the Maghreb to Mecca—and he did this immense journey actually walking, and, indeed, a detail worth adding, he spent a good half of his life on and off the road!

A large part of the *Fabulous Griffon* is truly understandable only in the complex Islamic religious-political context of sainthood [*walâyah*] and spiritual authority [or “spiritual caliphate”], a thorny and

⁴²⁶ Qur’ân 22:29 & 33. In another connection Ibn al-‘Arabi equals this “Ancient House” with the heart of the gnostic. *Turjumân al-ashwâq*, Ode 27.1.

⁴²⁷ F I.50.30

⁴²⁸ Elmore 1998, 171

⁴²⁹ F IV.7.34; for a longer translation of this passage see SDG 7.

⁴³⁰ ‘*Anqâ*’, Part One III, Elmore 1999, 248

⁴³¹ This is the expression Ibn al-‘Arabi uses to gloss “the East” in his commentary on the *Turjumân al-ashwâq*. See Elmore 1998, 174.

highly sensitive issue in the Islamic world clearly outside the scope of this study.⁴³² But it is also clear that Ibn al-'Arabi never loses sight of his unique and even relentlessly *existential* approach to all major questions of human life: for him the true criterion of all doctrinal or theoretical points is in their usefulness, that is, whether they actually open new perspectives or not, and if they are real they are also bound to open up. Philosophical understanding is not theoretical but practical in the sense that the Prophet urged us to “give each thing that has a *haqq* its *haqq*” [*haqq* signifying truth, correctness, real, valid, the truly real].⁴³³ This is highlighted well in the Qur'ânic verse [Q 33:4], which Ibn al-'Arabi quotes by far most often in all his writings: “and God speaks the truth [*al-haqq*], and He guides on the path”, with this quotation Ibn al-'Arabi concludes most chapters and discussions in his works. Once again we might here use the Aristotelian awkward expression the “what it was to be” for this particular sense of the word *al-haqq*: to give each thing its due equals giving it its reality, the end for the sake of which of its proper functioning; each thing in its native *entelecheia*. In the language of Ibn al-'Arabi this *entelecheia* is God's creative word, the truth of the matter to be, its *existential truth*, and it is towards this that He also guides the human being in its search for wisdom, that is, “he/she who does what is proper for what is proper as is proper” [F II 163.26]— as Ibn al-'Arabi formulates in very similar vein as Aristotle the principle of the Golden Mean: “to feel or act forwards the right person to the right extent at the right time for the right reason in the right way—that is not easy, and it is not everyone that can do it. Hence to do these things well is rare, laudable and fine achievement.” (EN II 9, 1109 a 26)

In the *Futûhât* Ibn al-'Arabi expresses the just mentioned “native *entelecheia*” in most concrete terms: “My Journey was only within me, and I was guided only to myself”.⁴³⁴ Here Ibn al-'Arabi is simply following the Prophet of Islam: “God's Messenger said concerning knowledge: there is no path to knowledge of God other than that of oneself” (F II.297 29-30). But this same fundamental position is clear already in the much earlier work of the *Fabulous Gryphon*, where he writes:

All of these symbolic expressions [like the 'Sun of the West', or 'Seal of sainthood'] refer to the 'Lesser Image' [*sci.*, Man as the Microcosm], not to the Greater one [the external world as Macrocosm].... There is no benefit in the knowledge of that which is external to your Self, unless the way of your salvation is dependent thereupon.⁴³⁵

And towards the end of the book he states:

As for the Seal of the Saints with regard to Man, it is actually an expression [*'ibarah*] for the Station at which you will end up and before which you shall be brought to stand—it

⁴³² For this aspect, see: Chodkiewicz 1993; Gilis 1993; Elmore 1998, 109–162; Hallenberg 1997, particularly Ch.4, 115–163.

⁴³³ A well-known hadîth found in most collections, see *Concordance* I 486.

⁴³⁴ *Fut.* III, 350.31

⁴³⁵ *Anqâ'* 1.5, Elmore 1998, 291

being each mystic Traveller wherever he may arrive, his Station wherever he comes to alight. For [the Station of the Seal with regard to any given person] is not specifically imposed, but is simply the place which he reaches, the Gnostic himself disclosing to us its limit. But the Seal of all of the Stations is none other than the testimony that GOD IS ONE [*al-tawhîd*], while the Secrets of Existence are in superabundance!⁴³⁶

III.3.2.2. First in intention but last in actuality

*And all the remedies that exist as defence against sufferings
and old age:
These you will learn, because for you alone will I make all these
things come true.*

Empedokles, fr.111

In the prefatory “Explanation of the Purpose of This Book” Ibn al-‘Arabi tells us that the above-sketched book of the Fabulous Gryphon is a kind of sequel to an earlier work entitled: *The Divine Directions concerning the Reformation of the Human Estate* [*Al-Tadhbîrât al-Ilâhîyah fî Islâh al-Mamlakah al-Insânîyah*]⁴³⁷. “The human estate”, “human kingdom/empire”, this expression refers to possessions and property [*malk, mulk, milk*, to possess, own, have, and rule; goods and chattels], the humanness as we have it. In this particular sense the expression would be a literal rendering of the Greek human “*ousia*”, the “substance of human being”, but here understood in the original meaning of the word: *ousia* as property, possessions, possessions and goods, estate. In both cases the idea is the humanity that we have, something that is available there, the human being in the how of its being in life, orienting itself in life: this is the “kingdom of humanness”, *mamlakah al-insânîyah*. Thus in this earlier work of Ibn al-‘Arabi the *Human Kingdom* provides a kind of ground for the further illumination of the “Human estate” into its perfection as the idea of “God’s friend” [*waliyu l-Ilâh*] or Seal of Saints, worked out in the later book on the Fabulous Gryphon. Here Ibn al-‘Arabi concentrates on the human substance, the proper governance of the human endeavour. This whole human “project”, the human possibility, is in each case an ontic possibility of “this” individual being [the Aristotelian *kath ekaston* and Heidegger’s *je meine*] and its becoming, but at the same time it is based on general ontology as human existence in the world [*Dasein*].

⁴³⁶ ‘*Anqâ*’ 3,V, Elmore 1998, 525–6

⁴³⁷ Yahia, no.716; ed.by H.S. Nyberg 1919. Interpreted as *Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom* by Tosun Beyrak 1997 unfortunately this interpretation is based on a Turkish translation and corresponds only vaguely with the original Arabic text.

This earlier work of *Divine Directions* was composed in just four days at the request of his senior friend Abu Muhammed al-Mawrûf, who had suggested for the young Ibn al-‘Arabi “to compare the secular politics of “The Sage” [*al-Hakîm* = Aristotle] from a book he wrote to [his pupil] Alexander the Great [arab. *dhu l-qarnain*] concerning [the Sûfî] teachings on the human realm [*sci.* the microcosm]”.⁴³⁸ The actual work on which Ibn al-‘Arabi wrote his commentary is known as [Pseudo-] Aristotle’s *Secretum secretorum* [*Sirr al-Asrâr*], a compilation from various sources bearing a clear flavour of the *Rasa’il* of *Ikhwân al-Safâ*, Brethren of Purity.⁴³⁹ Whether Ibn al-‘Arabi was acquainted directly with the *Rasa’il* [Epistles/Essays] as certain passages in his texts suggests, is an open question, but what we do know is that the *Rasa’il* had been introduced to Andalusia already in the middle of the eleventh century.⁴⁴⁰ However, in this early work commenting on the *Politics*⁴⁴¹ of “Aristotle” Ibn al-‘Arabi focuses particularly on the correspondences between Man and the outer political organization of the Caliphate and does not, according to his own words, go into more fundamental correspondences between “the outer World and its inner Secret [*sirru-hu*] deposited in Man”.

Nevertheless, the author wants to emphasize that “my purpose in everything of this type which I write is never the Gnosis of what appears in [phenomenal] existence [*al-kawn*], but rather the purpose is ever [the Gnosis] of that which is found in this Human Essence [*al-‘ayn al-insânî*] and Adamite Substance [*al-shakhs al-Âdamî*]”.⁴⁴² Here we have both the “ontic” level of the very “mineness” [*je meinige*] or being of this humanness” [*al-‘ayn al-insânî*] in the Aristotelian sense of the “what it was to be”, and, on the other hand, the ontological foundation of this particularity in the *Adamite Substance*, the Divine intention come true in the constitution of the blueprint of “first” human being in its existence [*Dasein*]. Therefore, what Ibn al-‘Arabi says he is after in his writings, is self-knowledge and its ontology. He goes on to explain that the use of any actual phenomenal event in his writings is “to fix it in the hearing of the listener [*sam’ al-sâmi*]” and compare it with its likeness in Mankind”, that is, as he on the next page says, “to throw light on that of which the listener is ignorant by means of the thing which he knows and comprehends”.⁴⁴³ “Then let us turn our contemplation therein to our [own Human] Essence [*dhâtu-nâ*], which is the Way of our Salvation [*sabîl najâti-nâ*]! I tread [that Way] in its entirety at this Human level

⁴³⁸ *Tad* I, 120,17–20

⁴³⁹ Nyberg 1919, 15–17 and in the text of the *Tadbîrât* 120–21; Elmore 1989, 80 n 25 For a general introduction to the highly eclectic teachings of the *Brethren of Purity*, see Callataÿ 2005, Nasr 1964, 25–104; for a vast bibliography on the *Ikhwân* see Diwald 1975

⁴⁴⁰ For Ibn al-‘Arabi and the *Rasai’il*, see Grill 2004, 130–33; for the the *Rasa’il* and the Andalusian west, see Callataÿ 2005, 109–11 and the concise article by Netton 1996, 222–230

⁴⁴¹ The *Tadbîrât* is known also as *Kitâb al-siyâsa fî tadbîr al-riyâsa*. Nyberg 1919, 16

⁴⁴² *Anqâ’* 1.II, Elmore 240

⁴⁴³ Elmore refers here to a fundamental principle of all “occultism”: as is the seen, so the unseen [“as above, so below”], but of course all teaching and learning is based on that which is already known [*prôgignôskomenôn*], as Aristotle says in *Post.An.* I,1, 71a1–10, a principle that was naturally fundamental also in all *kalâm*-discussions on speculative knowledge [*‘ilm l-nazarî*]. van Ess 1966, 126–27 and 243–44 We have met this principle as the foundational idea of alchemy above.

[*al-nash'ah al-insânîyah*] in accordance with whatever the Station confers—whether of corporeality or spirituality”.⁴⁴⁴

As already noted, the above mentioned flavour of the *Ikhwân al Safâ*’ is clear in these early works of Ibn al-‘Arabi as an overall perspective on the human being as microcosm [*‘alam al-saghîr*] containing essentially the entirety of the universe, the macrocosm [*‘alam al-kabîr*]. Everything found in differentiated form in the macrocosm is found in an undifferentiated mode in the microcosm. Therefore, the ontological basis for the “true governance of the human kingdom” lies both in the correspondences between the human soul as the “*caliph*” or “head” of microcosmic realm and, similarly, on the macrocosmic level, between the created human being as the centre of the overall structure of the universe, the focal opening point of the universe.⁴⁴⁵

In the first chapter of the *Tadbîrât* Ibn al-‘Arabi expands on the Qur’ânic passage of God creating the human being as a viceroy, *khalîfa* [=one that follows, a successor] of the earthly realm and how God “taught Adam the Names, all of them” (Q 2:30–34).⁴⁴⁶ Both the idea of *khalîfa* and this particular Qur’ânic *locus* attached to it are fundamental for the understanding of the human existential situation in the Islamic perspective on the human being as the masterpiece of God’s creation. This Qur’ânic view on Man is constantly referred to in the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabi and it is also one of the natural scriptural foundations for his famous later expression *al-Insânu l-kâmil*, the perfect human being, “the all-encompassing engendered existent” [*kawn ‘jâmî*’].⁴⁴⁷ In these early writings, however, this term is not yet employed —though mentioned as the composite of man and woman.⁴⁴⁸ In the *Fabulous Gryphon*, instead of this later expression of human perfection/completion, Man as a whole is referred to as *al-kitâb al-jâmî*’ (also F II 76.29), the All-inclusive Book, consisting of the “dark Night” [*al-layl al-muzlim*] as well as the bright, “shining Day” [*al-nahâr al-mushriq al-sâtî*’], “man’s ineffable essence, and [...] his phenomenal manifestation”, as Elmore paraphrases.⁴⁴⁹

However, before the question concerning the role of divine Names in the actual creation of human being, some fundamental distinctions have already been accomplished in the cosmic act of creation on a principal level: the last in actuality being the first in intention. Thus, it is with these meta-historical intentions and decisive moments of creation before the actuality of the human being that the whole

⁴⁴⁴ ‘*Anqâ*’ 1.II, Elmore 242 Here we have the Socratic program [*Apol.36c*] of Ibn al-‘Arabi, for other references in Plato, see Thesleff 199, 24–25

⁴⁴⁵ *Tad* 124 line 4–5

⁴⁴⁶ *Tad* 124 line 25

⁴⁴⁷ *Fus* 48, translated as “all-inclusive object” in the *Bezels* 50 this theme of human perfection as the composite of man and woman is taken up again as a theme in this last work of Ibn al-‘Arabi in its last chapter on the Wisdom of Muhammed.

⁴⁴⁸ ‘*Uqla*, ed. Nyberg 1919, 45 line 14 For this important theme see previous note.

⁴⁴⁹ ‘*Anqâ* IV.2, Elmore 396

treatise of *Divine Directions* begins. The first words in the preface of this work are a modification of the first sentence of the much later *Futûhât*, which now serves as our starting point:

Praise belongs to God, who brought the things into existence [*awjada*] from a nonexistence [*'an 'adam*] and [thus] annihilated nothingness [*wa addamahu*].

Being the very first opening sentence of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s magnum *Opus*, these words deserve a closer look. Here *wujûd* is put in a stark contrast with non-existence⁴⁵⁰ – and this is done for decisive purposes, namely, to stress that *nothing comes out of nothing*, that is, stepping aside from wrong notions of *creatio ex nihilo*.⁴⁵¹ This is clear already in his choice of preposition: he writes *'an 'adam* and the primary signification of *'an* conveys the idea of removal from off or away from a thing, not origin or composition like the preposition *min*. In another connection Ibn al-‘Arabî even calls the simple [*sarf*], clear [*khâlis*] and absolute being of the Real [God] Most High as the “*not ex nihilo*” [*lâ 'an 'adam* F I.90.20–21]. Nothing comes to be from an absolute or “unbound nonexistence” [*'adam al-mutlaq*] whose *wujûd* is impossible [*al-muhâl al-wujûd*]: non-existence can not “be”. Therefore, here the question is about possible things and their relative non-existence [*'adam al-muqayyad*], which means that the things had no manifest entity before they were brought into existence. Therefore, “God says (Q 15:21): There is no thing whose treasures are not with us, and We send it not down but in a known measure [*bi-qadarⁱⁿ ma'lûm*], that is, “to bring these things out from the Treasuries to the existence of their entities [*wujûd al-a'yân*” – as Ibn al-‘Arabî much later in the *Futûhât* says, referring back to his first words and, now adding, that in the first lines he “referred to ‘non-existence and its non-existence’, that is, to the negation of non-existence, which equals Being [*'adamu l- 'adam wujûd*]”.⁴⁵² Thus, accordingly, Ibn al-‘Arabî may also speak of “first existence” and “second existence”, referring with the first one to the pre-eternal existence in the divine omniscience, while the “second existence” refers to existence in the concrete individual essences [*a'yân*].⁴⁵³ Everything comes from God and it comes “in a known measure.”

⁴⁵⁰ The word *'adam* means “nothingness”, “non-being”, but also relative non-existence of potentiality as the standard translation of Aristotelian “privation” [*sterêsis*]; Vagelpohl 2008, 177. A student of the early *Mu'tazili* master Abû Hudhayil (d.in 841 in extreme old age), Abu Yaqûb al-Sahhâm (late 9th century), held a doctrine that non-existent objects (*ma'dûm*) are “things” in so far as they are possible objects; Dhanani 1994, 9. See also a concise note on this theme in kalâm-discussions, *ibid.* p.27 n.34.

⁴⁵¹ Here we have the Aristotelian *hylê* as a possible being *dunámei ón* and, thus, becoming as something changing into something else [*gênesis eis ousían*]: “everything is generated from that which is, but is potentially and is not actually” *Meta* XII.2.1069a19–20. And also, “the same thing can be contraries at the same time potentially” *Met* IV.5.1009a35. For discussion on *ex nihilo*, see Wolfson 1979, 207–221

⁴⁵² F II 281, 1–4. Here *wujûd* is translated with Being as it refers to God, the Real, and not an ontological concept. God as that which cannot not exist.

⁴⁵³ Cont. 23 and 27 n 6

But at the same time as he is here talking about bringing into existence and thus of making it *possible* for the human being to find something “there” in general, he is also talking about the human way of coming to know and understand, of finding the possible through himself as a being that in itself “**can also be otherwise**”⁴⁵⁴. This potentiality is in the very nature of human being: it is in her that this bringing into existence at its fullest occurs.

Finally, the Osman Yahia edition of the *Futûhât* provides a footnote on the text in which Yahia says: in this first phase of creation the bringing into existence is from the sphere of *kumûn*⁴⁵⁵ to that of *zuhûr*, that is, from concealment to manifest state, and, that this *kumûn* means [in Aristotelian terms] “potential existence” [*wujûd bi l-qûwa*] and in terms of Ibn ‘Arabi, “existence in knowledge” [*al-wujûd al-‘ilmî*].⁴⁵⁶ Similarly the state of *zuhûr* corresponds to what the Shaykh calls “entified existence” [*al-wujûd al-‘aynî*] or [the Aristotelian] “actual existence” [*al-wujûd bi l-fi‘l*].

The *Tadbîrât* written earlier than the above quoted passage begins with this same basic structure of potentiality and actuality, though applying it now into the creation of the human being, the focus of our point here.

Here is how the *Tadbîrât* begins: “Glory to God who brought forth [*istakhraja*, to externalize] the human being [*al-insân*, a gender-indifferent word] from its potential existence in the divine mind to its actual existence in entity [*min wujûd ‘ilmihi ‘ilâ wujûd ‘ainihi*].⁴⁵⁷ Here we have two basic modes of existence: “existence in knowledge” and “entified existence”, corresponding to Aristotelian “potential existence” [*wujûd bi l-qûwa*] and “actual existence” [*wujûd bi l-fi‘l*], as was just noted above by Osman Yahia on The First Words of the *Futûhât*.

Accordingly, in the beginning God brought forth the human being from its “existence in knowledge”, from potential being, into an “entified existence”, into an actually existing human being. In describing this process of formation and entification of the human being Ibn al-‘Arabi applies in this passage of the

⁴⁵⁴ That which “can be otherwise” [*endekhómenon allôs ekhein*], *Rhet.*I.2, 1357a13, a highly important formulation.

⁴⁵⁵ For the theory of *kumûn* see the article in *ET²V* 384ff; Ess 1992 Vol.III 335–47. Elsewhere Ibn ‘Arabi uses this term precisely in connection with the “bringing into existence of His creation [*‘ijâd khalqî^{hi}*] and states that “hidden within [the Real] is the Concealment of Transcendence” [*kumûnu tanzîhⁱⁿ*] which he also calls the Night of His Transcendence [*layl ghayb-hi*]. Anqâ, 373 There is an anecdote of al-Nazzâm describing the deep influence of Aristotle on early dialecticians: “al-Nazzâm once discussed the subject of the ancient Greek philosophers with the wazîr Ja’far al-Barmakî (d.803 CE.). Turning to Aristotle, al-Nazzâm remarked: ‘I have refuted his book.’ Ja’far asked, ‘How could you when you have not considered it worthwhile to read his work?’ To which al-Nazzâm replied, ‘What would you prefer: that I recite it to you from the beginning to the end or from the end to the beginning?’ Thereupon al-Nazzâm proceeded to recite it part by part and then he refuted it amazing Ja’far. ‘Abd al-Jabbâr, *Fadl al-i‘tizâl*, quoted through Dhanani 1994, 188

⁴⁵⁶ Y, I, 41

⁴⁵⁷ *Tad.* I 103.4 The concept of ‘noetic existence’, introduced by the *Muta‘zili* theoreticians and later taken up by Ibn al-‘Arabî, for which he was sternly rebuked by Ibn Taymiyya, who [wrongly] accused Ibn al-‘Arabî for holding the noetic and ontic modes identical. For *Muta‘zila*, see Nyberg 1919, 45–47, and for Taymiyya, see Knysh 1999, 102.

Tadbîrât the same expressions used in the Qur'ân for the first moments of creation of the universe. According to a literal translation the Qur'ân says [Q 21:30]:

Heaven and earth were a mass all sewn up [*kânatâ ratq^{an}*],
and then We [God] unstitched them [*fataqnâhumâ*]

Therefore, the fundamental moment of creation is described as a “splitting” or “unstitching” of a unity. This unstitching is a division and separation between that what is above [the heavens] and that which is below [the earth].⁴⁵⁸ Before creation these two were an undifferentiated unit. Here Ibn al-‘Arabi tells that in the later phase of creating the human being, this unstitched and “separated” heaven was again joined together with human reason giving the human being its own nature or innate disposition [*fitra*]. And, furthermore, in doing this [God] concealed His Being in the human being [*wa abtana kaunu^{hu} fi kauni^{hi}*], both inwardly and outwardly. This being the secret of God’s mystery, “veiled in the human nature by what is even more hidden [*hajabah ‘an sirrahu bimâ huwa ahfâ*]—concealed like the meaning of a wise saying that opens only to those who truly reflect on it”.⁴⁵⁹ This “even more hidden” is another Qur’ânic reference: “surely He knows the secret [thought] and that yet more hidden [*ahfâ*]. God—there is no god but He. To him belong the Names Most Beautiful” [Q 20:7–8]. The secret of God is thus hidden in the very existence of the human being, and, within this existence, that which is even more hidden are the divine Names.

Thus we have here two fundamental ontological levels as events linked one to another: **first**, the act of manifestation from *existence in knowledge* [*intentional inexistence*, or potential being] into *entified existence* (or actual existence of the *synolon* of *morphê* and *hulê*), both in the cosmos on the whole and the human being as its focal point. And **secondly**, the unstitching or splitting of a unity into two, that is, the couple of bestowing high heaven and receptive low earth. This theme of splitting into two, a unity of a duality, will later be expounded by Ibn al-‘Arabi when he is answering the 43rd question of al-Tirmîdhî: “*What is the Fitra?*” (F II. 70)⁴⁶⁰, that is, what is the human nature? This question refers to the above-mentioned human native disposition, but the verb *fatara* means basically *to split, make or create, bring into being*. Therefore, in his answer Ibn al-‘Arabî says: The *fitra* “is the light through which the

⁴⁵⁸ See above p.136. Here the question is not so much of spatial difference, rather, “The one that bestows benefits is always the ‘higher’, and the one that acquires benefits is always the ‘lower’” Fut.III 197.8–9, see SDG 254.

⁴⁵⁹ *Tad.* I, 103.10–104.2

⁴⁶⁰ *Fitra* was an expression to denote *a priori* truths like the existence of God in which case proofs of this truth were to provide only a *posteriori* reassurance. On the various uses of the word *fitra* in the kalâm –discussions, see Ess 1966, 146–47; 161–62 and van Ess 2006, 181.

darkness of the possible things is *cleft* and the separation occurs among the forms.” (F II 70.7, SDG 255)

Taking into account all the aforesaid on bringing into existence and cleaving asunder, it is not surprising that in answering this question of al-Tirmidhi, now to be paraphrased as “what is the primordial split”, Ibn al-‘Arabi formulates **the *fitra*** as that which “differentiates between an entity and its being” [*fassalat baina l-‘ain wa l-wujûduhâ*] as a consequence of **an original rendering asunder of actuality/heaven from possibility/earth**, a light making all the various forms distinct. Therefore, one could say that the *fitra* stands for **the Ontological difference** (*der Unterschied des Seins und des Seienden*, also referred as *klüftung* or emphatically *zerklüftung*), that is, the difference between beings and Being (‘*ayân / wujûd*)—to which the Shaikh refers as “one of the most abstruse things to which the knowledge of God’s knowers becomes connected”.⁴⁶¹ This fundamental issue will come up once more in the final chapter of our conclusion.

After this prelude on the creation of human being Ibn al-‘Arabi returns in the first chapter of the *Tadbîrât* to the same theme on human specific nature and the above mentioned Qur’ânic passage referring to it. This passage (Q 2:30–34) underlines the centrality of the human being in the cosmos: God is placing the human being as a viceroy [*khalîfa*] in the earth, teaching him “all the Names”, the knowledge of which makes him superior even to the angels. For Ibn al-‘Arabi it is this difference between the angels and the human being, depicted here in terms of knowing or not knowing the Names, that highlights the eminence of the human being in God’s creation.

Now, according to Ibn al-‘Arabi, naming is possible only if one *knows* the names, if one *in some sense has* the names.⁴⁶² Thus, in this passage God is referring to things he knew; all secrets of the universe are from Him and in Him, and the Lord knows Himself. In the *‘Uqla* Ibn al-‘Arabi says “God knows Himself and He knows the world, therefore [this knowledge] manifests in a form [*sûra*]... as the Prophet said: God created the human being in his form”. The human being was created in this condensed [*mukhtasira*] form as an “all-encompassing blueprint” [*nuskhat^{an} jâmi’at^{an}*] containing both all the forms of macrocosm and all the Divine Names.⁴⁶³ These Names are referred to as “the unseen things of the heavens and earth” [*ghaibu samawâti wa-l ‘ard*, Q 2:33]. They are the Names God taught to Adam, the composite human being made out of manifest clay [or mud] and a non-manifest spirit and breath, that is, out of the same concrete material elements as the whole universe, yet endowed with

⁴⁶¹ *Fut.* II 70.7-14, SDG 256. Heidegger radicalizes this division with the prefix ‘*zer-klüftung*’, not just a division but a fissure of being, *Zerklüftung des Seyns* (GA 65, §127, 156 and 159) and calls it also “*Die unterschied alle unterschiede*” (GA 54, 225).

⁴⁶² *Tadbîrât* 124.16–125.3

⁴⁶³ *‘Uqla*, ed. Nyberg 1919, 45.8–12

Divine Breath (Q 15:28–29) “that determines [*mudabbir*] all forms”—as Ibn al-‘Arabí much later says in the *Fusûs*.⁴⁶⁴

It is precisely this dual ontological status of matter and spirit, “pure darkness and pure light”⁴⁶⁵, possibility and completion of the human being that is at issue here. In the ‘*Uqla*, where this formation of man is given a more detailed exposition, Ibn al-‘Arabí says, that God “kneaded with his both hands the human clay [*tînatahu*], making the two opposites [of water and earth] enjoined [*mutajâwara l-addâd*].”⁴⁶⁶ Here the Shaikh is referring to a Qur’ânic passage from the same context where God asks Iblîs “What prevented you from prostrating yourself before him whom I created with My own two hands?” (Q 28:75) For Ibn al-‘Arabí the “Two Hands of God” indicate the dual eminence of the human creature: *human configuration combines contraries*, both visible and non-visible realities, but so do the Names, as is indicated in that God taught Adam “*all* the names, not just some of them: hence all the realities of the cosmos were brought together within him”.⁴⁶⁷ “[E]ssential oneness is implicit in the divine Names, even though their [individual] realities are various and multiple”, as he later writes in the *Fusûs*, and illustrates his point with an interesting comparison to “*Prime matter* [*hâyûla*] as part of each and every definition [be it a stone, plant, animal or man]: whatever the form, all of them are traced back to one single reality i.e. substance [*jawhar*], which is their *Prime matter*”.⁴⁶⁸ Here we, indeed, have not only the essential oneness of the divine Names but also the essential oneness of *Prime matter* as the “absolute substratum of all changes”⁴⁶⁹. The theme of God’s Two Hands and the idea of *coincidentia oppositorum* is a recurrent theme in the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabí, and, as such reminds the Aristotelian “underlying *hylê* of contrary opposites” (see I.2.2.)

The angels could not understand why God would appoint as His vicegerent a being of lower nature that will “cause mischief and shed blood” [Q 2:30] on earth. The angels are not material beings; unlike the human composite being, they are not made of clay. But it turns out that it is precisely this combination of the malleability of matter, matter as possibility, combined with the spiritual formative power of understanding that gives the human configuration an advantage of seeing the possible, a modality the angels know nothing about. Thus, in the case of the first human being, it was through his own microcosmic being that he could give the names to all existent things: God’s viceroy on earth is a combination of both the material and the spiritual worlds, that is, the human being includes *both* beings already actualized, *and*, possible beings still in the process of becoming. In this Qur’ânic passage the concealed possibility of the “Adamite substance” is referred to with the pronoun ‘these/them’ [*hâ’ulâ*’],

⁴⁶⁴ *Fus*3, 68/73

⁴⁶⁵ *Tad*.7, 168, 14

⁴⁶⁶ ‘*Uqla*, Ed. Nyberg 1919, 43,4

⁴⁶⁷ F I 263.17–19; also F II 268.10 the “Two Hands of God” see: Murata 1992, Ch.3, 81–114.

⁴⁶⁸ *Fus*XII, 124/153

⁴⁶⁹ Izutsu 1984, XIII, 215

as Ibn al-ʿArabí says⁴⁷⁰: God asks the angels “tell Me the names of these” [*anbi’ûnî bi-asmâ’i hâ’ulâ’i*, Q 2:31]. To see this possibility requires the understanding of motion and change, that is, metabolism of something becoming different. We are amidst Aristotelian physics.

The point seems to be concealed in this masculine 3rd person plural pronoun referring to “these Names” or, more exactly, to the Names of these [beings] “here”, that is, to higher animate beings somehow at hand [present, *hâdir*⁴⁷¹], whereas a feminine form of the pronoun would here refer to inanimate things. Therefore, here God is asking the angels to tell him the names of these elevated “beings” as possibilities: who are *they*? And, as the passage shows, the angels have no knowledge apart from what they themselves already are: angels are fully developed, actualized creatures with no potentiality in them; there is no change or becoming in the realm of angels and therefore they cannot have any idea to what God is referring here. Whereas Adam, a creature combined of clay and spirit, both matter and thought, is indeed a changing and yet to be realized creature. Thus God is here referring, according to Ibn al-ʿArabí, to something about to be: He refers to the things themselves, the known essences of the named ones [‘*ayân al-musammîyât*], but known in a kind of form [‘*alâ sûrat*’ⁱⁿ *mâ*, an equivalent phrase to the Aristotelian *eidos pôs*].⁴⁷²

This “kind of form” has an ontological status in that it gives the what for (*ou heneka*) of striving inherent in all potentiality as lack and yearning for form (*formverlangen*). And thus, as Happ says, the Aristotelian concept of *sterêsis* is based on the Platonic Second Principle striving (*hylê* as *dúnamei ón*) for perfection and, ultimately, on the doctrine of erotic ascending drive of *homoíosis theô*, mythically depicted in the Symposium and the Phaidros.⁴⁷³

According to Ibn al-ʿArabí God is referring to possible perfections, not to actual beings. What is actually present is the lack as **a kind of form yearning for its fulfilment**. He is referring to latent beings, an appearance of sorts, the divine Names as realizable possibilities opening up in human projects: “*names calling for the distant end of the path*”⁴⁷⁴. Possible forms can only be seen in the light of understanding their function [*bi-‘ain l-illat*], the ‘for the sake of which’ of their potentiality.⁴⁷⁵ And this is what Adam could see through his own self [*fî nafsahu*] because the secrets of the macrocosmic

⁴⁷⁰ *Tad* I, 124, 19–20 in his interpretation of this passage Bayrak takes the point to be the word “*hayula*”, the Arabic for Greek *hylê*, which he leaves untranslated. But this word does not appear in the Arabic text edited by Nyberg and the Qur’ânic passage is certainly not talking about *hylê*, even if what Ibn al-ʿArabí is here explaining leads to a further understanding of *Materia Prima* as pure possibility.

⁴⁷¹ *Tad* I, 124.20

⁴⁷² *Ibid.* 125 line 2. The expression *eidos pôs*, as we already know, is used by Aristotle for example in *Phys* II.1, 193b18–20, where “*sterêsis*, too, is something like *eidos*.” The meaning is exactly the same here in Ibn al-ʿArabí: the named ones are known through a kind of form as those absent and missing ones. See end of Part II.

⁴⁷³ Happ 1971, Ch 2.25, esp. p 207 and Ch 4.64 pp 469–71, *sterêsis* as the intermediary region between pure being and pure non-being; see *Met* XI 6, 1062 b24–33 and *Met* XIV 2, 1089 a28–31.

⁴⁷⁴ *Tad* 125 line 1

⁴⁷⁵ *Tad* I, 125 line 1–2

order are gathered and reflected in his own microcosmic blueprint [*nuskha*] providing him thus with this knowledge.⁴⁷⁶ To put it briefly: the human being has knowledge of becoming “the other”, knowledge of the other as a possibility, or, knowledge of what being something is.⁴⁷⁷ This knowledge opens up as a **path to be treaded**, a way opening up with each divine Name as a gate towards its reality, “a heaven with all its tracks” (Q 51:7). In this sense one can also say counter to Aristotle that potentiality is higher than actuality because it contains actuality precisely as a possibility to be: a piece of wood becoming a chair. “If not for the possible things (*mumkin*), no effect of the divine names would become manifest.” (F III 317.12)

Therefore, as Ibn al-’Arabí says, the key for the whole passage on the Names that God taught to Adam is hidden in the question referring to the names: “tell Me the names of *these*” (tr. Arberry). Who are ‘they’ [*há’ulá*]? They are the eternal or permanent [*thubût*] Divine Names as “seeds” [*albâb* sg. *lubb*], archetypes, or pure possibilities, to be given existence through the phenomenal existence of Adam. Whereas fully developed beings, like angels, have no projects to accomplish and no potentialities to actualize. They cannot, and have no need to become anything else apart from what they already are (as the angels say in this passage: “We know not save what Thou hast taught us”, Q 2:32) and, therefore, in more general terms, change does not exist in the angelic realm. Changing is not the way of being of angels, whereas in humans, due to their dual nature, becoming something is precisely their way of temporal being, of becoming what they already are, changing into something while retaining their sameness.

In clarifying these modes of existence Izutsu writes: “Seen from the viewpoint of external or phenomenal existence, the archetypes are not existent, although they are ‘permanently subsistent’. The permanent subsistence [*thubût*]⁴⁷⁸ is different from external existence. Symbolically the archetypes are ‘dark’. They are dark because they are not yet illuminated by the bright daylight of existence. Existence as Light belongs only to the individual things that exist concretely and externally... [T]he archetypes are permanent ‘realities’ that subsist in the Divine Consciousness. They do exist in the same sense in which concepts are said to exist in the human mind”.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ *Tad* I 125 line 2–4

⁴⁷⁷ Emphasizing here the word “knowledge”, that is knowledge of the qualities and attributes intrinsic to being. Knowing the other does not, however, equal being the other. Cf. SPK, Ch.V, 79–81.

⁴⁷⁸ This important term we have mentioned already (p.203, 266 see also 287) and it will be discussed further down in connection with the ‘*ayân al-thâbita*’ of Ibn al-’Arabí, see next note and notes 196, and 554.

⁴⁷⁹ Izutsu 1984, XII, 161. Ibn al-’Arabí makes a difference between *wujûd* and *thubût*, the latter being devoid of existence, and this is how the term was used also by the *mu’tazila: wa jufarriqûna bain l-thubût wa l-wujûd*, Schubert [ed.] 1995, 107. For the subtle development of the term *thâbit* in philosophical theology, see van Ess 1966, 197–207. Some of Ibn al-’Arabí’s followers, however, did compare *thubût* with *wujûd al-’ilmî*, thus opening the gates for severe criticisms like that of Ibn Taimiyya, claiming that Ibn al-’Arabí stands for the eternity of the world.

In his *Divine Directions concerning the Reformation of the Human Estate* Ibn al-ʿArabí continues by saying, that “Some mystics have called this [human possibility] the Mirror of Truth”.⁴⁸⁰ This, he says, “refers to the word of the Prophet: ‘the believer is the mirror for his brother’ where being a brother refers to the concept of similarity [*mithlîya*] expressed in the Qur’ânic verse: ‘Nothing is as his likeness’ (K 42:11)”.⁴⁸¹ Here the emphasis seems to be on the word “thing” [*shai*]⁴⁸²: God is not similar to any fixed or existent thing; but nor is the human being merely a *thing*, instead, “in the appearance of this [human] being [*mawjûd*], at its purest and clearest form, the very essence and the attributes of the Real [*al-Haqq*] are manifested [shining forth, *zahara*] forth in their meaning—[but of course] not in their being [*al-mâ’awîyat lâ al-nafsîyat*]; radiating [in the world] in the presence of generosity”.⁴⁸³ Thus, here the believing friend represents the *walîy*, the mineness of being together and reflecting the perfection of human being. The all-inclusiveness of the human being created in the divine form cannot be fully mirrored except by another equal being, whereas separate divine names and qualities can well be seen manifested in all of nature.

This non-entified realm of the human being is clearly formulated by Ibn al-ʿArabí when he later on in the same text says: “if we did not know that we exist, we could not know the meaning of existence”.⁴⁸⁴ We find ourselves in existence but we are not the makers of it. But it is only through our inherent knowledge and awareness of existence that we can pose the question on the meaning of existence; existence becomes an issue precisely in and for the human being. And the same is true regarding all Divine Names taught to Adam: we know seeing through seeing, hearing through hearing, generosity through generosity etc. It is precisely this connection between knowledge and being that is “referred to in the prophetic saying: He who knows himself knows his Lord”.⁴⁸⁵ One is even tempted to paraphrase this hadith as “He who knows himself knows Being”, but this only to emphasize what we are after here.

⁴⁸⁰ The theme of “polished mirror” is central in both the first chapter of the *Fusûs* depicting the creation of human being and the last chapter referring to the conjugal act of man and woman as divine unity.

⁴⁸¹ *Tad* I 125 line 10–13 Here Ibn al-ʿArabí is using one of his favourite quotations from the Qur’ân, which can be translated in many ways. This Qur’ânic passage is discussed further down.

⁴⁸² A very pregnant term and closely connected to *thubût* in the *kalâm* –discussions, Ess 1966, 192–99, Wisnovsky 2003, 145–160.

⁴⁸³ Later on he says: *Bi-l jûdi zahara- l wujûd* (*Tad* 152 line 10), “Existence is shining forth in generosity.” A sentence one could well insert in some writings of Heidegger without anyone noticing anything strange, as one might add. As, for example, in his saying that Being comes as a “gift” or a “favour” [*Gunst*], WM 49/358, see Caputo 1986, 164; see also above n 272.

⁴⁸⁴ *Tad*. 17, 208, 10–11. This identity of being and knowing [*ʿalîm bi-nafsihî*] is typical *Muʿtazili* tenet, see van Ess 1992, on al-Nazzâm, 399; and for Abû l-Hudhayl (d. 840/41 or 849/50), 275–76, formulating this identity as: God is a knower through a knowledge which is identical to Him” [*huwa ʿâlimun bi-ʿilmin huwa huwa*], Wisnovsky 2003, 229, translated into German as ”Er [Gott] ist wissend durch einen Wissensakt, Welcher Er ist”. Rudolph 1989, 133–34.

⁴⁸⁵ *Tad*. 17, 209, 4

Ultimately it is God who is the *Hearing*, the *Seeing* the *Knowing*, that is, the actual happening, or, as Michael Sells would say “the Meaning Event”.⁴⁸⁶

* * *

It seems that here we are in a focal point of many confusions. For example, al-Taftazânî (born in the village of Taftazan in 1322 and died in 1390CE), a ferocious critic of the followers of Ibn al-’Arabî, found the position of the *wujdiyya* [espousers of the Unity of being] “preposterous, because [they] posit existence to ‘be an intelligible abstract of the second decree’—that is, one generated by the human mind through the process of abstraction [*ta’aqqul*] [...] a hollow abstract with no reality outside our minds”.⁴⁸⁷ A preposterous notion indeed! But does it accord with what Ibn al-’Arabî teaches? Not in the least.

Here al-Taftazânî is accusing the espousers of the Unity of being philosophically quite superficially, but with an obvious moral resentment. Earlier, while referring to *kalâm*—discussions on the nature of human speculation and the use of it when it comes to God’s existence, a typical theological formulation was introduced: God is not generated in our speculation [*lâ mutawallad ‘an nazarinâ*]. God, accordingly, is not an outcome of speculation. With this formula the dialecticians want to emphasize that our knowledge is not deduced, instead, we know God’s existence through an intuitive necessity [*darûra fitrîa*, here we have the same concept of *fitra* discussed above pp.260–61, 277 and n 460].⁴⁸⁸ Here we meet this formula again, or at least the first half of it. According to al-Taftazânî the holders of the doctrine of Unity of being are disclaiming precisely this well-known theological truth, claiming that *wujûd*, existence, is “generated by the human mind; that existence is a mere hollow abstract with no reality outside our mind”. His argument is simple: God is not engendered by human speculation, as we [theologians] all very well know, yet, that is precisely what the espousers of *wujûdîa* claim Him to be. *Ergo*, their position is intolerable.⁴⁸⁹ But al-Taftazânî would have a hard time in showing how this fits with the above quoted sentences of Ibn al-’Arabî: “if we did not know that we exist we would not know what existence means”, or, “in the appearance of this [human] being... the very essence and the attributes of the Real [*i.e.* God] are manifested in their meaning, not in their being”. The first sentence refers to the ontological basis of our knowledge: we can come to understand the meaning of existence

⁴⁸⁶ Sells 1994, 63–89 Here Sells also refers to Ibn al-’Arabî’s “performative notion of existence”, bearing the same idea of the “event” of existing; p. 88.

⁴⁸⁷ Knysh 1999, 155–57

⁴⁸⁸ Here we also see a downgrading of the strict apophatic concept of God. The theologians dismiss reason as a source for our knowledge of God, but are still looking for more ultimate grounds as the proof of that knowledge. Aristotle had no difficulty in claiming that knowledge of the First principles is not based on demonstration but on intuition, *An.Post.*I.3, 72 b 20, or, that demonstrative science [*apodeixis*] is not capable of establishing the nature [*ti esti*] of anything. *An.Post.*II 7, 92 b 35–8. For the concept *darûrî* here translated as intuition, see above n 627, and pp.306–07

⁴⁸⁹ A parallel case for easy misunderstandings could be Plato’s provocative expression of the philosopher “making love to” and hence “conceiving” true being [*tò ón*]. [*Rep.*VI, 490ab].

only because we exist and *are* aware of the fact. Awareness is depending on the reality of what we are aware of, whether that awareness refers to an existent or nonexistent “thing”, for example, the shining sun or a good joke.⁴⁹⁰ This has nothing to do with the nonsensical or absurd claim that we are the makers of existence. “One cannot be the maker of that which is already there” [*tahsîl al-hasîl*], to actualize something already actual, to use another phrase of the theologians.⁴⁹¹

The second sentence of Ibn al-’Arabî above, on the other hand, emphasizes that what is given in our knowledge of God is the *meaning* of His attributes, not His Being.

A related problematic seems to be lurking behind Nyberg’s approximations of Ibn al-’Arabî as an “extreme realist, identifying logical and ontological being”. Here Ibn al-’Arabî is, according to Nyberg, close to the “school of *al-ma’dûmiyya*”, that is, those espousing the reality of [mental] inexistence⁴⁹², and for whom “black is black also in inexistence”. This is what Ibn al-’Arabî refers to, according to Nyberg, with his “Third metaphysical category [...] *Universalis sunt ante rem*; mental formations are objective realities; logical being is the ontological ground of existence”!⁴⁹³ But, as will be obvious in the next chapter, his “Third metaphysical category” pertains also to existents *in concreto* [*fî al-mawjûdât*] as well as to their manifestations in our abstractions, that is, *post rem*. It is precisely this which makes this *third metaphysical category*, the “mother of all existents”⁴⁹⁴, the most universal and comprehensive reality, an “all-encompassing principle of being”, as we could say with Happ. Being is the ground of existence, not logic.

One should perhaps here remember what Heinz Happ earlier warned about assessments on Plato or Aristotle: one should avoid both ultra-realistic interpretations of Platonic abstraction as well as purely nominalistic interpretations of Aristotelian abstraction.⁴⁹⁵ Avoiding extremes should be a sound basis for all assessments, but with Ibn al-’Arabî one also needs to be reminded of the various positions through which he as a mystic expressed the “unsayable”. Unlike “the bewildered Muslim thinkers” he was criticizing above (p.134), it seems he never got tired himself: gaining one perspective towards the divine does not close other perspectives, rather, each one leads to another, and, ultimately, to the One and Only.⁴⁹⁶ Reason operates with abstractions, a word that means to “draw away”, “tear apart”, “to dissect”, that is, pulling things out of their concrete situations and viewing them instead only as

⁴⁹⁰ The examples are mine but the point is Ibn al-’Arabî’s, as we will see in the next chapter on the *al-dawâ’ir*.

⁴⁹¹ van Ess 1966, 304

⁴⁹² *ma’dûm* = nonentity, nonexistent.

⁴⁹³ Nyberg 1919, 46–47. See also his article in the Shorter EI on Mu’tazila. For the *ma’dûmiyya* in *kalâm* discussions, see van Ess 1966, 195–7, Rescher 1967, 69–71.

⁴⁹⁴ *’Umm al-jâmi’a li-jâmi’ l-mawjûdât*, “encompassing mother of all existents”, *Al-dawâ’ir*, 25,8.

⁴⁹⁵ Happ 1971, 634, above Ch.I.B.5

⁴⁹⁶ Comparable with Thesleff’s Plato, who was “no dogmatic, but truth-oriented visionary, constantly experimenting with new approaches” Therefore, he claims, “If one considers the theory of Forms to be primary and, indeed, the actual core of Plato’s philosophy [...], the scope and specific features of the ‘vision’ are easily neglected” Thesleff 1999, 33–34.

conceptual formations. As such, reason alone can never reach the nature of anything as we experience it. In the language of Ibn al-ʿArabí: reason can only witness God’s incomparability or transcendence, never His similarity or immanence. Therefore, it is the whole human being and not just his rational faculty that is created in the form of God. That which is bound to remain closed for mere reasoning thought can, therefore, open up as an open possibility for the totality of human being.

Nevertheless, the pupils and followers of Ibn al-ʿArabí felt an urgent and understandable need to systematize his pulsating and multifaceted openings towards the divine, moulding them into a more solid and more conveyable doctrine. But for Ibn al-ʿArabí, the true doctrine, as the above quoted many examples already show, is hidden in the mirror of human being itself. In the words of the Qur’ân [K 95:4]: We indeed created the human being in the most beautiful stature [*ahsana l-taqwim*]. On this Ibn al-ʿArabí says: “So if you understand this God-given eminence of the human being, it will be for you the gist [*lubb*, the kernel] of gnosis and Divine wisdom”.⁴⁹⁷ When God gave his vicegerent existence He said: “You are a mirror, and in you all existents and all the Names and attributes are reflected, therefore, you are My indicator [*dalîl*] in this world; and as My vicegerent I appointed you to convey therein of My lights and to make My secrets known therein; it is for you to guard and take care of this kingdom”.⁴⁹⁸

III. 3.3. Manifest and hidden worlds

*If not for light, no eye would witness Him;
If not for reason, no engendered thing would know Him.*
F III.26 [SDG 38]

Two closely connected themes have emerged from what has been said so far on Ibn al-ʿArabí’s Islamic thinking: on the one hand, a distinction of realities as visible or invisible, manifest or nonmanifest, out in the open or hidden—like a tree with its visible trunk and branches reaching towards the sky and light and its invisible roots growing deep in the darkness of the soil. (Q 14:24)

“The root of every science is in the divine knowledge, since everything other than God [*kullu mâ siwâ Allâh*] is derived from God” (F I.170.8). Indeed, knowledge is a divine attribute of all-encompassingness [*sifat ihâtiyya*; F II.370.7]. Therefore, in the Qur’ân the angels say to God: “Our Lord, Thou embracest all things in mercy and knowledge (Q 40:7).” And, furthermore, accordingly, “all felicity lies in knowledge of God” [*ilm bi-llâh*: “knowledge of /through/with God” F IV.319.10].

⁴⁹⁷*Tad* 125.12–15

⁴⁹⁸*Tad* 131. 5–8

Similarly Ibn al-‘Arabí says, emphasizing the difference between “connected” and “unconnected” knowledge: “The knowledge through God is a decorating adornment. The knowledge through thinking leads to doubt and error.” (F II 644.11) With these poetic words Ibn al-‘Arabí begins Ch.288 of the *Futûhât* on “unlettered knowledge” [*al-‘ilm al-ummî*], referring to the Prophet, who, according to Qur’ân (7:158), was illiterate (*nabî al-ummî*). Ibn al-‘Arabí explains that an “unlettered” person “does not employ his reflective consideration and his rational judgment to bring out the meaning and mysteries which the Qur’ân embraces.” Therefore, his “heart is safe from reflective consideration.” (F II.644.17–19) Instead, being unlettered denotes to someone being open and receptive to divine effusion and God-given knowledge, amongst which Ibn al-‘Arabí here mentions “knowledge of *zâhir* and *bâtin*”, the manifest and the hidden (Ibid.644.31–32)

In many of the most often quoted passages of the Qur’ân [like Q 2:33; 20:7–8; 41:53; 57:3] commented by Ibn al-‘Arabí the idea of concealment or “non-manifestation” [*bâtin*], and its opposite, *un-concealment* or “manifestation” [*zuhûr*, also: outwardness, appearance], turn out to be central for the understanding of God’s divine Names. And even more generally: these opposites are fundamental in understanding all realities, God, the human being, the whole cosmos and also interpretation and hermeneutics of the Quran. According to a hadith, quoted by Ibn al-‘Arabí (F I 187.15⁴⁹⁹) “There is no verse of the Qur’ân which does not have an outward sense (*zahir*), and an inward sense (*batn*)[...]”.

Similarly, as we have already seen, this pair of opposites was central in the first words of Ibn al-‘Arabí on God’s bringing everything into existence from relative nonexistence of shadows. Therefore, all realities are manifest or hidden, illuminated or unilluminated, visible or invisible, unconcealed or concealed. “The corporeal bodies are the manifest dimension of existence, while the spirits and meanings are the entifications of the nonmanifest dimension of existence”, as Ibn al-‘Arabí’s stepson Sadr al-Dîn Qûnawî (d.1274) writes.⁵⁰⁰ All manifest realities have their roots in the nonmanifest dimension of reality. “God placed within each thing—and the soul of man is one of the things—a manifest dimension and a nonmanifest dimension. Through the manifest dimension, man perceives things which are called ‘entities,’ and through the nonmanifest dimension, he perceives things which are called ‘knowledge.’” (F I.166.13–14) “The visible world is perceived by sight, while the world of the unseen is perceived by insight (*basîra*; F III.42.6–7; cf. MR I.171).⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ This hadith is not included in the standard collections, but “our companions [an expression with which Ibn al-‘Arabí refers for example to al-Ghazzâlî] and the people of unveiling all agree on the soundness of this tradition”, as Ibn al-‘Arabí here notes.

⁵⁰⁰ Quoted through Murata 1992, 220

⁵⁰¹ This whole question of different realms of beings, things visible to the eyes and things thinkable, is introduced in the end of the sixth book of Plato’s *Republic* (507c–509b). In both realms all unveiling requires illumination: the eye can only see in the light of the sun and therefore the eye must be *helioeides*, of the type of the sun; similarly all knowledge requires its type of illuminating light, all *noesthai* requires its *phôs*. And for Plato this “sunlike” quality in the realm of thinking and understanding (*gignôskein*) is being like the good (*agathoeides*), something determined by the good (*agathon*), which

One very often referred Qur'ânic passage referring to manifest and nonmanifest dimensions of reality in the works of Ibn al-'Arabî is the verse (Q 41:53): "We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth". A good example of such reference is found in the very long chapter 369 of the *Futûhât* (SDG 230–32): "On the true knowledge of the waystation of the keys to the storehouse of munificence." Ibn al-'Arabî says that although these "storehouses" [the various genera that contain the species and the individuals] are many, they all go back to two—the storehouse of knowledge of God [*'ilm bi-llâh*, equaling here roughly *Theologikê*], and the storehouse of knowledge of cosmos [*'ilm bil-'âlam*, equaling here roughly *ontology*]. (F III.361.21)

However, before either one of these storehouses can open up, one needs "the first key." And this first key is our knowledge of *wujûd* (finfing/existence/being) in an unbounded sense—without any binding by the newly arrived or the eternal—and, also, knowledge how this Being/existence becomes distinct in entities, how the divine names work, what are their effects, how they are related, combined and differentiated. Through this first key we gain access to all basic properties [*ahkâm*, distinctions, and ruling properties⁵⁰²] like negation and affirmation, the necessary, possible and impossible, but also the above named basic distinction of knowledge through God and knowledge through cosmos. Thus, this ontic possibility of human being is the foundation for all ontology. Therefore, it is not enough to have the divine names as *onoma*, so to speak, but also as *rhêma*⁵⁰³, their qualities as acting and working properties, their effects in the cosmos that makes all that through which we can gain access to God.

This distinction of *onoma* and *rhêma* became later that of "noun" and "verb" (*Rhet* III 2, 1404 b 26) in Aristotle, who defined them with respect to time: *onoma* as without *khronou*, without any specific temporal aspect and *rhêma* as *prossêmaion khronon*, showing with respect to temporality (*De Int* I 2. 12 a 20 and I 3, 16 b 6). But not yet so in Plato who had these two as the primary modes in which beings as such is sayable. Both are making something clear (*dêlôma*): *onoma* makes clear a *pragma*, that with which one is dealing; whereas a *rhêma* makes the *praxis*, the dealing-with, clear. Here Ibn al-'Arabî is referring to ruling properties that are grasped in thought as modes of access to beings or meaning-accomplishments. "They are *what* we think *about* objects, rather than the *objects* we generally think about" (Caston 1999, 208). God has bestowed us this first and fundamental key for all further

ultimately is even beyond being (*epekeina tês ousias*) as the *demiurgos*. These different realms of being are then brought together at the beginning of the seventh book, with its famous simile of the cave.

⁵⁰² The word judgment is usually translated into Arabic as *hukm* (like in synthetic *tarkîbî* and analytic *tahlîlî* judgments), here judgment would, however, clearly be a misleading translation of *hukm* as Ibn al-'Arabî is referring to these distinctions as our means to gain knowledge of God and thus like the divine names.

⁵⁰³ This theme of "names" and "attributions" goes back to Plato's *Sophist*, 261 E–263 D. See Caston 1999, 208, and DL VII.51, 52. I am not suggesting that Ibn al-'Arabî is here commenting on the *Sophist*.

knowledge through our self-knowledge: we know existence through our own existence. [Heidegger says it neatly: “Being is given only if the understanding of being, hence Dasein, exists” GA 24, 26/19.]

According to Ibn al-‘Arabí God makes “yourself known to you so that you may come to know him. You are the first knowing thing and He is the last known thing. You are the last existent thing, and he is the first existent.” (F III 361.2–3) Much later in the same chapter Ibn al-‘Arabí goes on to combine these two “storehouses” into breathing in and breathing out: he who reaches this exalted level “acquires benefits in every breath between a manifest divine name and a nonmanifest divine name. The breath emerges to the All-Encompassing, Manifest Real so that He can show him the Entity of the Real in the signs of the horizons, and the breath enters to the Nonmanifest real so that He can show him the Entity of the Real in himself. He witnesses nothing that is manifest and nothing that is nonmanifest if not a *haqq* [as in the above mentioned passage of the Qur’ân 41;53: “till it is clear to them that it is the Truth”, the Real] (F III 404.SDG 216).

Yet, “the Manifest has a stronger—that is to say, more inclusive [*a‘amm*—property than the Nonmanifest, since the Manifest possesses the station of both creation and the Real [*maqâm al-khalq wa l-haqq*], while the Nonmanifest possesses only [or, simply] the Real without creation [*maqâm al-haqq bilâ khalq*]. But in relation to Himself He is not Nonmanifest, only manifest”(F II.533.2–3, SPK 149). Thus we have two modes of being present: the Nonmanifest and the Manifest. Or, if viewed from a slightly different angle in Aristotelian terms of possibility [*dúnamis*, *potentia*], that which can be, which has the power to be, and that in which this power is fully completed, an actuality [*energeia*]: in Aristotelian metaphysics actuality [*energeia*, *en-ergon*, in work, functioning] is prior (*prôteron*) to the potential and capacity (*dúnamis*) (*Met IX 8. 1049 b 5*); “a thing is more truly what it is when it is *entelecheia* [completed] than when it is only potentially so (*Phys II 1.193 b 7–8*, see above p.10–15). Thus *entelecheia* is being (*ousia*) to a greater degree than *dúnamis* is. Here Ibn al-‘Arabí seems to suggest an opposite order in saying that although the roots of all Manifest realities are in the Nonmanifest, yet the Manifest is more encompassing than the Nonmanifest since it contains both the potential and the actual as that which will exist actually. For a carpenter a block of wood does contain the chair he is planning to make out of it. This planned actuality is there, but first only as *dúnamis*, potential, and not yet in its full state of completeness as the chair that is readymade. Thus, “*dúnamis* is the source [*arkhê*] of movement and change [*metabolê*]” (*Met V12, 1119 a15*). Whereas “*energeia*’ means the presence [*huparkhein*] of the thing itself [*pragma*], not in the sense which we mean by ‘*dúnamis*’.” (*Met IX 6 1048 a 30–32*)

In the above quotation Ibn al-‘Arabi says the Nonmanifest possesses only the Real without creation, that is, in our example, the chair without its wooden material is not nonmanifest but it is manifest solely to

the carpenter, he sees it as a plan to be executed: the chair is “conceivable or desirable” but it is not yet in the process of becoming/motion (*Met IX 3 1047 a 35–b 1*). Thus we have here two different perspectives or two different ways of becoming: *dunamis poietikê*, to make something come true or happen in another, and *dunamis pathêtikê*, the possibility of being the subject of change (*Met IX 1, 1046 a 10–14*). In the example of the chair, the actuality recides in another, the carpenter, whereas the motion recides in the thing moved, the block of wood changing and becoming a chair. The case is different where there is no other result besides the actualization, here the actualization recides in the subject; e.g. seeing in the seer, and speculation in the speculation, and life in living/soul/spirit/*Dasein* [*psúkhê*]. Thus it is obvious that the full being present [*ousia*] and form [*eidos*] are the completed state of being [*energeia*]. (*Met IX 8 1050 a 30–b3*) Thus, the above quoted passage “with regard to Himself He is not nonmanifest, only manifest,” denotes to the Real in whom all essential possibilities are in their completion, fully manifest and fully functioning, and, therefore, nothing in Him remains nonmanifest. In the human perspective this means for Aristotle reaching perfect happiness, full flourishing or full success⁵⁰⁴, which, as we have already seen, is closest to the divine. (*EN X 7*) All felicity comes through or with knowledge of God, as Ibn al-‘Arabí above said.

Here we are in fact dealing with two often mentioned Names of God in the Qur’ân (Q 57:3): “He is the Manifest/Outward [*zâhir*”] and the Non-manifest/Inward [*bâtin*”].⁵⁰⁵ It is also obvious that both of these Names can be conceived only as relations: something can be concealed or manifest only with respect to someone. And even more generally, as was said with Plato: “nothing is one thing just by itself” (*Theat.* 152d), or, as Cornford formulates this Heracleitean harmony of opposites: “no contrary can exist apart from its own contrary.”⁵⁰⁶ In Ibn al-‘Arabí’s vocabulary this is emphasized in that he calls all relations as “things pertaining to nonexistence” [*umûr ‘adamiyya*]. Relations can take place or happen only between things, that is, as Plato said, “in their intercourse with one another”⁵⁰⁷, or, as Ibn al-‘Arabí said, *the marriage act that pervades all atoms* (the title of a lost book of his mentioned in Ch.11 of the *Futûhât*). He explains: “everything that exercises and effect [*mu’aththir*] is a father, and everything that receives an effect [*mu’aththar fih*] is a mother. [...] The spirits are all fathers, while

⁵⁰⁴ See I.1.4 above and Johnson 2005, 220n11

⁵⁰⁵ Linguistically these expressions refer to “the back” and “belly” of a body with their obvious connections of “turning one’s back” or “embracing something”, or, the covering and harder outer parts of a body and the tender inner parts of it.

⁵⁰⁶ Cornford 1979, 38 Similarly, Husserl wrote: “The cognition of causal relationships is not something secondary to the cognition of the real, as if the real were first of all in and for itself, and then only incidentally, as something extra-essential to its being, came into relation with other realities, having an effect upon them and being affected by them [undergoing effects], as if, accordingly, cognition could bring out and determine an essence proper to the real that would be independent of the cognition of its causal relations. The point, rather, is precisely that it is fundamentally essential to *reality* as such not to have a proper essence of *that sort* at all; rather, it is what it is only in its causal relations. It is something *fundamentally relative*, which demands its corresponding members, and only only in this connection of member and corresponding member is each a ‘*substance*’ of real properties. [...] A *substance* that would be *alone* [in the sense that every Objective real is a substance] is *nonsense*.” Husserl 1980, 3

⁵⁰⁷ Theaetetus 157a, and, continuing the passage: there is no thing which is acting until it meets with what is being acted on, nor any being acted on until it meets with what is acting.

Nature [*al-tabiyya*] is the mother, since Nature is the locus of transmutations [*istihâlât*, thus in Greek *metabolê*] (F I.138.27–30).

In the above passages of the Qur’ân this relational feature has been emphasized with regard to all so-called divine Names: basically they all name relations between God and the creatures, predicates [*ahkâm*] that connect the Real to the world. Thus, Ibn al-‘Arabî says, “He who knows relations knows God, and he who is ignorant of relations is ignorant of God.” (F II.74.18) Instead of being ontological entities [*a’yân wujûdiyya*], the divine Names refer to relations/connections [*nisâb, idâfât*], and therefore, “things pertaining to nonexistence”. “Existence is put in order by things between things, just like the present moment [*zamân al-hâl*].”⁵⁰⁸ Today, and this very instant [*al-ân*], is the limit between a nonexistent yesterday and a nonexistent tomorrow, or, seen in divine scale, the whole cosmos is a limit (*barzakh*, Q 55:19⁵⁰⁹) between “eternity without beginning” [*azal*] and “eternity without end” [*abad*]. Through it [the cosmos] the one becomes differentiated from the other; if not for this limit the past nonexistence would not become distinct from the future nonexistence [F III 108.15–17]. In explaining the divine names as relations Ibn al-‘Arabî writes: “Relationships are neither entities [*a’yân*] nor things [*‘ashya*]. In respect to the realities of the relationships, they are non-existent qualities [*umûr ‘adamiyya*].”⁵¹⁰

The second theme emerging from the aforesaid visible/invisible –distinction was said to be the possibility of knowledge (‘*ilm/mâ’rifa*), a clear but invisible realm: we witness visible realities and we know invisible realities. In the human being the seat of knowledge is the heart. “Knowledge is for the heart to acquire something as that thing is in [and of] itself [*al-‘ilmu tahsîlu l-qalb ‘amru amma ‘alâ haddi mâ huwa alaihi fî nafsi*], whether the thing is nonexistent or existent.”⁵¹¹ Thus, “all knowledge is awareness [of a reality] dependent on the existent [actual] or non-existent [potential] reality [*inna l-‘ilm ‘ibârat ‘an haqîqat fî nafsi tata’alluq bi l-ma’dûm wa l-mawjûd*].”⁵¹² Knowledge relies only on an existent (actual or potential), and never on a non-existent. “Indeed, knowledge cannot be imagined as related to pure non-existence...which is characterized only by pure negation [*al-naflu l-mahd*], and the

⁵⁰⁸ F III 156.27–28, MR I, 304 n88

⁵⁰⁹ The term *barzakh* is very central concept in the whole of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s thought—to the extent that he is himself at times called the *barzakh al-barâzih*, the “limit of limits”, Eklund 1941, 157. The Aristotelian *limit* [*peras* Met V.17, 1022a4–14] is the ultimate part of each thing: “the first part outside which no part of a thing can be found, and the first point within which all parts are contained”. For Ibn al-‘Arabî the limit [*barzakh*] is an entity separating and uniting two entities: it is a limit that meets both differentiated entities with its undivided essence. This concept of limit both separates and provides unity. It can only be known and rationally understood but not perceived or witnessed. [F III 518.12, SDG 335, Bashier 86–87]. The term *barzakh* remains outside the main scope of this study and has been amply studied by Eklund 1941, 157–67 and Bashier 2004. Compare: “als Sorge ist das Dasein das ‘Zwischen’”, SZ 374, above III.3.2.

⁵¹⁰ F II 516.34–35, SPK 36

⁵¹¹ F I 91.19, SPK 148, the thing “within its own limits [*hadd*]” emphasizes the role of ‘limit’ [Gr.*peras*] in defining a thing. In philosophy, a definition [*al-hadd*] “indicates the thing’s essence” [*ad-dâllu ‘alâ mâhiyyati sh-shay’i*] See Wisnovsky 2003, 150 n.12.

⁵¹² *Insha’* 10.3–4/20

latter does not allow the actualization of anything in the mind [*lâ yuhsal minhu fi nafsi shaiⁱⁿ*], for if a thing could actualize there, it would already have existence.”⁵¹³ Pure non-existence cannot undergo any change and therefore it remains forever outside of all knowledge or imagination. Nevertheless, *non-existence, or the impossible [muhâl], as that which cannot be known or imagined, as the counter-part of all that is and ever can exist, or the possible, is fundamental for all knowledge*. As the Arabic proverb has it: “Things become distinct through their opposites.” [*bi-didduhâ tatamaiyz al-ashyâ*], quoted for example in F II 672.14 where Ibn al-‘Arabî notes that absolute nonexistence, ‘*adamu-l mutlaq*, denotes to absolute existence [*yadullu ‘alâ al-wujûdu l-mutlaq*].

Non-existence as the impossible refers to the knowledge we have of the possible; it can only be understood or thought of as the negation or counterpart of all phenomenal existence we can think or imagine, which thereby is found as a positive Unicity [*wahdâniyya*] of existence. “Knowledge is dependent on non-being, but only insofar as it depends upon its existing counterpart [*fa l-‘ilm innamâ ya-talluq bi-mathaluhu l-mawjûd*]!”⁵¹⁴ It is this sense that is also behind the Aristotelian notion of *privation* and lack, *stérêsis*, as being a kind of form [*eidos pôs*; see above pp124; 129–30, 263 n472 and n 472]. Privation serves as a kind of form precisely as the lack of something, something *is* missing. And, to bring back the general idea of Aristotelian *abstraction* [Ch.I B.5], we have here the same basic and necessarily two-fold process which consists of a negative “elimination” or “subtraction” [*afairein*] of something away, and a positive side of “knowing” or “seeing” [*noein*] the focused object of knowledge as *ab-stracted*, a structure standing apart from the “eliminated” or “subtracted” part, like turning a way from a particular individual object in order to grasp intuitively its essence as a universal [*katholon*], or seeing the *eidos* –aspect of this compound individuated *hylê/eidê*. In this sense the Aristotelian abstraction is a *Via negativa*. Here Ibn al-‘Arabî seems to refer to non-existence as the “eliminated totality” (*âfele pânta*, “abstract the all!”) of our spiritual look in order to see the totality of what truly exists as an immaterial unity of being, the ultimate end of all knowledge and being. I quoted above (p.273) Ibn al-‘Arabî saying that “he who knows relations knows God”. In the same instance he continues: “He who knows that the possible existents demand relations knows the world and he who knows the lifting [*irtifâ’*] of relations knows the Essence of the Real [*al-haqq*] through way of negation [*tariq al-salb*, “*via negativa*”, F II.74.19].

⁵¹³ *Insha’* 11.12–14/21

⁵¹⁴ *Insha’*, 22/13.5

Regarding the divine Names it was stated that the angels could not tell the Names, whereas the human being both “knew” the names and could also teach them to the angels. The angels could not tell the Names because these are not within the reach of purely spiritual creatures, whereas the Names are shining forth [*zahara*] as possible entities for the not yet actualized human being. Here the decisive difference between humans and angels is referred back to differences in their constitution, and thus, ultimately, to different ontological levels. This constitutional difference is expressed in the making of these different ontological levels: like many theologians Ibn al-’Arabí differentiates between a creature [*makhlûq*] and an originated [*mabda*]⁵¹⁵ thing. God is called both the creator [*al-khâliq*] of the composite things and the originator [*al-badî*] of non-composite things. The human being was made out of the mixture of clay and spirit, whereas the angels are simple originated spiritual creatures. In fact, “the first originated ‘object’ [*maf’ûl*] was the First Intellect [or ‘the Pen’]”. Earlier, with Aristotle (p.35), it was emphasized that “the elements should not be seen as ultimate entities but as combinations of *hylê* and one of the contrary elemental qualities of heat cold, wet and dry.” These simplified abstractions were entities for thought exemplified by natural elements in concreto making later possible mixed and proportioned compounds.⁵¹⁶ Similarly, as we already know, for Ibn al-’Arabí, the four elements are constituents of further complex compounds but as such they are simple, uncompounded elemental qualities without any corporeal manifestation: the “wet”, “cold”, “hot” or “dry” are not entities—“water is not the same as the essence of water” [*húdati einai*], as Aristotle states (*DA* III 4, 429 b15, adding, however, that in some cases there is no difference, “flesh” can only be as a compound).

All creatures are made from something already originated, like the human being made out of dust or clay. Whereas angels, pure spiritual creatures, are originated without any pre-existing matter: “Every creature created without a precedent *exemplar* [*‘alâ ghayr mithâl*] is originated”.⁵¹⁷ The common theological phrase was: *min ghairⁱ aslⁱⁿ wa ‘alâ ghairⁱ mithâl*, “without [material] root and paradigm”, an expression occurring particularly with non-Qur’ânic expressions of creating as bringing into

⁵¹⁵ The Arabic word origin [*ibtidâ*] is ambiguous, like the Greek *arkhê*. It can stand for both a starting point in time and a principle [*mabda*].

⁵¹⁶ For the Aristotelian connections between the elements, see above Ch.III.2.3 and *GC* II 8–11, Happ 1971, 532

⁵¹⁷ *F* II 421.23 MR I, 248 n.86 The word *mithâl*, here *the exemplary*, to resemble, to look alike, to imitate, to appear in the likeness of [*mithl*=likeness], represent, and therefore also image, model, picture, pattern. A *mithâl* has “looks,” it has an appearance, a visible aspect. It is closely connected to the word *sûra*, form, shape, illustration. Ibn al-’Arabí says in a version of the alchemic formula “as above so below” using both terms: “Know that there is no form [*sûra*] in the lower world without a likeness [*mithl*] in the higher world. The forms [*sawâr*] of the higher world preserve the existence of their likenesses [*amthâl*] in the lower world”. *F* III, 260.6–7, SPK 406 n.6. For the Shaikh the Qur’ânic dictum [Q 42:11] *Nothing is as His likeness* [*laisa ka-mithlu^{hu} shay^{un}*] is the basic *locus* for this word. *Sûra* and *mithâl* are related like the Greek *morphê* and *eidos*.

existence, like *ahdatha* or *aujada*.⁵¹⁸ This expression points to things prior to their existence, that is, things as they *subsist* in God's knowledge, and thus to a broader concept of existence including both already created things, and those not yet created, or, things no more in existence, a theme we will soon briefly enter by asking what actually is a "thing"?

In fact, van Ess detects behind these 3rd century [a.h.] theological formulations on creation both Hellenic (*Proclus Arabus*) and Zurvanite influences concerning time, *aeôn*, *al-dahr*, and respective arguments for the eternity of the world (for example: *ex nihilo nihil*, nothing comes out of nothing, clear in Ibn al-'Arabi's "First words," p. 258–59 and 270) and therefore also a proximity to the arguments of [Materialist] Eternalists [*al-dahriyya*]. One of the most important conceptual developments of the 3rd century *kalâm* discussions had to do with things before their actual existence, that is, the idea of *intentional inexistence* (a non-existent being something, *al-ma'dûm shai'*).⁵¹⁹ It is highly significant that the most fundamental Aristotelian notion of potentiality was introduced into the *kalâm* discussions of the dialecticians through questions of *temporality*, that is, to make a connection to Heidegger's fundamental position, in terms of Being and Time. Since God is the creator of time and there was no time before the creating of it, one could, for example ask, how could God be "there" before the creation of time? Certainly God becomes a creator first in creating, but this does not mean that He was originally a "Non-Creator". And, also, similarly, *things* must have been in some sense "there", "fixed" [*thubût*], in God's mind before their actual existence in creation. Thus, one could formulate this difference as God being not in a temporal sense "before things" [*qabla l-ashyâ'*], rather, He is the *existential* before of all things [*qablu l-ashyâ'*]. In these discussions the question was not yet of the concept of "possibility", rather, this **concept of possibility was confronted through the existential questions on modes of being, how is one to understand being before and after creation.**⁵²⁰ And, as is obvious, here we have some central points taken over and developed by Ibn al-'Arabî, for example in his distinction between *thingness of fixity* (i.e. things eternally in God's knowledge) and *thingness of existence* (*wujûd*, i.e. things temporally "found" in existence)⁵²¹, or in the distinction between absolute and relative non-

⁵¹⁸ Tabarî, *Tafsîr*, II 581, quoted through van Ess 1997, 451.

⁵¹⁹ This is a proposition by the famous early 3rd century theologian of Basra, *al-Shahhâm* (see n 552), who also introduced the notion of "potentiality" into *kalâm* discussions; van Ess 1997, 45.

⁵²⁰ van Ess 1997, 454

⁵²¹ For example: F III 263.22–26. Things "subsist" in themselves (*qâ'im bi l-nafs*) or they are *fixed/immutable* [*thâbit*, see above n. 279–80] eternally in God's mind [as intelligible but not existent] and when they acquire existence they do not change in any other respect except that they become manifest, temporally existent entities. For a translation of the full passage, see SDG 32. On "intelligible but not existent in entity" (*ma'qûl lâ mawjûdu l-'ain*) see F IV 129.34–35.

existence, this last-mentioned going also back to *Mu'tazila* theologians of the 3rd century (*al-ma'dûm al-mumkin*, that is, *ens in potentia*).⁵²²

On the whole, according to van Ess, these new distinctions in theology were **making the *kalâm* arguments convertible with Aristotelian philosophy based fundamentally on the notions of *dûnamis* and *enérgeia*.**⁵²³ This, of course, is a very important assessment considering the whole theme of my study: **here we have, as it were, an indigenous source for the Aristotelian elements in the thinking of Ibn al-'Arabi**, embedded in the very structures of that theological tradition in which he had grown up. Wisnovsky further confers this, in referring to Wolfson 1976, by saying: “The world-view of the eternalists was shaped partly by Aristotelian notions of potentiality (*quwwa*) and actuality (*fî'l*) then [3rd century] coming into circulation,” he further refers first to al-Kindî but interestingly also to “evidence preserved in the Jâbirean corpus (ca.900), where one can detect the infiltration of notions of potentiality and actuality into the *shay'/mawjûd/ma'dûm* paradigm: *K. ikhrâj mâ fîl-quwwa ilâ l-fî'l* [...].”⁵²⁴

In the previous chapter it was said that God created Adam with His two Hands, kneading the human being into a “seamless” compound of clay and spirit, a unification of qualifications which, abstractly taken are mutually contradictory, yet meeting in the concrete human being—like the *hylê* and *eidê* / *morphê* of Aristotle. Accordingly, in the Qur'ânic perspective of Ibn al-Arabî, the creation of cosmos and mankind takes place in two stages of the first and second arising [*al-nash'ah al-'ulâ* Q 56:62 and *al-nash'a l-ukhrâ* 53:47, also 29:20]. In Aristotelian terms: the first formation of nature, *fýsis*, which then in the second stage can reach its *entelecheia*, that which maintains and completes the already existing being. In other words, seen from yet another angle, the second arising is a return to the original *fitra*, as al-Qashânî says in his commentary on Q 53:47 (Tafsîr II 560). Returning to the original intention, or, as we might now say in terms of Aristotle, a return to the “*tò tí ên eînai*” of “what the human being was to be”. What is given form in the first phase is the physical constitution which, in terms of knowledge, is a mere possibility. This is the human animal form differentiated from other animals only by its higher receptivity as a possibility. “Philosophers call what something needs as far as its existence or the perpetuation of its existence are concerned the first perfection, and what it does not need as far as its existence or the perpetuation [of existence] are concerned the second perfection,” as Ibn Sînâ (born before 980 and died 1037CE.) explains these two phases in terms of philosophy.⁵²⁵

⁵²²van Ess 1966, 192. Here van Ess also refers to Maimonides' discussion on the Aristotelian term *steresis*, privation, as a positive something differentiated by the “*mutakallimûn*” from absolute non-being. See above p. 133 n 329 and 284 n 541.

⁵²³van Ess 1997.451–55, particularly p 454.

⁵²⁴Wisnovsky 2003, 149

⁵²⁵*at-ta'liqât* 21, quoted in Wisnovsky 2003, 123.

It is only in the second phase of human creation that the human possibility is animated by the divine Form which is no more a mere physical surplus into the composite human animal but an individuating *eidōs*/form, awakening the human being into a spiritual reality, an altogether unique reality in comparison with all the foregoing ontological levels of elemental physical combinations. Through this perfecting divine *eidōs*/form all the inherent material possibilities become transparent and realizable, or they become “legible”: we gain an access to a world. Here the human animal wakes up into an opening [*fath*] dimension of meaning and understanding, an absolutely distinct and supra-sensory [*ma'nā*] level of reality, leading ultimately to perfection.

Ibn al-‘Arabī uses the word “completion” (*tamām*) to refer to each created being in its created form *native* to it, or “proper” to it, whereas the word “perfection” (*kamāl*) refers to that “which the complete acquires and the benefits it bestows.”⁵²⁶ It is interesting that in this passage Ibn al-‘Arabi refers as an example of this two-fold perfection to the Qur’ānic verse (Q 20:50): “Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation, then guided it”, a verse that is quoted also by Ibn Sînâ when he is explaining the first and second perfection [*entelecheia*] quoted above, where the second perfection is seen as something extra, a bonus and surplus for the existing thing. According to Ibn Sînâ the above mentioned Qur’anic passage hints at this distinction of two perfections in that the mentioned “guidance of God is what man does not need as far as his existence or the perpetuation of his existence are concerned.”⁵²⁷ On the other hand, earlier in the quoted passage of Ibn al-‘Arabi he refers (F III 403.35) to the basic Avicennian distinction between the *necessary of existence through itself* (**wājib al-wujūd bi-dhâtihî**) and the *necessary of existence through the Other* (**wājib al-wujūd bi-l ghair**)⁵²⁸, the last mentioned referring in Avicenna to something as a consequence of some relation and some connection (*tabî’un li-nisbatin mâ wa-idâfatin*). The first distinction is referring to God in Himself and the second to the possible thing, something in causal relation to another, like everything created by God or the names of God, which were indeed described above (p.273) exactly with these two expressions of “relation” [*nisbât*] and “connection” [*idâfat*]. Instead of being ontological entities, the divine names are “relations” and “connections” between things also for Ibn al-‘Arabī. However, Ibn al-‘Arabī never once mentions Ibn Sînâ by name, even though knowledge of him is obvious in many of his conceptual choices and perhaps clearest with the above mentioned most important Avicennian distinction.⁵²⁹ Here one ought to remember that during the times of Ibn al-‘Arabi Ibn Sînâ had been fiercely debated already for two centuries, and he was, therefore, amongst the best known philosophers in the whole Islamic world. This

⁵²⁶ F III.405.3–4, SPK 297

⁵²⁷ *al-ta’lîqât* 21.16–19, in Wisnovsky 2003, 123

⁵²⁸ For this distinction in Avicenna, see Wisnovsky 2003, Ch. 14, pp.245–263.

⁵²⁹ In his *Muhâdarât al-abrâr*, The Discourses of the Pious, the modern editor has added Ibn Sînâ as the author of a qasida quoted by Ibn al-‘Arabi simply as “poem by a famous scholar,” *Muhadarât* 1972, Vol.I, 362. However, oddly enough, he does mention several Greek philosophers by name in this non-philosophical collection on wise sayings and literature.

may also be the reason for Ibn al-‘Arabí’s silence on his name: we already know that he did not want to get involved in any doctrinal debates. And as we are here dealing with vital questions of philosophical debates, even the slightest reference to the name of Avicenna could have been considered a declaration of war by some protagonists and falangs of opposing interpretations in the philosophical “*nomenclature*”.⁵³⁰

Nevertheless, here (F III.405.3–4), in his description of “perfection” as referring to “that which the complete acquires *and* the benefits it bestows,” it is worth noting that Ibn al-‘Arabí actually retains the original Aristotelian distinction between that for the purpose of which [i.e. perfection], *and*, that “for the benefit of which” (DA II.4, 415b3). Thus, there is a distinction between producing something like nature [Greek *physis*], making for example the human being grow to adulthood, and, on the other hand, in *the ability to use nature-given capacities* for the wellbeing of this adult human being as a whole [Greek *poiesis*]. Therefore, in Aristotle, the human “*entelecheia* is determined by powers or capacities (DA II 4, 415 b 15). These are ends, but not as terminal points or final stages.”⁵³¹

Here we obviously come to the unique human capacity for language to express and share this newly found and yet founding notional/rational [*nâtiq*] dimension of all reality: “Surely We [God] have appointed for thee a clear opening”, as the Qur’ân says (Q 48:1). “This is the opening of unveiling through the Real, the opening of sweetness in the inward dimension, and the opening of expression [*ibâra*].”⁵³² Angels, on the other hand, though perfect spiritual creatures, are totally lacking the individuating earthly material element and cannot, therefore, become anything different from what they already are as originated perfect spiritual entities or units. The angels are not comprehensive [*jâmi’*], all-inclusive, beings like the human being. Therefore, the ontological status of a creature is dependent on its constitution, and this again correlates directly with the scope of its knowledge. Knowing is grounded in being. The angels tell us in the Qor’ânic passage (Q 2:31–32): “We know not save what Thou hast taught us.” They were unable to use their knowledge for becoming something different, whereas the imperfect human being is capable of this precisely because of his all-comprehensive nature and his knowledge of all the divine names. Thus, imperfection and the unknowability of the *individuum* must be included, if the question is of perfection.

⁵³⁰ I am grateful to Prof. Kukkonen for making me aware of this motive of avoiding controversies. Ibn al-‘Arabí for example criticizes al-Ghazzâlî, whom he generally speaking praises and considers “his companion,” for entering into philosophical and theological discussions—something a serious wayfarer should avoid. SPK 235 with few references to both critical and positive assessments by Ibn al-‘Arabí on al-Ghazzâlî.

⁵³¹ Johnson 2005, 83

⁵³² F III 153.2–3, Chittick 1993, 110, see also SPK 224. A similar close connection between reality and concept was emphasized in the second part with Heidegger; see p. 70; 122.

To summarize the aforesaid: the theme of concealment and manifestation is an inherent feature of knowing the Names, a shared feature between man and God but concealed from fully actual beings like the angels. Furthermore, this shared knowledge concerns self-knowledge: God knew the Names because He knows Himself, and He taught these Names to Adam—not as they actually are but as possibilities. And, emphasizing the connection of knowledge and being, Ibn al-’Arabí said: “If we didn’t know that we exist we would not know what existence means”.

Thus, the two central poles around which our discussions have so far circulated are the “hidden and manifest” reality of existence and our possible knowledge, that is, our *coming to know* thereof, a process taking place in time. It is to these two poles of being and time that the often-quoted *hadîth* is said to refer: “He who knows himself, knows his Lord”.⁵³³ This knowledge, according to mystics, is due to the divine all-encompassing form in which the human temporal being was created. To put it bluntly: the fullness of human temporal existence opens up the possibility of God’s Self-Disclosure, mirrored in the human temporal becoming. Here the infinite ends and finite means are the ingredients of perfection.

The upshot of grounding knowledge in being is obvious: being precedes unconditionally any determination in knowledge—nothing knows until it first exists, or, in terms of the Parmenidean dictum: being is a necessary precondition of [or identical with] thinking [*to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*, fr.3]. Being *is*, and thinking belongs to being; our access to being is through thinking/perception. Whether we are talking about the whole of cosmos or the human being as a living creature in this universe, the fundamental issue is always already there: the fact that “there is” [*es gibt, il y’a*] precedes any intellectual comportment towards the “what is”. The world exists and there we also find [*wajada*, to find] ourselves: we know that we exist. Something reveals itself shining out in the open, a manifest opening of something we call the world. The world is encountered before the first question on it can arise. In Islamic terms of the divine Names this is expressed in the primacy of Life over Knowledge. In the chapter of the *Futûhât* discussed above in Ch.III.2.4 concerning knowledge of primal elemental qualities, the four natures, and the power of the higher worlds over the lower worlds, Ibn al-’Arabí says: “The root is Life, since it is the precondition of the existence of knowledge [*fa-innahâ al-shurta fi wujûd al-ilmi*], and knowledge is connected to everything; it is related to the necessary of existence [*wâjib al-wujûd*] to the possible and to the impossible [*al-muhâl*]”.⁵³⁴

⁵³³ A tradition which Rosenthal (1988, 33) puts in the form “He who recognizes his soul/himself recognizes his Lord” and notes: “it can be stated unequivocally that the Church Fathers were responsible for the coining and the ultimate spread of the statement in the Islamic form familiar to Ibn al-’Arabí,” referring to his article “On the knowledge of Plato’s philosophy in the Islamic world” in *Islamic Culture*, 15 (1941), 397 (not consulted).

⁵³⁴ F I 293.9–10 Here I follow Wisnovsky in translating the philosophical concept *wâjib al-wujûd* as the “necessary of existence” in respect of the way it is. For *wâjib* as technical term, see Wisnovsky 2003, 245–47.

We find ourselves in existence that manifests itself. In the vocabulary of Ibn al-ʿArabī the world is a *mazhar*, grammatically a noun of place derived from “appearance”, “visibility” or “splendor”, *zuhûr* [like in the name of the famous cabbalistic book *The Zohar*, by the 13th century Iberian Rabbi *Moses de Leon*]. The world is given in manifest phenomena; that is, it is given in that which shows *itself* (*tajallî*). The word *mazhar* means a *locus of manifestation*, as Chittick proposes for a translation of the word. And, in fact, “Ibn al-ʿArabī claims to have been the first to employ the term to explain the nature of existence”.⁵³⁵ Whether he was actually the first *phenomenologist* or not is irrelevant, but his point is fundamental: “That which appears is in fact Being, the Divine reality itself... What appears to us is the One Being, but colored by properties of the nonexistent possible things”.⁵³⁶ Thus, with the phenomena, or *loci of manifestation*, we are not facing referential entities, representations, *Erscheinungen*, but direct manifestations of the one acting reality expressing itself in literally endless varieties. The act or form—or “The Divine Breath”—determines each possible entity into its manifest existence, but the possibilities inherent in the receptive matter in turn limit and condition the act of making manifest.

In this manifest abundance of worldly qualities and kind, the loci of manifestation display an endless variety of aptitudes for reception, each phenomenon manifesting the one reality according to its particular inherent *disposition* [*istiʿdād*]⁵³⁷. This preparedness is determined by the natural level of being of each receptive entity, starting from simple compounds of minerals and ending up in most complex physiological compounds constituting the one total entity of human being. Ultimately, preparedness as such describes the state of pure possibility in its undefined universality, and we are therefore back in the fundamentally indeterminate nature of *hâyula/hylê*.

Commenting on the Qurʾānic verse on the idea of “*physis*”⁵³⁸, that is, the growth and emerging of human being [Q 71:17]: “God makes you grow up from the earth as growing things”, Ibn al-ʿArabī says: “The earth is one, but how can the form of grass be compared to that of trees, given the diversity of their kinds, or with the form of man, or with the forms of animals. Yet all of this derives from an elemental reality [*haqîqa ʿunsuriyya*]. The elementality never disappears through the diversity of what becomes manifest within it. Thus the diversity of the cosmos in its entirety does not take it away from

⁵³⁵ SPK 89, referring to F II 520.21

⁵³⁶ Ibid Here we have the same idea of “colouring” used by Aristotle in *DA* III.6 to be discussed above, see p.305 n 617.

⁵³⁷ F II 520.21 This flexible analogous reception principle, “*ad modum recipientis*”, of the scholastics has a wide and long history in philosophy. *Istiʿdād* as *aptitudo* in Ibn Sina, *Shifāʾ* VI.1.3 St Thomas expresses its basic form as a principle: “*omne quod est in aliquo est per modum eius in quo est*” in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* where he finds this principle attributed to Plato, [Henle 1956, 86 and 441 n.10]. St Thomas refers frequently to Proclean *Liber de Causis* as his source, a text also well known in the Arabic world (see above n 114). Its Ch.11 states: “The effect is in the cause after the mode of the cause and the cause is in the effect after the mode of the effect” Proclus 1984, 30. For the extensive Latin scholastic use of this principle, see Henle 1956, pp.330-33 and for its numerous instances in St Thomas alone p.440 n1.

⁵³⁸ The word *fýsis* comes from the verbal stem *fúô/fúomai* that is to be traced back to the Indo-European root **bheu* or **bhu*, swell, grow, cause to emerge, just like the here used Arabic *nabata*, to grow, to sprout, to germinate, bring forth vegetation.

the fact that it is one entity in existence”.⁵³⁹ Despite the diversity of forms, all growing things preserve their specific unifying elemental reality. This seems to apply both to each separate growing thing as to the total structure of nature. With Aristotle one could say: “But the phenomena show that nature [*physis* ⁵⁴⁰] is not a series of episodes, like a bad tragedy” (*Met* XIV 3, 1090 b 19). Instead, despite all its diversity, nature is indeed a totality, “one entity in existence”, as Ibn al-‘Arabí just said. “The world must not be governed badly. The rule of many is not good; let one be the ruler” as Aristotle also says (*Met* XII 10, 1076 a1)

Therefore, like the capacity to reflect of a mirror depends on the smoothness of its surface, the preparedness for knowledge is similarly dependent on the level of being of the knower, exemplified earlier by the differing levels of being in angels and humans. Applying this property of preparedness to the divine Names, Ibn al-‘Arabí says: “He is described by them as His Essence requires, and you are described by them as your essence requires... — The entity is One, the properties diverse: the servant serves, the All-merciful is served”.⁵⁴¹ Here one could also refer to the “Oneness of the Essence” and the manyness of the Names, that is, the One Essence as such, and, on the other hand, the plurality of relationships depicted by the divine Names. Each entity manifests the One Reality according to its preparedness. We can perceive one and the same *reality* through the song of a nightingale and the scent of a rose.

In another example of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s use of the general terms *hidden* and *manifest*, a reference is made to the preparedness of exterior and interior capacities [*quwwât*] of the human being: “God is the Manifest who is witnessed by the eyes and the Nonmanifest [*al-bâtin*] who is witnessed by intellects”.⁵⁴² Here the manifest is visible like creation itself and therefore accessible to our sense of sight, our aptitude to see; whereas the non-manifest is not visible to the eye but can be discerned in our mind, our aptitude to understand. The One reality is seen visibly by the eye [*aisthêton*] and invisibly by the mind [*noêton*]. However, as we have seen, both dimensions are predicated of God: He is the outwardly manifest and the inwardly hidden. And even more, He is the very opposites [*‘ayn al-diddain*], as Ibn al-‘Arabí emphasizes contrasting this with the saying of al-Kharraz: “I knew God by gathering between the opposites”. What al-Kharraz says “makes you surmise [*wahm*] that there is an

⁵³⁹ F II 459.21–23, SPK 83–4

⁵⁴⁰ Unlike mathematical entities, whose contribution to reality is nothing, *Meta* XIV.3, 1090 b24–27

⁵⁴¹ F II 484.1–2 In discussing how God brought forth “something from nothing”, the Iberian Kabbalist mystic and a contemporary of Ibn al-‘Arabí and the teacher of the great Nahmanides, Azriel of Gerona (1160–1238), answered: “The something is in the nothing in the mode of nothing, and the nothing is in the something in the mode of something”, quoted in D.C.Matt with same reference to Liber de Causis as above (n.265). Matt also notes that, in Hebrew philosophical terminology, *efes* [nothing] represents the Aristotelian concept of *steresis* [privation]. And, indeed, Maimonides says: “the *principia* of all existing transient things are three, viz., Substance, Form, and Absence of particular form” and, that “the last-named principle is always inherent in the substance.” Guide I, 17, 1956, 27. See, Matt 1990, 132.

⁵⁴² F III.484.35

added entity that encompasses both opposites, but this is not how the matter stands. Instead, **He is the very opposites** and no entity is added to that”.⁵⁴³

Therefore, manifest and non-manifest are not two separate realms entering into complex relations with one another; rather, they are the two names for the one and same reality. “Knowledge is existence and existence belongs to God, while ignorance is nonexistence, and nonexistence belongs to cosmos”.⁵⁴⁴ Therefore, the Hidden and the Manifest are two names of the One Real and therefore also positive modalities of existence, knowledge and possibility, whereas ignorance equals nonexistence and impossibility of being: that which does not exist and can not exist can neither be hidden nor manifest.

Hence the name ‘Manifest’ exercises its properties forever in existence, while the ‘Nonmanifest’ exercises its properties in knowledge and gnosis. Through the name Manifest He makes the cosmos subsist, through the name Nonmanifest we come to know Him, and through the name Light we witness Him.⁵⁴⁵

Ultimately, this one duality bringing the manifest and the nonmanifest together while keeping them apart refers not only to the divine but also to “the human essence”, which, according to Ibn al-’Arabî “is also the very opposites [*f-al-insânu ‘ayn l-diddain aidan*]”.⁵⁴⁶

In another and more complicated example of the use of phenomena [*zuhûr*] or “locus of manifestation” the Shaikh says: “God is identical with the *existence* of the things [*huwa ‘ain wujûd l-ashyâ*], but he is not identical with the things [*fa-annahu laisa ‘ain al-ashyâ*]. The entities of the existent things [*al-a’yân al-mawjudât*]⁵⁴⁷ are a ‘*hayûlâ*’ for the things, or they are their ‘spirits’ [*arwâh*]. Existence is the manifest dimension of those spirits and the forms of those hylic entities [*al-â’yân al-hâyulî’a*]. Hence, all existence is the Real Manifest while His Nonmanifest is the things”.⁵⁴⁸

The first part of this quotation is clear, expressing the difference “between an entity and its being”, that is, the ontological difference [referred to above]. God is identical with Being [*‘ayn al-wujûd*]⁵⁴⁹, not the thingness of things. Simply: God is no thing and being is no entity [Being is not a being]. “In everything

⁵⁴³ F II 476.30–31 This theme is discussed thoroughly by Salman Bashir with the central Akbarian notion of *barzakh*, the uniting and separating one Reality. Bashier 2004, particularly Ch. ’s 5 and 6

⁵⁴⁴ F III 160.22

⁵⁴⁵ F III 65.24–25, Chittick 1993, 94

⁵⁴⁶ F II 476.26

⁵⁴⁷ Chittick translates systematically the term *a’yân* as ‘entities’, “whether within the cosmos [the created things, everything other than God], or outside the cosmos [God Himself, the Essence or ‘Entity’ named by the names] SPK 36. In a technical sense the ‘*ayn*’ of a thing means the very thing itself, the existent thing in itself, identical with, the individuated or determined ‘thing’, that which makes one thing different from another.

⁵⁴⁸ F II 21.36–22.1, SPK 89.

⁵⁴⁹ F II 616.27, here we have the word ‘*ayn*’ in one of its primary meanings ‘identical with’, ‘none other than’.

there is His Spirit, and there is no thing in Him”, as Ibn al-’Arabí says in slightly different terms.⁵⁵⁰ But the middle part of the above quotation introducing the term *hylê*, is not so clear. Ibn al-’Arabí is here talking of the entities both as *hylê* or individuating material principle for the potential things, but at the same time he is referring to the defining and determining “spiritual” principles in God’s knowledge. “Things” in God’s knowledge are the determining spirits for the hylê entities and their combinations manifest as existence. In *The Book of Encompassing Circles*, Ibn al-’Arabí is discussing *hylê* as the “Third Entity”, something which is neither existent nor non-existent. Here the middle part of our quotation seems to refer to something similar.

Here it may be of help to refer back to the distinction made at the beginning of the *Tadbîrât* (above p. 260) between “mental existence”⁵⁵¹ in human terms, or, existence in knowledge [*al-wujûd al-’ilmî*] in terms of God, and, on the other hand, entified existence [*al-wujûd al-’aynî*]. These two modes of existence were distinguished as two moments in the act of creation or bringing into existence. All possible things as they are in God’s knowledge are “externalized” in creation into determined, individuated existents, into existence in entity. In the above passage of the *Futûhât* these things in God’s knowledge are referred to as “His Nonmanifest”, whereas all existence is “the Real Manifest.”

These non-manifest “things in God’s knowledge”, are also known as the Hidden Treasure [*khazâ’in makhfûz*] of God, that is, all the hidden possibilities, called by Ibn al-’Arabí also the *fixed entities* [*a’yân al-thâbita*].⁵⁵² All possibilities are *fixed* in God’s knowledge. In Arabic this word *thâbita* brings in mind immediately the fixed stars, the *thâwâbit*. These entities or “determinations” in God’s knowledge are fixed like the stars in the sky. Chodkiewicz writes: “*Thubût* is the way these ‘possibilities’ are present in divine knowledge. They do not ‘exist’: they are real only for God, not for themselves”.⁵⁵³ That is why a *fixed entity* is also called the non-existent entity [*’ayn ma’dûma*] in God’s knowledge. The fixed entities are “the things themselves ‘before’ they are given existence in the world”.⁵⁵⁴ The fixed entities are referred to in plural just as the existing entities are many; thus, there is a corresponding

⁵⁵⁰ F I 168.26

⁵⁵¹ *wujûd al-dhihnî=kaun al-ma’lûm mutasawwira fî l-nafs ‘alâ mâ huwa ‘alayhi fî haqîqatahu*, “the object of knowledge to be given form as it is in its own reality in the soul”. F II 309.27, SDG 239. All things given existence by God may be considered in four modes: entified existence, mental existence, spoken, and written existence. F I 45.34=OY I 208.5, F II 309.23–35, *Insha* ’18/7.16–8.1. Thus these four modes of existence are also to be understood as four modes of revelation. See Hirtenstein 1999, 222–23.

⁵⁵² The term *thâbit* goes back to 3rd century [a.h.] mu’tazila theologians of Basra and particularly to *al-Shahhâm* (see n519) who is said to have introduced the notion of potentiality into the *kalâm* discussions in claiming that “the *kosmos noêtos* is more encompassing than the present creation”. These potential things were said to be “subsistent” [*al-thâbit*] though not yet as existent [*mawjûd*]. van Ess 1997, 47–48. Further, see van Ess 1966, 192 and Rescher 1966, 70, who states that “the realism of Mu’tazilite realm of nonexistence is reminiscent of Plato’s realm of the Ideas”; See also, Nyberg 1919, 45–47. Also further down the discussion on “Thing” III.3.4.1

⁵⁵³ MR II, 15, translating F II 281.4

⁵⁵⁴ SPK 84

fixed entity to each and every existent entity.⁵⁵⁵ Or, in slightly different terms: each creature is a word—“and the words of God are inexhaustible” (Q 31:27). Chittick clarifies: “This nonexistent fixed entity is identical with the ‘existent entity’ [*‘ayn mawjûda*] in every respect, except that the existent entity exists in the external world, but the fixed entity does not”.⁵⁵⁶ In God’s knowledge these entities are fixed but inherently nonexistent, whereas in the world they are mutable and relatively existent. Thus the “externalization” of these fixed possibilities means their acquiring the property of being a locus of manifestation. And this happens in the divine/Qur’anic “*fiat*” [*Esto!*]: “*kûn fa-yakûn*”: Exist! And it will exist (for example Q 16:40, F I 139.17ff.). Each engendered thing manifests the Real in relative existence. But the fixed entities do not exist: instead, what makes each existing thing what it is, is this *hylic* entity belonging only to it. Thus, what needs a closer look is the possible thing as such, *ens in potentia*, the relative non-existent [*al-ma’dûm al-mumkin*] or simply a “thing” [*shay’*] or an essence [*haqiqa, dhât, ‘ayn*] or the fixed, subsistent [*thâbit*] entity, in contrast to that what exists [*al-mawjûd*]. These concepts are both useful and fundamental for any understanding of reality and they belong to the core of Ibn al-’Arabî’s “grammar” of understanding. Thus, to take an example, in his *Insha’ al-dawâir* Ibn al-’Arabî takes full advantage of these notions in a fundamental statement about God, knowledge and existence. He says: “The existence of a temporal thing in the knowledge of God, the Exalted, preceded the existence of a thing in its individualized essence, and pre-exists it” [*wujûd ash-shay’ al-muhdâth fî ‘ilm Allâhi ta’alâ qabla wujûd ash-sha’y fî ‘aynihi*].⁵⁵⁷ You cannot make a thing unless you know it. He adds that what he is illuminating here is in truth a mystery, a remark worth taking heed of in everything the Shaykh explains: language and understanding are ultimately confronting a mystery of the unsayable. However, to understand the way Ibn al-’Arabî approaches this mystery it is useful to get more acquainted with the background of his thinking. As we noted earlier, Nyberg found the proper environment for Ibn al-’Arabî’s thinking in the school of *ma’adûmiya* [non-being or in-existence], and the above referred concepts surrounding possibility are at the heart of this school of the *Mu’tazila*.

Closer to our own times we can run across similar formulations on “intentional inexistence” in the school of Franz Brentano at the end of the 19th century.⁵⁵⁸ One might even surmise that the relation of Ibn al-’Arabî to the *ma’dûmiya* is somewhat similar to that between Brentano and Martin Heidegger on

⁵⁵⁵ This would make the *‘ayân al-thâbita* different from Platonic Forms, of which Socrates says that he and his companions are “in the habit of positing a single Form for each of the pluralities to which they apply a single name” [*Republic* 596a]. Here, however, the question is not of pluralities but of the fixed form of each particular entity. On the other hand, Platonic “forms are not simply attributable to many things. They are also the ground of explanans for things’ being what they are—indeed, it is precisely for *this* that Plato introduces them time and again.” Caston 1999, 212 This indeed is also the function of *ayân al-thâbita*.

⁵⁵⁶ SDG 389 n.9

⁵⁵⁷ *In*.19/8.13–15

⁵⁵⁸ As Nicholas Rescher wrote concerning the arguments of the *Mu’tazila* on existence: “The reader can be assured of surprises if he thinks that the idea of ‘intentional inexistence’ was born in the school of F.Brentano, that the denial that *existence* is a predicate was an invention of Kant’s, or that B.Russel originated the teaching that the truth of a singular subject-predicate statement required the existence of its subject.” Rescher 1966, 69

intentional inexistence, discussed in the second part of my study. Through my closer analyses in the next two chapters on “thing” and the “Third Thing” the above exemplary sentence on the existence of temporal things in God’s knowledge of Ibn al-’Arabí, will hopefully find its proper context.

III.3.4 The Third Thing – the matrix

III. 3.4.1. Something and nothing, the thing

In his essay on “The Thing”, written in 1950, Martin Heidegger makes the following introductory remarks on his subject. In Latin to go straight to the point would be proceeding *in medias res*. Here we have the subject of this chapter, the Latin *res*: a matter of discourse, or that which *concerns* somebody like a case at law; or, broadly, as the *res publica*: that which concerns all and is therefore deliberated publicly. A *cosa nostra* as one could also say since the Romanesque forms *la cause* or *la chose* stem from the same Latin root *causa* as the English word case. This very broad meaning is still retained in English when we say someone “knows his things” or in the Scandinavian word *ting* meaning assembly, law court or court session, like the Norsk *all-tinget*, general assembly, the Parliament. Here the matter of discourse is very broad but at the same time concerning all and everything: “that which it is possible to speak about” [*mâ yajûz an yukhbâra ‘anhu*] as the Muslim theologians defined the term *shay’*, or, according to the grammarians [Sîbawayhi]: a “*shay’*” is “the most generally applicable of terms” [*a’ammu l-’âmm*], applying to all that may be placed in relation to a predicate [*yaqa’u ‘alâ kulli mâ ukhbira ‘anhu*].⁵⁵⁹ But this broad grammatical definition of a thing would make it a pertinent expression also of God. That God is a thing, however, seemed to run counter to Qur’ânic evidence according to which a thing was taken to be synonymous with *makhîlûq*, “created”, and therefore not applicable to God. This discrepancy was leveled by a doctrinal formulation according to which God is a *shay’un lâ ka-l-ashyâ’i*, “a thing not like [other] things”.⁵⁶⁰ But, of course, this is no answer to the problem.

Similarly, according to Ibn al-’Arabí, *al-shay’* is “one of the most indefinite of indefinites” [*min ankar al-nakirât*]⁵⁶¹, a definition that would intuitively be counter to any notion of the One and Only God, the All-powerful, all-comprehensive and so forth. Therefore, Ibn al-’Arabí does not use the word thing referring to God, but it seems his reasons for this are more out of courtesy towards what is given in the

⁵⁵⁹ Sîbawayhi, *al-Kitâb* I 47, 7 quoted through Wisnovsky 2003, 147. Referring to al-Khwârazmî Wisnovsky notes that *al-shay’* is used by the “Algebrists” as a kind of universal variable.

⁵⁶⁰ Wisnovsky 2003, 148

⁵⁶¹ Rescher 1966, 78–9, Wisnovsky 2003, 147; SPK 88, F III 295.1

Islamic tradition than actually against the idea of referring to God as a thing. In commenting on the Qur'ânic verse: *Everything will perish save His countenance* [Q 28:88] Ibn 'Arabi emphasizes that every *thing* will perish, and that means every “aspect” of the essential reality of which the “things” are the appearing “faces” in the entities [*al-ayân*], will perish. In another passage he notes that these changing aspects or faces of the essential reality express the fundamental imaginal character of the cosmos, that is, the cosmos in its dynamic and ever changing forms, which is, like imagination, He/not-He.⁵⁶² Imagination is a theme we have already discussed, whereas here Ibn al-'Arabî says concerning “things”: “As for ourselves, we do not affirm that the word “thingness” can be ascribed to the Essence of the Real since [such ascription] has not come down to us, nor have we been addressed by it, and courtesy [*adab*] is to be preferred”.⁵⁶³

In the Qur'ân this act of entification into manifest existence is described by a simple imperative word in which, according to Ibn al-'Arabî, “the Real says to the entity of each possible thing [*â'yân l-mumkinât*]: ‘Be!’ [K 16:40]. Hence He commands each one to exist”.⁵⁶⁴ This imperative ‘Be!’ [*Esto!*] is a word denoting existence [*harf wujûdî*].⁵⁶⁵ Thus the Qur'ân says “Naught is there, but its treasures are with Us, and We send it down but in a known measure”. [Q 15:21] Measuring can take place only as distinguishing one thing from another. In the first Qur'ânic passage Ibn 'Arabi uses the theological expression entity [*ayn*] as part of the philosophical expression “each possible thing” [*â'yân al-mumkinât*] for the simple Qur'ânic word *shay'*. This simple word has been the subject of complex discussions surrounding two theological topics: God's attributes [can God be spoken of as a “thing”] and “God's creative power [in this case, whether or not it is *things* which God causes to come into existence and pass out of existence, and if so, how]. In order to buttress their arguments the *mutakallimûn* had to address the question of what *shay'*, ‘thing’, means when it is used in the Qur'ân.”⁵⁶⁶ This discussion is summarized succinctly by Wisnovsky (pp. 146–160). Here it is enough to briefly clarify Ibn 'Arabi's position on the question of a “thing” before moving on with the relation of *hylê* and a thing.

In the above Qur'ânic quotation God says to a thing “Be!”, and it is. The things were thus somehow “there” before God said “Be!” to them. From this the Mu'tazilites concluded that “thing applies not only to what exists [*al-mawjûd*] but also to what does not exist [*al-ma'dûm*]; and what does not exist in turn applies not only to what did not exist and now exists, such as the world, but also to what does not now

⁵⁶² F II 313, 17–20

⁵⁶³ F II 90, 20–21

⁵⁶⁴ F II 248.31–32

⁵⁶⁵ F II 280.35–281.2. In another passage the Shaikh refers to the grammarian Sîbawayih [d.ca.796] for the term *harf wujûdî*.

F II 56.9

⁵⁶⁶ Wisnovsky 2003, 146

exist but will exist, such as the Day of Resurrection”.⁵⁶⁷ To answer where or how these non-existent things subsist before and after they exist, there seemed to be two options: either they are *outside* God’s mind or they are *within* His mind. If they subsist outside, then they will also share the attribute of eternity with God, and “the precept of [divine Unity] *tawhîd*, understood as uniqueness will be violated. But if they are within God’s mind, in that case they will introduce multiplicity into God, and the precept of *tawhîd*, understood as simplicity, will be violated. Alternatively, and just as problematically, the Mu’tazilite conception could be understood as implying that before and after they exist, things were and will be undifferentiated, just one great eternal blob of Thing. In other words, when things are non-existent, they are undifferentiated; when things are existent, they are distinct from one another.”⁵⁶⁸ With this last mentioned concept of an eternal and undifferentiated non-existent Thing the Mu’tazilites were seen to be holding the same position as the Eternalists [*ad-dahriyya*] with their undifferentiated prime matter. “God’s sole possession of eternity will be infringed upon, and the precept of *tawhîd*, understood as divine uniqueness, will once again be violated.”⁵⁶⁹

But let us pause for a moment on the word “thing”, which has actually a long philosophical history that goes particularly back to Stoic thinking. Indeed, Rescher claims that “The Mu’tazilite elaboration of the doctrine of nonentities—and thus the entire course of Arabic discussions on the issue—derives from Stoic sources. Its whole machinery of existents and nonexistent, and qualities, states, and relations goes back to this origin. We may be sure of this salient fact even though we cannot trace the exact course of transmission of ideas with all the desirable detail.”⁵⁷⁰

In the above quoted passage of the *Futûhât* the differentiating and individuating *hylê* provides for the fixed but non-existent “things” in God’s mind an entification, but on the other hand, these measured entities also function as the determining “spirits” or forms for all hylic possibilities, the *hylê* in itself being absolutely indefinable and unknowable.

Here we have the *hylê*, indeed, as a vague ‘Third something’ which is neither existent nor non-existent. But does this mean that the *hylê* is not only some kind of Platonic antemundane matter but also something like the supramundane matter, an intelligible counterpart [*hylê noêton*] of sensible matter of Plotinus? These are the terms with which Wolfson describes the doctrine of the *Mu’tazila*, according to which this antemundane matter is often referred to as a non-existent which is still “something”,

⁵⁶⁷ Wisnovsky 2003, 148

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid 149

⁵⁷⁰ Rescher 1966, 78

identifying it with Plotinian supramundane matter.⁵⁷¹ In any case, the above passage from the *Futûhât* expresses *hylê* as both as the individuating principle and the determining spiritual principle. Takeshita notes in his article that the term *hylê noêton* appears “both in Aristotle and Plotinus. However, the Plotinian version is closer to Ibn ‘Arabî’s concept of Prime matter than the Aristotelian one”.⁵⁷² His assessment is based on Peters, according to whom “the Aristotelian intelligible matter is a purely conceptual entity involved in the process of abstraction [*aphairêsis*]”, whereas “the Plotinian version has a definite ontological status; it is the intelligible counterpart of sensible matter, and its existence is proved by the diversity of the genera of the *eidê*, as indicated in the *Philebus* (*Enn.2.4.4.*)”.⁵⁷³ Here we could refer to previous clarifications by Happ on the general status of *hylê noêton* as latency in things and in Aristotelian thinking and abstraction (above I.B.5).

Before a closer inspection of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s position in the *Inshâ’*, one could first illustrate the point of Ibn ‘Arabî with a contemplation of a dialogue between God and Ibn ‘Arabî in one of his first major works composed in 1194 after his return from Tunis where he had spent that year. In the first chapter of *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries* he tells us about his “contemplation [*masshad*] of existence from the place of manifestation [*mazhar*]”. There and then:

“He [God] asked me: ‘Who are you?’ I replied, ‘Apparent non-existence’ [*al-‘adam al-zahîr*]”.⁵⁷⁴

This answer could equally well be translated as ‘I am a non-existence which manifests’. In that case its opposite would be ‘non-existence which does not manifest’ [*al-‘adam al’bâtin*], and this would refer to pure *impossibility*, that which can never be. Here we have again repercussions of the two divine names discussed above: God is both Manifest and He is the Non-manifest. But instead of calling himself simply existent or simply nonexistent, Ibn al-‘Arabî says he, a human being, is something in between these contraries: he is not purely manifest existence but nor is he utterly non-manifest non-existence, an absolute non-being incapable of being [*al-muhâl al-wujûd*]. Therefore, his answer combines manifestation and non-manifestation, being and non-being, knowledge and ignorance: he is the *apparent non-existent*, and this refers to *the possible* [*mumkin*] as the true and proper domain of the human being. Further in the same dialogue between God and Ibn al-‘Arabî God says to him: “You are not a thing, nor have you been a thing, nor are you according to a thing”, and a commentator adds to Ibn al-‘Arabî’s text: “that which ‘is no thing’ cannot, in any way, be opposed to the existence of the possible, since what we call ‘possible’ is the same as what we call ‘no thing’”.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷¹ Wolfson 1976, 379–382

⁵⁷² Takeshita 1982, 249 n.33

⁵⁷³ Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms*, quoted through Takeshita 1982, 249 n.33

⁵⁷⁴ *Con.1*, 23

⁵⁷⁵ *Con.1*, 23 and 28, n.15

Here we are at the condensed and yet quite obscure core of our “Sachen selbst” which could now be schematized as the three modalities of necessary, possible and impossible existence, the last named referring to things that can never enter into existence in cosmos, pure impossibilities that “do not allow the actualization of anything in the mind”, like a ‘round square’, ‘child for God’, ‘camel passing the eye of a needle’, etc.⁵⁷⁶ These modalities are further explained in the *Inshâ’ al-dawâ’ir*, *The Book of the Description of the Encompassing Circles*, a study, in which Ibn al-’Arabî gives also an exposition on the notion of the Third thing, the “*summum genus*” [*jins-al-ajnâs*], or the *Prime Matter* [*mâdda ûlâ*], and the Arabic transcription *hâyulâ* of the Aristotelian *hylê*. Like in the above quote from the *Futûhât* this concept appears now and then also in the later writings of Ibn al-’Arabî but to my knowledge it is here that the term receives its most detailed exposition. Here I will outline only briefly what would deserve a monograph in itself.

III.3.4.2. Matrix or Mother of all existents

The short treatise of *Inshâ’ al-dawâ’ir* is somewhat exceptional in the *oeuvre* of the Shaikh: “The work is built round a pronounced philosophical framework, composed almost in the *kalâm* style and is copiously illustrated with diagrams and tables, hence its title”.⁵⁷⁷ It is an initiatory text originally intended for Ibn al-’Arabî’s life-long companion (during the years 1198–1223), ‘Abd Allah al-Habashi.⁵⁷⁸ The treatise or, at least a central part of it, was written during Ibn al-’Arabî’s final year in the Maghrib in 598/1201, though the text has been revised later, as the author tells in the *Futûhât* (F I.98). Thus, here we have some of the brightest beams of the early ‘Sun rising in the West’, ready to enlighten some of the deepest aspects of Universal Reality [*haqîqa l-kullîya*]. The penetrating analysis of this text by Masataka Takeshita and his “particular reference to the doctrine of the ‘Third Entity’” is a valuable help in approaching this short text of Ibn al-’Arabî.⁵⁷⁹

Ibn al-’Arabî begins his text once again with the creation of Man in terms we have already discussed: “Praise belongs to God who has created Man in his image and favored him with His Secret”. He then refers to the same Qur’ânic passage (Q 2:34) discussed above on angels prostrating themselves before

⁵⁷⁶ The last two examples appear in the *Insha’* 10.11–12/20

⁵⁷⁷ Fenton and Gloton 1993, 12 I am using here this translation with the original text ed. by H.S. Nyberg 1919, 1–38. In the following notes on the *Inshâ’* the first number refers to pages of the translation in CV and the second to the Arabic text and line number on the page.

⁵⁷⁸ Fenton and Gloton 1993, 13 for al-Habâshi, see Addas 1993, 160–61. See Nyberg’s introductory marks on the work on pp. 11–14 of his dissertation.

⁵⁷⁹ Takeshita 1982, 243–60

man, which points to the noble “ontological rank” [*martabat fi l-wujûd*] of Man in creation. Therefore, “scrutinize your existence... and discriminate between what you are and your condition as servant”.⁵⁸⁰ Thus, the “object of this treatise is to specify the rank of man in regard to existence... and examine the manner of his manifestation subsequent to his non-manifestation [*ghayb*]. Thus we must discuss non-being [‘*adam*’] and being [*wujûd*]”.⁵⁸¹

In his article on the *Inshâ’* Takeshita summarises:

The subject of this small treatise is man’s exalted rank in the universe, due to certain correspondences existing between man and God. According to Ibn al-‘Arabî, these correspondences lie in the similarity between God’s knowledge and man’s knowledge, and he explains this similarity through an intermediary ‘third entity’ which exists between God and all creatures, something which is neither existent nor non-existent. This third entity is God’s knowledge of Himself when it is connected with God; at the same time it is man’s knowledge of himself when it is connected with man.⁵⁸²

Yes, indeed, “all of that and other related questions are to be found in the following chapters of this treatise, accompanied by practical diagrams designed to facilitate their assimilation by the student by representing in his mind their meaning in concrete form, thus facilitating their interpretation by impressing them upon the imaginative faculty [*quwwat al-khayâl*]”.⁵⁸³ **Imagination is the fundamental prerequisite of all understanding, and picturing the abstract arguments helps to understand the “totality of these notions” in that they induce the appetite of the senses to become attached to these principles.**⁵⁸⁴

To begin with, it is important to understand that existence and non-existence “are not realities superadded to an existent [*mawjûd*] or non-existent [*ma’dûm*] thing, but are *inherent in* the existent or non-existent thing [*huwa nafs l-wujûd wa l-ma’dûm*]”.⁵⁸⁵ Therefore it is necessary to understand this peculiar structure of “inherence” or *in-being* that is here referred to existence. This must be clarified, since in our language or in our misconceptions [*wahm*]⁵⁸⁶ we tend to formulate this *in-being* in terms of

⁵⁸⁰ *Inshâ’* 4.5–5.6/15–16

⁵⁸¹ In a note the translators here say that throughout the first part of the treatise the terms *existence*, *non-existence*, *existent* and *non-existent* are given an Aristotelian perspective which is far from being in harmony with the Shaik’s leading doctrine. CV 42 n14

⁵⁸² Takeshita 1982, 243

⁵⁸³ 6.7–10/17

⁵⁸⁴ “And every appetite is directed towards an end... for the object of appetite produces movement, and therefore thought produces movement, because the object of appetite is its beginning.” DA III.10, 433 a18–20.

⁵⁸⁵ 6.14–15/17

⁵⁸⁶ *Wahm* is term with many translations. A good summary of its basic meanings is Morewedge 2001, 321–324. Ibn al-‘Arabî has also much to say about the word, but here the idea can be summarized well with one feature of the word given by Morewedge: [*wahm*] “is a knowing process whose ultimate result is not knowing the ‘what’ of something, but the ‘how’ of a pragmatic situation”, *ibid.* p 324. Here Ibn al-‘Arabî is referring precisely to this kind of ‘pragmatic situation’, where *existence* is presumed as ‘something-in-something’, like someone entering a house.

a relation: ”*wahm* deems that existence and non-existence are two attributes [*sifatân*] applying to the existent or non-existent thing, *like a dwelling which the existent and non-existent thing enter*”.⁵⁸⁷

But existence and non-existence are not two properties or attributes, they are not something a thing has or does not have, as if it might just as well do without them. But because of our common sense, our imaginal predilections, when it is said of a thing, previously non-existent, that it comes into existence, we tend to understand it as something coming into something else, that is, as a real in one another. But, clearly, this in-being says something only about a relationship of being between entities, the relation of one being, a house, with the being of the one entering the house. This being enters that being. The relation between two beings is expressed, but nothing is said of existence itself.

One could easily stretch Ibn al-’Arabí’s example on the house and see the impossibilities it leads into. We could, then, further imagine existence as the house being built, or ‘coming into existence’ in a certain city, the city in a country, the country in the world, the world in the universe, and so forth ... but then: where is the universe? That, however, is no concern of ours, because this example only shows what existence does *not* mean: it is not this type of *in-being* that is meant when something is said to exist: **to exist does not mean being-in-one-another**. We should avoid this kind of thinking, even if we take it for granted. Instead, Ibn al-’Arabí says, “for persons of discernment, this saying [to come into existence] means that the thing, in its reality, is individuated [*hâdhâ l-shai’ wujud fî ‘aini*]. Therefore, **what existence and non-existence express is the affirmation or negation of the thing in its individuality**” [*ibâratân ‘an ithbât ‘ain al-shay’*].⁵⁸⁸ In other words, existence denotes the being “there” of a thing. It is therefore also possible to qualify an individual simultaneously by existence and nonexistence with respect to time and place: a certain individual Zayd is present at the market and absent from home. But if existence and nonexistence were simply qualifications like black and white, we certainly could not attribute these qualities simultaneously to Zaid. “It is then a matter of relative existence and non-existence, with the affirmation of being”.⁵⁸⁹

Instead of being an attribute of an existent thing, existence is in each case ‘mine’, it is the existence of each individuated thing known directly as such. “Every knower is necessarily [*darûrî*, “unavoidably”, irrefutably—but not *a priori* in the Kantian sense of knowing independently of experience] existent in himself and is a knower of himself and by himself”.⁵⁹⁰ This knowledge is direct and not the result of deduction or specification [*min ghairi takhsîs*]. This is so, because “individuated entities, or ‘essences’,

⁵⁸⁷ 6.17–18/17, italics mine

⁵⁸⁸ 7.2–3/18

⁵⁸⁹ 7.3–10/18

⁵⁹⁰ 14.8–9/23

are known by immediate perception [*ru'ya*"]. And here we have a fine example to suggest what 'afairesis' (see above pp 37–39, 196) could mean for Ibn al-'Arabí: accordingly, he says, we come to know every knowable thing, each essence ['ayn], the "what it was to be", in a *wesenschau* [*min bâb l-ru'ya*] as just stated, and therefore he emphasizes that, "that which remains inexistent [*ma'dûm*] is truly perceived as a reality within you [*fa-mudraku haqîqatan 'indaka*"]".⁵⁹¹ Our insight is thus directed towards the *eidos*–aspect [*mithl*], or 'prototype', of the particular thing perceivable only in the inexistence of our own understanding, that is, as *noêton*. Thus, our insight is not directed from the particular towards the universal, on the contrary, immediate perception sees the particular through the universal, and this it does "unavoidably", necessarily [*Unbedingt*] *a priori*, from his or her own existence, from the ontic fact that the knower is an individuated being and thus existent.⁵⁹² And, therefore, a being that has a world, belongs to a world and can know the world. "So", Ibn al-'Arabí concludes: "apply this *fully in every existent* without limitation, although you must guard against anthropomorphism [*tashbîh*] if you reach the Divine Presence. And, ultimately one does reach, as "by knowing one's soul, one may know the entity in whose form it was created, without that entity being diminished." (*Inshâ'* 15.3–4/24)

III.5. Between philosophy and mysticism: highest human possibilities

III.5.1. The first meeting of Ibn Rush and Ibn al-'Arabí

In his article on "Ibn 'Arabí between 'philosophy' and 'mysticism'", Franz Rosenthal ends his assessment by calling Ibn al-'Arabí both a philosopher and a mystic.⁵⁹³ Similarly I find it proper to end my perusals on Ibn al-'Arabí with an anecdote he himself tells us about a meeting of a philosopher and a mystic, namely the great Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-'Arabí himself, meeting one another in Cordoba sometime in the early 1180's; a much commented and well known short passage in the Ch.15 of the *Futûhât al-Makkiyya* (F.I.153.33–154.16= OY II 372–373). As mentioned earlier, the concrete historical fact of Ibn al-'Arabí's migration from the west to east had an obvious "doctrinal" or

⁵⁹¹ 14.7/23

⁵⁹² Heidegger would speak here of *existentiell* understanding: "In existentiell understanding, in which factual being-in-the-world becomes visible and transparent, there is always already present an understanding of being which relates not only to Dasein itself but also to all beings which are unveiled fundamentally with being-in-the-world. *In it there is present an understanding, which, as projection, not only understands beings by way of being but, since being itself is understood, has also in some way projected being as such.*" GA 24, §20b, 396/280

⁵⁹³ Rosenthal 1988, 35; similarly Netton begins his chapter on Ibn al-'Arabí, "the great Andalusian mystic and philosopher," Netton 1989, 268

“alchemical” dimension in his personal spiritual life too. In fact, in the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabí one often gets a simultaneous strong impression on the actual “facticity” in which he is writing and discussing his experiences. The reader comes across a decisive sense of intimacy [*uns*] with Ibn al-‘Arabí’s surroundings, the wonder and marvel of the world in the infinity of its ever-changing aspects: the radiance of the new moon or the shining stars, a closeness to things at hand and veils lifted to uncover deeper sense of presence. The roaring coastal ways of the Atlantic, the solitary mountains of the Atlas, the actual villages he is passing by, or, the intimate conversations in which he happens to be involved: they are all there. They are all part and parcel of his guidance for the reader. Even his minute descriptions of nature bare witness for the sense of God’s grandeur in Ibn al-‘Arabí and, indeed, for him, the whole of creation, and not just man, is speaking, and this includes all levels of reality, wakefulness in all its stages: in dreams, daily experiences, visions and revelations.⁵⁹⁴ We meet sensual and intellectual compounds like “gardens of attributes” [*jannât al-sifât*] or “meadows of words” [*riyâd al-kalimât*].⁵⁹⁵ Therefore, that which comes to pass, the ongoing stream of experience is itself also “speech”, something in the midst of which our awareness can have various levels. Full awareness equals full being.

One of the best known examples of taking up an intimate relation between the ongoing incidents of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s life and his subtle doctrinal expositions, is the famous passage in the *Futûhât* depicting the meeting of Ibn al-‘Arabí and Abû l-Walîd Ibn Rushd (1126–1198 CE), known in the west as Averroes, or simply: *The Commentator* (of Aristotle).⁵⁹⁶ Ibn Rushd, the famous philosopher and *qâdî* of Cordoba, was a personal friend of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s father and it is this family-contact that brought the great philosopher and the adolescent Ibn al-‘Arabí together. In the passage of the *Futûhât* this meeting and encounter serves also as an example of the relation between philosophical and mystical understanding, and, therefore, the highest possibilities of spiritual Man, here personified by Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-‘Arabí. Comparing the perspectives of a philosopher and a mystic is interesting in the sense that for both a mere doctrine and dogma is not enough: neither one would be happy in just following a conviction. Instead, the philosopher is looking for a way to understanding, and a mystic is looking for divine inspiration and unveiling to ascertain the true meaning of the revealed texts. How do these two processes of philosophical understanding and mystical unveiling relate? Do they have something in

⁵⁹⁴ James Winston Morris, in his *The Reflective Heart* discusses this important feature in the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabí and has also translated many beautifully written descriptions of nature from the *Futûhât*. Morris 2005.

⁵⁹⁵ *Anqâ* II.1, Elmore 1999, 332–33 “The Garden of Attributes” is explained by al-Qashanî in his *Istîlâhât* p.41, as the Garden of the Heart and the Spiritual Garden [*jannat al-mâ’anawî*].

⁵⁹⁶ This passage is also a good example of Henry Corbin reading Ibn al-‘Arabí, who reads out from this brief episode the whole life of Ibn al-‘Arabí as a brief breakthrough of the *imaginal world* [*mundus imaginalis*], where the Shaikh explains through the actual historical moments the grand themes of his mystical quest. Corbin, 1958/1975, 41

common or not? This actual text of the *Futûhât* was written more than 30 years after the original encounter⁵⁹⁷, making it thus a cherished chapter on a memory lane, but at the same time it is woven into a matrix of perennial questions of human being. Here the complex question between philosophical reasoning and the power of human intellect on the one hand, and, mystical experience, enlightenment and direct witnessing of spiritual realities as an immediate given experience on the other hand, are depicted as incidents of the Shaikh's own life, a memory of his own from the early years of his coming of age. Two major historical figures, one of the greatest philosophers of the Islamic civilization and one of the greatest mystics of all times actually meet one another to discuss and at the same time illuminate this complex question, as we will soon see.

At the end of the 12th century two major losses occurred in al-Andalus: the death of the last capable caliph of Andalusia Caliph Ya'qûb al Mansûr and the funeral of his former protégé, Ibn Rushd. Both happened within few months of the earlier mentioned decisive vision of Ibn al-'Arabî, opening for him the access to highest mystical "station" of Nearness [to God] (*maqâm al-qurba*) and the ensuing actual composition of the '*Anqâ*' *al-Mughrib*. Ibn al-'Arabi actually attended the burial of Ibn Rushd, whom he had himself met twice in reality and once in a dream—as he tells us in this well-known passage of the *Futûhât*.⁵⁹⁸ Symbolically this last farewell meeting between Ibn al-'Arabi, "the very type of the anti-rationalist mystic, and his older contemporary, that paragon of logical order, Ibn Rushd"⁵⁹⁹, is thought-provoking also in the sense that the dead philosopher's works were soon to migrate into the western/Christian Europe to give a vital boost to scholastic philosophy as "The Commentator" of Aristotle,⁶⁰⁰ whereas the former, a very much alive and autodidactic—as he himself maintained—mystic, was soon to migrate into the oriental east to boost there a great Islamic religious revival!

However, contrary to many other learned masters introduced on the pages of the *Futûhât*, it is quite obvious that Ibn al-'Arabi held deep respect for Ibn Rushd as the paragon of philosophy, bequeathing for example one of the philosopher's works to his own son, Sa'ad al-Dîn Muhammad.⁶⁰¹ He wrote: "Ibn

⁵⁹⁷ Noting that he is the only one still alive of those attending the funeral of Ibn Rushd by 1199 C.E. (F I 154.15), suggests that Ibn al-'Arabî wrote this passage after the year 1217 when Ibn Jubair, a friend mentioned at the funeral scene and the secretary to the Almohad prince, died in Alexandria. See, Elmore 1999, 52 n 23

⁵⁹⁸ F I 153.33–154.16. See, Palacios 1931, 39–41; Corbin 1958, 39–41; SPK, xiii; Addas 2005, 34–37; Elmore 50–53; Hirtenstein 1999, 57–58, Bashier 2004, 66–67.

⁵⁹⁹ Elmore 1998, 49–50. Nyberg says one might find traces of Ibn Rushd in the thinking of Ibn al-'Arabî—in that for both the universals are potentially in things and actual only in mind—though the two thinkers are very different in kind, perhaps "comparable to those of Kant and Swedenborg". He also compares Ibn al-'Arabi's position in the Islamic intellectual tradition to that of Proclus in late antiquity or to that of Hegel in the modern world. Nyberg 1919, 24, 31 and 160; Corbin also compares Ibn al-'Arabî's diary-like writing to that of Swedenborg: 1976, 42. For the assessment of Ibn al-Abbâr (above p.12 n.59) on Ibn Rushd as a very modest and humble man who devoted his whole life to learning, see Addas 2005, 34–35.

⁶⁰⁰ The Latin translations of Averroes' principal commentaries were completed in about 1230. Jolivet 1988, 113. However, as Kurt Flasch has shown, Averroes, if freed from Latin Averroism, was a strong impetus also for Meister Eckhart. Flasch 2006, Ch.2

⁶⁰¹ Elmore 1999, 31 n.101

Rushd was one of the great masters of reflection and rational consideration” [F I 154, 6: *fannahu kâna min arbâbu-l fikr wa-l nazaru-l ‘aqlî*] and, interestingly with respect to their meeting under discussion here, Ibn al-‘Arabî also tells us, that “Ibn Rushd had received knowledge through a special divine effusion [*al-faîdu-l ilâhî*] that is outside ordinary learning and cannot be acquired through study and effort or reached by reason [*mâ lâ jaqdar al-aql*] through its own reflective powers.” (F I 325.18–19) There was thus, according to Ibn al-‘Arabî, more to Ibn Rushd than meets the eye: he was not only a “rationalist” philosopher.

Furthermore, one should also keep in mind that in both western and eastern medieval traditions “scholasticism” and “mysticism” were by no means opposites. One can safely say that Ibn al-‘Arabî criticized often the so-called rational philosophers, but to think that he was “irrational” certainly misses the point. In fact, the terms rational/irrational are highly elusive as it is impossible to say what the “rational” as such, without reference to anything, would be. Kingsley says aptly: “Rationality is a blanket term which, in spite of its apparent definiteness, tends to obscure more than it clarifies.”⁶⁰² For Ibn al-‘Arabi and the great Sufis the way to knowledge and understanding does not come through a process of thinking [*istidlâl*] or rational demonstration [*burhân ‘aqlî*], instead, their knowledge is received in *unveiling* [*kashf*] as direct “tasting” [*dhawq*], “opening” [*fath*] or “insight” [*basîra*], without the interference of the reflective faculty [*aqlî* or *nazarî*]. However, also in the purely philosophical tradition, intuition, or the Aristotelian *epagoge*⁶⁰³ as straightforward perception, a seeing which discloses the *arkhê*, or what Husserl called “pure disclosure/seeing”, *reine Anschauung*⁶⁰⁴, has played a decisive role in coming to understand the highest truths. And, of course, intuition is precisely *not* a process of thinking, which always already presupposes the *arkhê* as that out of which and upon which thought can operate.

III.5.2. Between rational consideration and illumination: what made Ibn Rushd tremble?

It is, therefore, no wonder that this highest determination of man as intellect [*nous*],⁶⁰⁵ and its correlate, the question of *unveiling* of truth, or the reception of divine [*ilâhî/theion*] *effusion*, illumination, was precisely the subject Ibn Rushd wanted to discuss with the young Ibn al-‘Arabî when they first met. The topic and the conversation itself may raise some doubts in the modern reader as by the time of this

⁶⁰² Kingsley 1995, 385

⁶⁰³ Post.An. 71 a 6

⁶⁰⁴ Husserl distinguishes between “*sinnliche*” and “*übersinnliche*”, sensuous and supersensuous percepts with real and ideal objects; the latter, “higher” form of “seeing”, referring to nonsensual objects “seen” in pure categorial intuition. These two types of intuitions have accordingly an essentially different constitution LU 2.VI, §46, 674.

⁶⁰⁵ This highest capacity of the soul, as we know already through Johnson, includes all the lower functions of the soul and, therefore, does not refer to disembodied human rationality.

discussion Ibn al-‘Arabí was still a young lad “with yet no moustache and beard”, maybe a boy of 17–19 and thus the occasion would have occurred roughly by the year 1182–83 C.E.⁶⁰⁶ Be that as it may, as a friend of Ibn al-‘Arab’s farther, Ibn Rushd had heard about the young boy’s extraordinary spiritual experiences and wanted to hear more. What he actually wanted to know is formulated quite clearly: “How did you find the situation [*kaifa wajadtumu l-‘amr*] in unveiling and divine effusion [*al-kashf wa-l faidu-l ‘ilâhî*]. Is it what rational consideration/speculation [*al-nazar*] gives to us [philosophers; *hal huwa mâ ‘atâhu lanâ ‘l-nazar*]?” Thus, the question is on the *mode of givenness* of that which is understood. This is a highly relevant philosophical question that pertains also to perhaps the deepest question that attracted Ibn Rushd all through his life, namely man’s possibility to transcendence and his ability to relate to universal truths.⁶⁰⁷ I will come back to this further down.

Ibn al-‘Arabí’s somewhat cryptic and cautious answer was: “Yes no [*n ‘am lâ*, no conjunction in between]”, first a yes followed by no, explaining that “between the yes and the no, *spirits will take flight from their matter and necks will fly from their bodies* [*latatayara l-arwâh min mawâddihâ wa l-‘anâqi min ajâdihâ*]”. This answer turned Ibn Rushd immediately pale and made him tremble in awe, “repeating the phrase *lâ hawla wa lâ quwwata illa billâh* [there is no Power and no Strength save in God], and this he did, says Ibn al-‘Arabí, because “he understood to whom I was alluding to, the one who is actually *the very gist of this question* [*wa huwa ‘ayn hâdhihi-l mas’alah*] of the *Pole of Imâms*, that is, the *Healer of Wounds* [*mudâwî-l kulûm*]. (F I 154.3–5) Here Ibn al-‘Arabí actually identifies Ibn Rushd as “this qutb of imâms”, *hadhâ qutb al-imâm*, probably best to be understood here as an honorific; a friendly way of addressing the great master of his time.

But what is this answer with its dramatic consequences supposed to mean? Ibn al-‘Arabí tells us the old philosopher turned pale and trembled because “he understood to whom I was alluding to”, that is, he was referring to a mysterious “Healer/treater of Wounds” who is somehow attached to the very crux of the subject-matter under discussion. Of whom and on what is Ibn al-‘Arabí talking about here?

If one looks at the translations of this passage, which indeed are many, starting with its beautiful rendering into Spanish in 1931 by Asín Palacios, one is however, disappointed. The earliest translation of Asín Palacios stops at noting that Averroes turned pale and started to tremble “as the meaning of my allusions sank in” [*como si hubiese penetrado el sentido de mis alusiones*] Asin Palacios 1931, 40].

⁶⁰⁶Judging by merely the fact that Ibn al-‘Arabí says he was still a beardless youth one would think of much younger age as it is a question of coming of age of an Arab boy, but scholars starting from Asin Palacios have usually dated this meeting in the early 1180’s. On the other hand, the combination of young age and brilliant argumentation is by no means exceptional. The famous early *Mu’tazili* –theologian Abú l-Hudail [d. 841 C.E.] is said to have had his first great success in argumentation against a Jewish *mutakallimún* at the age of fifteen. van Ess 1992, Vol.III 220

⁶⁰⁷For an excellent brief survey of this question regarding Avicenna, see D’Ancona 2008.

Not a word of any Treater of Wounds. Similarly, Corbin (originally in 1958, here in the 1976 edition, p 40–41), following on the whole literally the translation of Asín Palacios, also cuts his translation short in “*car il avait compris ce à quoi je faisais allusion.*” Averroes turned pale because he understood to whom I was alluding to. But following this there are neither three dots nor any note on omissions, and yet a full sentence is missing. William Chittick, on the contrary, attaches “his famous”⁶⁰⁸ three dots into his version: “he [Averroes] had understood my allusion”.... R.W.J.Austin gives also a fluent translation of this meeting in the Preface of his translation of the *Fusûs al-Hikâm*, but cuts it short by noting that Ibn Rushd became pale “because he had understood my allusion.”⁶⁰⁹

Claude Addas, admitting that the passage is enigmatic, says she is following the translation of Corbin, but leaves “the whom” Ibn al-‘Arabî was alluding to away. Instead, she refers to her father, the great French interpreter and scholar of Ibn al-‘Arabî, Michel Chodkiewicz, who had noted in a lecture in 1986 that “in reading of the pages directly preceding this particular passage indicates that the subject of debate between the philosopher and the young saint was the resurrection of the body.”⁶¹⁰ And, indeed, in his introduction to the second volume of Meccan Revelations Chodkiewicz, in summarizing the early chapters of the *Futûhât*, takes up the mysterious figure of *Mudâwî al-kulûm* from Ch.15 as the master of alchemy, a “healer of metals,” medicine, astrology, and cosmology (*‘ilm al-‘âlam*) and, therefore, identifying him as Hermes/Enoch. He also quotes a passage from this chapter where Ibn al-‘Arabî tells us how this “healer of wounds” gathered together his companions “in a village and announced them that he is going to leave this world (returning to the root, *raja’ ilâ-l’asl*)” (F I 153.23-29). In this sermon for his people he also told that the paradise and this world have in common “the brick and the mason”. “There is thus continuity of nature between them,” writes Chodkiewicz and concludes that “this speech reveals the subject of the enigmatic dialogue of the young Ibn al-‘Arabî and Averroes, which is reported immediately thereafter, and which Corbin has translated, albeit without its context.” Chodkiewicz then goes on to formulate this context by saying: “Careful study of the conversation shows that the problem the philosopher and the boy debated is the problem of the final ends; the best guess is that the specific topic was the resurrection of the body.”⁶¹¹ There certainly is a connection between the continuity noted here between the spiritual paradisiacal state and our material worldly condition and the topic of the discussion between Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-‘Arabî following directly after this sermon, but I do not think the connecting element is the theological issue of resurrection, instead, it is the element of continuity itself in the form of *balance*: here between this material world serving as the bricks and mason, the

⁶⁰⁸In the introduction to SDG he tells us how often he had to add three small dots in the translations appearing in SPK “saving some sort of headache.” SDG, x

⁶⁰⁹Austin 1980, 3

⁶¹⁰Addas 2005 37 n.17. Cf. Chodkiewicz, in MR II 2004, 35-36

⁶¹¹MR II, 36

“bezel” for the spiritual descent, and there as the intellectual *hayûla*, prime matter as intellectual pure potency, the purified capacity of reception, the ability to respond to divine illumination. As we already know: there is a balance also for the intellect. This will be delved into soon.

In passing it is also interesting to note the similarity of this anecdote of the *Healer of wounds* gathering his companions in a village before his death and the story told by Diogenes Laertius on Empedocles’ last sermon for villagers after which he disappeared (DL 8.2.70). Even the choice of words, returning to the *root*, by no means a common way of expressing one’s death, but of course the very basic word of Empedocles for whom the elements were “roots” and who as a medicine man was also a “root cutter.” The above explanation of Chodkiewicz, however, obliterates the explicit and highly relevant philosophical theme of the conversation formulated quite clearly by Ibn Rushd himself. Therefore, I see no reason to dismiss this given theme. Similarly, Stephen Hirtenstein (1999, 58) seems to follow Addas and Chodkiewicz in saying that the “conversation centers on how to understand the resurrection”, though adding “one more general and fundamental point [...]: the gulf between two modes of inquiry, the philosophical and the mystical [...].”

One of the latest treatments of this famous historical meeting that I know of is that of Salman Bashier (2004). He sets the meeting—and correctly, it seems—in a larger connection as an encounter between philosophy and mysticism, between rational inquiry and a far wider “cocreative synthesis, unifying affirmation [...] and negation [...]”⁶¹² The mystics considered the human intellect alone insufficient for achieving the ultimate truth, instead, for them only direct personal knowledge coming from God can open up such knowledge for the human being. “In order to be ready to receive this knowledge, the Sûfis had to remove the veils that separated them from God.” Thus, Bashier writes: “In my opinion, the conclusion that reason is just another veil that has to be removed before perfect knowledge is obtained is the most important lesson that we can learn from the encounter between Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-‘Arabî”.⁶¹³ And this, of course, is very true. This contextually obvious perspective and conclusion does explain the shock of Ibn Rushd as he understands what Ibn al-‘Arabî was referring to in answering him: for a young boy to be able to clearly see the limits of rational inquiry is by all standards an astonishing achievement. However, for the actual passage of the *Futûhât* describing this meeting Bashier seems to be using the translation of Gerald T. Elmore (Bashier 2004, 168 n31) though paying no attention to Ibn al-‘Arabî’s remark on the *Healer of wounds*. Instead, he explains at length the role of a central mythical figure of Islamic mysticism, al-Khadir, “the verdant one”, who is also briefly mentioned in this cryptic Chapter of the *Futûhât*. I will come back to Bashier further down.

⁶¹² Bashier 2004, Ch.IV, 59–74 Though, to be exact, talk of synthesis [or diæresis] is here no more possible as the question is of a pure beholding and reception of the real

⁶¹³ Bashier 2004, 60

Gerald T. Elmore (1999) is indeed the only translator besides Chodkiewicz who in a note mentions that the “entire anecdote... is set in the context of a rather strange Ch. [15] of the *Futûhât*, developed around the figure of *qutb al-imâm* styled the ‘*treater of wounds*’ [*mudâwî l-kulûm*].” And further, regarding Ibn al-‘Arabî’s allusion to this figure, Elmore writes: “At this point Ibn al-‘Arabî identifies his allusion to the philosopher as having to do with the function of this mysterious personage.”⁶¹⁴ But, when it comes to the interpretation of the Shaikh’s strange words, “and necks will fly from their bodies”, Elmore is sure to read these words in his own way: “To cause s.o.’s head to fly [*tayyara ra’sa-hu*] signifies, of course, capital punishment” [...and, also,] ‘to become confused, insane’”.

But why would Ibn al-‘Arabî refer to capital punishment in answering a question on the similarity or difference between rational processes of judgement and intuitive mystical witnessing? And why would a great philosopher and *qâdî* of the High Court of Cordoba want to discuss capital punishment with a young lad, albeit one with mystical experiences? Elmore answers: “If I might hazard a tentative explication of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s elliptical riddle, we could say that those who attempt ‘to read between the lines’ of Sûfî metaphysics without proper moral preparation may lose their heads in more ways than one.”⁶¹⁵ This certainly would be true, but is it an answer making a philosopher tremble and pale? Or, indeed, is it an answer at all to the above clearly specified question of Ibn Rushd?

Except the general context of Bashir’s account of the meeting between “philosophy” and “mysticism”, none of these renderings of this passage actually explain the stupor of Ibn Rushd, nor what on earth is Ibn al-‘Arabî referring to with his “yes/no,” or, “spirits will take flight from their matter and necks will fly from their bodies”. Nor do we get any explanation on who might be this strange “Treater/Healer of Wounds” that *hits the very point of their discussion*, as Ibn al-‘Arabî himself clearly emphasizes. He tells us that his answer is an allusion to the *Treater of wounds* and with this he reveals the very crux of the matter brought to discussion by the philosopher.

It is impossible, of course, to say for sure what is going on here, but if one takes Ibn al-‘Arabî’s words literally and keeping in mind the fact that he is talking to the Arabic “embodiment of Aristotle” who probably knew his Aristotle by heart, then I might venture for another explanation. According to Ibn al-‘Arabî his allusion captures somehow the whole question under discussion.

⁶¹⁴ Elmore 1999, 51 n.15

⁶¹⁵ Ibid. 51 n.13

My suggestion is that he is not making a riddle here; instead, he might be referring to one, one that is most likely known to Ibn Rushd who was not only a scrupulous translator and commentator of Aristotle, writing himself no less than three commentaries on *De Anima*, and a philosopher deeply engaged all through his life in the question of the intellect and its possibility of conjunction with the Agent Intellect. And so were some of his eminent predecessors, particularly Ibn Sînâ and Averroës' Andalusian predecessor Ibn Bâjja (d.1338) the latter favouring the idea of "conjunction of the individual intellect with Agent Intellect." And, indeed, in his commentaries Averroës favours the idea of the possibility of such conjunction (*ittisâl*) against the Neoplatonic adaptation of the Agent Intellect (Aristotle's productive intellect, *nous poiêtikos*) of Avicennian interpretations, or the more physiological orientation towards the receiving, passive intellect (Aristotle's intellect in potentiality, or *nous hylikos*) of Ibn Bâjja.⁶¹⁶ And it was also this idea of conjunction that "posed a continuing problem for Averroës: that of trying to reconcile individual identity and universal knowledge, material and immaterial being." (ibid.)

III.5.3. The question in Aristotelian terms of *De Anima*

To understand the perspective of Ibn Rushd on the question he himself poses, one ought to take a look at the passage in Aristotle's *DA* III 4–6, particularly 430a10–30 (and also *NE* VI 6–7), where Aristotle expressly discusses the question brought forth by Ibn Rushd, that is, the "so-called *nous*" [*o kaloúmenos tês psukhês noûs*, *DA* III 4, 429 a22] and *noêsis* as the highest possibility of being for the human being: "[*noûs*] either is itself also something divine, or is the most divine part in us" [*NE* X 7, 117a15–16]. How does this most divine part in us, also equated with god by Aristotle [*o theòs kaì nous*], "the god, i.e. the intelligence", *NE* I 6, 1096 a24–5, similarly, *EE* 1217b30–1], function? How can something occur to a living thing regarding its being? The soul is acted upon by what is thinkable and must, therefore, be receptive to the form of an object. Therefore, this living thing is a possibility [*dunatón*] of being opened up (*DA* III 4, 429a13–23). But the mind seems to be active too, having a capacity to understand. Does this understanding arise in the human being itself or is it something that enters the human being from outside? What exactly is the role of the mind in an illumination? How does a genuine mystic express these ultimate questions? Here we have, then, the philosophical background for Ibn Rushd's question: how did you find the situation in unveiling and divine effusion; is it what rational consideration gives to us philosophers? To clarify Aristotle in these matters I have benefited from my third thinker under discussion in this study, Martin Heidegger, who looked thoroughly also into this

⁶¹⁶AMCA intro p.xvi and 145 n.20

passage of Aristotle in DA both in his early *Anzeige* (PIA) and in his 1924 lecture course on Aristotle (GA 18).⁶¹⁷

Aristotle writes, “Like in the whole of nature, there is something which is their matter [*hylê*], i.e., which is potentially all the individuals, and something else which is their cause or agent in that it makes [*poieîn*] them all—the two being related as an art to its material [*hylê*]—these distinct elements must be present in the soul also”. (DA III 5, 430a10) Therefore, mind should be seen in its passive sense as “becoming all things”, mind as something that can be affected, changing in the form of “suffering” [*páskhein*] and “coming to be” out of an earlier situation into a new one, a possibility of “becoming-otherwise” [*alloíôsis*] and, on the other hand, “mind as it makes [*poiein*] all things, a positive state [*hexis, dispositio*] like light [*oion tò fôs*, 430a16]: for in a sense light makes potential into actual colours.”⁶¹⁸ Mind in this sense is separable [*khôristos*], impassive [*apathês*] and unmixed [*amigês*], since it is essentially an activity [*energeía*]” (DA III 5, 430 a15–18). Here the highest human mode of understanding and “seeing,” *noein/noesis*, in its basic character as a beholding through light, is equated as an understanding that provides sight for intuition [*epagoge, induction*, a simple “leading-to”].⁶¹⁹ What is given thus by unmixed/uncontaminated mind, *noûs amigês*, is “a being as such” [*òn hê ón*] and only this is immortal and everlasting, whereas mind in the passive sense [*pathêtikon*] is perishable (DA III.5, 430 a24 sqq.). This ability of the human intellect to *become all things* [*tò panta poiein*] is accomplished as a kind of light through which the *noein* can “have” things “there”. *Nous* provides a “there”, it exists [*ist*] in its concrete actualization, as at work (as *energeia*), as providing sight.⁶²⁰ *Nous* is a *providing-sight*, it illuminates our dealings, and in some way, it “touches,” contacts [*thigeîn*, Met IX 10, 1051 b26, *thisis*, a connection, a touch is also needed to explain movement, Phys III.2, 202a6–7], the matters at hand: it makes us see the looks of things. Aristotle thus likens *nous* to light [*oion tò fôs*] as noted: it is a kind of *hexis*, a disposition for illumination. **For anything at all to be there needs first to be illuminated, opened-up and it is the mind that gives this possibility of something being opened-up.** “There is no manifestation without light”, as Ibn al-‘Arabí says (F II.466.20)⁶²¹. The thinkable, the entire field of possible perceiving, is *pánta*. Everything that in any sense *is* is *noêton*. Thinking is open to the other. But this it can only be as possibility, uncontaminated: it can have no characteristic except its capacity to receive (DA III 4, 429 a23). Thus we have here the basic dual concepts of being in

⁶¹⁷ PIA 257–58/380, GA 18, 200-03/134–37

⁶¹⁸ We have seen (above 281) that Ibn al-‘Arabí uses “colouring” in a similar sense: “When the possible thing came into existence, it became coloured [*insibâgh*] by light, and non-existence disappeared.” F II 303.32 See also pp 83–84, 195 and 219 above.

⁶¹⁹ *Epagogê*, the “leading-up-to”, is a “path toward...,” *éfedos, apo tôn kath’ekaston*, “through what is at each moment,” what is there immediately, “to what is ‘on the whole’ [*kathólou*].” Top A 12, 105 a12

⁶²⁰ PIA 380

⁶²¹ He also has an expression “light of existence” (*nûr al-wujûd*) which is deployed over all existent things. F II.241.6; SPK 223 At times Ibn al-‘Arabí also equates “existence is light and non-existence is darkness”, F II 486.5

Aristotelian thinking: being as *páskhein* in contrast to being as *poiein*, that is, the mind as being-moved, suffering a change and becoming something other, and, on the other hand, the mind as active power of illumination, a being as having something at one's disposition [*hexis* referring back to *ékhhein*, having].

Now, one way of posing the problem here raised by Ibn Rushd is to ask, as we already did above, whether the human highest understanding, *nous*, arises in the being of human beings, or whether this *nous* enters into human beings from outside (DA I.1, 403a3 sqq.). In any case, the fundamental feature of the mind is its capacity to receive [*dunátón*] and as such the *nous* is defined as *dektikòn tou éídous*, being able to take up the *eidos*, receptive for the “look” of a being.⁶²² Thus the mind is the light in which something is seen: “as the sensitive is to the sensible, so must mind be to the thinkable.” (DA III 4, 429a18) Receptivity, therefore, is fundamental characteristics of the mind, but, on the other hand “it seems that none of the affections, whether active or passive, can exist apart from the body [*aneu sômatos*]” (DA I.1. 403 a10) Indeed, it seems all the affections [*pathê*] of the soul are associated with the body [*metà sômatos*]; for when they appear the body is also affected (*páskhei ti tò soma*; DA I.1. 403a16 sqq.). And, furthermore, “there are times when men show all the symptoms of fear without any cause of fear being present.” This shows that corporeality also plays a role in the rise of affects: they are “forms expressed in *hylê*,” “incorporated formulae” [*lógoi henyloí*] and, therefore, affects must be considered on the one hand as corporeal [*sôma* as fully determined *hylê*] and, on the other hand, as formal [according to *eidos*, with a certain end in view: *upò toude éneka toude*, 403 a26]. Thus, anger, for example, is viewed quite differently by a natural philosopher [*fusikós*] and a dialectician [who deals with rhetorics]. For the former “anger is a surging of blood and heat round the heart, whereas the latter will call it a craving for retaliation, or something of the sort. The one is describing the matter [*hylê*] the other the form or formula [*eidos*]” (DA I 1, 403a29–b 1).

On the whole, it seems that Aristotle is not trying to reach a clear-cut theoretical doctrine on the highest intellectual capacities of the human being; instead, he describes the human understanding from different angles and leaves the matter ultimately open.

Furthermore, and in our context quite surprisingly, while discussing all this, Aristotle happens to refer to Empedocles (Fr. 57), who claimed, concerning new combinations of thoughts [or, simple elemental formations searching for union, and thus, the same question but on another ontological level discussed by Aristotle in the *Cael* III.2 passage with the same Empedocles quotation appearing there], that such combinations produce new fresh units, “*where without necks the heads of many grew [hê pollai mèn kórsai anaúkhenenes eblastêsan]*”! Only later, according to Empedocles in the *De Anima* passage, love

⁶²² The Platonic *khôra* as *dekhomenon*, the “receiving receptacle” or the *triton genos* between sensible and intelligible, or the *ekmageion*, wax or “matter always ready to receive the imprint,” as described in the *Timaeus* [Tim.48e–50e]

makes such composites again united and therefore further indivisible objects of possible intuition.⁶²³ Since that which is genuinely objective for *nous* is indivisible [*adiairêton*]: it cannot be taken apart nor can it be explained further: it presents that which is objective as such and “simply [*haplos*] true” and “simply there”. *Nous* is a kind of perception (*aisthesis tis*), **a beholding which in each case gives the appearance of the objects purely and simply** (432 a 2, PIA, 380). It is *not yet* within the sphere of judgement making it either true or false—“for falsehood always lies in the process of combination” [DA III.6, 430 b1]. Instead, *nous* provides the “from whence” (*arkhê*) of the *legein* as that which is uncovered. Earlier in the same Book III of *De Anima* (DA III 3, 427a23) Aristotle quotes also Empedocles (as he actually does quite often in *De Anima*) on the notion that thinking is a form of perceiving [*aisthánesthai*], that thinking and perceiving are identical, like, for instance, Empedocles has said “Understanding grows with a man according to what appears [*pareôn*] to him,” a sentence perfectly agreeable, as we will soon see, with the perspectives of Ibn al-‘Arabí for whom this “appearing” would be an “unveiling”, a light dawning in the heart, that is a light illuminating a *mazhar*, a place of manifestation [*mahall li-zuhûr*, F II 575, 18] due to God’s self-disclosure [*tajallî*]. Here we could point out, that this “appearing” itself does not grow, even if it can cause the growth of our understanding. In itself the “appearing”, the unveiling, or divine effusion is “without a neck”, “without a why”; it is an unconcealment of the Real. “The things are like curtains over the Real (*al-ashyâ* ‘*alâ l-Haqq ka ’l-sutûr*). When they are raised, unveiling takes place.” (F II 507.32)

But there is yet a further interesting feature in Aristotle’s use of this Empedoclean dictum. In the *DA* passage Love unites again “heads” to “necks”; mind is the unifying power bringing together that which lies apart. But in *De Caelo* III 2, 300 b8-301 a22, where the same Empedoclean fragment is quoted, towards the end of the passage Aristotle states (*italics mine*):

Hence Empedocles *begins after the process ruled by Love*: he could not have constructed the heaven by building it up out of bodies in separation (*èk kekhôrisménôn*), making them to combine by the power of Love, since our world has its constituent elements in separation, and therefore *presupposes a previous state of unity* and combination (*èx henòs kai sunkekriménou*).⁶²³

Thus, here we have love as a combining force in a previous state, a state probably scattered by hate, the dynamic counterpart of Love for Empedocles. This again is an idea perfectly suitable for the perspectives of Ibn al-‘Arabí for whom the *divine form* makes the definition of human being, the form of Adam (*sûrat Âdam*) which God breathed into the human spirit (*al-rûh al-insânî*). The imperfect human being has a genuine possibility of knowing objectively because of the divine form in which

⁶²³ This idea is based on his “doctrine” of *sympathies*: Love and affection [*filia*] bringing unification and mixture; Strife or enmity causing separation, being the fundamental teaching of Empedocles. Earlier I noted Ibn al-‘Arabí explaining “quarrel” as being derived from nature with its oppositional elements.

he/she *was created*. This is the very marrow of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s teaching: we can become to know because this knowledge is native to us. As he said: I was guided only to myself (*wa dalâlat-î illâ ‘alayya*; F III.350.31).

Johnson interpretes the above passage of *De Caelo*: “Aristotle apparently holds that the separation itself is indicative of a natural order [...]. All things are jointly arranged with respect to one thing, the good. Chiefly this means their own goods, like reproduction for plants, and pleasure for animals.⁶²⁴ Clearly the highest good in nature is intelligence (*noûs*)—and it is identified with god, even with reference to its presence in the extraterrestrial intelligences and human beings.”⁶²⁵

Thus, roughly, one could here surmise, that Ibn al-‘Arabi both agreed and disagreed with the philosophical proceedings concerning the highest truths: yes, they are beheld by a light in unveiling, but not as based on a processes of judgmental thought [judgment as a connecting “neck” or a “way” of proceeding from premisses to conclusions]—therefore: his answer is a definite “yes/no”. Yes, the moment of unveiling is like pure intuition, and, no, this intuition is not a conclusion of rational inquiry: it is neither connecting [*synthesis*] nor separating [*diæresis*]. As we have already quoted Ibn al-‘Arabí (n34 above): in our reason/thinking [*fikr*] “there is only *that what is in it*; it does not go beyond its own level” (F IV 156.11–12) Knowledge of the First principles is not based on demonstration but on intuition (*An.post* I 3, 72 b20, quoted already above n 488). Hence, in unveiling and illumination the question is not of a logical being, not of true or false judgment [the theme in the corresponding DA III.6 passage]. Instead of judgment here we are witnessing directly, having the “object” simply [*haplôs*] “there”; it is “there” before any dialectical process, before any yes or no of *apóphasis/katáphasis*. That’s why it is called *kashf*, unveiling.

Already in the Introduction [*muqaddima*⁶²⁶] of his *Futûhât* Ibn al-‘Arabi discusses briefly the same topic as in our present inquiry, namely “discursive inquiry” [*al-nazar*] versus “spiritual unveiling” [*al-kashf*]. In this Introduction Ibn al-‘Arabi explains that “the ranks/levels of knowledge” [*marâtib al-‘ulûm*] are three and of these levels the third is pertinent to our theme.

First we have *knowledge of the intellect* [‘*ilm al-‘aql*] which is self-evident and immediate [*darûrî*, necessary, *a priori*⁶²⁷], or based on argumentation and sound premisses [*dalîl*] and which connects

⁶²⁴ Instead of the Platonic universal and one idea of the good Aristotle says: “the good is understood exactly as variously as being.” *NE* I.4, 1096 a23ff. Note not in Johnson.

⁶²⁵ Johnson 2005, 282

⁶²⁶ In the older Cairo edition F I. pp. 31–47, in the OY 1972/1392AH Cairo edition pp 138–214

⁶²⁷ One of the very early distinctions in Islamic theology is between knowledge which is *darûrî* necessary/given/immediate and that which is *kasbî/iktisâbî*, speculative/acquired/mediated. van Ess points out that this term of necessity is difficult to translate accurately as it has no direct equivalent in western philosophy. *A priori* seems closest to its meaning, but then again, *darûrî* can define also actual sense-perceptions. Similarly the word *intuitive* gives one aspect of the term but not that

[*yajma*'] and separates [*yakhtass*] and that is why "some of it is sound/true [*sahîh*] and some is invalid/false [*fâsid*]" (F 31.11). This is just as Aristotle says: only where there is *synthesis*, a positing together of what is discerned, is there falsity; that is, to assert something as what it is not: "deception occurs only where there is *synthesis*" (DA III 6, 430 b1). Or, as Ibn al-ʿArabî says: "Some rational thinkers [*al-uqalâ*] have erred... by attributing error to sensation. That is not the case: the error belongs only to that which passes judgement." (*wa innamâ al-ghalat li-l 'hukm* F I 213.31–32) In this same passage Ibn al-ʿArabî tells us that our five senses of perception, hearing, sight, smell, touch and taste perceive things *darûrî*, which Chittick is careful not to translate as *a priori* but as perceiving "inconvertibly", whereas our reflective faculty [*al-quwwat al-mufakkira*] can be both inconvertible and not inconvertible, due to the above mentioned possibility of errors of judgement.⁶²⁸

The second level is *knowledge of "states"* [*ilm al-ahwâl*] which comes about only through direct experience [*tajriba*] and "tasting" [*dhauq*]. Therefore this type of knowledge cannot be rationally defined or given proofs. As examples Ibn al-ʿArabî mentions the sweetness of honey, bitterness of aloes, pleasures of intercourse, love, ecstasy, yearning and so forth.

At the third level of knowledge we have *knowledge of secrets* [*ilm al-ʿasrâr*], which is said to be beyond the stage of [discursive] intellect [*fauqa tawru l-ʿaql*] and described as "inbreathing of the Holy Spirit in the heart [*ru*']" (F I 31.9–15). "Our intellects have a limit at which they stop, insofar as they are [discursively] thinking, not insofar as they are receptive [*qabilîyya*, Gr. *dunaton* to God's inspiration]" (F I 41.4–5). Thus our reason is limited in its own discursive power but not in its—or the hearts (*ru*' means "heart", "mind", "soul")—capacity to receive higher knowledge of the type under discussion here: "knowledge of divine breaths and their secrets" (also the theme of Ch.15 on the whole, including also this passage on Ibn Rushd meeting Ibn al-ʿArabî). One could here note in passing that this distinction of knowing by reason and knowing by heart does not refer to different "organs". Rather the question is of two fundamentally different ways of coming to know of the one and same human subject. Similarly, one should also keep in mind that it is not the eyes that see or the ears that hear, instead, it is the human being that sees and hears, not the organs. This was expressed in the Islamic world by calling perceptions on the whole as "functions of the heart" [*af'âl al-qulûb*].⁶²⁹

of logical necessity or primacy (*badîhî* or *awwalîyât*, Gr. *axiomata*) also involved, van Ess 1966, 114–19, see above notes 488 and 627

⁶²⁸ Aware of the problem, Chittick translates *darûrî* in Ibn al-ʿArabî here as "incontrovertible" (SPK 160), and thus very much in the sense of for example al-Îjî (1300–1335) in the study by van Ess: "(*Notwendiges wissen ist*), was *hervorzubringen [hassala] nicht in der Macht des Geschöpfes liegt*." van Ess 1966, 113. This definition makes obvious the difference to Kantian *a priori* judgment.

⁶²⁹ van Ess 1992, Vol.III, 250

And, indeed, Ibn al-‘Arabí also states that both knowledge of the states and knowledge of secrets come close to the self-evident and immediate [*darûrî*] first principles of knowledge grasped by the intellect in that they are also known self-evidently and immediately, only here this self-evidence and immediacy occurs only to the one actually witnessing [*huwa darûrî inda man shâhidhu*, F I.33.9]. Thus, here we see the wider use of *darûrî* covering not only intellectually known principles [*axiômata*] but also self-knowledge⁶³⁰ and perceptions or, as the point is here, immediate or intuitive knowledge, which Ibn al-‘Arabí also calls “all-encompassing knowledge” [*al-‘ilm al-muhîr*, with a clear Qur’ânic connotation], which comprises all objects of knowledge [*jami’ al-ma’lûmât*](F I.31.22). The difference between knowledge by reason and by heart is in their modes of coming to know: reasoning is a process giving “birth” [*tawallud*] to knowledge, whereas the heart comes to know by opening up to *receive* the all-encompassing or the whole truth *simpliciter*. One way of putting this is: “The clearest of denotations [*dalîl*] is a thing’s denoting itself by its own manifestation.” (F II 305.26) In this connection Ibn al-‘Arabí refers to the important Qur’ânic locus (Q 41:53): “*We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth.*” Truth is simply witnessed. For Ibn al-‘Arabí the essential feature of the heart is its constant beat as change, fluctuation and alteration [*taqallub*] which corresponds to the forever ongoing divine act of creating.

Here we have, as Frithjof Rundgren notes, “a highly interesting and clever approach: to place the *darûra*, ‘necessity’, of philosophy [in the sense of *falsafa*] on an equal footing with the *mushâhada*, ‘the beholding, autoptic testimony of the Sufi’.”⁶³¹ How could “truth” be a character of “disclosure”, witnessed being? But here we see why the term *darûra* does not equal the term *a priori* as the opposite of *a posteriori*, as we are prone to think in Kantian terms. Here the highest truth is witnessed with the same immediacy as any perception is, that is, simply and without the possibility of error in immediate “opening” or *un-veiling*, *a-lêtheia*. If I could delve on this subject “forever and a day” the next chapter would be a commentary of Martin Heidegger on Aristotelian three different uses of being in *Met IX 10, 1051 a34–b1* where the most authoritative [*kuriôtata*] being [*das Seiende*] is true [*alêtheia*] and untrue being. This indeed would bring us to the pinnacle not only of Aristoteian thinking but also to the peak of Heidegger’s reading of Aristotle and the thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabí. But as this confrontation was exposed in a lecture courses during 1930 as GA 31, and 1931 as GA 33, I will leave it outside the sphere of Aristotelian elements in the young Heidegger.

Ibn al-‘Arabí writes: “In our view, anything that the rational faculty is able to perceive on its own can be known prior to being witnessed [*shuhûd*]. But the Essence of the Real [*dhât al-Haqq*] is outside this

⁶³⁰*Ich bewusstsein*: van Ess 1992, Vol. IV. 667

⁶³¹CV 1993, 347

judgement, for it is witnessed before It is known. Or rather, It is witnessed, but not known, just as the Divinity is known but not witnessed [no positive attributes of Self can be ascribed to Divinity that is known only in the *via negativa*, that is, the self-disclosure of the (Divine) Essence is impossible]. How many a rational man among the considerative thinkers, claiming a firm rational faculty, has maintained that he has acquired knowledge of the Essence [*m'arifatu l-dhât*] in respect of his reflective consideration [*al-nazar al-fikrî*]! But he is mistaken, since he wavers [*mutaraddid*] in his reflection between negation [*salb* = Gr. *apóphasis*] and affirmation [*ithbât* = Gr. *katáphasis*].” (F I 41. 11–15, SPK 59–60) But this is precisely what we said with Aristotle (above p.306).

“And with regard to simple [*hapla*] concepts and essences [*tí estin*] there is no truth or falsity even in thought.” (*Met* VI 3, 1027 b 27ff.) Therefore, this highest direct beholding of reality is not the outcome or product of reasoning, as Aristotle also states: “And intuition [*nous*] is concerned with ultimates in both directions; because it is intuition and not reason that grasps both the first and the ultimate terms.” (*EN* VI 11, 1143 a35) Thus, unlike knowledge [*epistêmê*], and unlike practical understanding [*phrónesis*], or wisdom [*sofía*], intuition is not *metà lógou*, not the outcome of judgement, but, rather, it is an *aletheúein*, adisclosure of principles [*perì tàs arkhàs alêtheúein* *EN* VI 2, 1141 a17ff.] without judgement [*áneu lógou*]. Here there is no addressing [*legein*] of something *as* something, that is, *ti kata tinós*.

Like Empedocles says, such intuition is a “head” but not attached to a body, not growing out of a “body” of thought. Instead, it is a “spirit flown off from matter”, separate from matter, and, therefore, it is also known immediately because in this seeing the thought and its thinking are the same.

According to Aristotle “the faculty of sense is not apart from the body, whereas the mind is separable [*khôristos*].” (*DA* III 4, 429 b 5) And, therefore, the mind is also capable of thinking itself. “For in the case of things without matter [*áneu hylê*] that which thinks [*tò nooûn*] and that which is thought [*tò nooúmenon*] are the same.” (*DA* III 4, 430 a 3–5)

In the words of a modern philosopher: “Being is not a judgment nor a constituent of judgement [...] The *is* itself does not enter into the judgment. [...] It is, however, *self-given* ... in the *fulfillment*... the *becoming aware* of the state of affairs”—as Husserl says concerning the categorial intuition.⁶³² Therefore, instead of reaching out for truth through judgment, in the mystical unveiling and divine effusion, we genuinely encounter something “not given birth in our speculation” [*lâ mutawallad 'an-nazârinâ*—see above in the *kalâm* discussion pp.144 n 50 and 260], this something is not reached or “incorporated” through any “neck” or intermediary channels, on the contrary, here “heads [conclusion]

⁶³² LU II 6. §44: *Das Sein ist kein Urteil und kein reales Bestandstück eines Urteil. [...] Selbst gegeben... in der... Erfüllung: der Gewährwerdung des vermeintes Sachverhalts.*

fly from their bodies [premisses]”—or the conclusions, “heads”, grow without “necks”, premisses: “spirits [*al-arwâh*] will take flight from their matter.” Instead of reasoning, in the mystical unveiling or fulfillment one simply becomes aware of the state of affairs; thus the Essence of the Real [*dhâtu l-haqq*] is outside the scope of judgment and is “witnessed before it is known. Or rather It is witnessed but not known”, as Ibn al-‘Arabî says in his Introduction of the *Futûhât* (F I 41.12).

This philosophical explanation of Ibn al-‘Arabî’s elliptical riddle (and perhaps his deliberately theatrical expressions), gives ample support to understand Averroes’ strong reaction of turning pale and starting to tremble. I find it therefore strange that it has never, to my knowledge, been considered as a possible explanation of this famous conversation in the pertinent literature. Ibn al-‘Arabî’s answer showed the older master that this young mystic understood philosophically what he was being queried after—as Ibn al-‘Arabî shows in his answering with the very words of Empedocles attached by Aristotle to illuminate this same philosophical question. Maybe he thus adds another ancient couple highlighting and representing the question and relation between logical and intuitive knowledge, or the meeting of philosophy and mysticism, through the very different figures of Empedocles and Aristotle. And, as the much elder mystic here writes, there and then Ibn Rushd “understood my allusion” [*ishâra*, to point to or to give a sign⁶³³] and started to tremble. Thus, he was deliberately referring to something “distant” attached essentially to the matter at hand, and therefore, as the philosopher understood the accuracy of his reference, he started to tremble and turned pale. The question of direct induction/intuition or, as one could say in modern terms, on categorical intuition, is now in its proper peripatetic philosophical context, but stupendously, put there by an adolescent boy with supposedly no literary erudition!⁶³⁴

But, then again, what one can say for sure of this passage written at least 30 years after the actual encounter, is not that this is how it all happened. Instead, what we here have is a souvenir told in the mode of a full-blown mystic and grown-up Ibn al-‘Arabî who wanted to dramatize one of his early important encounters in life to illuminate the question between judgment and intuition. And, as I quoted above, Ibn al-‘Arabî mentions in another passage that Ibn Rushd had “received knowledge through

⁶³³ Ch 54 of the *Futûhât* is devoted to “Allusions”; F I 278.32–281.22. In F I 63.2 Ibn al-‘Arabî quotes Ibn ‘Arif (d.1141): “An allusive indication (*ishâra*) is a call from afar”; see note by O.Yahia in OY I 283.6.

⁶³⁴ This story of the meeting of Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-‘Arabî comes in a “rather strange Ch 15 of the *Futuhât*” (Elmore above, p.142), which actually is not at all so strange if it is given the Empedoclean context suggested here. In fact, Ch 13 is devoted to the central idea of Ibn Masarra on the Throne of God and the order of creation, and Ch 14 on the Prophets and perfected “poles”, mentioning several times the *Healer of Wounds* amongst them. In Ch 15 the Shaikh finally discusses first the [Empedoclean] theme of elemental combinations of nature both in physics and in the human being [the same Empedocles fragment is referred to by Aristotle in the respective passage on elements in *Cael* III 2, 300 b 30]. Next, he discusses essential understanding [*m’arifa al-dhâtîya*] and potential knowledge [*‘ilm al-quwwa*]. And it is after this passage that the story of the meeting of the great philosopher and the great mystic to be is given as an example on intuitive or immediate and absolute knowledge [*‘ilm mujarrad*]. I find it improbable that this passage has anything to do with either some earlier discussions on resurrection (Addas 1993, 37 n.17, referring to Chodkiewicz) or on capital punishment (Elmore 1999, 51 n.13).

unveiling” and therefore, must have recognized what he was here witnessing. And that is what he actually later did! According to Ibn al-‘Arabí’s further description, still in the same passage, when relating the impressions of Ibn Rushd on their meeting to Ibn al-‘Arabí’s father the philosopher hailed that all along he had known that it is possible for an “ignoramus to enter into his spiritual retreat [*khalwa*] and come out [illuminated] like this without studying and reading”, but how lucky was he to live in an age where this has actually come true! (F I 154.6–7) However, a modern reader might be more prepared to conclude from this story that Ibn al-‘Arabí had actually read from early on much more than he was willing to admit.⁶³⁵ In fact, one is prone to agree with Corbin who simply says “we know [Ibn al-‘Arabí] had read massively”.⁶³⁶

However, there is no reason to doubt Ibn al-‘Arabí’s extraordinary visionary experiences: his whole oeuvre gives ample support for this. He had witnessed what Empedocles was talking about. But nor do I see any reason to doubt his extensive knowledge in philosophical and mystical writings. On the contrary, that is how he gained lucid words to express his vivid experiences. If my hypothesis on Empedocles is sound here, then one could even say that Ibn al-‘Arabí is using traditional wisdom just as it ought to be used in this very same Empedoclean tradition: alluding to answers that can truly be appreciated only in the understanding mind of the listener, giving food for thought, here making Ibn Rushd turn pale and tremble.

III.5.4. Meeting of the Two Seas: the role of *phantasia*—*khajâl*

Salman Bashier has decided to concentrate in his description of this meeting between the philosopher and the mystic mainly on the central concept of “imagination” [*khajâl*] in Ibn al-‘Arabí’s thinking. This choice is quite understandable in the light of the subject-matter of the chapter on the whole. The legendary meeting of Moses and Khidr, depicted in the Qur’ân 18:60–81 (where this Khidr is not

⁶³⁵The disputed question of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s “literary/philosophical erudition”, can be referred to here only in passing. One extreme holds only to hagiographical references, both of his own and his followers, where basically everything he ever wrote is taken as God-given knowledge. However, in his writings one also comes across a wide plethora of spiritual teachers and masters, theologians and even some philosophers mentioned now and then briefly, but never really discussed. Ibn Masarraḥ is mentioned favourably, for example, but Ibn Sîna is not, even if his terminological influence is quite obvious, or, indeed, even when his verses are quoted directly (*Muhâdirât* 1972, I.362 where the modern editor has added the source) Ibn al-‘Arabí simply calls the poet “a famous scholar”. Nyberg, basing his list on the famous letter by Ibn al-‘Arabí on the subject to the Ayyubîd ruler in Damaskus written in 1234, mentions some 30 scholars and teachers with whom Ibn al-‘Arabí had studied. These are further discussed by Addas. Nyberg describes the Shaikh generally as a man of fine worldly education and a sophisticated stylist. In his *Muhâdirât al-abrâr* the Shaykh tells us widely of his general literary erudition [*adab*], referring expressly to some 40 works. However, the other group of scholars, those “of us who are inclined to doubt the entire verisimilitude of the Shaykh’s claims to *ummîyah* [illiteracy] must admit that we have no proof for our suspicions.” Elmore 1999, 69 n. 131 Cf. Addas, 93–110, Ghorab 1993, 199–227, Hirtenstein 73–92, Nyberg 1919, 21–28, Palacios 1987, Rosenthal 1988, 1–35, Takeshita 1982, 243–60 and 1987.

⁶³⁶Corbin 1976, 41

mentioned by name) is described as someone having received knowledge from the Lord [*‘ilm ladunna*, “knowledge from Our presence”]. Moses and his servant find this “Khadir” in a place defined as where the “Two seas meet” [*majma’ l-bahrain*, Q 18:60]. Elsewhere (F III 361.5–6) Ibn al-‘Arabí explains that this place where the “two seas meet” is precisely human imagination, an “isthmus” [*barzakh*] between the spiritual and the bodily realms, between “seas of meaning” and “seas of perception” [*bahru l-ma’ânâ wa bahru l-makhsûs*].

The theme of al-Khadir and the specific intermediary human power of *imagination* [*khajâl*] and its particular region, the “world of imagination” [*‘âlam al-khayâl*], are certainly involved also here in this Chapter of the *Futûhât* on the *Divine Breaths*, but neither topic is actually discussed at any length by Ibn al-‘Arabí here. However, the point of Bashier is clear: Khadir personifies the mystical quest in general and **imagination is the necessary Akbarian function of human understanding in general**.

According to a commentator of Ibn al-‘Arabí, *al-Khadir* “is a personification of the finding of the knowledge of reality [*wujûd ‘ilm al-haqîqah*], and the subtle secrets [*al-asrâr al-raqîqah*] at the completion of things”.⁶³⁷ Here in Ch.15 of the *Futûhât* these subtle secrets are discussed as Divine “breaths”, “fragrances of proximity to God” [*rawâ’ih al-qurbu-l ilâhî*, F I 152.13] which the Gnostics can come to know through their own soul/breath. In fact, Ibn al-‘Arabí often calls the greatest friends of God simply as *Men of Allâh*, equating them with the “world of breaths [*‘âlam al-anfâs*]” (F II. 6. 20–21).

Imagination, the Greek *phantasia*, the human ability of “making-present” to itself, is touched upon also by Aristotle in the same passage of his *De Anima* I have already referred to. *Phantasía* is the ground of *noeîn*: not only feelings, or bodily states of having the world in a certain mode, but also all thinking is dependent upon imagination, **we need something to think upon**: all thinking involves a *phantasma* (DA III 7 431 a16; 431 b2; III 8. 432 a3–14).⁶³⁸ Therefore, the difficult question that Aristotle poses is whether these different modes of finding oneself in the world, having the world in sensations, all the different modes of being “touched” by the world [*pathê*] or having the world in thinking and imagination, are these all determined by the mind? Do they have existence only in the compound of the whole human being or are some of them peculiar to the soul itself [*tês psykês idion autês*: DA I.1, 403 a 3 sqq.]. Reading this passage makes it clear that for Aristotle there is no division between bodily acts or acts of the soul. Aristotle “has no word, nor even any concept, corresponding to our ‘mental’. But none the less, he does not say of what we should call mental affections that they are simply physiological

⁶³⁷ Elmore 1999, 286 n 45

⁶³⁸ Stoic philosophers equated *noêsis* and *fantasia logikê*. See SVF, *noêsis*. Ess 1966, 111

processes. He allows that in some sense of ‘is’ anger, or smelling, *is* a physiological process. And in an analogous sense a house *is* bricks. But he considers it entirely misleading to say that a house is ‘simply’ bricks, or that anger and smelling are ‘simply’ physiological processes. A house is also a shelter (DA I.1, 403 b3–9), anger is also a desire to retaliate (DA I.1, 403a25), and smelling is also an awareness of odour [*aisthanesthai*, DA II 12, 424 b17–19].”⁶³⁹ Even our highest intellectual faculty [*noein*], which grasps all possible beings, is in need of having something “there” and therefore depends on *phantasia*, an ability to make something present for itself, either something actually present as the surrounding world, or maybe something coming from in-existence, coming, for example, into the present as a fleeting memory of a meeting with a long ago dead person.⁶⁴⁰ Therefore, for Aristotle *phantasia* is the ground of *noein* as making present that which is not actually at hand, and, therefore, a mental affection is a form expressed in matter, “an enmattered form” [*lógoi énuloí*, DA I.1, 403a25]. Similarly, according to Ibn al-‘Arabí the basic functions of imagination is “to embody that which is not properly a body” (F II.379.3–4).

Ibn Rushd had been dead for more than 30 years when Ibn al-‘Arabí wrote about their meeting: his memory provides him with the images of their meeting. The Sheikh uses “the expression ‘Presence of Imagination’ [*hadrat al-khayâl*] as a domain in which everything that exists is woven out of images.”⁶⁴¹ Imagination “corporealizes the spirits” [*tajassud al-arwâh*] and spiritualizes the corporeal bodies [*tarawhun al-ajsâm*]. Thus, imagination supplies us representations or means to apprehend things not currently existing or imaginal forms of things not having a sensible form. Imagination is neither existent nor non-existent: “for example, a person perceives his form in a mirror. [...] He cannot deny that he has seen his form, and he knows that his form is not in the mirror, nor is it between himself and the mirror.” (F I.304.24–27, SPK 118) Thus, Ibn al-‘Arabí tells us also of a second meeting with Ibn Rushd, this time in a memory of an imaginal dream/vision [*fî l-wâqi’ah*] of his, where from behind a thin veil he saw the philosopher so occupied with his work that he was not aware of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s [imaginal] presence. There Ibn al-‘Arabí said to himself: “verily, he is not intended for that which we are” (F I 154.10)—thus, this double imaginal occurrence of *a memory of a dream* provides him with a far reaching thought concerning the direction of his own life, and, indeed, the future lives of these two great men were quite different, naturally. But here, the point is in **imagination providing the foundation of all knowledge** according to Ibn al-‘Arabi, but also, as he says, “the first principle of divine inspiration

⁶³⁹ Sorabji 2004b, 15

⁶⁴⁰ Interestingly, Victor Caston “suggests that Aristotle was alive to some of the problems about non-existent objects that the later philosophers, from Stoics onwards, tried to address by postulating intentional objects” in his *Aristotle and the problem of Intentionality*, quoted through Sorabji 2004b, xx.

⁶⁴¹ SPK 5, F III.451.3

[*awwal mubâdî l-wâhî l-ilâhî*; *Fus* 99/120]. Therefore, he states bluntly: “he who has not understood the high rank of imagination [in all knowing] has understood nothing!” (F II.313.2–3)⁶⁴²

This bold statement is actually a direct and necessary upshot of his fundamental notion of “the renewal of creation at each instant”, that the whole world is under constant transmutation from one state to another without end.⁶⁴³ Ultimately the whole cosmos is precisely this ongoing flux of transmutation and, therefore, imagination: the whole cosmos becomes manifest only in imagination, “it is imagined in itself [*fa huwa mutahayil li-nafsahu*]. So it is and it is not [*huwa huwa wa huwa mâ huwa*]”, as he says (F II 313 20–21).

III.5.5. Healer of Wounds

Finally, we should note that in this passage of Ch.15 of the *Futûhât* Ibn al-‘Arabî speaks of a “Pole” or “Axis” [*Qutb*⁶⁴⁴] and a mysterious spiritual *Treater of Wounds*, rendered in the Yahia edition of the *Futûhât* as “The First Qutb”. A “Pole” and a leader [sometimes equated with the Qur’ânic *mutâ*, the “obeyed one”, Q 81:21, referring to Archangel Gabriel and the First Intellect, *al-‘aql al-awwal*, of the Neoplatonic philosophers⁶⁴⁵], and whom Bashier here seems to equate with the greatest *psychopompos* of Islamic mysticism, *Khadir*. And indeed, this legendary figure of the mystics is explicitly referred to in this chapter of the *Futûhât*, but the “mystical personage” [Elmore] to whom Ibn al-‘Arabî is referring with his allusion on the *Treater of Wounds* is definitely not *Khadir* but someone “like in our account of the Prophet on Khadir” [*kamâ rawainâ ‘an rasûl Ullâh fî Khadir*: F I 153.17] who explained the name *Verdant* [*khadira*, to be or make green]: “the touch of Khadir made verdant each place he set his foot into.”⁶⁴⁶ Here we perhaps enter the more mystical side of Ibn al-‘Arabî to end our survey.

⁶⁴² One may note here that Husserl in his early work [1891] *Philosophie der Arithmetik* mentions his teacher, fr. Brentano, with gratitude for giving him a deeper understanding of the founding role of symbolic imagination [*uneigentliche Vorstellung*, like Ibn al-‘Arabî above: “that which is not properly a body”] in “all our mental living” [*unser ganzes psychisches Leben*]. *Husserliana* Bd. XII, 193 n.1

⁶⁴³ See Chittick 1994, 28. Ibn al-‘Arabî refers often to Q 28:88: “All things perish, except His face”, where “face” denotes the “essence of God/Truth” [*dhâtu l-haqq*]. F II.313.15–18, for a full translation of this passage, see SPK 118.

⁶⁴⁴ For a discussion on *qutb*, see F III. Ch.336, pp.135–140; Chodkiewicz 1986, Ch. VI; Nicholson 1978, 111; Hujwiri, 1999, 228

⁶⁴⁵ W.H.T. Gairdner’s introduction to his translation of al-Ghazzâlî’s *Mishkât al-anwâr*, 10–25; Nicholson 1970, 62–63 suggests an Ismâ’îlî origin for this equation; Corbin 1988, 363 n. 2; the Prophet Muhammed as the “obeyed” one, Q 3:32. It may also be significant in this connection that Ibn Rushd accused al-Gazzâlî for “insincerity” by referring to this [Neoplatonic] doctrine of the *first emanation* of the philosophers as the “obeyed one”, *mutâ*, in his *Mishkât*. Through al-Hallâj, whom al-Ghazzâlî admired, we have another equation of these terms in the sense of a *Qutb* being an “earthly Mystic of supremest attainment” as “the Pole of his time” [*qutbu l-zamânihi*], *Passion* 754, Gairdner, *Op.cit.* p.14; H.S.Nyberg 1919, 106 foll. This last named Pole of his time is also referred to in the Persian *ghauth-e rûzgâr*, the “Universal Succour”, Böwering 1980, 83, where we have the epithet *ghauth/ghiyâth* attached to Arabic Empedocles.

⁶⁴⁶ F I 153,18, Bashier 2004, 61. This figure of fertility, Green Man, has a long history going back to Attis/Kybele and the Sumerian *Tammûz/Dumuzi*. See: Baring & Cashford 1993, 409–10

Here the *Treater of Wounds* is referred to as the great pupil of Khadir in matters of “essential gnosis and potential knowledge” [*ma’rifat al-dhâtiyya wa ‘ilm al-qouwwat*: F I 153.19, chosen also as one heading in this chapter in the Yahia edition of the *Futûhât* OY II, p.370]. But Khadir differs from other sages, Imâms or Prophets in that he is not a bodily creature of this world of ours [F II 5.31–32], whereas here the *Treater of Wounds* lived a human life and died “during the times of David”, as Ibn al-‘Arabi says. (F I 157.14–15)

On the whole, however, Bashir’s account gives a good summary on the idea of Khadir in the Islamic tradition, already referred to above. The story of Moses meeting one of God’s “slaves unto whom We [God] had given mercy from Us, and had taught him knowledge from our presence” (Q 18:60–82). The story of Khadir and Moses represents the exemplary pattern for all later relations between a *Sheikh* [master] and his *murîd*, pupil. And, indeed, Moses is known in the Islamic tradition as *Kalîm Allâh*, meaning both “the speaker” or “mouthpiece” of God or one who seeks to God, but the word means also “the wounded”, “injured”, as we have it here in the *Treater of Wounds*, *Mudâwî al-kulûm*. According to Ibn al-‘Arabi Moses is also one of the so-called *abdâl*, substitutes, headed by the *qutb*. This hierarchy of something like “divine safekeepers”, or holders of divine secrets, is, however, out of the scope of this study.⁶⁴⁷ But in this Ch.15 of the *Futûhât* I don’t think Ibn al-‘Arabi is referring either to Khadir or Moses with his Healer of Wounds.

Partly for same reasons I fail to see the connection, presented by James Winston Morris (and Chodkiewicz in MR II already quoted) that here “the spiritual ‘Pole’ in question... is the central spiritual reality of the prophet *Idris*: ‘the Healer of Wounds’, the Pole among the Knowers of the divine Breaths.”⁶⁴⁸ *Idrîs*⁶⁴⁹ is mentioned twice in the Qor’ân: Q 19:56; Q 21:85; equated often with Enochor *Ilyâs/Elias* (as in the corresponding chapter of the *Fusûs al-Hikam*). The role of Idris among the prophets as explained in the *Fusûs* where he is depicted under the term *intimacy* [*inâsiya*] and therefore the immanence [*tashbîh*] of God as *the Sun* and “Heart” of cosmos (who is thus said to have lived 365 years, see *EI*² article on “Idris”) does not support the basic features brought up in this chapter 15 of the *Futûhât* even though *Idrîs* is indeed mentioned by Ibn al-‘Arabi as one of the seven *Abdâl*. Traditionally Idris is, however, also connected with the Greek *Hermes* and also *Hermes Trismegistos*, therefore, as the founder of the arts and sciences of wisdom [*wadî al-hikam*, F III.348.16] and also the first to use pens [*qalâm*, thus quite in line with the Egyptian great scientist and farther of the alchemic sciences,

⁶⁴⁷ Here the *Abdâl* are explained in F I 154.34–156.31; OY II 376–384 and each of them is connected to the planetary order of the seven heavens. For Ibn al-‘Arabi’s concise treatment of the issue, see F II.5–9, where he lists “Seven *Abdâl*”: Aabraham, Moses, Aron, Idris, Josef, Jesus and Adam; F II.7.10–13. See also the article “Badal” in *EI*².

⁶⁴⁸ Morris 2005, 283

⁶⁴⁹ Nöldeke suggested the name deriving from *Andreas* the cook of Alexander the Great who obtained immortality. See Shorter *EI*, “Idris”.

Thoth], very much like Empedocles was. However, the one common and much emphasized feature of all three figures in these traditions is that, Enoch/Idris/Elias are all said to have gained immortality and were therefore ascended bodily to heaven in “chariots of fire” (chariot = *merkavah*, becoming the title of mystical speculation and writings in Judaism. see above n285).⁶⁵⁰

Here, however, Ibn al-‘Arabí tells us of a Healer of Wounds who died during the times of King David as was just noted. This is not a symbolic or mythic figure, but clearly a human being who lived a human life. I also could very well imagine Ibn al-‘Arabi attaching the name *Mudâwî al-Kulûm* to Idrîs or Iljâs, but not here, and, particularly not in the case of the well-defined question of Ibn Rushd: for what would be the explicitly referred “allusion” of Ibn al-‘Arabí here? And how is Idris supposed to be at the very core of the philosophical problem posed by Ibn Rushd? But then again, William Morris does not get into this meeting of the philosopher and the mystic at all. His above quoted statement is simply about the overall quality of this “mysterious” chapter 15 of the *Futûhât*.

In the chapter under discussion here, Ibn al-‘Arabí further tells us that the *Treater of Wounds* had knowledge not found in books (F I 152.18), especially concerning the primal elements [fire, air, water, earth] and qualities combining with them [hot/cold, wet/dry], that is, knowledge of dissolution [*tahlîl*] and creation or coming together [*tâ’lîf*; F I 153.21], that is, analyzis and synthesis. But maybe also the familiar Empedoclean contrary powers of love and hatred [*filia/neikos*]. Causing the one becoming many and the many becoming one, both in cosmos at large and in the “beautiful constitution” [*ahsana l-takwîmi*: Q 95:5] of the human microcosmic being (F I 152. 20–29). These elements and primary qualities are thus constituting both the “Human level” [*nashâ’t l-insânîya*: F I 152.32] as they combine similarly in the four human humours [*al-akhlât al-arbâ’*] and the four bodily elements of the “Great world” [*al-’alam al-kabîr*]: fire, air, water and dust/earth, all in balanced proportions. “And God created the body of Adam from clay which is a combination of water and dust into which He then blew his Breath and Spirit.” (F I 152.35–153.1) Following this explanation we get detailed description how these elements and qualities combine in the human bodily functions, as is known and explained in the art of medical science [*’ilm al-tibb*, 152.5–10]. Indeed, all knowledge pertaining to these things, and also all astronomical knowledge pertaing to the movements of the stars and the planets, all this the Treater of Wounds had acquired through unveiling and carefull perusal [*bi l-kasf wa-l ittilâ’* F I 153, 14]; even the miraculous knowledge of bringing the dead back to life is described to him (Ibid.153.16). On the whole this mystical magician was the great pupil of Khidr, as already mentioned, in all “essential gnosis and potential knowledge” [F I 152.19]. Indeed, so great was his knowledge and mighty his powers that

⁶⁵⁰ For Enoch and Elias, see Gen 5:24; 2Kings 2:5-12 For *ma’aseh merkava*, “working of the chariot”, as a general heading of mystical teachings in Judaism, see Schäfer 1992, 5, 77–95; “*Merkava* mysticism occupies an exalted position in rabbinic thought”, Verman 1992, 15.

people in general were afraid of him: that is why he was called the *Treater of wounds* (F 152, 20).⁶⁵¹ In a similar vein, as Ibn al-‘Arabí next tells us, Jacob wanted to hide his son Joseph from his brothers lest they harm him because of his extraordinary skills in the Art of interpretation of dreams, an art which also has to do with giving tangible forms to matters spiritual, clothing them with forms and dissolving bodies into respective spiritual forms—that is—the *imaginal capacity* [*qouwwâtu-l khayâl*], or, if seen from slightly different angle, alchemical processes.

In the *Fabulous Gryphon* Ibn al-‘Arabí gives an example of himself acting as a kind of “Treater of wounds” (though not referred to with this name), a wise “physician” [*hakîm*] who leads his “patient” with the healing “secrets of his wise counselings” [*sarâ’ir hikâmi-hi*]⁶⁵² “to the recognition of his own condition and the discovery of the Divine secret hidden within his own heart.”⁶⁵³ This, of course is fully in line with the general Akbarian counsel: Do not seek the “meanings” outside yourself; rather, seek them in your own being and soul [*min wujûdi-ka wa nafsi-ka*].⁶⁵⁴

The heading of Chapter 15 “On the Poles and the Realizers in the Knowledge of Breaths and their secrets”, as Bashier translates the somewhat tricky heading, combining the idea of “knowledge of [divine] Breaths [*al-anfâs*]” and “knowledge of their Poles [*aqtâbuhâ*]”, that is, knowledge of those who have realized these divine Breaths and therefore become “Poles”. It is this fundamental connection between the divine Breath as “exhaling” all the spiritual forms into their respective forms on the one hand, and, correspondingly, the “inhaling” of these Breaths in the souls [*anfus*] of the Realizers [*al-muhaqqiqûn*] as spiritual “divine intimacy” [*qurb al-ilâhî*, F I 152.14].

And, indeed, Ibn al-‘Arabí tells us that all this knowledge concerning the miraculous Treater of Wounds was “opened” [*fatara*] to him by a Spirit/Breath [*al-rûh*, 152.23, later specified as *breath/spirit of life and life of spirit/breath*, 152.28]. This could mean many things; perhaps Ibn al-‘Arabí understanding the divine name Life/Living, or, maybe he means he understood intuitively how all these legendary features of this high spiritual figure were linked together in his own particular case.

⁶⁵¹ I can easily see the connection between the extraordinary powers of this Sage and the fear they cause amongst people in general, but I fail to see how this is expressed in the term *Treater of Wounds*. Maybe treatments in those days were scary and painful, and of course, all spiritual convalescence requires cumbersome processes.

⁶⁵² Elmore 1999, 264 n.7; as Elmore notes, here we have an early instance of the plural expression “wisdoms”, wise counselings, tenets of practical wisdom, which was to become famous in his late work *Fusûs al-Hikâm*, “Bezels of Wisdom”. A Sage [*hakîm*], though the epithet of Aristotle in the Arabic world, is generally an expression with clear connection to a “healer” and consellor, someone imbued with “technical know-how” of how things work and come about, that is, one that has “magical skills”. That is a kind of wisdom that was strongly attached to the Orphic and Pythagorean traditions in Antiquity. Faidon –dialogue is pregnant with examples like 69c; also Menon 81a; Dodds 1951; Luck 1982 111–12.

⁶⁵³ Elmore 1999, 264 and 87 Elmore notes these proceedings to be “strangely reminiscent of the ancient shamanistic practices of Turcic and central Asia” Ibid 87 n 66 and, indeed, the whole Empedoclean tradition has a decisive shamanistic flavor to it.

⁶⁵⁴ Elmore 1999, 236 and 541–42

On the whole, the description and various powers of this ancient sage fits by and large quite well with the known fragments on the life and teachings of Empedocles, also called a “medicine-man,”⁶⁵⁵ known through various Western and Eastern sources from early to late Antiquity.

However, the actual term Treater of Wounds quite obviously reminds of another almost technical term of the sufis, namely *ghâuth/ghiâth* as a “help or succour of the souls” [*ghiyâth al-nufûs* used oddly as describing Aristotle by Suhrawardî!⁶⁵⁶] and defined precisely as a Pole for example in the *Istilâhât* of al-Qashânî [*Istilâhât*, 167] and in the early *Kashf al-Mahjûb* of al-Hujwârî.⁶⁵⁷ The term refers thus to someone capable of showing the way to spiritual world, helping in overcoming *Seinsvergessenheit*—as we might say with Heidegger!

According to Haydar al-Âmulî, in his large commentary on the *Fusûs al-hikâm*, this *ghawth* corresponds spiritually to Nature, *The Materia Prima*, and the body, following immediately the first theophanic manifestation (*mazhar*) of the First Essence of the spiritual world which is the First Intelligence.⁶⁵⁸ Here we may note just in passing that this given order (Intellect—Matter) corresponds and is relevant to the subject-matter of the discussion between Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-‘Arabî. In the Islamic mystical tradition this term “succor of souls” as well as the doctrine of the *Materia Prima* as the basic tenet of the Pseudo-Empedoclean writings, where it is posed even above the Intellect.⁶⁵⁹ This Islamic tradition is known in western scholarship as “pseudo-empedocles”—because the doxographic Empedocles of Aristotle and Theophrastus are considered to be the genuine one and this other one the other, manifestly false in comparison with the “true” Empedocles.

Be that as it may, the influence of Empedocles has been throughout history enormous, both East and West, simply because of his teaching on the four elements, in the words of Aristotle: “moreover, he was the first to maintain that the material ‘elements’ are four” (*Met* I 4, 985 a31–33)—he of course by no means being the first to introduce the elements or “roots” [*ridzômata*] as *fire, water, earth and air*, but he was the first to integrate them into a dynamic whole. These elements he introduced in a poem

⁶⁵⁵ DL VIII.2, 51-77; Toulmin & Goodfield 1962, 52 Indeed, Galen calls Empedocles the founder of Sicilian medical school. OCD 382b

⁶⁵⁶ Suhrawardî tells us of a dream of his where he met this “succor of souls and the guide of wisdom, the first teacher”, Aristotle. He also tells that in this dream Aristotle agreed that Abû Yazid al-Bistâmî and Sahl at-Tustarî were true philosophers [*falâsifa*] and sages [*hukamâ*] who did not stop “at the formal knowledge [*al-‘ilm ar-rasmî*] but went on to participatory, unitive, experiential knowledge [*al-‘ilm al-hudûrî al-ittisâli as-shuhûdî*]. Bowering 1980 53, Chodkiewicz 1986, 12

⁶⁵⁷ Hujwârî 1999, 214, 228

⁶⁵⁸ Quoted through Corbin 1986, 66

⁶⁵⁹ Rudolph 1989, 135–36 It is interesting that in the Pseudo-Empedoclean tradition this *Materia Prima* is combined with the two Empedoclean forces of *Love (filia)* and *Strife (neikos)* (ibid.), whereas in Âmulî the *ghawth* is combined with two Imams, corresponding separately to “Spirit and Soul of the world” (compare also above p.60 n.16); Corbin 1986, 66. Asin Palacios 1978, 67, is referring to Porphyrios as a possible source of “*divine, pure Matter*.”

connecting each of them with a divinity. And that is also where the problems started: which element and which deity belong together?—that has been the riddle heavily discussed ever since antiquity up to modern scholarship. Here is how Empedocles put it [Fr. 6], here translated by Kingsley (1995):

*Hear first the four roots of all things:
Dazzling Zeus, life-bearing Hera, Aidoneus [Hades], and
Nestis who moistens the spring of mortals with her tears*

In the thinking of Empedocles—as we have already seen in similar interpretation by Ibn al-‘Arabí’s—these roots were coupled so that fire and water, air and earth made dynamic pairs as contrary qualities and attracting or repelling powers between them, that is, “love”, *filia* and “repulsion/hatred”, *neikos*. Here we need not go more into Empedocles’ teaching on the elements, as the point is simply to emphasize the strong influence, albeit often indirect, of Empedocles on later generations of thinkers both East and West. But, then again, as we know from the western sources, through Empedocles we also come across many aspects of knowledge and skills not appreciated, or even downright denigrated, in the mainstream western philosophical tradition. Indeed, with the tradition attached to Empedocles and the Pythagoreans in the West, one comes across a very different kind of idea of philosophy itself in comparison with the Platonic/Aristotelian Academy –tradition, a difference that is reflected also in the Islamic world as that between the Sufi mystics and, on the other hand, scholars of theology [*mutakallimûn*] and the philosophers [*al-failasûf*] or, indeed, as in the case of our subject-matter: between mainstream philosophy of Ibn Rushd and the mysticism Ibn al-‘Arabí.

Whether there actually ever was a concurring and “deeper” philosophical tradition, a kind of *Philosophia Perennis*, only submerged by the mainstream academic tradition of Athens, is of course a contestable hypothesis. Kingsley is very much on these lines in his investigations, and his findings are stimulating and even helpful to understand someone like Ibn al-‘Arabi, who definitely had an “astonishingly receptive mind”, as Nyberg put it (see above p. 137), and who advised his followers to become fully receptive to all forms like the *materia prima* (Fus113/137). And, as was also suggested already at the beginning of this study, the “*agrapha dogmata*,” the unwritten teachings or oral traditions, did play a role also in the Academy of Plato, even if this thesis too is much debated. Following Ibn al-‘Arabi one should not close any channels of information, instead, one should take care to keep one’s mind open to all and any possible new openings towards the infinite possibilities of Reality.

Instead of the theoretical character of the Aristotelian philosophical tradition [though this is challenged and disputed by Heidegger as we saw in Part II] is in stark opposition to this *intensely practical* character

of early Greek philosophy. Yet, it is quite likely that the very word *philosophy* was originated in these early Pythagorean circles of “Healers” or “Treaters of wounds”. Therefore, many of the fragments we know on Empedocles are concerned with his high technical skills. No wonder the Yahia edition of the *Futûhât* gives us a chapter heading: *The Treater of Wounds and the science of chemistry*. (OY II 366.9) And, indeed, magic should be understood as an early form of technique, of making something come true, producing some sought-for effect and, therefore, knowledge on how things are constituted, how they function and so forth. This is the Aristotelian *technê* of *poiesis* and the greatest exponent in the Islamic world of this Art of Reproduction or Creating (see above n.96 and 97) is undoubtedly Jâbir ibn Hayyân, of whom we know already a little.

Here the “emphasis [is] not only on practical application but also on detailed knowledge and observation as means to achieving understanding and mastery of cosmic principles, involvement in magic and ritual, and the attachment of primary importance to healing in all its facets.”⁶⁶⁰ Like Pythagoras, Empedocles is strongly attached to therapeutic and medicinal ideas of a philosopher as a magician and an *iatromantis*, “inspired healer” [*iatrikê* as the healing art], a medicine man highly skilled in using herbal remedies extracted from plants [*pharmakon*] and their roots [*rhizôtomoi*, root-cutters]. Here we have a strong and long-enduring tradition coupling the philosopher and the magician as “true philosophers”, “authentic prophets” or genuine “root-cutters”. Indeed, as Kingsley writes, “there are surviving fragments of his [Empedocles’] poetry which describe precisely how ‘at the end’ [eis télos]—just before being entirely divinized—souls in their final incarnation become ‘rulers’, ‘prophets’, and ‘healers’ [iêtroî].”⁶⁶¹

This is obviously connected with what Aristotle tells us about Empedocles as the founder of “Rhetorics”. The art of speaking effectively and its heightened form in the “incantatory use of poetry for harmonizing the emotions [to gain tranquility, *hêsukhia*] was a common magical practice among the Pythagoreans of Empedocles’ time.”⁶⁶² And Empedocles himself “compares the process of nurturing his words with the process of tending and nurturing plants.”⁶⁶³ Here we also can see the Pythagorean fundamental role of personal guidance in wisdom, emphasized also by Plato, where a teacher is capable of sharing knowledge exactly at the right time [*pròs kairón*], depending on the capacity of the pupil. (*Laws* 968c–e; *Rep.* 528b–c) Philosophy is not about “universal laws” of logic or judgment, but much more on seeing the truth of the matter at hand in the spur of the moment and acting accordingly. Therefore, in his references to this legendary sage in the *Futûhât* –passage under discussion here, Ibn al-

⁶⁶⁰ Kingsley 1995, 339

⁶⁶¹ *Emp.fr.* B 146–7; Kingsley 1995, 345

⁶⁶² Boyance, quoted through Kingsley 1995, 247. For *hêsukhia* of mind in Pythagoreanism, see DL.8.7,9.21

⁶⁶³ *fr.* B 33.72, Kingsley 1995, 299

‘Arabí actually alludes to well-known Empedoclean features as he is known both in the western and oriental literature.

A clear example of the latter, the oriental Empedoclean tradition, can be glimpsed in the famous so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, composed in the early ninth century philosophical circles around al-Kindî (born in Kufah 805, died in Bagdad 873 C.E.) and based mainly on extracts from Plotinus’ *Enneads*.⁶⁶⁴ In the Arabic version, however, there is a reference to Empedocles from which we learn more than from the original statement of Plotinus. It states that [Empedocles] “came to this world as a help [*ghiyâth/ghawth*] to those souls whose minds have become contaminated and mixed. And he became like a madman, calling out to people at the top of his voice and urging them to reject this realm and what is in it and go back to their original, sublime, and noble world.”⁶⁶⁵ Instead of reading such passages merely as typical for the “Pseudo-Empedoclean” tradition, one might rather take them as simple examples of a long-enduring tradition on healers and magicians having its roots both in ancient Greek as well as Egyptian traditions, or, to express the same in another way: in “non-Athenian” Mediterranean philosophical traditions.

Indeed, as Asin Palacios writes, the “moral appearance of [the Islamic Empedocles] was that of a Muslim mystic or Sûfî”, and, adding to his study on Ibn Masarra, that “The most salient features of his [*i.e.* that of Empedocles] image were so similar to those of Ibn Masarra that one could easily believe that the latter intended to copy in his soul the moral characteristics of the master whose doctrine he professed.”⁶⁶⁶ On the other hand, we now know since the publishing of Ibn Masarra’s central works in 1978 that “Ibn Masarra al-Jabalî [“il Serrano,” 883–931 C.E.], one of the earliest representatives of Andalusian *tasawwuf*⁶⁶⁷, looks very much like the founder of a path that would lead to Ibn ‘Arabí”, as Denis Gril states, adding that “[O]f the masters of *tasawwuf*, it appears as though Sahl al-Tustarî and Ibn Masarra are the individuals who best presage the synthesis Ibn ‘Arabí achieved.”⁶⁶⁸ And, indeed, Ibn Masarra is discussed in the previous Chapters 13–14 of the *Futûhât* before our textual passage on Empedocles. On the other hand, Ibn al-‘Arabí mentions Sahl al-Tustarî and Junaid as deriving their

⁶⁶⁴ “One of the key elements of this philosophical “program” of the Kindî-circle was the extraction of theological elements of Platonism, surviving only on the fringes of the late Hellenistic philosophical traditions in Gnostic and Hermetic ‘subcultures’, as religion for intellectuals.” Vagelpohl 2008, 44, referring further to Endress 1997

⁶⁶⁵ Quoted through Kingsley 1995, 380, one can be sure that this spurious work of “Aristotle” was equally well known by both Ibn al-‘Arabí and Ibn Rushd as it was by Ibn Sînâ (Avicenna), see D’Ancona 2008.

⁶⁶⁶ Asin Palacios 1978, 45 “One of the greatest masters of the way in terms of knowledge, spiritual states and unveiling“, as Ibn al-‘Arabí writes on Ibn Masarra, F I 148.3. He also mentions the Empedoclean doctrine of five cosmic hypostases’ as “the house founded/standing on five” and the *Book of Letters* of Ibn Masarra in F II.581.26; 30-31. See van Ess 1997, Vol.IV, 273

⁶⁶⁷ Mysticism is a Greek word not known in Arabic. Instead, “people of *Tasawwuf*” or simply *tasawwuf* is the common Arabic expressions referring to Sûfî practitioners and to what they practice.

⁶⁶⁸ Gril in MR II, 140, 146

mystical tradition from *Dhû l-Nûn al-Misrî* [died in Giza in 860 C.E.], who was born and lived in the small village of Akhmim—the Greek Panopolis—(close to Nag Hammadi) in upper Egypt, a centre of ancient and rich alchemical tradition pre-dating Christianity.⁶⁶⁹ The 12th century philosopher of the illuminatist [*ishrâqî*] school, Shihâb ad-Dîn Yahya as-Suhrawardî [d.1191 C.E.], mentions Dhû l-Nûn as “brother of Ikhmîm” [*ahî Ihmîm*] attaching to him and the “wayfarer of Tûstar” (= Sahl al-Tustarî, d.896) the role of handing on some decisive influences of the Greek Platonic and Pythagorean tradition incorporated in the Hermetic literature into the circles of Sûfî philosophers.⁶⁷⁰

Writing in 1914 Asín Palacios mentions: “[introducing] the traditional theosophical occultism of [ancient] Egypt into Islam was due to him [Dhû l-Nûn].”⁶⁷¹ It seems Ibn Masarra received an important impetus from the teachings of Dhû l-Nûn who, again, was obviously strongly influenced by the strict and austere Christian monastic tradition of his native Akhmim (with its early Christian Gnostic connections), which, again, was preserving vital ties with the philosophically oriented ancient alchemical tradition of Zosimus, living in Akhmim/Panopolis some six hundred years earlier.⁶⁷² The name *al-Jabâlî / il Serrano* attached to Ibn Masarra refers to his austere ascetic community living in solitary “mountains” of al-Andalus, far from human habitation, very much like the Christian monks in Akhmim and, as one must emphasize, unlike the established Islamic way of life. To this one might still add the well known austere practices attached to Pythagorean communities in the ancient world.

Some of the central technical terms of the Sûfî's, like the spiritual states [*ahwâl*] and stations [*maqâmât*] are attributed to Dhû l-Nûn as well as the term *qutb* discussed here.⁶⁷³ In fact, Dhû l-Nûn, known also as “head of Sûfis”, has had an enormous influence on Islamic mysticism despite the sparseness of his actual writings.⁶⁷⁴ His influence is more “Pythagorean” than “Aristotelian”, that is, not theoretical but practical. Thus, in his figure we have clear resemblance with Empedocles as he too was known for his magical medicine, exorcism and writings on the alchemical “Philosopher’s stone”, like Dhu l-Nun.⁶⁷⁵ Thus, when Asín Palacios writes that the ancient Hermetic chain of wisdom inherited by Dhû l-Nûn and passed on to Ibn Masarra and, again, over to Ibn al-‘Arabî who then in the beginning of 13th century brings it back to its native soil in the heartlands of Islamic Orient, he is actually giving a good

⁶⁶⁹ F I 150.15–16 On the whole, as Addas writes, “if we draw up [...] a list of the Authors on Sufism whom he refers to in his writings, we see that not a single one of the most famous of them is missing: Ghazâlî, Tirmidhî, Niffarî, ‘Abd Allâh al-Ansârî, Sulamî, Qushairî, Abû Tâlib al-Makkî and so on. This is not even to mention Ibn al-‘Arîf, Ibn Qasî, Ibn Masarra and Ibn Barrajân [...] with] whom he had studied in Andalusia in or around the year 590/1193. Addas 1993, 102–03

⁶⁷⁰ Böwering 1980, 52

⁶⁷¹ Asín Palacios 1978, 165; for legends on his life see also al-Hujwirî 100–103.

⁶⁷² Kingsley 1995, 59 On the more philosophically oriented tradition of Akhmim versus the “orthodox” Christian tradition of Upper Egypt monasteries. see Doresse 1960, 135–36

⁶⁷³ J.S.Trimingham 1971, 163

⁶⁷⁴ Asín Palacios 86–88; Böwering 1980, 53–4

⁶⁷⁵ Listed in *GAL Suppl.* I 353, quoted through Asín Palacios *Op.cit.* 166 n 8

description [unknowingly of course] of the inner “agenda” in the book of *the Fabulous Gryphon*.⁶⁷⁶ One could therefore say, that the above large-scale historical influences between the “East” and the “West”, of Egyptian and Greek antiquity and medieval Islamic world serve as explanatory “facts” behind Ibn al-‘Arabîs intensified sense of meaning in his own life as he depicts it in the *Fabulous Gryphon* as the “Sun rising from the West.” No wonder that Ibn al-‘Arabî interpretes the common Qur’ânic expression “Lord of the East and ther West” [*Rabb al-mashriq wa-l-maghrib*, Q 26:28] by referring to another verse where God is called “the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden [*al-Zâhir wa-l-Bâtin*, Q 57:3], thus connecting the external or phenomenal world with the “East” and the internal or spiritual world with the “West”.⁶⁷⁷ He is himself like the *Healer of Wounds* rising from the West and admonishing his readers to set in motion “your Moon and your Sun [...] on the Most-ancient Way [*al-sabîl l-aqdâm*]”⁶⁷⁸, acquiring knowledge by your insight with the rising of your own [inner] sun [*‘inda shurûqi shamshi-ka*].⁶⁷⁹ In fact, this is the true secret of the Realizers [*al-muhaqqiqîn*] of the divine Breath of the Mercifull [*nafas al-Rahmân*], which is the subject of Ch.15 of the *Futûhât* (see F I 152.15–17). In this above discussed historical encounter between the Philosopher and Commentator of Aristotle, Ibn Rushd, and the mystical leaven for all becoming true, the “Red Sulphur” [*kibrît al-ahmar*], Ibn al-‘Arabî, are depicted as an example on the meeting of rational philosophy and mysticism for us later readers of Ibn al-‘Arabî.

On the other hand, as last note on the destiny of Averroes, once the favoured philosopher of the Almohad court, having to spend the last years of his life in disgrace and exile—owing to evil machinations of his enemies in the court—must have been taken, at least in the intellectual circles, as “a sad sign of times”, a concrete sign of the “sun setting in the west”, a sense which became all the more acute with the death of the last capable Caliph, Ya’qûyb al-Mansûr in 1199 CE. And, so it happened, that the last encounter between the Philosopher and the Mystic takes place in the funeral of the former. And since *balance* turned out to be so central concept of this study it is quite appropriate to also end the study in an important aspect of balance, namely the final one between what one was and what one did. While watching the funeral procession of the great philosopher and Commentator, Averroës, Ibn al-‘Arabî tells us in a poetic line that the corps of the Philosopher was placed on one side of the mule and his collected works as a balance on the other side; “I wish I knew whether he reached his high hopes”. (F I 154.16)

⁶⁷⁶ Asín Palacios, 1978, 128

⁶⁷⁷ Fusûs I 208, tr, ib *Bezels*, 262

⁶⁷⁸ *Anqâ* II.7, Elmore 445.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid. II.4, Elmore 399

Conclusion

*The name Allâh is receptive for all names just as
the Universal Haûylâ is receptive for all forms.*

F III 195, 26

*Mind in the passive sense is analogical to hylê, which is potentially all
individuals; similarly mind is passive because it becomes all things.
DA III 4, 430 a15*

One way of describing this study conclusively is to call it Phenomenological studies in philosophy of religion. Despite the great cultural and temporal distances between ancient Antiquity, the Golden age of Islam⁶⁸⁰ and modern Europe, Aristotle like Ibn al-‘Arabî and Martin Heidegger are all broadly speaking phenomenologists: each of them is speaking of the encountered world; “to exist means being in the world” (*Dasein besagt: in der Welt sein*; GA 64,19; GA 63, 80/62). The world is encountered as phenomena are encountered, or, as Aristotle states (*Phys* I.1, 184 a23): “something I have there in a general way (*kathólou*).” Throughout our study this having something “there” has been decisive: doing philosophy means articulation and interpretation of a being-experience as being-there, and that means being limited, having limits (*horismos*) that characterize the being in question. What is called for is a renewed going-into the matter (*erneuten Eingehens auf die Sache*, GA 33, 175/150), “pushing for an elaboration” (*Herausarbeitung*) of the specific phenomena: “hermeneutic phenomenology means entering into the phenomenon” (Maly 2008, 76). Thus, philosophy is here seen not as an abstract and separate conceptual rational inquiry of “going towards something that no longer is since it lacks limit (*mê eis ápeiron iénai*),” as Aristotle says (*Phys* VIII. 5, 259 a29). According to Heidegger, as I have quoted on p.116, “these principles are programmatically the genuine *counter-thrust to Platonic philosophy*. Aristotle says: I must have *ground* under my feet, a ground that is there in an immediate self-evidence, if I am to get at being. I cannot, in fantasy, hold myself to a definite concept of being and then speculate.”

Philosophy is a question of vital concern, “Es geht um mein Leben,” as the young Heidegger (1922) states, my life is at stake, *mea res agitur* (GA 62).⁶⁸¹ Therefore, Heidegger translates the first sentence of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* by stating “The care for seeing (*Sorge des Sehens*) is essentially inherent in man’s being” (SZ 171, GA 20, 380/275, usually translated as *All men naturally desire knowledge*). Here

⁶⁸⁰ “Golden age,” simply to avoid the western historical category ‘medieval’

⁶⁸¹ There would be a number of examples pointing to this same idea in Ibn al-‘Arabî, one being his emphasis on the word “friend,” “protector” as a name applicable to both God and the native human actuality in its completion as *wa-liy*, meaning “belonging to me, mine”, as the idea of closeness and proximity to God (above 243-44)

Heidegger reads the Greek *eidenai* in its root meaning, ‘to see’, and connects *orégontai* (‘reach out for’) with ‘Sorge’, care (BT 215 note 2). Here the emphasis is on the existential genesis of all theory, one of the latent key-notes of my whole study and quite explicit in Heidegger’s insistence on facticity instead of theory and thus search for the pre-theoretical origin of all theory (p.63 above). In Ibn al-‘Arabí this is obvious already in his use of the word *wujûd*, existence, in its root meaning, ‘to find,’ finding something “there” in a general way: *Es gíbt*. This is why my work is called Aristotelian and not Platonic Elements in the respective thinkers. The relevance of this choice, so I think, has been amply shown throughout this study.

Earlier (p. 138) I quoted Ibn ‘Arabí further backing up this approach by saying of “speculative philosophers”—a term that could refer to Plato, Plotinus or Ibn Sînâ as well: “dispite all their knowledge they wish for that which cannot be wished for, which is disengagement from all matter (*tajarrud ‘an al-mawâdda*, see note 686 above). This will never happen, neither in this world nor in the last world. This – I mean disengagement from matter – is an affair that is rationally conceivable but not witnessed (*ya ‘qíl wa lâ yashad*). The speculative thinkers (*ahli ‘l-nazar*) have no greater mistake (*ghalat aghzam*) than this” (F III.509.7-8). Here we have clearly a “hylo-morphic” or “body-mind” mystic, not “fleeing” from the world of the senses (see p 138 n24). And, as I think is clearly shown through our studies on the young Heidegger, he too had a decisive impetus against all axiomatic “Grekanized” orders countering the everydayness of facticity which he saw as the central feature of genuine Christian religious life-experience.

Therefore, in this study the main focus is not on the actual “how” of transmitting certain doctrinal theories, rather, my point has throughout been on the phenomenological questioning itself as a basic approach, a way of entering into phenomena, yielding similar results across cultural and historical boundaries. We do know some factual influences too between oriental and phenomenological studies in the modern sense of the word, for example, the famous French orientalist influencing a whole new generation on oriental studies, Henry Corbin (1903–78), a pupil of Etienne Gilson and Louis Massignon, who spent much of the 1930s in Germany, making the acquaintance of both Rudolf Otto and Martin Heidegger and gaining vital insights from the modern protestant exegesis of Karl Barth. He also introduced Heidegger and German Existential philosophy into France by translating *Was ist Metaphysik?* into French.⁶⁸² These phenomenological influences can clearly be detected in Corbin’s own life’s work, particularly on the hermeneutical ideas of Iranian philosophical thinking but also in his work on Ibn al-‘Arabí. But even this factual evidence shows simply the applicability of the *phenomenological approach* into different intellectual settings.

⁶⁸² Lory, in HIP 1996 II, pp.1149–1155

In his major work, *Being and Time* (SZ §37), Heidegger speaks of being “on the scent” (*auf der Spur sein*) of something and this in an ambiguous sense: one can be driven by idle curiosity and hearsay, thus Being-on-the-scent of what is “in the air,” whereas he who is genuinely “on the scent” of anything, he does not speak about it (SZ 173).”

This latter option could well describe the methodological core of the present work, implying also that both advancements and retrievals in this work have been untrodden paths for the author with many baffling surprises and changing courses. The starting point was Aristotelian teleological thinking formulated by Monte Johnson and, on the other hand, Aristotle’s conceptual innovation in the long Platonic Academy tradition of the Second Principle, formulated by himself as *hylê*, material or matter for something, that out of which (*ex hou*) something is accomplished. Here our guide was Heinz Happ.

These preliminary studies on Aristotle were to provide the flavor (the above *Spur* of Heidegger) of Aristotelian elements of thought to be followed throughout the ensuing studies on Heidegger and Ibn al-‘Arabí. Thus, the purpose of this study was said to illuminate the inherent ideas of a passage, a passage from something into something and, therefore, of becoming, changing into something, metabolism. To study the Aristotelian *hylê*-principle, that is, entering in the above noted phenomenological sense into the material principle of Aristotelian philosophy. This implies an entry into an active force and a striving towards forms, “ein Urgrund” of slumbering realities, as was stated with Happ (above p.43). Now that all this is done, what remains is to bring it all together in a neat conclusion.

But first I have to confess that by far the biggest surprise for myself was that perhaps the most influential Aristotelian elements in the thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabí turned out to be precisely the elements of nature: fire, air, water and earth. These were not originally intended in my heading with Aristotelian Elements, instead, what I then had in mind were the central Aristotelian concepts relating to something emerging, and not from nothing, but rather from a previous state of latency, potentiality. Thus, what I was originally heading at was the Aristotelian *dúnamis*, having the force or power (*potentia*) for something (dunamis as possessed, GA 33 § 18), the capacity to run, or having the power of vision, sight, or else, the lack and withdrawal, the privation (*stérêsis*) of these powers: standing still, not seeing anything; like darkness (*skótos*) is *stérêsis* for light (*phôs*) (DA II 7, 418 b18f), and silence is *stérêsis* of noise. Or similarly, at the opposite end, the Aristotelian *energeia*, the actuality of being capable: all force gathered in the act of running, after the call “go” is there, the execution of one’s capability to run, full functioning, being in the active state of completion, and all this somehow reefed together as having

the “excellent outcome of the end” (Johnson above p.21), that is, being at work in the sense of the Aristotelian neologism *entelekheia*, being in full swing.

And, indeed, these basic Aristotelian elements have been there all along, but I had no idea just how these too go back to elements and further to elemental qualities operative on all ontological levels of existence. However, if one stops for a moment to think the endless *genesis* and *pthorá* in the whole of nature, thoughts of being-on-the-way-to-something and ending in being-no-more; the ongoing endless changes of elemental qualities first combining into elemental unites and these further into all existent beings, which again, having reached their completeness, eventually reverse the order of becoming into corruption and decay, losing step by step their capacities and finally exiting from all of existence... : no wonder we are at the source and end of everything. Coming into being and passing away; emerging as this being and changing into something different, like a flower turning into a fruit—what more fundamental could there be! This belonging together of genesis and corruption is why Ibn al-‘Arabí called the complete human state “the end and the source” (*al-nihâyah wa ‘l-marjî’*), reversing the natural order of corruption and genesis for the submerging of the natural order and the genesis and upsurging of the spiritual human being (see above p.246 n 396).

The endlessly changing natural elements are of course no more Aristotelian than Ibn ‘Arabían inventions, nor are they the copyright property of Empedocles, even though he is said to have been the first to formulate a dynamic whole as the elemental theory. Besides, we have also noted that according to Galen this honor of being the first to introduce an all-inclusive elemental theory belongs actually to Hippokrates (p.155 and n98)! In any case, irrespective of who was the first to discover the elements as the principal order of all genesis of theory, these elements have always been something given, they are “there,” *Es gibt*. Fire is hot and flaming; earth and stones are heavy and falling, air is light and transparent, water wet and cool. No historical changes in these things. No wonder this “*Spur*”, this “scent,” inexistent in my original plan, turned out to become the longest section of III.2 in this study.

When I started five years ago I had no idea of this major source of inspiration. I did not know that the central Aristotelian cosmological writings on *Generation and Corruption*, *The Heavens* or *Meteorology* were among the first translated Aristotelian works in the Arabic world, and this because of the natural “care for seeing” and a vital interest on *tawhîd*, the declaration of unity as an *innate* intuition of all reality: nature as cosmology and the human nature as physical, psychical and spiritual “all-inclusive engendered thing”—as Ibn al-‘Arabí calls the human being in his *Fusûs al-Hikâm*. Through the Qur’ân all Muslims were exhorted to seek knowledge (Q 20:114, *Rabbi, zidnî ‘ilman, Lord, increase me in knowledge*, as the prayer of the Prohpet) and this knowledge is said to dawn from “signs upon the horizons and in themselves” (Q 42:53). Now, such innate intuition of all reality and search for ultimate

cosmological principles is perhaps not how religion is taught in our high-schools! But nor is there a word for religion in the Arabic language! Therefore, what we ought to do is revise our notion of religion, but, this however, is not an actual theme of this study, rather, it is a hidden agenda, something hopefully slowly emerging from the discussions.⁶⁸³ On a more obvious level this has to do with the need of finding fresh language for traditional religious ideas, a return to “living spirit” instead of “theory divorced from life” as the young Heidegger already saw it. (pp 86–87)

I most probably had read sentences on the first Aristotelian writings in the Islamic world. But no bells were ringing, because I did not understand the proper context for these questions. In the conclusion of part III.2, I emphasized the very different setting of medieval Christian Europe for digesting the massive output of Aristotelian physics and philosophy poured into the Christian religious tradition during the 12th–13th centuries. One could hardly imagine any medieval Christian writing like the quoted (above p.150) Ikhwân al-Safâ’ that “had Aristotle known the Christian message he would have converted into Christianity.” I have also suggested subtle and early influences of Aristotle on the doctrines of the Kalâm, but the roads followed here through alchemy were more concerned with natural sciences not yet so clearly differentiated from the theological or spiritual sciences in the early 8–9th century alchemical thought of Jâbir or the later mystical thought of Ibn al-‘Arabi during the 12–13th century. Following van Ess I wrote that as long as theology was strictly apophatic (the tradition of negative theology, the absolutely unknown God), it was only natural to explain the world and not God. On the other hand, in the case of Ibn al-‘Arabi, for whom the whole of nature is the “breath of the all-Merciful” (*nafas al-Rahmân*), the Self-disclosure of God, the study of nature thus understood also yields ultimately spiritual insights. Thus, **in our study one of the central issues was to show in what ways can the study of nature serve as a key to “finding God.”**

As a concrete example of a balance between nature and spirit, or plurality and unity, the *Science of Letters* was studied precisely as a Science of Balance (*‘ilm al-mizân*), where both letters of language and the elements of nature are seen as comparable constituents for higher orders. Thus, as Jâbir saw it, the structure of language, its morphology (*tasrîf*), corresponds to the morphology of existent things. Thus, like Pythagoras in early antiquity, Jâbir taught that there is a deep affinity between physics and grammar: what things are and how we call them are deeply related phenomena. The application of this idea is obvious in thy cosmology of Ibn al-‘Arabi, as I think the above studies clearly show.

⁶⁸³ For an excellent discussion on the notion of religion, see Derrida 2002, pp.42–101, esp. pp. 57, 74, where he builds on Heidegger’s claim that to think “religion” is to think “Roman” (... eine Sache der Römischer Deutung, GA 4, 114), p.54 n 9 and p.74 n25.

But as all these connections came through in my understanding, the whole study took a decisive new turn towards the probable *alchemical* sources of Ibn al-‘Arabí’s Aristotelian elements. And this led me to Jâbir Ibn Hayyân, antedating the Shaikh with at least three, maybe even four centuries.

However, here alchemy does not stand for some kind of primitive chemistry. Rather, as I think my study makes it clear, alchemy should be seen as a genuine continuity of the *peri physeôs* tradition of Antiquity and the even more ancient and highly developed practical knowledge and skills of craftmanship of the ancient world. To emphasize the difference between the modern science of chemistry and alchemical thinking, I have quoted Jâbir saying: “alchemy is the greatest of all arts for it [concerns] an ideal entity which exists only in the mind.” (*Ahjâr* 38.4, above p.158 n104) If this is taken to refer as the ultimate concept of potentiality, the pure receptivity of the passive mind as analogical to *hylê*, then it can be said that the genesis of this entity is the subject of my whole study.

On the other hand, and with a similar basic idea, on pp.39- 40 regarding Aristotle it was written: “in the act of knowing our understanding is directed towards the *eidos*-aspect of being. And this is naturally something the senses cannot perceive: it is a mental image, *noêton eidos*. But it should also be stressed, that this spontaneous or subjective side of essential grasping (*wesenschau*) does not mean individual subjectivity, rather, the subject of Aristotelian abstraction is always the *Sophos*, an ideally wise human nature, “a transcendental logical subject”, who does not posit truths or realities but only *uncovers* them.

In a fairly early footnote (n 66 in Part III) I quoted from the Chapter 47 of the *Futûhât* a line I found through Chittick (1996), where Ibn al-‘Arabí says that the philosopher or sage (*al-hakîm*) “combines the knowledge of God (*al-‘ilmu’l-ilâhîy*), nature (*al-tabî’îy*), mathematics (*al-riyâdîy*) and logic (*al-mantiqîy*),” whereas he sees it as a weakness in theology of the dialecticians, that is, in *Kalâm*, that it has no entrance to cosmology and knowledge of nature (F I 261.7–8). But by then I still had no idea just how seriously he meant this comment. It is also worth noting that here the Shaikh speaks of Wisdom *hikma*, of which the Qur’ân says: “God gives Wisdom to whomsoever He will, and whoso is given the Wisdom, has been given much good...” (Q 2:269)

One of the earliest motives for this study came through the central Aristotelian concept *hylê*, material, that ‘out of which’. In the works of Ibn al-‘Arabí the Arabic *hayûlâ* stands for something similar as the Aristotelian concept of *hylê* and it appears quite often as it does also in the writings of Jâbir ibn Hayyân. But perhaps the most important connection for the *hayûlâ* in Ibn al-‘Arabí is in the sense that Aristotle above in the anagram for this Conclusion uses the word: “Mind in the passive sense is analogical to *hylê*” (from *DA* III.4).) The essence of the soul is thus seen as a receptacle in the same way as Ibn al-

‘Arabí presented it in the *Fus*113/137 as *hayûlâ*, Prime Matter, capable of all forms. This equation between prime matter and soul as well as prime matter and substance (*jawhar*) as “receptive for all forms” appears already in the *Book of LXX*, by Jâbir i.Hayyân: “it [*hayûlâ/habâ’/jawhar*] contains all things [potentially] and all things are made out of it and all are also decomposed in it” (from n 119; see also p 207). Thus it is the human fundamentally temporal “being-in-the-world” which is receptive for all forms as a pure possibility, a universal *hayûlâ* for all forms.

In the Arabic form the word *hayûlâ* does not “say” anything and probably most modern native speakers of Arabic would not understand the word in a conversation. And yet, every student of Aristotle knows the centrality of this particular concept in the *hylo-morphic* philosophy of Aristotle. This recurring theme of *hylê* seemed strange in the writings of Ibn al-‘Arabí, particularly after having read some 30 years ago the fascinating books of modern authors like Burckhardt and Corbin, who seemed to take it for granted that Ibn al-‘Arabí is a Platonist, he was even referred to as *Ibn Aflâtûn*, “Son of Plato,” and Burckhardt further claiming that he was given this honorific during his lifetime.⁶⁸⁴ Similarly, in his preface to R.W.J.Austin’s 1980 translation of the *Fusûs*, Burckhardt repeats this claim with his assessment: “Ibn ‘Arabí’s thinking is fundamentally Platonic...”⁶⁸⁵ I later found out, like Franz Rosenthal in his 1988 article, that there was not much to support this claim in the original sources: “even if it should turn out that someone used ‘Son of Plato,’ it certainly was not one of the designations commonly applied to him,” as Rosenthal notes.⁶⁸⁶ Furthermore, one can be quite sure that Ibn al-‘Arabí himself would never have described himself thus, even though he shared the traditional high esteem for Plato, not necessarily based on any first-hand knowledge. Similarly, it seems Jâbir Ibn Hayyân had very little actual knowledge of Plato and yet I have quoted him saying “Socrates is the Mother and Father of all philosophers” (above p.232 n339).

It is of course only natural and a sign of genuine philosophical interest that the towering Philosophers of Antiquity did go through a thorough reconciliation process in the hands of their commentators and further expounders in the Islamic world that took place during the 1,500 years that separate Ibn al-‘Arabí from Plato and Aristotle. Wisnovsky calls this process the “greater Synthesis,” (*sumphonia*) or “Ammonian synthesis,” referring “to the tendency, epitomized by the Aristotle-commentator Ammonius and his students, to incorporate the larger project of reconciling Plato’s and Aristotle’s philosophies...”⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁴ Burckhardt 1955, 7, Corbin 1977, 24

⁶⁸⁵ Austin 1980, xiii

⁶⁸⁶ Rosenthal 1988, 4

⁶⁸⁷ Wisnovsky 2003, 15

Obviously one could quite well conduct also a successful survey on “Platonic Elements in the Thinking of Ibn al-‘Arabí and the Young Martin Heidegger” and, indeed, the study of Salman Bashier (2004) consulted in the above pages shows the relevance of that approach with Ibn al’Arabí. Above, already in the section I.B of this study, Heinz Happ noted clearly that there is more that unites Plato and Aristotle than what separates them. In the Islamic world this *Harmony between the two Sages* (a name of an important treatise, *K.al-jâm’ bayna ra’yay al-hakîmayn*), as it was presented by the early philosopher al-Farâbî (870–950CE.), has set the general tone of Muslim thinkers. And although the two referred Sages stand for Plato and Aristotle, it would often be more accurate to refer to Aristotle and Plotinus, as D’Ancona (2008, 50) notes. She also considers it a serious possibility that Avicenna was actually thinking he was reading a work of Aristotle while reading the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* (ibid. p.60–61 and 65).⁶⁸⁸

Be that as it may, my motive was to dig deeper into something more radical, and this is what Heidegger claimed Aristotle did to the philosophy of Plato and the Academy. Here my “hunch” has all the time been “Zur Sachen Selbst,” suggested in our introduction by St Thomas as: *qualiter se habeat veritas rerum*, to search for “what is the truth of things.” Of course claiming to express *the truth* in any conclusion is a tall order and a ridiculous one at that, but here the reference is rather to what is meant with the word truth, or how this word is understood. What does it mean that the above mentioned Aristotelian Sage does not “posit truths [...] but only *uncoveres* them?”

The central Greek concept *alêtheia* taken as Truth, *veritas*, does not say much. As an abstract concept, *la vérité*, does not give us anything to think about. But this is one of the reasons for our perusals on Heidegger in this study, a modern philosopher who wanted to dig deeper into the roots of Western Philosophical tradition. The Greek *alêtheia* has not been thematized on these pages as it seems to be perhaps the best known aspects of Heidegger’s thought.⁶⁸⁹ Namely, he suggested that Truth in the Greek mode should rather be thought literally as *a-lêtheia*, *un-concealedness*, something concealed which is negated by the so-called “a-privativum” of the Greek language.⁶⁹⁰ “What is unhidden in *alêtheia* is not a proposition about a being, but the being itself – a thing, a fact. A being is true in the Greek sense when

⁶⁸⁸ On the whole, if I had had access to D’Ancona’s paper earlier some lines of thought presented in this work might have been little different, particularly her findings as to the origins of the concept *tajarrud/mujarrad* for Aristotelian abstraction originating actually not from Aristotle, but either from Avicenna himself or the Neoplatonic Theology of Aristotle. On the other hand, D’Ancona’s paper makes me even more convinced of Ibn al-‘Arabí being neither Avicennian nor Plotinian philosopher.

⁶⁸⁹ Above pp.81, 85 n 153 and 111, n 261. The Aristotelian five ways of *alêtheuein* (EN VI 2, 1139 b15–18) “in which the soul takes and brings beings, as uncovered, into truthful safe-keeping...” PIA 255–56/377–8; SZ § 44 esp. pp 219–25; GA 34, pp 5–13 and § 16; SD 74–80/ 67–73; Kisiel 1995, p 266, as simplex apprehension, above pp 68–71, van Buren 1994, p 76, de Boer 2000, pp 123–26 and p.344 n 19; Caputo 2003, pp. 84–86; 192–94; 201–03; 222–23; Hanley 2000, pp 53–53 and 133–38 etc. There is hardly a study on Heidegger without some reference to this theme.

⁶⁹⁰ Here one could refer to most of Heidegger’s writings, like the few examples in the previous note, but in his 1942–43 lecture course on Parmenides (GA 54) he gives perhaps the most thorough analysis of the term, here GA 54, Introduction 23/16

it shows itself as what it is: true gold.” (GA 34, 118/86) Heidegger suggests that this literal meaning of the word gives food for thought with its play of negations of being concealed and its privation, a kind of double negation suggesting that negated concealedness yields unconcealedness. He says: “Indeed it appears unconcealedness is involved with concealedness in a ‘conflict,’ the essence of which remains in dispute.”

Here, with these negations we have something positive to think about: the negation of concealments brings something into light, something is revealed, brought out into the open, and this tells something decisive of truth, which is now expressed in terms of experience: something is dawning, “like the breaking of the light of dawn” (see our Intro p.7). “Unconcealment is, so to speak, the element in which Being and thinking and their belonging together exist” (SD 76/69). But here one should note that this has nothing to do with truth as certainty or assurance (truth as *adequatio intellectus et rei*), a polarity of subject and object and a search for an inner conviction of correctness (like the *inconcussum terra firma* of Descartes).

Heidegger states: “In Aristotle, there is not a trace of either of this concept of truth as ‘agreement’ or of the common conception of logos as valid judgement or –least of all– of the ‘representation-theory’” (PIA 256/378). Quite the contrary, here something takes place, opens up, is disclosed, enlightened. The breaking of the light of dawn is not an achievement of the human mind, even though we witness its occurrence. Through Ibn al-‘Arabí we are *in medias res*: these are the shades in which he speaks of *Meccan Illuminations*, openings, openings occurring at the “heart of existence” (III.2.1.1), or, the openness, “*l’ouverture*,” as Jean Beaufret interpreted the Heideggerian *Dasein* (above p.205).

Here in the climate of negations one cannot refrain from thinking the *Shahhadah*, the witnessing of faith in Islam, which begins with a decisive negation: *Lâ ilâha illa’Allâh*, No, there is no other divinity but God. Similarly, with Ibn al-‘Arabí, we came across a double negation in the very first lines of his Magnum Opus, *The Futûhât*, a negation of a negation which he later explained, referring back to his first words and, now adding, that in the first lines he “referred to ‘non-existence and its non-existence’, that is, to the negation of non-existence, which equals Being [*‘adamu l- ‘adam wujud*]”.⁶⁹¹ Here one could paraphrase these two perspectives together and formulate the Heideggerian reading of the Greek concept of truth in an *Akbarian* frame of reference: *the negation of concealment equals Being*. Of course, in Ibn al-‘Arabí, the most often used expressions for this unconcealment is *unveiling (kashf)* the lifting of veils (*sutûr*) with the idea that when the veils of *beings* are lifted what shines forth is *Being* pure and simple. Similarly, Heidegger notes that the German language contains a beautiful word “to hide” *verhehlen*: the originally simple “concealing” is called veiling [*verhüllen*]. “Hiding” refers to

⁶⁹¹ F II 281, 1-4, see above pp. 258–59 and 270

concealing and concealedness; to “hide nothing,” to make “no secret” out of something, signifies there is no mystery to it, nothing concealed. He further says the German language once even had the word “dis-hide” [*enthelen*]: to bring something out of hiddenness, to take it out of concealedness, dis-close it— *alêtheia*: dis-closure.⁶⁹² Seen in this context the name given by William Chittick to his second major book on Ibn al-‘Arabí, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, is in its proper context.

Here we come to one basic thought hovering over my whole study which was perhaps formulated most clearly in the conflicting thoughts of Husserl and Heidegger as “philosophy of the mind” and “existential” thought. On the one hand thinking incarcerated in the Cartesian Ego (me in my consciousness), and on the other hand, the “formal indication” of each “mine” (*je mine*), Dasein as an objective momentum (of each there-Being, each *Dasein*). Or, if seen through terms of intentionality: intentionality as *noematic act* of consciousness and intentionality as disclosing of the *intentum*. In the Greek version we have met this conflict in the axiomatic intellectual philosophy of Plato virtually discarding the power of senses, and the general “top-down” philosophy of the Greek tradition on the whole, appearing still in Aristotle as the primacy of *Sophia* over *Phronêsis*. However, here we already have *phronesis* which “is in need of life-experience (*ex empeiriâs*) which again requires time (*khrónos*): only through much time (*plêthos khrónou*) is life-experience possible,” as was noted on page 75. Here we are no longer in the theoretical spheres of *âei hon*, eternal present, the theoretical as contemplation of ideal and perfect being contrasting the contingent imperfect being in its temporality as something of very little or of no consequence. “Eternity is the basis of Aristotle’s ontology and his ethics: being is eternal,” as Hanley summarises (above p 206).

Through our studies on the young Heidegger we have seen a strong impetus against this “theistic theater of theory” as David Farrel Krell formulated (see p.73). In the words of Heidegger: “theoretization of life ‘de-vivifies’ it, reducing a situation from *Ereignis* – an event of one’s own – to a *Vorgang*, a ‘process’ that passes before one like a spectacle.”⁶⁹³ For Heidegger life is not a spectacle, instead, he proposes for a counter-movement as a return to a “living spirit,” and this means not simply dismissing the theoretical for the practical, rather it has a desire to dig deeper into the pre-theoretical questions of “givenness” as such, that is, it wants to take “a leap into the world as such” (GA 56/57, 63). Instead of mere logical possibility, the young Heidegger is speaking of life itself as a possibility: he makes the equation “life = existence, ‘being’ in and through life.” (GA 61 84/64) And as we quoted on p.77: “To live means always living ‘in’ something, to live ‘out of’ something, to live ‘for something, to live ‘from’

⁶⁹² GA 54, 48/32

⁶⁹³ GA 56/57, 74–75; Polt, in CH 2007, 376 Here we have one of the early instances of the term *Ereignis*, which became a key-word in the later thinking of Heidegger and particularly in his Contributions to Philosophy, GA 65.

something. The ‘something’ indicated in these prepositional expressions [...], is what we call ‘world.’” Here one could make a comparison with Aristotle, as quoted on p.173 concerning substance: “the syllable is some particular thing; not merely the letters, vowel and consonant, but something else besides. And flesh is not merely fire and earth, or hot or cold, but something else besides [...]. This ‘something else’ is something that is not an element, but is the cause that *this* matter is flesh and *that* matter a syllable [...]. And this is the substance of each thing, for it is the primary cause of its existence.” (*Met* VII 17, 1041 b12–32) Through these structurally similar quotations Heidegger comes in the first quote into the World and, in the second, Aristotle comes to his central concept of Substance. The main point here being that both are here in existence and not in the eternal spheres of theory.

Here Ibn al-‘Arabí would also surely agree – as noted on p 146 – “with Heidegger who over 700 years later, and certainly with no connections what so ever with Ibn al-‘Arabi, insisted *on purely philosophical grounds* for the necessity of realizing *the ontological priority of the question of Being*. “All research is an ontical possibility of Dasein [*eine ontische Möglichkeit des Dasein*]”. This priority denotes to an understanding which is rooted in “Dasein’s ownmost being” which, precisely because of that, tends to be suffocated under the overwhelming conceptual tradition of philosophy/theology.”

And, indeed, this opening “existential” aspect of the human being heading towards its own perfection, towards an “excellence native [*oikeías*] to it”, towards its own “what it was to be”, is a central theme in the '*Anqâ*' as it depicts the journey on the “human level” or through the “human nature” [*al-nasha 'tu l-insâniya*].

Similaly, we have noted (p.248) with Aristotle that the intellect is the divine element in human nature: “that which is best and most pleasant for any given creature is that which is proper / native to it. Therefore for man, too, the best and most pleasant life is the life of the intellect, since the intellect is in the fullest sense the man. So this life will also be the happiest.” (*EN* X.7, 1178 a 5–8)

Again, here one could use the Aristotelian awkward expression the “what it was to be” for this particular sense of the word *al-haqq*: to give each thing its due equals giving it its reality, the end for the sake of which of its proper functioning; each thing in its native *entelecheia*. In the language of Ibn al-‘Arabí this *entelecheia* is God’s creative word, the truth of the matter to be, its *existential truth*, and it is towards this that He also guides the human being in its search for wisdom, that is, “he/she who does what is proper for what is proper as is proper” [F II 163.26]— as Ibn al-‘Arabi formulates in very similar vein as Aristotle the principle of the Golden Mean: “to feel or act forwards the right person to the right extent at the right time for the right reason in the right way—that is not easy, and it is not

everyone that can do it. Hence to do these things well is rare, laudable and fine achievement.” (EN II 9, 1109 a 26)

In the *Futûhât* Ibn al-‘Arabî expresses the just mentioned “native *entelecheia*” in most concrete terms: “My Journey was only within me, and I was guided only to myself”.⁶⁹⁴ Here Ibn al-‘Arabî is simply following the Prophet of Islam in one of his variations on the theme “he who knows himself knows his Lord”: “God’s Messenger said concerning knowledge: there is no path to knowledge of God other than that of oneself” (F II.297 29-30). For [the Station of the Seal with regard to any given person] is not specifically imposed, but is “simply the place which he reaches, the Gnostic himself disclosing to us its limit.” (p.255)

Here, like always, Ibn al-‘Arabî concentrates on the human substance, the proper governance of the human endeavour. This whole human “project”, the human possibility, is in each case an ontic possibility of “this” individual being [the Aristotelian *kath ekaston* and Heidegger’s *je meine*] and its becoming, but at the same time it is based on general ontology as human existence in the world [*Dasein*].

Then, as Ibn al-‘Arabî suggests, “let us turn our contemplation therein to our [own Human] Essence [*dhâtu-nâ*], which is the Way of our Salvation [*sabîl najâti-nâ*]! I tread [that Way] in its entirety at this Human level [*al-nash’ah al-insânîyah*] in accordance with whatever the Station confers—whether of corporeality or spirituality”.⁶⁹⁵

Ibn al-‘Arabî formulates **the *fitra*** as that which “differentiates between an entity and its being” [*fassalat baina l-‘ain wa l-wujûduhâ*] as a consequence of **an original rendering asunder of actuality/heaven from possibility/earth**, a light making all the various forms distinct. Therefore, one could say that the *fitra* stands for **the Ontological difference** (*der Unterschied des Seins und des Seienden*, also referred as *klüftung* or emphatically *zerklüftung*), that is, the difference between beings and Being (‘*ayân* / *wujûd*)—to which the Shaikh refers as “one of the most abstruse things to which the knowledge of God’s knowers becomes connected”.⁶⁹⁶ Here we might also speak in terms of Hayman’s “metaphysical plurality” of Aristotle: the categorical explanations of being said in many ways, the way of beings (‘*ayân*), the horizontal diversity of existence in each individual entity. And, on the other hand, the vertical pole of speaking in terms of *dúnamis* and *energeia*, being itself in its manifold possibilities and its unique actuality in full swing, as *Ereignis*, the performative notion of existence, as Sells described

⁶⁹⁴*Fut.* III, 350.31

⁶⁹⁵‘*Anqâ*’ 1.II, Elmore 242 Here we have the Socratic program [*Apol.*36c] of Ibn al-‘Arabî, for other references in Plato, see Thesleff 199, 24–25

⁶⁹⁶*Fut.* II 70.7-14, SDG 256. Heidegger radicalizes this division with the prefix ‘*zer-klüftung*’, not just a division but a fissure of being, *Zerklüftung des Seyns* (GA 65, §127, 156 and 159) and calls it also “*Die unterschied alle unterschiede*” (GA 54, 225).

the Akbarian position. Reality, for Ibn al-‘Arabí as well as for Heidegger, is an ongoing process, not an axiological metaphysical system.

This whole theme of potentiality and actuality was taken up in our study of Ibn al-Arabí’s understanding the Qur’ânic passage on God creating the human being as His viceroy (*khalîfa*) and explaining this for the angels. Changing is not the way of being of angels, whereas in humans, due to their dual nature, becoming something is precisely their way of temporal being, of becoming what they already are, changing into something while retaining their sameness. Here is what we came up to (on p.263): The angels could not understand why God would appoint as His vicegerent a being of lower nature that will “cause mischief and shed blood” [Q 2:30] on earth. The angels are not material beings; unlike the human composite being, they are not made of clay. But it turns out that it is precisely this combination of the malleability of matter, matter as possibility, combined with the spiritual formative power of understanding that gives the human configuration an advantage of seeing the possible, a modality the angels know nothing about. Thus, in the case of the first human being, it was through his own microcosmic being that he could give the names to all existent things: God’s viceroy on earth is a combination of both the material and the spiritual worlds, that is, the human being includes *both* beings already actualized, *and*, possible beings still in the process of becoming.

As was noted (p.71): We humans do not invent existence, “things themselves are not dependent upon humans.”... Or as Aristotle puts it: “it is the *hylê* which is there throughout (*enupàrkhein*) and which becomes (*gígnetai*).” (*Met* VII 7, 1032 b 32) But it is only because the human being is incomplete, something always opening in further projects and possibilities, that we can also uncover this becoming.

The constantly changing, flickering nature of the ever-changing nature of our being-in-the-world equals what Ibn al-‘Arabí expresses as the “fluctuating” (*taqallub/qallaba*) and constantly over-turning nature of the human heart [*phren*>*phronêsis*] which alone is capable of receiving the ever-changing and fluctuating nature of reality. (see p 308)

Despite “the multiplicity of forms and their [sensible] diversity they all go back in reality to one single substance which is their Prime Matter [*hylê*]” (*ma’ kathrati ’l-sawâr wa ikhtilâfihâ turja’ fî l-haqîqati ’ilâ jawharⁱⁿ wâhidⁱⁿ huwa hayûlâhâ*) *Fus* 124–25; see also Izutsu 1984, 207–08, with the commentary of al-Qashânî. [see also Chittick in HIP 505]: “The universal categories of these possible modes are designated by the Divine Names...”: A plurality of Names, yet all referring to One Reality; oneness of being and plurality of knowledge, *wahdat al-wujûd—kathrat al’ilm*. And as was suggested on p. 76, in Aristotelian realism this plurality, the differentiation of meaning, comes from the domains of reality themselves.

As we have seen, the fundamental context for *hayûlâ* in Ibn al-‘Arabî, though he uses it constantly also in the true philosophical sense of *prime matter*, is the human existence understood and lived in the sense of the other connected Aristotelian conceptual framework of *potentiality* and *possibility*. For Ibn al-‘Arabî the true human quest is to become *hayûlâ*, the fully open possibility for God. Becoming this possibility equals to him the Prophetic version of the Delphic maxim: He who knows himself knows his Lord (*man ‘arafa nafsahu faqad ‘arafa Rabbahu*), a saying that comes in many forms throughout his writings. Thus, combining these elements together again with another clumsy neologism of Aristotle, “the what it was to be” (*tò tí ên ênai*), referring to, as we learned through Monte Johnson, Aristotle’s primary category, substance (*tí esti légei kai ousían*, *Top I 9*, 103 b30-31), answering the common question: *tí esti*—what is it? In this sense the phrase-like word is closely connected by Aristotle to the definition of a thing: that what is being defined, that is, the “What it is for something to be.”⁶⁹⁷ Aristotle refers to this as the substance of each thing (*ekaston*).

Here we also get an important parallelism between this specific substance of each thing and the *differentia specifica* of the human being. For Ibn al-‘Arabî, as we have seen, the definition of man is not the traditional *animal rationale*: it is not reason and rationality alone, not only our ability to speak that makes the human being. Instead, he insists that the specific true human nature lies in the *form* in which the human being was created. This form is higher than mere knowledge and higher than mere nature. It is *mallon physis*, it is “nature to a greater degree.” It is higher because in the form nature ‘is’ in the mode of having-itself-in-its-end rather than when it is (only) in the appropriateness for... [*in der Geeignetheit zu*]” (*Phys II 1*, 193 b 6-8). Similarly, for Ibn al-‘Arabî the true *human completion, or, perfection* (*insân ul-kâmil*) means fullness of being, which, however, equals completion of receptivity exemplified in the figure of “polished mirror.” On the other hand, it is obvious that *form* is the basic constituent of Aristotelian *hylo-morphism*, *morphe*/form. In this connection, concerning the substance of each thing as “the what it was to be,” means that “form is motion of natural phenomena from potentiality to ‘the what it was to be’.” One could also say that the *eidos* provides us the “looks” of the essential, “the what it was to be,” as we noted with Johnson in the first part of our study.

These active formative powers and passive receptive powers were finally studied in the last part of our study: Between philosophy and mysticism, highest human possibilities. These are depicted through Ibn al-‘Arabî’s own reminiscence of his youth, his meeting with the great philosopher and commentator of Aristotle, Ibn Rushd, born some 40 years earlier than Ibn al-‘Arabî. Contrary to previous numerous

⁶⁹⁷ Above pp.13–14, Johnson 2005, 48

studies of this short passage in Ch.15 of the *Futûhât*, here the philosophical purport of this encounter is taken seriously, even though the question of the elderly philosopher is put quite casually for the young mystic: “How did you find the situation in unveiling and divine effusion (*kashf wa’l-faidu-l ‘ilâhî*). Is it what rational consideration gives to us philosophers?” I have pointed out that this question was both critical for the Islamic philosophers in general and particularly to Averroës, for whom the nature of intellection was a subject that vexed him throughout his life, and who opposed the Avicennian brand of philosophy. For him the material intellect—or the “hylic” intellect, in terms of Alexander of Aphrodisias—is the principle of potential intellection; it receives the potentially intelligible forms conveyed to it by the imaginative faculty. Its passive nature refers to its universal receptivity. Thus, here we are all in all, at the heart of the questions of my whole study. This pure potentiality is only a disposition (*istidâd faqat*) to think, it cannot think by itself. For this thinking to take place, an active counterpart, the Agent or Active intellect, is needed to energize and activate this pure potentiality. In its activating role the Agent intellect is something like light upon an object. Thus, as Averroës says, “there are two functions in our soul, one of which is the producing of the intelligibles and the other is the receiving of them.” (AMCA p.112, parag.284) The philosophically quite complex inquiry of Averroës is answered by Ibn al-‘Arabî in the most cryptic fashion and yet his answer causes an immediate reaction in the senior philosopher, who understands the *allusion* of the young mystic’s strange words in answering whether illumination happens for the mystics in the same way as for rational thinkers. He said: “Yes no. And between the the yes and no spirits will take flight from their matter and necks will fly from their bodies.” This answer has vexed the translators of Ibn al-‘Arabî and numerous explanations have been given. What is immediately clear is that Ibn al-‘Arabî understands the tricky philosophical question to be essentially a question of intuitive joining together or conjunction and how is this precisely to be understood: he refers to “a neck” as the naturally connecting isthmus of heads to bodies. Apparently this kind of connection is missing in the mystical intuition. The mystical intuition is not a judgmental process, or, rather, it is and is not, it is in the sense that an illumination occurs, something is given and beheld in its “there,” but this something is not the result of our intellection, not generated in our speculation [*lâ mutawallad ‘an nazarinâ*], as we have quoted the *muta’zili* position in questions of theology. The key to this off passage as I have interpreted it is expressed in two ways: first, Ibn al-‘Arabî says he was alluding to something, and, as I have elsewhere quoted him further quoting Ibn ‘Arif (d.1141): “An allusive indication (*ishâra*) is a call from afar.” But this distant allusion is here in the chapter of the *Futûhât* dealing with “knowledge of Divine breaths and their secrets,” and particularly with an ancient sage not mentioned by name but called the *Treater of wounds*, an expression I take to refer to Empedocles, “the founder of Sicilian medical school,” as Galen called him. The other key-element being the use of the odd word of a neck in this connection, which is precisely what Aristotle does in describing the nature of intellection in his *DA* III.6, where he refers to

Empedocles saying: “without necks the heads of many grew.” Thus, with his allusion Ibn al-‘Arabí puts his finger right to the point in Aristotle’s thinking of the highest human capacities treated in his *De Anima*, a book on which Averroës wrote all in all three different commentaries and which seems to have perplexed him throughout his life.

I fully agree with Rosenthal (1988, 18) that this little episode on the memory lane of Ibn al-‘Arabí can hardly be taken at its face value. Instead of depicting accurately a historical incident, I think it should be taken as brief but essential philosophical discussion. As I noted, Ibn al-‘Arabí wrote this passage decades later from the possible original *rendez-vous* in his youth. It is obvious from his several comments that Ibn al-‘Arabí held Ibn Rushd in exceptionally high esteem, though clearly seeing their respective ways of life as quite different. In this brief description of their meeting Ibn al-‘Arabí pinpoints the different approaches of rational inquiry and intuitive knowledge, but at the same time he enhances the latter’s sensitive connection with philosophy. He knew that for real philosophers “it is intuition and not reason that grasps both the first and the ultimate terms,” as Aristotle says in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (see above p 309).

In fact, I think, this encounter between philosophy and mysticism brings neatly together all three thinkers of this study: here we are at the heart of Aristotelian understanding of the highest human possibilities expressed by his formula *the what it was to be*. This facticity is taken very seriously by Ibn al-‘Arabí as the fundamental basis of being human, the very marrow of human existence or “human level” (*nashâ’t ul-insâniyya* discussed above). This is the proper mystical and philosophical domain of human *Dasein* in its ownmost task of fulfilling its own native possibilities precisely as a being-towards an end, a being tending to the completion of what it already in some sense is, fulfilling the yearning privation, *steresis*, inherent in all material existence. “In determining itself as an entity, *Dasein* always does so in the light of a possibility which it is itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands.” (SZ 43/BT 69, quoted above on p.127)

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text to refer basic sources.

- AETIUS** *Aetius Arabus*. Die Vorssokratiker in Arabischer überlieferung. Hans Daiber, Wiesbaden : Franz Steiner Verlag 1980.
- Ahjâr** Jâbir Ibn Hayyan: *Kitâb al-Ahjâr* (Book of Stones), see Haq S.N. 1994
- ‘Anqâ** Elmore G.T. 1999 : Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time. *Ibn al-Arabî’s* Book of the Fabulous Gryphon (K. ‘Anqâ al-Mughrib wa al-shams al-Maghrib)
- AMCA** Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima*. A Critical Edition of the Arabic Text with English Translation, Notes, and Introduction by Alfred L.Ivry. (*Greco-Arabic Sciences & Philosophy*). Provo, Utah : Brigham University Press 2002
- B** Bukhari, al-. *Sahîh al-Bukhârî*. Matba’at al-bâhîat al-masrî, toinen painos, Kairo 1349AH. (Tr. anonymous) Hadith of Bukhari Vol. I, II, III & IV. Forgotten Books 2008
- CCG** The Cambridge Companion to Galen. Ed.by R.J. Hankinson, University of Texas at Austin. Cambridge University Press 2008
- CGH** The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger. Ed Charles B.Guignon 2nd ed. [1.ed.1993] New York : Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- CH** A Companion to Heidegger. Eds H.L.Dreyfus and M.A.Wrathall (*Blackwell Companions to Philosophy*), Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2007
- CHCP** *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*. Ed.by Charles E Scott, Susan M.Schoenbohm. Daniela Vallega-Neu, and Alejandro Vallega. (Studies in Continental Thought), Bloomington, IN, 2001.

- CHI** 1975 The Cambridge History of Iran in Eight Volumes. Vol IV, The Period from the Arab invasion to the Saljuqs. Ed. R.N.Frey. London : Cambridge University Press
- Concordance** 1992 : Wensinck, A.J., et al (eds.). *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane* (8 volumes). Leiden : Brill
- CV** Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi. *A Commemorative Volume*. Ed. S Hirtenstein and M.Tiernan for the Muhyiddin Ibn –Arabi Society. Dorset: Element Books Limited 1993.
- Dalálat** Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed (Dalálat al-khaijírín)*. Tr.from the original Arabic text by M Friedländer. 2nd revised ed. Dover Publications, New York 1904, repr.1956.
- DL** Diogenes Laertius: *Vitae philosophorum*, 2 vols. Ed. H.S.Long. Oxford: Clarendon Pree, 1964 [repr. 1966].
- DK** H.Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*⁶, ed. W.Kranz, Berlin, 1951–2
- DMR** Aristotle: *De memoria et reminiscencia*, Aristotle on Memory, See Sorabji 2004b
- EI²** Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd edn.
- GAL** (*Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*) Brockelmann, C.
- GAS** Sezgin, Fuat: *Geschichte der arabischen Schrifttum*. [GAS], Leiden, 1967
- Enn** Plotinus: *Enneades*. In *Plotini opera*, 3 vols. Ed. P Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer. Leiden: Brill, 1951, 1959, 1973.
- F** *Futuhát al-Makkíja* 4 Vols. Kairo 1911, repr. Dár Sádír, Beirut. (in refs the roman figure is for vol, the middle for page and final for line)
- Fus** *Fusús al-Hikám*. Edited by Abu al-‘alá ‘Af’fí, Dár al-kutub al-arabí, 1365/1946.
- G** Martin Heidegger: *Gelassenheit*. Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1959, [repr. 2004].

- GA** Martin Heidegger, Gesamtausgabe, Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann 1975- (in refs the first figure is for volume, the second for page and third for possible English translation given in bibliography as tr. under each German volume)
- GAL** F. Sezgin. *Geschichte der arabischen Schrifttums*. Leiden :1967–
- HAT** Heidegger and Asian Thought. Ed. bt Graham Parkes. University of Hawaii 1987.Paperback 1990.
- HIM** A Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics, ed by Richard Polt & Gregory Fried, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2001
- HIP** History of Islamic Philosophy Vol I & II. Ed.bt Seyyd Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman. (Routledge History of World Philosophies, Vol.1). London: Routledge 1996
- Husserliana** Edmund Husserl. Gesammelte Werke. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Inshâ’** Inshâ’ al-Jadâwil wa-l-Dawâir (Leiden, 1919), tr. in CV (in refs the first figure is for page the second for line and the third for tr.)
- Istilâhât** Al-Qashâni, *Istilâhât al-Sûfiyya*, (Cairo 1981)
- JCW** The Collected Works of C.G.Jung. Ed. Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler. Tr.by R.F.C.Hull. (*Bollingen Series*) Princeton.
- Kr.** Paul Kraus [1942-43]: “Jâbir ibn Hayyân; Contributions à l’Histoire des Idées Scientifiques dans l’Islam; Le Corpus des Écrits Jâbiriens. (*Memoires de l’Institute d’Égypte*), 1943, 44, 1.
- L** Langenscheidts Grosswörterbuch Griechisch Deutsch unter Berücksichtigung der Etymologie von Prof.Dr.Hermann Menge. Langenscheidt, Berlin München 22nd ed1973. [1st ed.1913.]
- Lane** Lane, E.W. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. Repr. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984.

- Loeb** Loeb Classical Library. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*. H.K.Tredennick, general editor. Cambridge, MA and London.
- LU** LU I: Logische Untersuchungen , Erster Band, Prolegomena zur reinen Logik. Text nach Husserliana XVIII. Gesammelte Schriften
LU II: Logische Untersuchungen, Zweiter Band, Teil I: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis, Text nach Husserliana XIX/1. Zweiter Band, Teil II, Text nach Husserliana XIX/2. Gesammelte Schriften 2–4, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg 1992.
- MR** The Meccan Revelations. Selected Texts of al-Futûhât al-Makkîyya – Presentations and tr. from the Arabic under the direction of Michel Chodkiewicz. Vol.I in collaboration with W.C.Chittick and J.W. Morris; Vol.II in collaboration with C.Chodkiewicz and Denis Gril. New York: Pir Press 2002 and 2004
- OCD** The Oxford Classical Dictionary. Eds N.G.L.Hammond and H.H.Scullard. 2nd ed, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- OY** *Al-Futûhât al-Makkîyya*, O.Yahiya, ed. (Cairo 1972–)
- PAPW** Martin Heidegger, Philosophical and Political Writings, ed.by Manfred Stassen (The German Library 76), New York, London: Continuum
- Placita** *Placita philosophorum*, ed. J.Mau. Leipzig, 1971 (in refs. the final figure is the paragraph number)
- PP** *The Presocratic Philosophers*. A Critical History with a Selection of Texts by G.S.Kirk, J.E.Raven, M Schofield. 2nd Ed.Cambridge University Press 1957, repr1990.
- Q** Al-Qur’ân
- Qashânî** ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Qashânî, *al-Tâ’wilât (Ta’wîl al-Qur’ân)*. Published as *Tafsîr al-Qur’ân al-Karîm* 2 vols. and wrongly attributed to Ibn al-‘Arabî. Dâr al-Andalus, Beirut 1978.
- R** *Rasâ’il Ikhwân al-Safâ’*, Cairo: ‘Arabîyah Press, 4 vols. 1928

- Rasâ'il** *Rasâ'il Ibnu 'l-'Arabî.* (Dâirat al-Mâ'rif al-Uthmânîya, ed.). Hyderabad–Deccan, 1948
- ROT** *The Complete works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation.* J.Barnes, ed. 2 vols. Princeton, 1984.
- SDG** Chittick, William C. *The Self-Disclosure of God. Principles of Ibn al-'Arabî's Cosmology.* Albany, SUNY Press 1998.
- SLI** Edmund Husserl, *Shorter Logical Investigations.* Tr. From the Second German edition of *Logische Untersuchungen* by J.N.Findlay. Routledge, Lontoo ja New York, 2001.
- SPK** Chittick, William C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge.* Ibn al-'Arabî's Metaphysics of Imagination. Albany, SUNY Press 1989
- SS** Summer semester
- SZ** Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit*, 19th ed. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006. [1st ed.1927.]
- SVF** *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, coll Joannes ab Arnim. Vol I-III. Stuttgart 1964.
- Tafsîr** See above: Qashânî
- Tadbîrât** Ibn al-'Arabî: *Al-Tadbîrât al-Ilâhîyah* (Leiden 1919)
- Teol. Arist.** *Theology of Aristotle:* ed. 'A. Badawî, *Aflûtîn 'ind al-'arab* (Cairo 1955), 8–164; trans.G.L. Lewis in *Plotini opera*, ed.P.Henry and H.R. Schwyzer, ii (Paris and Brussels 1959)
- 'Uqla** Ibn al-'Arabî: *'Uqlat al-mustawfiz.* Leiden 1919 (the first figure is for page the second for line)
- WS** Winter semester
- ZSD** Martin Heidegger: *Zur Sache des Denkens.* 4th ed. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000 [1st ed. 1969.]

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- Cat and Int** Ackrill, J.L: *Aristotle's Categories and De interpretation*. Translated with notes, Oxford, 1963 (ROT)
- DA** *De anima. On the Soul*. Tr. W.S. Hett, Loeb Classical Library vol 8, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971
- De caelo** *On the Heavens*, tr. W.K.C.Guthrie, Loeb classical Library, vol.6 Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971
- DMR** *Aristotle On Memory. De Memoria et Reminiscentia*, tr., introduction and comm. by Richard Sorabji. 2. ed. [1.ed. 1972]. London: Duckworth, 2004b
- De Resp** *On Respiration*. Tr. W.S.Hett, Loeb Classical Library vol. 8
- De Sensu** *On Sense and Sensible Objects*. Tr. W.S. Hett, Loeb Classical Library vol.8, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971
- EE** Solomon, J.: *Eudemian Ethics*. Princeton 1984. (ROT)
- EN** *Ethica Nicomachea*. Ed. I. Bywater. (Oxford Classical Texts.) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894 [repr. 1962]
- Gen An.** Balme, D.M: *Aristotle. De partibus animalium I and De generatione animalium I*. Translated with notes, Oxford 1972. Rev. A.Gotthelf. (Clarendon Aristotle Series)
- GC** Joachim, H.H: *Aristotle. On Coming-to-be and Passing-away (De Generatione et Corruptione)*. A Revised text with commentary. Oxford 1922
- *On Generation and Corruption*. Princeton, 1984. (ROT)
- Met** *Metaphysics*, 2 vols. Ed. W. D. Ross, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924 [repr. 1970]
- Meteor** Lee, H.D.P: *Aristotle Meteorologica. With English Translation*. Cambridge, MA and London, 1952. (Loeb)

PA	Balme, D.M: <i>Aristotle. De Partibus animalium I and de generatione animalium I.</i> Translated with notes, Oxford, 1972. Rev. A.Gotthelf, 1999. (Clarendon Aristotle Series)
Phys	<i>Physics</i> Ed. W. D. Ross. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936 <i>The Metaphysics.</i> Tr. Hugh Tredennick. Loeb Classical Library vol.17–18. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975
Poet	<i>De arte poetica liber</i> Ed. R. Kassel Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965 [repr. 1968]
Pol	<i>Politica</i> Ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford Classical Texts.) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957 [repr. 1964]
Rhet	Roberts, W.Rhys. <i>Rhetoric.</i> Princeton, 1984. (ROT)
Somn	Gallop, D. <i>Aristotle. On Sleep and Dreams. A text and translation with introduction, notes and glossary.</i> Warminster, England, 1996.
Top	<i>Topica in Topica et Sophistici elenchi.</i> Ed. W. D. Ross. (Oxford Classical Texts.) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958 [repr. 1970], 1–189

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 - “Neuere Forschungen über Logik” [1912], 17–43
 - Besprechungen [1913/14], 44–54
 - “Vorwort zur ersten Aufgabe der *Frühen Schriften*” [preface, 1972], 55–57
 - “Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus,” 59–187
 - “Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus” [habilitation dissertation, 1915], 189–411
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-“Wege zur Aussprache” [essay, 1937], 15–21

-“Hebel—der Hausfreund” [lecture, 1957, Lörrach], 133–50

GA 15 *Seminare* [seminars, 1951–73]. Ed. Curt Ochwadt. 2nd ed.

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- Petra Jaeger. (Gesamtausgabe, 20.) 3rd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994 [1st ed. 1979.] *History of the Concept of Time. Prolegomena*. Tr. by Therodore Kisiel. Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Indiana University Press 1985
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- GA 29/30** *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit* [lecture course, WS 1929–30, Freiburg]. Ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983 1995: *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Tr. by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, (Studies in Continental Thought) Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press
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