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DIALECTICIANS AND DIALECTICS IN AVERROES' *LONG COMMENTARY* ON GAMMA 2 OF ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS*

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Abstract. While Averroes' work is often considered to represent the culmination of the method of Aristotelian demonstration in Arabic philosophy, a short passage of his *Long Commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Γ.2 emphasizes the prominence of dialectic and calls for a re-examination of dialectic and demonstration in Averroes' philosophical works. In this passage Averroes describes dialectic as an acceptable form of philosophy and the dialectician as a kind of scientist. In putting dialectic and demonstration on an equal, or nearly equal footing, Averroes seems to go against his own account of the dialectical and demonstrative classes of people in the *Decisive Treatise*. Moreover, this interpretation of *Metaphysics* Γ.2 also contradicts Averroes' explanation of the same passage in the *Middle Commentary* on the *Metaphysics* as well as Aristotle's own description of dialectic throughout the *Metaphysics*. That is, in the *Long Commentary* on the *Metaphysics*, Averroes departs from his earlier views, and describes dialectic as a necessary part of metaphysics, even though the centrality of dialectic argumentation could call into question the entire project of metaphysics and consequently of the sciences whose demonstrations rely on metaphysical ground, *i.e.*, all sciences. Averroes does not emphasize this view, but its presence is nevertheless unambiguous.

Résumé. Si l'œuvre d'Averroès est souvent considérée comme étant le sommet de la méthode démonstrative aristotélicienne dans la philosophie arabe, un bref passage de son *Grand commentaire* à *Métaphysique* Γ.2 d'Aristote souligne l'importance primordiale de la dialectique et suggère d'examiner à nouveaux frais le statut de la dialectique et de la démonstration dans l'œuvre philosophique d'Averroès. Dans ce passage, Averroès décrit la dialectique comme une forme acceptable de philosophie et le dialecticien comme un certain type de scientifique. En mettant la dialectique et la démonstration à un niveau égal ou presque, Averroès semble aller contre sa propre conception d'une distinction entre des types d'hommes dits "dialectiques" et "démonstratifs", qu'il développe dans son *Traité décisif*. En outre, cette interprétation de *Métaphysique* Γ.2 contredit aussi son explication du même passage dans le *Commentaire moyen sur la Métaphysique*, et la description donnée par Aristote lui-même de la dialectique tout au long de la *Métaphysique*, à savoir que, dans le *Grand commentaire* à *Métaphysique*, il s'écarte de ses vues antérieures en décrivant la dialectique comme une partie nécessaire de la métaphysique, même si la centralité de l'argumentation dialectique pourrait remettre en question le projet de la métaphysique tout entier et, par là, celui des sciences dont les démonstrations s'appuient sur le terrain métaphysique, c'est-à-dire toutes les

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sciences. Averroès ne souligne pas cette vue, mais sa présence n'en est pas moins ambiguë.

Establishing the supremacy of Aristotelian demonstration (*burhān*, ἀπόδειξις) for rational inquiry is among the crowning achievements of medieval Arabic philosophy and science.[1] This triumph of necessarily valid syllogisms appears to find its most extensive reach in the work of Averroes, who describes a division of humanity in accordance with psychological tendencies toward demonstration, dialectic, or rhetoric, leaving no doubt as to the supremacy of a demonstrative class of people.[2] While he suggests that this demonstrative class is made up of philosophers,[3] in a passage of his *Long Commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Γ.2, Averroes describes dialectic as an acceptable form of philosophy and the dialectician as a kind of scientist.[4] Not only does this apparently put dialectic on an equal, or nearly equal footing with demonstration, this interpretation of this passage from Γ.2 also contradicts how Averroes explained the same passage in the *Middle Commentary*[5] on the *Metaphysics* as well as Aristotle's own description of dialectic throughout the *Metaphysics*.[6] In this

[1] See, *e.g.*, Gerhard Endress, "The language of demonstration: translating science and the formation of terminology in Arabic philosophy and science," *Early Science and Medicine*, 7 (2002): 231–54 and Dimitri Gutas, "Certainty, doubt, error: comments on the epistemological foundations of medieval Arabic science," *Early Science and Medicine*, 7 (2002): 276–89. Roshdi Rashed has explored the role of mathematical demonstrations on grounding philosophy and science in, *e.g.*, "Between philosophy and mathematics: examples of interactions in classical Islam," *Islam and Science*, 3 (2005): 153–65. Another view emphasizes that natural science and philosophy were not as well founded in the Islamic world as the principles and science of *fiqh* and that metaphysics in particular was not well grounded in a consistent epistemology. See, *e.g.*, Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "Relations of philosophy and science: a general view," in George Hourani (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Albany, 1975), pp. 1–4.

[2] This oft mentioned division appears twice in the *Decisive Treatise Determining the Connection between the Law and Wisdom*, at paragraphs 11 and 44 (ff.). See Averroes, *Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, trans. Charles Butterworth (Provo, Utah, 2001), pp. 8 and 26 ff.

[3] *E.g., ibid.*, paragraph 47, p. 27.

[4] The passage in questions is found in Averroes, *Tafsir ma ba'd at-tabi'at*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut, 1938–42), vol. 1, pp. 324–30. It is commenting on Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1004b16–26.

[5] Averroes' *Middle Commentary* survives on in two medieval Hebrew translations, edited in *Il* Commento medio *di Averroe alla* Metafisica *di Aristotele nella tradizione ebraica: Edizione delle versioni ebraiche medievali di Zeraḥyah Ḥen e di Qalonymos ben Qalonymos con introduzione storica e filologica* (Averroes's *Middle Commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the Hebrew Tradition. Edition of the Medieval Hebrew versions by Zeraḥyah Ḥen and Qalonymos ben Qalonymos, together with a historical and philological introduction), by Mauro Zonta (Pavia, 2011), vol. 2. The passage in question occurs on pp. 34–5 of tom. 1 of vol. 2.

[6] Aristotle's explicit mentions of dialectics or dialecticians in the *Metaphysics* are rather few: Greek words with that root appear only 18 times. 8 of these mentions occur in Book Γ (6 appearing in the passage in question [1004b16–26], the other two at 1007a20 and 1012b7); 2 in Book A (987b32 and 989b33); 1 in Book B (995b23); 4 in Book K (1061b8, 1062b11, 1063b11, and 1066b10); and 2 in Book M (1078a29 and b25). I discuss the more

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paper, I begin by re-examining Averroes' exaltation of demonstration in the *Decisive Treatise*, arguing that his position there is not unequivocal. I then proceed to describe Aristotle's presentation of the dialectician in *Metaphysics* Γ.2 (1004b16–26) and continue on to examine some of the changes and ambiguities present in the Arabic translation Averroes used.[7] Subsequently, I turn to Averroes' comments on the passage in question in the Middle and Long Commentaries. Finally, I argue that in the *Long Commentary*, Averroes views dialectic as a necessary part of *Metaphysics*, even though the centrality of dialectic argumentation could call into question the entire project of metaphysics and consequently of the sciences whose demonstrations rely on metaphysical ground, *i.e.*, all sciences. Averroes does not emphasize this view, but its presence is nevertheless unambiguous.

I. THE *DECISIVE TREATISE*

Probably the best known of Averroes' so-called "doctrines" is his division of humanity into three groups according to their manner of assent: the rhetorical class, the dialectical class, and the demonstrative class. This is seen to provide what Richard Taylor, *e.g.*, calls a "psychology of assent"[8] according to which the souls of some are more suited for rhetoric, others for dialectic, and still others for demonstration.[9] Presented in this way, this doctrine appears to list three distinct natures of man. Like Machiavelli's description of two natures of man, peoples and princes, these natures, with their far reaching political implications, would appear to be exclusive and admit no

significant of these in section II below. Of course, this does not rule out the possibility that other passages of the *Metaphysics* have dialectic in mind.

[7] Usṭāth's translation is preserved as lemmata to the Arabic text of Averroes' *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*. See *Tafsir ma ba'd at-tabi'at*, ed. Bouyges, pp. 324–5, Lemma 5, paragraphs e-l.

[8] Richard Taylor, "Averroes on the Sharia of the philosophers," in Richard Taylor and Irfan Omar (eds.), *The Judeo-Christian Islamic Heritage: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives* (Milwaukee, 2012), pp. 283–304.

[9] This account of assent has a parallel in Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's *Book of Demonstration*, where he describes three forms of assent: certitude, which he relates to demonstration, dialectical assent and rhetorical assent. The latter two are inferior approximations of the first. See *Al-Manṭiq ʿinda al-Fārābī*, ed. Rafīq al-ʿAjam and Majid Fakhry (Beirut, 1986–87), vol. 4, chap. 1, p. 20. However, in other places al-Fārābī distinguishes between absolute certainty and other less than absolute forms of certainty. See Deborah Black, "Knowledge (*ʿilm*) and certitude (*yaqīn*) in al-Fārābī's epistemology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 16 (2006): 11–45, esp. 36 ff., where she discusses the *Book of Demonstration*. On the goal of science as "the attainment of perfect conceptualization and assent" in Ibn Bājja, a major influence on Averroes, and the roots of this view of assent in al-Fārābī, see Miquel Forcada, "Ibn Bājja on *taṣawwur* and *taṣdīq*: science and psychology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 24 (2014): 103–26.

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overlap. Averroes himself calls the rhetorical class "the overwhelming multitude" (*al-jamhūr al-ghālib*) and thus apparently adopts a striking intellectual elitism.

One of the implications of this view is the unsuitability of the masses for intellectual speculation. Another is the limited necessity of rhetoric and dialectical argumentation for the non-philosophical. As Etienne Gilson, writing in 1938, says, "You will not civilize a tribe of Bedouins by teaching them metaphysics."[10] Remarkably, metaphysics seems to be the most common example in the scholarly literature of a science conforming to this schema.[11] This is probably due to the character of the work in which Averroes lays out this tripartite division of human classes: *The Decisive Treatise Determining the Connection between the Law and Wisdom*. This work is a legal decision, explaining why, according to Averroes the *qāḍī*, the study of philosophy is permissible, even obligatory for those suited for it, while at the same time possibly dangerous for those not suited for it.[12] Metaphysics, it seems, appears right at the beginning where the activity of philosophy (*falsafa*) is described as "nothing more than theorization (*al-naẓr*) about and consideration of (*iʿtibār*) the things that are (*al-mawjūdāt*) insofar as they are an indication of the Artisan."[13] This is in a way a good one-line account of metaphysics: theorization about the things-that-are as indications of the Divine, *i.e.*, the divine intellect of *Metaphysics* Λ.[14]

[10] *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1938), p. 43.

[11] Cf., *e.g.*, Richard Taylor, "'Truth does not contradict truth': Averroes and the unity of truth," *Topoi*, 19 (2000): 3–16 and "Averroes on the Sharīʿah of the philosophers," in Richard Taylor and Irfan Omar (eds.), *The Judeo-Christian-Islamic Heritage: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives* (Milwaukee, 2012), pp. 283–304, esp. 285–91. See also Thérèse-Anne Druart, "Averroes on God's knowledge of being qua being," in Paul Lockey (ed.), *Studies in Thomistic Theology* (Houston, 1995), pp. 175–205. Majid Fakhry ends his *Averroes (Ibn Rushd): His Life Works and Influence* (Oxford, 2001; repr. 2008), by connecting several statements in the *Decisive Treatise* to statements in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Λ (p. 164).

[12] On the legal form of the *Decisive Treatise* as a *fatwā*, see Daniel Heller-Roazen "Philosophy before the Law: Averroes's *Decisive Treatise*," *Critical Inquiry*, 32 (2006): 412–42, esp. 419 ff. Heller-Roazen notes that the legal syllogism is determined by Averroes to be obligatory (p. 422) and that there is a kind of "unity of demonstration and legal doctrine" (p. 426), yet it is less clear that the whole of philosophy is deemed obligatory (this is true even if the whole of philosophy is contemplating existing things using the most complete demonstration, as at *Decisive Treatise*, pp. 2–3, paragraph 3). On the one hand, Heller-Roazen seems to suggest that Averroes assimilates philosophy to logic, implying that demonstration is an adequate description of philosophy (*e.g.*, pp. 432–3, esp. n. 35). Yet, he also tells us that "wisdom," which presumably includes philosophy, is beyond the grasp of the Law: "Wisdom as such remains outside the purview of the *Treatise*, and it therefore remains possible that the juridical tract has not truly seized hold of the pagan science" (p. 434).

[13] Averroes, *Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, p. 1. On the ambiguity of what is meant by "philosophy" (*falsafa*) in Averroes' *Decisive Treatise*, see Heller-Roazen "Philosophy before the Law," pp. 434–6. See also previous note.

[14] Cf. Fārābī, "A Treatise about the intentions of the Metaphysics": "As for universal science, it reflects on what is common to all existents, such as being and unity … Also on the origin

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Yet the depiction of metaphysics in the *Decisive Treatise* meets with a more dramatic methodological problem: Averroes' description of the philosophical class as those who are "demonstrative by nature and by art" (*al-burhāniyyūn bi-al-ṭabaʿ wa-al-ṣināʿa*)[15] seems to imply that philosophy is purely demonstrative, *i.e.*, that philosophy, and in this context metaphysics in particular, operates using logically sound syllogisms alone. Moreover, since this demonstrative class is distinct from the dialectical class (*al-jadaliyyūn*), metaphysics would seem to be non-dialectical, *i.e.*, it would seem that there is no share of dialectic in philosophy, especially in metaphysics.

However, syllogisms are notoriously difficult to find in Aristotle's writings, and may be even more elusive in Averroes' commentaries. Furthermore, it is far too restrictive to deny the dialectical character of at least certain parts of the metaphysics, if not the whole work. Averroes himself, as we shall see, characterizes the early books as dialectical. That is to say, Averroes relegates dialectic to the non-philosophical in the *Decisive Treatise*, but then employs dialectic in his philosophical commentaries. The description of the philosophical class of people thus seems at odds with the way Averroes actually practices philosophy.

I want to suggest Averroes' account of the three classes of humanity has been somewhat overextended in the literature. It does not carry quite so many implications as might seem. There are, in fact, two descriptions of the three types of assent (*taṣdīq*) in the *Decisive Treatise*. In the first, Averroes says the following:

> [Assent to the Law] is determined for every Muslim in accordance with the method of assent his temperament and nature require. That is because people's natures vary with respect to assent. Thus, some assent by means of demonstration; some assent by means of dialectical statements (*bi-al-aqāwīl al-jadaliyya*) in the same way the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstration, there being nothing greater in their natures; and some assent by means of rhetorical statements, just as the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstrative statements.[16]

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common to all existents, and that is the thing which should be referred to by the name of God, may He be exalted and may His names be sanctified" (unpublished translation by Aryeh Leo Motzkin). Nevertheless, it is not clear to what extent metaphysics, in Averroes' view, sets out to study God rather than to study truth as such, which arrives, indirectly, at a study of God toward the end of the *Metaphysics* (Book Λ). See Steven Harvey, "The quiddity of philosophy according to Averroes and Falaquera, a Muslim philosopher and his Jewish interpreter," *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, 26 (1998): 904–7. Harvey compares the definition of philosophy according to the *Decisive Treatise* with how Averroes proceeds philosophically in his commentaries.

[15] Averroes, *Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, p. 26:

[16] Paragraph 11, Butterworth trans., p. 8.

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This description lists three ways of assent to the Law, determined by the various natures and temperaments of people. There is no reason to assume that they are mutually exclusive, that, *e.g.*, those who assent to one thing by demonstration cannot assent to something else on the basis of dialectical arguments. Moreover, the assertion that those who assent by means of dialectical methods do so because there is nothing greater in their natures leaves it unclear whether there is nothing greater in their natures than dialectic (*i.e.*, they have no appreciation for demonstration) or whether there is nothing greater in their nature than dialectic and demonstration. In any case, the inclusion of temperament (*jibla*) as one of the reasons for the variance in ways of assent implies that what is referred to here is a *spectrum* of assent along which various forms of assent can be found, including the three mentioned here. He does not say that there are three different *natures* of people here, but rather that nature requires people to form assent in different ways.

It is later in the decisive treatise that Averroes describes three classes (*aṣnāf*) of people, the rhetorical, the dialectical, and the demonstrative. But here Averroes does not describe them as natures, but in fact says, "People, according to the law (*fī al-sharī'a*) are of three classes."[17] That is, the distinction between these three classes of people is not natural, but legal.[18] The Law groups these people into classes, where perhaps nature leaves more of a spectrum of assent. The Law's purpose, Averroes tells us, is to determine who can interpret what. The different classes of people have different methods legally at their disposal for interpreting the Quran. However, it does not necessarily follow from this legal argument that there are three natures of people, in the same way that there are three classes of argument. The Law may reflect nature to a certain degree, but does not do so necessarily.

The *Decisive Treatise* provides an account of the legal divisions of human beings, but we must look elsewhere for the natural division of humanity in accordance with their ways of assenting to arguments. One place to look is in Averroes' own accounts of metaphysics, *i.e.*, his three commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, especially the culmination of these works, the *Long Commentary*. As a work of Law, the *Decisive Treatise* gives us a legal account of the differences between philosophical, dialectical and rhetorical people, but it is the philosophical works that should explain such distinctions as they *are* or according to their natures.

[17] Paragraph 44. See Butterworth trans. p. 26.

[18] Note that Averroes' statements in the rest of paragraph 44 that the demonstrative classes are so by nature and art and that the dialectical classes are so by nature or habit in context imply only that the Law recognizes them to be such.

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II. ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS* Γ.2

A short passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Γ.2 provides a glimpse of this kind of division in the context of metaphysics. In this passage, Aristotle outlines a kind of distinction between the philosopher, the dialectician and the sophist (the latter may have something in common with the rhetorician). Averroes discusses this passage differently in two of his commentaries on the *Metaphysics*, the *Middle* and the *Long*, and examining that distinction is instructive about his approach to metaphysics. In the original passage, Aristotle is arguing for the unity of metaphysics as a science that examines being *qua* being and its attributes. Almost as an aside, Aristotle mentions the dialecticians and the sophists as people who also examine the attributes of being. Aristotle's words are as follows:

It is the task of the philosopher to examine the truth about [the attributes of being *qua* being]. A sign of this is the following: dialecticians and sophists put on the same appearance as the philosopher (for sophistry only appears to be wisdom, and dialecticians discuss everything) since being is common to all. But clearly they discuss all things because these are *proper* to philosophy. Now sophistry and dialectics busy themselves with the same genus of things as philosophy, but philosophy differs from dialectic in the manner of its capacity, and from sophistry in the kind of life *chosen*. Dialectics is a striving concerning things which philosophy knows, sophistry makes the appearance of knowing without knowing.[19]	καὶ ταῦτ' ἐστὶ περὶ ὧν τοῦ φιλοσόφου ἐπισκέψασθαι τὸ ἀληθές. σημεῖον δέ οἱ γὰρ διαλεκτικοὶ καὶ σοφισταὶ τὸ αὐτὸ μὲν ὑποδύονται σχῆμα τῷ φιλοσόφῳ· ἡ γὰρ σοφιστικὴ φαινομένη μόνον σοφία ἐστί, καὶ οἱ διαλεκτικοὶ διαλέγονται περὶ ἁπάντων, κοινὸν δὲ πᾶσι τὸ ὄν ἐστιν, διαλέγονται δὲ περὶ τούτων δῆλον ὅτι διὰ τὸ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ταῦτα εἶναι οἰκεῖα. περὶ μὲν γὰρ τὸ αὐτὸ γένος στρέφεται ἡ σοφιστικὴ καὶ ἡ διαλεκτικὴ τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ, ἀλλὰ διαφέρει τῆς μὲν τῷ τρόπῳ τῆς δυνάμεως, τῆς δὲ τοῦ βίου τῇ προαιρέσει ἔστι δὲ ἡ διαλεκτικὴ πειραστικὴ περὶ ὧν ἡ φιλοσοφία γνωριστική, ἡ δὲ σοφιστικὴ φαινομένη, οὖσα δ' οὔ.

According to this passage, three types of people examine the attributes of being *qua* being, philosophers, dialecticians, and sophists. All three have the appearance of philosophers, but there are crucial distinctions between them. Sophistry is the most easily distinguished

[19] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. 1004b16–26. Hippocrates Apostle trans. (Bloomington, 1970), p. 57. Translation modified.

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from philosophy. It seems to be wisdom (σοφία, *not* ἐπιστήμη) concerning being and seems to be a knowing (γνωριστική, *not* ἐπιστήμη), but is not. Moreover, sophistry involves a different kind of life choice from philosophy. Aristotle does not elaborate what this life choice is here, but it is not difficult to imagine: philosophers pursue knowledge of truth, sophists pursue the kind of benefits that come with seeming to know, things like public esteem and teaching positions.

Dialectics, as presented here, is a little more difficult to distinguish from philosophy. It appears to be philosophy because dialecticians engage in dialectics (οἱ διαλεκτικοὶ διαλέγονται) about everything. Indeed, they do so *because* philosophy treats everything. That is dialectics pursues the same goals as philosophy because they are the goals of philosophy. Dialectics differs from philosophy in two respects: "in the manner of its capacity" and in that it is a striving. We cannot be certain what these expressions mean for Aristotle, but regarding the "capacity" (or "potential," δύναμις), we have the sense that dialectics is more limited in capacity than philosophy, though this is somewhat vague.[20] It is harder to make sense of dialectic as a striving (πειραστική) especially when such striving is contrasted with "knowing" (γνωριστική). It is sometimes suggested that the striving of the dialectician is a striving to overcome an opponent or else a kind of exercise,[21] but it could just as easily be a striving for truth. That is, dialectics could be a striving for philosophy.

The few other places where Aristotle mentions dialectics in the *Metaphysics* also echo this more positive view of dialectic as a striving for philosophy. Thus, dialectic is associated with Plato and twice said not to have been developed before him, or at least not before Socrates (A, 987b32 and M 1078b25 ff.). In Book B (995b23–24), Aristotle notes that dialectics inquires into the essential attributes of substance. He

[20] It is also possible that Aristotle alludes here to the discussion of capacity in Plato's account of discussing being in the *Sophist*. Note also that Aristotle's contention that sophists and dialecticians put on the same appearance as the philosopher may refer to the beginning of the *Sophist*, where Socrates says that philosophers sometimes put on the appearance of statesmen, sophists, or madmen (216c-d). If Aristotle is introducing the dialectician into this group of appearance makers, we must wonder how the dialectician differs from the sophist, philosopher, statesman, or madman.

[21] Hugh Tredennick (Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, Mass. and London,1968], p. 157) translates the term, πειραστικὴ, "treats as an exercise," which he contrasts with the "trying to understand" (γνωριστική) of the philosophers. William D. Ross (in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes [Princeton, 1984], vol. 2, p. 1586) gives "merely critical" for πειραστικὴ, similarly implying a kind of futility to the efforts of the dialectician. However, Ross gives a more nuanced look at the word πειραστικὴ in his edition of the *Metaphysics* (London, 1924), where he notes the difficulty of deciding what the term might mean (see pp. 260–1). Sachs (Santa Fe, NM, 2002) translates πειραστικὴ as "tentative," *i.e.*, "tentative about those things which philosophy seeks to know." I have used the word "striving" to translate πειραστικὴ because it reflects the word's root of πειράω, to strive or try. Moreover, "striving" works with all of the other meanings sketched above, while preserving the ambiguity of what precisely the dialectician strives for.

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notes that dialecticians strive (πειρῶνται, from the same root as πειραστικὴ) to inquire about these essential attributes, but they make this inquiry on the basis of accepted opinions alone (ἐκ τῶν ἐνδόξων μόνων). In context here, Aristotle seems to contrast this dialectical approach with a theoretical approach (θεωρῆσαι) that treats all things completely. Here, too, dialectics strives for what theory proper accomplishes.

A more revealing account of dialectics does not come until Book K (1061b7–12), where Aristotle says, "dialectic and sophistry are concerned with the attributes of beings, but not insofar as they are beings, nor with being itself in that it is being. As a result, it remains that it is the philosopher who is the one who theorizes (θεωρητικόν) about the things mentioned above in that they are beings." According to this account, dialectic and sophistry do study the attributes of being, but not as beings. Earlier, philosophy was described as "knowing" (γνωριστική), here the philosopher is one who theorizes (θεωρητικόν). Whatever the distinction between the two, dialectics is taken as a counterpart to both. An indication of what Aristotle might mean when he says that dialectics does not study being as being may be gleaned from a kind of aside in the above-mentioned section in Book M (1078b25–27), where Aristotle notes that before Socrates no one had dialectics by which to study contraries without knowledge of whatness (τοῦ τί ἐστι). It seems to follow that the dialecticians who theorize about beings but not *qua* beings are theorizing about beings without examining the whatness of being, *i.e.*, without understanding *what* being is.

We may summarize Aristotle's somewhat piecemeal account of dialectics dispersed throughout the chapters of the *Metaphysics* as follows. Dialectics is a striving to achieve knowledge of beings, just as philosophy is. However, philosophy studies the beings *qua* beings and being *qua* being, and it does this through examining the whatness of being. Accordingly, philosophy is properly theoretical and may be said to be a *knowing* of its subject. Dialectics does not examine beings *qua* beings, but focuses on examining accepted opinions. It seems likely that because of its focus on accepted opinions and because of its lack of attention to the *what it is* of being, dialectic is considered to be of limited capacity.

Aristotle's sole examples of dialecticians are Socrates and Plato, and the reference to Plato probably refers to his portrayal of the dialectician *par excellence*, Socrates. The critique of dialectics is for Aristotle also a critique of Socratic philosophy. We may even speculate that Aristotle's frequent example of Socrates as a subject or underlying thing throughout the *Metaphysics* could be a further critique of the Socratic approach. After all, Aristotle's criticism of Socrates is that he did not pay attention to the *whatness* of a thing, but

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Aristotle then goes on to use Socrates as an example of the *whatness* of a particular being, *e.g.*, Socrates sits, Socrates stands. What is sitting or standing? What unifies them? The underlying thing, their whatness, *viz.* Socrates.

According to this account of Aristotle, philosophy and dialectics are clearly distinct and philosophy is clearly superior to dialectic. At best, dialectic is an imitation of philosophy, but not the real thing. The Socratic dialectic is inferior to the Aristotelian study of essences.

III. USṬĀTH'S ARABIC TRANSLATION OF *METAPHYSICS* Γ.2

This distinction between philosophy and dialectic receives two different treatments in Averroes' two commentaries that explain this passage from *Metaphysics* Γ.2, *viz.* the *Middle Commentary* and the *Long Commentary*. Averroes' account of this passage in the *Middle Commentary* conforms pretty well to what I am describing as Aristotle's approach, but his account in the *Long Commentary* differs considerably and encourages rethinking the place of dialectic in Aristotelian metaphysics. In context, it becomes clear that Averroes' *Long Commentary* offers a quite radical departure from Aristotle's initial text.

To some extent, these two interpretations reflect different readings of Usṭāth's 9th century Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[22] The passage in question reads as follows:

It is fitting for the philosopher to examine these affections [of being] in truth. An indication of this is that dialecticians and sophists task themselves with the labor the philosophers assign themselves. For the sophistic science is merely erroneous wisdom. But the dialecticians speak of all things and being is the universal shared by all [three] of them. It is known that they speak of these things because they are the specialty of philosophy. For

[e] وهذه الالام التى ينبغى
للفيلسوف ان يفحص عنها بالحقيقة.
[f] والدلالة على ذلك ان المنطقيين
والسفسطانيين يلزمون انفسهم ما يلزم
الفيلسوف نفسه من التعب. [g] فان علم
[h] السفسطانى هو حكمة بالتموية فقط.
واما المنطقيون فهم يتكلمون فى جميع
الاشياء والهوية هو العام المشترك لجميعهم.

[22] See *Tafsir ma ba'd at-tabi'at*, p. 325, Lemma 5, paragraphs e-l. Note also that of the other places where Aristotle mentions dialectic or dialecticians (in Books A, B, Γ, K and M), we only have access to two in Arabic translation (those in Books B and Γ). Two of these places, in Books K and M, probably were translated into Arabic since Averroes comments on them in his *Middle Commentary* on the *Metaphysics*. The text from Book A happens to be missing at that point.

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the science of sophistry and the science of dialectics concern one genus, which is the genus of philosophy. But philosophy is distinguished from the former science in the manner of its capacity and from the latter science in the consideration of conducting life. For the science of the dialectician scientifically studies that which the philosopher scientifically studies, while the science of the sophist thinks it studies something scientifically but in truth does not study scientifically.

فمعلوم انهم يتكلمون فى هذه الاشياء لانها خاصة الفلسفة [i] فان علم السفطانيين وعلم المنطقيين يرجع الى جنس واحد وهو جنس الفلسفة. [k] لاكن تنفصل الفلسفة اما من العلم الواحد فبنوع القوة واما من العلم الاخر فباعتبار تدبير الحياة. [l] فان علم المنطق يعلم ما يعلم الفيلسوف واما علم السفسطانى فيظن انه يعلم ولا يعلم بالحقيقة.

There are a few striking differences between this translation and the Greek original. Where Aristotle's Greek spoke of sophistry and dialectics putting on the same appearances as philosophy, Usṭāth has them assigning themselves the same labor. That is, Usṭāth much more strongly indicates that they are all working toward the same goal.[23] Usṭāth also obliterates any mention of *choice* in consideration of the way of life one ought to lead, but this does not seem to affect the meaning here. Aristotle says that sophistry and dialectics are concerned with the same genus that philosophy is concerned with, while Usṭāth has them concern the genus of philosophy. Perhaps, though, here too there is no actual difference in meaning.

The most important difference seems to lie in the final line of the passage. Aristotle has: "Dialectics is a striving concerning things which philosophy knows, sophistry makes the appearance of knowing without knowing." Usṭāth translates this: "For the science of dialectic scientifically studies (*yaʿlimu*) that which philosophy scientifically studies (*yaʿlimu*), while the science of sophistry thinks that it studies something scientifically but in truth does not study scientifically." Under Usṭāth's rendering throughout this passage sophistry, dialectics and philosophy are all described as sciences (*ʿulūm*). In the final sentence of this passage, Usṭāth suggests that dialectic and philosophy scientifically study (*yaʿlimu*) the same thing, while sophistry does not. It is much more difficult to make a distinction here on the

[23] While it is not entirely clear why Usṭāth uses the word "labor" (*taʿab*) here, it seems to convey the sense of "project" or "intellectual endeavor" in much the same way the sciences in Arabic are often referred to as "crafts" or "arts" (*ṣināʿāt*)

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basis of this passage between dialectic and philosophy on grounds of knowing or theoretical approach.

Part of this seems due to the very loose way Usṭāth uses the word *ʿilm* and words that share its root. Usṭāth's 9th century translation was quite early in the development of Arabic philosophical terminology and consequently Usṭāth himself had to determine and fix Arabic metaphysical terminology in a language that had not yet treated Aristotelian metaphysics. While many of his choices were of lasting influence in philosophical Arabic, some were not and could consequently lead to confusion later on.[24] For example, in this passage from Γ.2 and throughout the *Metaphysics*, Usṭāth translated Aristotle's διαλεκτικοὶ as *manṭiqiyyūn* probably considering that since the root meaning of n-ṭ-q is "speak" it would make a good term for dialecticians. By Averroes' time, however, the root n-ṭ-q was consistently used for "logic" and the term *manṭiqiyyūn* could be understood to be "logicians." Averroes, though, does not appear to have had any difficulty with this. Similarly, whatever Usṭāth may have meant by *ʿilm* or *yaʿlimu*, Averroes appears not to have been led astray into understanding Aristotle to minimize the distinction between dialectics and philosophy. This is evident from Averroes' treatment of this passage in the *Middle Commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

IV: AVERROES' *MIDDLE COMMENTARY* ON ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS* Γ.2

Averroes renders the passage as follows in his *Middle Commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[25]

[24] For a discussion of the issues facing 9th and 10th century translators of Greek philosophy and Usṭāth's place among these translators see Gerhard Endress, "The circle of al-Kindi: early Arabic translations from the Greek and the rise of Islamic philosophy," in Gerhard Endress and Remke Kruk (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 43–76. See also the sources mentioned in note 1.

[25] Since the Arabic of the *Middle Commentary* on the *Metaphysics* is not extant, the text printed here is from the Hebrew translation of Qalonimos b. Qalonimos, printed in Averroes, *Il* Commento medio, ed. Zonta, vol. 2, tom. 1, pp. 34–5. Another translation by Zeraḥyah Ḥen, which does not differ in any significant way from the Qalonimos translation of this passage, is included in Zonta's edition. Both translations strove to be as literal as possible and can therefore be relied upon for our purposes here. On the reliability and usefulness of the Hebrew translations of Averroes, especially those of Qalonimos, see Steven Harvey, "Are the medieval Hebrew translations of Averroes' Commentaries on Aristotle still of value and worth editing?" in Aafke M. I. van Oppenraay (ed.), *The Letter before the Spirit: the Importance of Text Editions for the Study of the Reception of Aristotle* (Leiden and Boston, 2012), pp. 95–210.

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ואלו המקרים יחוייב שיהיה הפילוסוף הוא אשר יחקור מהם. והראיה על זה שהנצוחיים והטעאיים יחייבו לעצמם החקירה מן הנמצא מה שיחייבהו הפילוסוף לעצמו. אם המטעים לפי שהם יתדמו לפילוסופים ויראו לעולם שהם הם. ואמנם הנצוחיים לפי שהם חייבו עצמם לחקור מכל הדברים. והנמצא הוא הנושא המשותף להם, ר"ל אשר יעיינו בו אלו המלאכות השלש, ר"ל מלאכת החכמה ומלאכת הנצוח ומלאכת החכמה המזוייפת. ואלו המלאכות הן אחדות בסוג, ר"ל השלש, ומתחלפות בצד. הנה מלאכת הפילוסופיה תבדל ממלאכת הנצוח בכח והפעל, ר"ל שפעל הפילוסופיא הוא ידיעת האמת ופעל הנצוח הוא התגבורת, או החכמה המדומה. ותבדל ממלאכת ההטעאה בתכלית, וזה שכונת ההטעאיי הוא הכבוד והממון ושאר הטובות המדיניות אשר מחוץ אשר יחשבו שהם יקנו אותם כשתחשב בם החכמה. וכונת הפילוסוף היא ידיעת האמת ועשיית האמת.

It is incumbent upon the philosopher to examine these accidents [of being]. An indication of this is that dialecticians and sophists task themselves with examining being, just as the philosopher tasks himself with this. The sophists do this so that they might seem to be philosophers and appear to the world to be the same.[26] But the dialecticians do this because they task themselves with examining all things. Being is a subject that is shared by them; that is, these three projects theorize about it, *i.e.*, the project of science, the project of dialectics and the project of false science. These projects, *i.e.*, these three, are ones in genus but are different in a way. The project of philosophy is different from the project of dialectics in potentiality and actuality, that is because the activity of philosophy is knowledge of the truth and the activity of dialectics is overcoming and [becoming] imagined science.[27] [Philosophy] is different from the project of sophistry in end; this is because the aim of the sophist is glory and money and other external political goods which they think they can acquire once they are considered to have science. But the intention of the philosopher is knowledge of the truth and doing the truth.

While Averroes does not restore anything about "appearances" and how philosophers, dialecticians and sophists all appear the same, he does correct other differences between Aristotle's text and Usṭāth's translation. Dialectics and sophistry no longer concern the "genus of philosophy," but are rather "ones (*ʾaḥadot*) in genus." This somewhat vague formulation may suggest that they are not "one (*ʾeḥad*) in genus," but that each of the three sciences is itself a kind of one. Further, where Aristotle had "choice of life" and Usṭāth's translation had "conducting life," Averroes' *Middle Commentary* refers to the end

[26] Or: always appear to be the same. Zeraḥyah's translation has no equivalent of לעולם.
[27] Or: or [philosophy is different from] the imagined science.

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(*takhlit*) or the aim (*kawwanah*) of the activities. While this terminology does not explicitly reintroduce the notion of choice, it quite clearly implies the actors' choice in pursuing philosophy or sophistry.

More surprising here is how this account of dialectic conforms to how this passage is often read (but not how I argued Aristotle's passage ought to be read). Aristotle's assertion that dialectics is a πειραστικὴ, a striving is often taken as meaning a striving to beat an opponent. That is, according to this view, dialectics is a kind of contest, where competing arguers strive to get the better of each other in speech. Averroes' statement that "the activity of dialectics is overcoming"[28] seems to subscribe to this view.[29] We saw that the term πειραστικὴ does not make it into Usṭāth's translation, but appears to have been replaced by the somewhat problematic term, *yaʿlimu*, as mentioned above. Averroes' re-insertion of "overcoming" here for πειραστικὴ (lit. "striving") seems to indicate that he had another source for this passage, perhaps another commentary on which he relied.[30] Perhaps relying on this source, Averroes also removes the other mentions of the word *yaʿlimu* in this section of the *Middle Commentary*. Accordingly, he does not assert or even imply here that dialectics is scientific. Rather, he seems to assert that dialectics is an imagined science.[31] He only mentions that philosophy seeks knowledge of the truth (as well as action!), and does not get into whether or to what extent dialectics pursues knowledge of the truth.

In sum, Averroes' treatment of this passage from Γ.2 in the *Middle Commentary* does not tell us much about dialectics. We learn that dialecticians task themselves with examining being, because they task themselves with examining all things. Dialectics is said to be of the same genus, or at least a related genus as philosophy, but seems to aim at a kind of overcoming of antagonists, rather than scientific knowledge of the truth simply. This view of dialectics conforms to how this passage is frequently read and seems to imply that dialectics is really not of much value when it comes to metaphysics. According to the *Middle Commentary*, and to Aristotle's text itself, dialectics is

[28] Both Qalonimos' translation (*tigboret*) and Zeraḥyah's translation (*niṣaḥon*) have roughly the same meaning.

[29] Cf. Averroes' *Short Commentary* on Aristotle's *Topics*, par. 21 in *Averroes' Three Short Commentaries on Aristotle's "Topics," "Rhetoric," and "Poetics,"* ed. Charles Butterworth (Albany, 1977), pp. 54–5, where Averroes refers to two disputants training their dialectical abilities and compares such training to fencing. Averroes then ends this *Short Commentary* by stating, "Training like this seems unnecessary for the perfection of the demonstrative arts. But if it were, without a doubt, it would be from the standpoint of the most excellent." This statement certainly reinforces the distinction between dialectics and demonstration and seems to accord with Averroes' view of dialectics in the *Middle Commentary* on the *Metaphysics*.

[30] There is, however, no outside evidence for this claim. On possible sources available to Qalonimos and Zeraḥyah see Zonta, *Il* Commento Medio, vol. 1, pp. 45 ff. and the secondary sources cited therein.

[31] This is not, though, entirely clear. Accordingly, I suspect there may be a transmission problem here in the Hebrew.

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clearly inferior to philosophy proper and by implication would best be avoided by the true student of metaphysics.

IV. AVERROES' *LONG COMMENTARY* ON ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS* Γ.2

The *Long Commentary* paints dialectic in a somewhat different light. The following is my translation of Averroes' *Long Commentary* on this passage:[32]

(e) These accidents which are of being insofar as it is being are those which the philosopher ought to examine.	(e) ... وهذه الاعراض التى للموجود بما هو موجود هى التى ينبغى للفيلسوف ان يفحص عنها.
(f) ... An indication that the philosopher tasks himself with examining being and its concomitants is that those who become like the philosopher task themselves with the labor of examining those meanings the philosopher tasks himself [with examining]. Indeed, this is so because these [sophists and dialecticians] also theorize a general theorization about being.	(f) ... والدليل على ان الفيلسوف يلزمه الفحص عن الهوية ولواحقها ان الذين يتشبهون به يلزمون انفسهم من التعب فى الفحص عن هذه المعانى ما يلزمه الفيلسوف نفسه وانما كان ذلك كذلك لان هولاء ايضا ينظرون فى الموجود نظرا عاما.
(g) ... The wisdom of the sophists is a seeming wisdom because it is not in itself [wisdom], just as counterfeit *darāhim* (= *drachmai*) seem to be *darāhim*.	(g) ... حكمة السفسطانيين هى حكمة توهم بانها حكمة من غير ان تكون كذلك فى نفسها مثل الدراهم المدلسة التى توهم انها دراهم.
(h) ... But the dialecticians also speak about all the things that the philosophers and sophists speak about. And speaking about being[33] is a science shared by them.	(h) ... واما الجدليون فانهم يتكلمون ايضا في جميع الاشياء التى يتكلم فيها الفيلسوف والسفسطانى والتكلم فى الهوية والموجود هو العلم المشترك لهم.

[32] See Bouyges, *Tafsir*, Comm. 5, paragraphs e-l, pp. 328–30. The paragraph letters in this paragraph correspond to the superscript letters in Uṣṭāth's translation quoted above.

[33] In the context of this article, I do not differentiate between the Arabic terms هوية and موجود, both which I translate "being." On some of the difficulties in translating these terms see my "Revision and standardization of Hebrew philosophical terminology in the fourteenth century: the example of Averroes' *Long Commentary* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Δ," *Aleph*, 13 (2013): 95–137.

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(i) When he mentioned that they share the [same] subject, he mentioned the way in which these projects can be distinguished … the genus which these three [projects] theorize about is one genus, *i.e.*, absolute being.

(k) … But true philosophy is distinguished from dialectical philosophy in the manner of its science. For true philosophy theorizes about being through demonstrative theorizing, and dialectical philosophy through a theorizing involving accepted opinions. But sophistic is different in the intention of its aim in life, because the sophist's aim is to be thought a philosopher without being one so that they might thereby obtain glory or some of the other human goods. But the aim of the philosopher is only to know the truth.

(l) He said, "the science of the dialectician scientifically studies that which the philosopher scientifically studies." He means, Indeed, we said that the projects of philosophy and of dialectics are distinguished in the kind of science [they are], because the dialectician scientifically studies that which the philosopher scientifically studies, but one of them studies what he scientifically studies through demonstration and the other through accepted opinion. However, the sophist does not have a science at all. Indeed, he has something that seems to be a science but is false. Accordingly [Aristotle] says, "while <the science of> the sophist thinks it studies something scientifically but in truth does not study scientifically."

(i) ولما ذكر انهما يشتركان فى الموضوع ذكر النحو الذى تفترق فيه هذه الصنائع . . . الجنس لهذه الثلث الذى تنظر فيه هو جنس واحد وهو الموجود المطلق.

(k) . . . لاكن الفلسفة الحقيقية تنفصل من الفلسفة الجدلية بنوع العلم فان الفلسفة الحقيقية تنظر فى الموجود نظرا برهانيا والجدلية نظرا مشهورا. واما السوفسطانية فتنفصل بالغرض المقصود فى الحياة فان السفسطانى قصده ان يظن به انه فيلسوف من غير ان يكون كذلك لينال كرامة بذلك او غيرها من الخيرات الانسانية. والفيلسوف قصده ان يعرف الحق فقط.

(l) ثم قال "فان علم المنطق يعلم ما يعلم الفيلسوف" يريد وانما قلنا ان صناعة الفلسفة والجدل تنفصل بنوع العلم لان الجدلى يعلم ما يعلمه الفيلسوف الا ان احدهما يعلم ما يعلم بالبرهان والاخر بالشهرة. واما السفطانى فليس عنده علم البتة وانما عنده ما يوهم انه علم وهو كذب ولذلك قال "واما السفسطانى فيظن انه يعلم ولا يعلم بالحقيقة."

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Once again we see our now familiar three characters, the philosopher, the dialectician, and the sophist. Here what they have in common is that they all engage in general theorizing (*naẓar*) about being, indeed about absolute being. Moreover they all set as their task the labor (*al-taʿab*) of examining (*al-fakhṣ*) the meanings (*al-maʿānī*) that philosophy tasks itself with examining. Note that Averroes' language in the *Long Commentary* is much more restrictive than either the *Middle Commentary* or Usṭāth's translation, or even for that matter Aristotle's Greek. Indeed, Aristotle's Greek is the most broad, least useful characterization of what these three approaches have in common. Aristotle says they all "put on the same appearance (ὑποδύονται σχῆμα) as the philosopher." Usṭāth's translation adds the notion that they "task themselves (*yalzimūna*) with the labor (*al-taʿab*) the philosophers assign (*yalzimu*) themselves." This language of assignment and tasking themselves (from the verb *alzama*) implies intent, and suggests that the sophists, dialecticians and philosophers are all pursuing the same ends. Averroes echoes this sentiment in the *Middle Commentary* where he says that all three characters "task themselves with examining[34] being." This is to say, sophists, dialecticians, and philosophers all set themselves on the path toward examining being. In the *Long Commentary*, Averroes does *not* say that they are pursuing the same examination of being, but rather they are pursuing the labor of examining the meanings that philosophy is examining. This leaves an opening for Averroes to claim what I argued Aristotle himself seems to claim in the *Metaphysics*: that sophistry and dialectics do not actually pursue being, but only the attributes of being, *i.e.*, the meanings or intentions (*al-maʿānī*) of being.[35]

However, in the *Long Commentary*, Averroes only extends this to sophistry. It is sophistry that is the seeming wisdom, but in fact counterfeit philosophy. Sophistry shares the same subject, *viz.* absolute being, and theorizes about the same genus as philosophy, but it only aims to be considered philosophy so as to receive all the attendant human goods. Moreover, sophistry is emphatically *not* a science according to the *Long Commentary*. It aims to be seen as a science, but is not scientific.

[34] The Hebrew *ha-ḥaqirah* ("examining") is generally used to translate *al-fakhṣ*.

[35] On "attributes" as a possible meaning of *maʿna*, see Richard Frank, "Al-maʿnà: some reflections on the technical meanings of the term in the Kalâm and its use in the Physics of Muʿammar," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 87 (1967): 248–59. I discuss Averroes' use of *maʿnā* for a form that is "about" something or in relation (*bi-nisba*) to something in my "Averroes on intentionality and the human experience of the natural world," in Ahmed Alwishah and Josh Hayes (eds.), *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 164–76.

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The dialecticians, on the other hand, do not fall under this criticism in the *Long Commentary*. Dialecticians speak about all the things that the philosophers and sophists speak about. Further, speaking about being is itself a science. While it follows that sophistry does not partake of this science, dialectic, which properly includes speaking (*takallum*) as its activity, seems to include this. Moreover, we learn in paragraph i that it speaks about one genus, absolute being, and may thereby contain the theoretical unity required for a science.[36]

In paragraphs k and l, Averroes states that dialectics is or at least can be a science. Moreover, Averroes introduces the expression "dialectical philosophy" (*al-falsafa al-jadaliyya*) which he opposes to "true philosophy" (*al-falsafa al-ḥaqīqiyya*). The implication of this is that dialectics is or at least can be a kind of philosophy. On the one hand, it is possible that Averroes calls dialectics philosophy because it is performed by the philosopher, even though it is not philosophical activity as such, *i.e.*, demonstration.[37] On the other hand, the context of the statement seems to indicate that dialectics is a kind of philosophy; in particular, it is an approach to science through accepted opinions, rather than demonstration. Averroes contrasts the philosopher, both the demonstrative philosopher and the dialectical philosopher, with the sophist in paragraph k, ending with the assertion, "the aim of the philosopher is only to know the truth." If the philosopher as such aims to know the truth, he is no less of a philosopher for employing less than demonstrative methods, even if those methods are less effective.

In paragraph l, Averroes' selective quoting and interpretation of Usṭāth's translation leaves out Usṭāth's assertions that sophistry is

[36] See, *e.g., Posterior Analytics* I 7, where Aristotle argues that demonstrations made of one genus cannot be applied to another genus. If dialectics concerns one genus, "absolute being," then there is a science of that one being. Of course, it would presumably be studied through demonstrations, not dialectical argument. Averroes' definition of science at this point in the *Long Commentary* does not, however, seem to rely on demonstration. One may well ask, then, if a non-demonstrative, dialectical science such as that which emerges from the ensuing paragraphs, would still be confined to examining one genus.

[37] This would seem to conform to Fārābī's differentiation of the "true philosopher" from false, vain, and counterfeit philosophers at the end of the *Attainment of Happiness*, paragraphs 57–64 (see Muhsin Mahdi's Translation, *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* [Ithaca, NY, 1969], pp. 46–50). Among the many (perhaps not directly philosophic) jobs assigned to the true philosopher (including ruler, legislator, and *imām*) is that of making images and persuasive arguments (par. 59). That is, the philosopher seems to take on the jobs of poet and sophist. According to Fārābī, "the images and persuasive arguments are intended for others," *i.e.*, for non-philosophers, "whereas, so far as he is concerned these things are certain" (*ibid.*). That is, "true philosophy" encompasses arguments that are not strictly speaking philosophical, though they may refer to or relate to *things* that are grasped by the philosopher. For Averroes, in this vein, "true philosophy" would refer to demonstration, while other activities of the philosopher, including dialectics, would be philosophy only by extension. However, in neither Averroes nor Fārābī, are "persuasive arguments" clearly the domain of the dialectician rather than of the sophist.

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a science (ʿ*ilm*). It mentions only that dialectics and philosophy pursue scientific study (*yaʿlimu*). The implication is clear: the sophist is not a scientist, but the dialectician and the philosopher are scientists. The science of dialectics is different from the usual science of philosophy in that it does not follow demonstration, but pursues accepted opinion. Yet insofar as he pursues knowledge of truth, the dialectician is, or can be a philosopher.

Averroes' comments here seem to some extent to be straightforward interpretations of Usṭāth's translation. After all, it was Usṭāth who claimed that dialectic studies scientifically (*yaʿlimu*), while sophistry does not (though he somewhat paradoxically includes sophistry as a "science" [ʿ*ilm*]). Yet Usṭāth does not refer to "dialectical philosophy." Moreover, Averroes is perfectly able to extract any mention of dialectic's scientific character in the *Middle Commentary* and could presumably do so in the *Long Commentary* in much the same way that he restates *manṭiqiyyūn* as *jadaliyyūn* in, *e.g.*, paragraph h.

In sum, the status of dialectics has changed somewhat in its journey from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* to Averroes' *Long Commentary*. Dialectics appears in Aristotle's text to have been an imitation of philosophy that focuses on attributes rather than the what-it-is of being or what it is to be. This view is to some extent preserved in the *Middle Commentary*, where dialectics is said to focus on overcoming opponents, rather than on discovering the truth. In the *Long Commentary*, we find dialectics as an alternate form of philosophy, one that scientifically examines accepted opinions. It is implicitly inferior to demonstrative philosophy, but nevertheless comparable in kind.

V. THE DIALECTICAL BOOKS OF THE *METAPHYSICS* ACCORDING TO THE *LONG COMMENTARY*

The elevation of dialectics to a science and a kind of philosophy is significant for Averroes' approach to the *Metaphysics* because it turns out that, at least in the *Long Commentary*, metaphysics begins with a dialectical approach.[38] Averroes states this explicitly in his introductory remarks to Book B and his remarks there, while containing precious few details, are, to my knowledge, the most detailed account of dialectics in the *Long Commentary*. He says:

> [Aristotle]'s intention in this treatise [*i.e.*, Book B] is to bring in the first place the dialectical statements that establish the thing that is one in itself and to invalidate all the deep questions of this science. For determining the science of a thing, *i.e.*, the demonstrative science, is complete when one makes known

[38] Cf. Aristotle, *Topics* 101b3–4: dialectic "holds the path toward the principles of all inquiries."

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in the first place the contradictory statements about this thing and then makes known their solution due to the demonstration that concerns that thing.[39]

According to this account, Book B is explicitly dialectical, and the dialectical approach quite clearly extends beyond this book. Dialectics, or perhaps dialectical philosophy has at least two parts. The first is invalidating the "deep questions," *i.e.*, the ἀπορίαι, which is quite clearly the subject of Book B, if not also of Aristotle's critique of his predecessors in Books α and A. It is the second that most concerns us here: dialectical statements (*al-aqāwīl al-jadaliyya*) that establish (*tathbitu*) the thing that is one in itself (*al-shayʾ al-wāḥid bi-ʿaynihi*). It is establishing this thing that makes demonstrative science possible, since the demonstrations are to concern this thing.[40]

In the remainder of this introduction, Averroes goes on to explain that to some extent, Aristotle begins every science dialectically,[41] presumably referring to Aristotle's custom of critiquing his predecessors at the beginning of certain works.[42] But here, in "this book," *i.e.*, the *Metaphysics*,[43] Aristotle

> saw fit to join the learning of this science, which is the best way of learning, to the science of dialectics (*li-ʿilm al-jadal*) in the general [ways] of theorizing and in combining the many demonstrative statements included in it with dialectical statements. Accordingly the subject of both sciences is one, *viz.* absolute being.[44]

In what follows, Averroes focuses on how he takes Aristotle to make this kind of combination of metaphysics and dialectics when it comes to elucidating the terms that are studied in metaphysics, *i.e.*, in Book Δ.[45] The dialectical approach taken in the *Metaphysics* thus explicitly includes B, and by inference also α, A, and Δ. Averroes does not tell us

[39] Averroes, *Tafsir*, ed. Bouyges, Book B, C1.a, pp. 166–7.

[40] At least, this seems to be the argument at the beginning of *Metaphysics* Γ.2. Aristotle speaks of one principle in relation to which (πρὸς μίαν ἀρχήν, 1003b5-6) things are said to be. Cf. Averroes, *Middle and Long Commentaries ad loc.*

[41] "This is Aristotle's approach in all of the sciences…" *Tafsir*, p. 167.

[42] Such critiques occur in, *e.g., Metaphysics* A and *De Anima* A.

[43] Averroes' reference to "this book" (*hādhā al-kitāb*) implies that he has in mind the *Metaphysics* as a whole. Averroes consistently calls each of the "books" that make up the *Metaphysics* a "treatise" *maqāla*.

[44] *Tafsir*, p. 167.

[45] Averroes says, "And because it is the nature of dialectical statements to go before demonstrative statements, Aristotle saw fit to make this kind of theorization a separate part of this science, placed at the front of [the *Metaphysics*], just as he did regarding the terms that indicate the meanings (*al-maʿānī*) that are taken up in this science. These are the terms that generally concern all the meanings that are taken up in this science. He made this a separate part at the beginning; not like he did with the other sciences. I mean, he expounds the terms that indicate each of the meanings that are sought in those sciences in the theorization about each thing sought … However, in this science he placed the examination of all the terms in one treatise [*viz.* Book Δ] not to distinguish the equivocal terms

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whether Γ is included in this approach, but it seems to be in terms of its content. First of all, as Averroes mentions in his introduction to Book Γ in the *Long Commentary*, Book Γ continues the answers to the ἀπορίαι raised in Book B.[46] More importantly, it is in Book Γ, especially in Γ.2 where Aristotle lays what Averroes takes to be the beginnings of the account of the thing that is one in itself which is the object of the science of metaphysics. That is, in Γ.2 Averroes takes Aristotle to do what in the introduction to Book B Averroes described as the second (or perhaps first) activity of dialectics: establishing the one thing that is the subject of the science and can later be used as a basis for demonstrations.

This occurs within the context of Aristotle's argument that metaphysics is a single science that studies being *qua* being. The unity of this science is due, in the first place in Γ.2, to the unity associated with the term "being" (here rendered by *mawjūd*). This unity is not pure equivocality, nor is it univocality, but Aristotle's famous πρὸς ἕν, translated into Arabic as *tansub ilā shay wāḥid*, "related to one thing." This one thing provides a kind of unity for everything about which being is said and accordingly, Aristotle argues, there can be a single science studying this one thing and its attributes, *i.e.*, all of being.

That Averroes in the *Long Commentary* views the approach to discovering this one thing as dialectical is highlighted not only by association with Averroes' introduction to Book B, but also by the focus on the ways in which being *is said*. The "is said" here implies a reference to accepted opinions especially in view of Aristotle's (and Averroes') examples here: the healthy things and their relation to health.[47] Things are said to be healthy because everyone understands their connection to health. It goes without saying, however, that not everyone *really* understands health. Not everyone is a doctor or a scientist, but nevertheless a consensus arises in language regarding the "healthy" that implicitly includes an understanding of health.

The same is supposed to be true of being. Everyone has some kind of understanding of being. In fact, on the whole, people are probably more adept at identifying beings than healthy things. Thus Averroes takes Aristotle to begin the inquiry into being in Γ.2 by searching for the one thing with reference to which all beings are said to be. At one point, Averroes calls this thing a first that is in

from each other, but to enumerate the meanings about which this science is to theorize." *Tafsir*, pp. 167–8.

[46] "This treatise (*i.e.*, Book Γ) includes a discussion of . . . the way of theorizing in this science . . . and of the solution to the questions included in it." *Tafsir*, p. 297. Presumably, these "questions" include the questions mentioned in Book B.

[47] *Tafsir*, pp. 302–3.

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some kind of conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) with all other things.[48] Elsewhere, Averroes, like Aristotle, refers to this one thing as substance (*jawhar*). All things are said to be because they are substance, are in substance, have substance as their active or final cause, or have some other relation to substance. The study of being thus becomes a study of substance.[49]

The problem with this is that substance itself is said in many ways and one would have to find a single thing to which all the meanings of substance are related. In fact, all of the metaphysical terms, which are explored further in *Metaphysics* Δ, are said in many ways, and it becomes extremely difficult to pin down the one thing the relation to which unifies any of them, to say nothing of a one thing that unifies all beings into a single genus. This dialectical search for this one thing that will form the genus which metaphysics studies goes well past Books Γ and Δ and I leave to studies of the later books of the *Metaphysics* the question whether Averroes ever sees Aristotle as discovering this one thing and then beginning to do demonstrations. Perhaps, one never quite understands this one thing and accordingly never moves into an idealized demonstrative science of metaphysics.[50]

I want to conclude here by mentioning another Socratic-style turn that Averroes takes almost as an aside in the *Long Commentary* on Γ.2. At 1003b17, Aristotle says that if this one thing, this first thing that *Metaphysics* examines is substance, then "it is of substances that the philosopher should possess the principles and the causes."[51] Once again the *Middle Commentary* does nothing interesting with this passage; indeed, rather than discuss the "philosopher," it mentions "the science of the philosopher" (*ḥokhmat hafilosof*), *i.e.*, presumably just another term for metaphysics.[52] In the *Long Commentary*, however, Averroes says the following:

If this prior thing of the beings is substance … and if the philosopher is the one who makes known the first causes of everything, then it necessarily

[48] *Tafsir*, p. 308, par. u.
[49] *Tafsir*, pp. 302 ff., esp. par. d, k, and x.
[50] Charles Butterworth questions whether demonstrations can *ever* be made. Regarding the short commentaries on the logical *Organon*, Butterworth understands Averroes to believe that "the art of demonstration appears more to be something yet to be attained than it does an art that has been perfected." This conclusion, though, is not based on anything Averroes says, but rather on Averroes' silence about how to reach the first principles of demonstrations. See "Finding first principles, possibility or impasse?", in Rüdiger Arnzen and Jörn Thielmann (eds.), *Words, Texts and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea* (Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA, 2004), pp. 211–22, esp. 220–2. The passage I bring here from *Metaphysics* Γ raises the question of the dialectical grounding of demonstration directly and, while it does not answer the question, does not require *argumentum ex silentio.*
[51] Apostle translation, p. 55.
[52] *Il* Commento Medio, vol. 2, tom. 1, p. 31 (155b22). Both translations have the same expression here; both obscure the "philosopher" in favor of "philosophy."

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follows that the knowledge[53] of the first principles and causes is contained in the definition of the philosopher, who is the one who does this science.[54]

It follows from this that the search for the subject of metaphysics can extend even to an examination of the philosopher him/herself.[55] Accordingly, the subsequent discussion of the sophist, dialectician and philosopher (which we detailed above) is not an aside, but an integral part of understanding the philosopher and therefore of discovering that which the philosopher studies, *i.e.*, the subject of metaphysics. The implication that this philosopher may be a dialectical philosopher should raise concerns about the demonstrative validity of metaphysics. If we can no longer clearly assert the superiority of the philosopher to the dialectician, we are left with a metaphysics that is incomplete. We may even have a philosopher whose knowledge is not quite complete.

Indeed, in light of this we may reinterpret Averroes opening remark in his introduction to Book α:

> It's as if [Aristotle] hints that he himself grasped the truth, or a large part of it . . . It is preferable to think that he has grasped all of it, I mean, all truth, to the extent which is natural for man to grasp insofar as he is man.[56]

This is usually taken as a sign that Averroes thinks Aristotle has understood everything and as an unqualified endorsement of Aristotelian philosophy. It seems to me that Averroes' qualification of Aristotle's knowledge as complete "to the extent which is natural for man to grasp insofar as he is man," may mean that in fact Aristotle did not grasp all of the truth.[57] Perhaps all he means by this is that the *Metaphysics* represents the farthest man can go in

[53] Averroes uses the general term for knowledge, *ma'rifa*, not the term for scientific knowledge, '*ilm*.

[54] *Tafsir*, p. 309, par. x.

[55] Cf. Shem Tob ibn Falaquera's description of studying psychology so as to know oneself and thereby to attain knowledge of God in his *Book of the Soul*, quoted in Raphael Jospe, *Torah and Sophia: The Life and Thought of Shem to Ibn Falaquera* (Cincinnati, 1988), p. 321, see also pp. 321–50.

[56] *Tafsir*, p. 7, par. f-g, translated by Peter Adamson in "Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī and Averroes on *Metaphysics* Alpha Elatton," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medieval*, 21 (2010): 343–74.

[57] Compare this statement with Averroes' description of Aristotle in his Prooemium to the *Long Commentary* on the *Physics*: "[Aristotle] is the one who originated . . . the art of logic, natural science, and divine science, and it is he who completed them. . . . No one who has come after him to this our time – and this is close to fifteen hundred years later – has been able to add a word worthy of attention to what he said." Translated in Steven Harvey, "The Hebrew translation of Averroes' Prooemium to his *Long Commentary* on Aristotle's *Physics*," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 52 (1985): 55–84, p. 83. Averroes' statement of Aristotle's accomplishment is considerably stronger in the *Long Commentary* on the *Physics*, than in the *Long Commentary* on the *Metaphysics*. Even though the statement in the former appears to include metaphysics ("the divine science"), it is in the latter statement that Averroes suggests human limitations.

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overcoming his intellectual limitations and in establishing a science of all beings.

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