

AVERROES ON THEOPHRASTUS, THROUGH THEMISTIUS*

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Averroes has the distinction of being the one Arab philosopher who has by far the greatest number of eponymous references to his sources, both Greek and Arabic. This fact about Averroes can be analyzed and used in a variety of ways. My purpose in this paper is to investigate the nature and sources of his quotations and citations of Theophrastus in order to assess the benefit to be derived therefrom for the study of the Greek philosopher.

I

Theophrastus of Eresos is a singularly interesting and important figure in the history of ancient Greek philosophy in general and of Peripateticism in particular. The basic facts about his life are briefly stated by the Suda:

Theophrastus was the son of Melantas ... from Eresos [in the Aegean island of Lesbos]. He was the pupil of Aristotle and successor as head of the school in the Peripatos ... He was formerly called Tyrtamus, but on account of the divine character of his speech he was called ... Theophrastus ... He had more than 2000 students and had as beloved

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The following abbreviations have been used in this study:

CAG: *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*. Berlin, 1882–1909

Davidson: Herbert A. Davidson. *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*. New York and Oxford: OUP, 1992.

FHS&G: W.W. Fortenbaugh, P.M. Huby, R.W. Sharples, and D. Gutas, eds. *Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for His Life, Writings, Thought, and Influence*. 2 vols. *Philosophia Antiqua* 54. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992.

Fihrist: Ibn-an-Nadim. *Kitāb al-Fihrist*. Edited by G. Flügel. 2 vols. Leipzig, 1871–72.

Gätje: H. Gätje. *Studien zur Überlieferung der aristotelischen Psychologie im Islam*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1971.

RUSCH 2: W.W. Fortenbaugh, P.M. Huby, and A.A. Long, eds. *Theophrastus of Eresus. On His Life and Work*. Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities 2. New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Books, 1985.

Todd: R.B. Todd. *Themistius on Aristotle on the Soul*. London: Duckworth, 1996.

the son of Aristotle the philosopher, Nicomachus. He was honored at the court of Cassander, the son of Antipater [the Macedonian successor of Alexander the Great], and he died after becoming worn out from continual writing ... His books are very numerous ... [FHS&G, 2].

The books of Theophrastus were indeed amazingly numerous, as can be expected of someone about whom it was credible to claim that he died of fatigue from writing too much; Diogenes Laertius, in his life of Theophrastus, lists no less than 224 titles, some of which, like the *Theses* and the *Laws*, contained 24 books each [FHS&G, 1].

Despite his brilliance, eloquence, and industry, history has treated Theophrastus harshly. Few of his books survive in the original Greek — notably his great book on *Plants* and some opuscula, including the famous *Characters* — while the fragments and testimonia that my colleagues and I put together from Greek, Arabic, and Latin sources until the 15th century (FHS&G) amount to fewer than 500 pages of text or, roughly, the length of another ten opuscula.

The reasons for this deplorable state of affairs are not hard to gauge; in the first place, he had the misfortune, in historical retrospect, of being the student and successor, and hence of having to survive in the shadow, of Aristotle; and second, he was too Aristotelian for the philosophical tastes of the Neoplatonic and Neoplatonist schools in Athens and Alexandria in late antiquity. His books were therefore not copied extensively. This is significant for the history of the transmission of classical Greek works because it was in late antiquity that most of the manuscripts in uncials were copied, copies which formed the archetypes of the first miniscule manuscripts of the Photian renaissance of the 9th century in Byzantium and hence of all subsequent Greek manuscripts which survive to this day.¹

If the works of Theophrastus in Greek ill survived in late antiquity, we can hardly expect them to have fared much better in Arabic translation during the early 'Abbāsids. Indeed, such expectations are borne out because Ibn-an-Nadīm mentions only *seven* titles by Theophrastus in the *Fihrist* (252.5–11): *On the Soul*, *Meteorology*, *On Education*, *On Sensation and the Sensible*, *Metaphysics*, *The*

¹ See, in general, the standard account in L.D. Reynolds and N.G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1991), pp. 55–65.

Causes of Plants, and a probably spurious commentary on the *Categories*, to which is to be added an eighth, *Problemata Physica*, mentioned elsewhere in the *Fihrist* and also later by Ibn-Abī-Uṣaybi‘a [FHS&G, 3A].

The *Fihrist* is the only Arabic source that contains an original list of the works of Theophrastus; the bibliographical works of Ibn-al-Qiftī and Ibn-Abī-Uṣaybi‘a simply copy it. The nature and length of this list given above make it amply clear that it was not copied from a Greek bibliography of Theophrastus available in Arabic translation but that it was compiled by Ibn-an-Nadīm himself on the basis of books which he had seen or heard about from his sources — most likely Yaḥyā ibn-‘Adī, his chief source of information for books by Greek philosophers. The direct and indirect manuscript transmission of these works in Arabic largely corroborates this view: we have a direct, independent manuscript tradition for the *Meteorology* and the *Metaphysics*, and indirect transmission for the *Plants*, the *Problemata Physica*, and possibly also for *On Sensation and the Sensible*, about which more may become known once the extant Arabic evidence has been studied in greater detail.² Thus, if we exclude the spurious *Categories* commentary — which, being part of the *Organon*, belongs in any case to a different category of problems of transmission — I know of no traces in Arabic of only two works mentioned in the *Fihrist*: *On the Soul* and *On Education*, though much more thorough research is needed before anything definitive can be said on this matter. This much, then, is what was directly transmitted of Theophrastus’s works in Arabic.³

It was necessary to go in some detail into the history of the transmission and survival of Theophrastus’ works in Arabic in order to

² Gāṭje, pp. 81–92 has done significant work in this regard; to the material he discussed in 1971 there is now to be added the contents of the Rampur manuscript mentioned by H. Daiber, “Salient Trends of the Arabic Aristotle,” in G. Endress and R. Kruk, eds., *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1997), pp. 36ff. Furthermore, the many works by Avicenna on the soul, and especially the *De anima* (*Fi n-nafs*) part of *The Cure* (*aš-Šifā’*), must be studied in minute detail to disentangle the many and varied sources that went into their making.

³ For a survey of all the Theophrastean material indirectly transmitted in Arabic see H. Daiber, “A Survey of Theophrastean Texts and Ideas in Arabic,” and D. Gutas, “The Life, Works, and Sayings of Theophrastus in the Arabic Tradition,” both in *RUSCH* 2, pp. 103–114 and 63–102 respectively.

provide a background against which to assess properly and accurately the Theophrastean quotations in Averroes, an inventory of which now follows. In this connection it must be borne in mind that this list cannot be either potentially or actually complete; potentially, since not all the works of Averroes have survived, in any language, and actually, since not all of his extant works have been published and are therefore inaccessible to me for the purposes of this essay.

These quotations in Averroes derive ultimately from four works by Theophrastus: (1) *On Motion*; (2) *Topics*; (3) a work on modal logic, possibly his *Prior Analytics* in three books, as mentioned by Diogenes Laertius; and (4) *On the Soul*. According to most expert opinion, the first and fourth book mentioned in this list, *On Motion* and *On the Soul*, were part of a large work by Theophrastus titled *Physics*.⁴ The following remarks can be made about each one of them.⁵

II

(1) *On Motion* (περὶ κινήσεως). Averroes quotes from this work in only two passages, once in the *Ġawāmiʿ* of the *Physics*, and once in the *Talhīs* of the *Physics*, as quoted by Crescas.⁶ In both cases Theophrastus is mentioned by Averroes together with Themistius. The happily extant Greek paraphrase by Themistius of Aristotle's *Physics* allows us to verify that in the course of the discussion of the

⁴ See the commentary on the psychological fragments in FHS&G by P.M. Huby, *Theophrastus of Eresus. Commentary*, vol. 4, *Psychology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), on frg. 265, 1a.

⁵ In the following discussion I will be referring to Averroes's various commentaries on Aristotle with their Arabic designations in order to dissociate them in people's minds from the traditional but inaccurate tripartition into "short," "middle," and "long." These designations are, *masā'il* (questions or problems, *quaesita*), *ġawāmiʿ* (abstracts of demonstrative statements in Aristotle), *talhīs* (precise exposition of subjects), and *ṣarḥ* or *tafsīr* (commentary *ad litteram*). See the extensive discussion of this issue in my "Aspects of Literary Form and Genre in Arabic Logical Works," in *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts*, ed. Charles Burnett, Warburg Institute, Surveys and Texts XXIII (London: The Warburg Institute, 1993), pp. 33–43 and 55–56.

⁶ The former is a discussion of Aristotle, *Physics* 236a7–27, in (Averrois) *Epitome in Physicorum Libros*, ed. Josep Puig (Madrid, 1983), p. 105.16ff.; the latter is on *Physics* 234b10–17, in H.A. Wolfson, *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 542.

passages concerned Themistius does indeed mention Theophrastus and his work *On Motion*.⁷ Averroes thus had access not to the *On Motion* by Theophrastus but to Themistius's paraphrase of the Aristotelian *Physics* in Arabic translation.

The *Fihrist* (250.22–23) mentions only a Syriac version of Themistius's paraphrase done by Abū-Biṣr Mattā ibn-Yūnus; Ibn-al-Qiftī,⁸ however, provides in addition a precise description of the paraphrastic format of the book that generates the impression that he had access to it in Arabic. Averroes' testimony here would appear to corroborate this, though there is equally strong evidence that Themistius's paraphrase may have been known in Arabic only through the quotations from it in Philoponus's commentary, which was translated into Arabic and formed the basis of the understanding of the *Physics* by Arabic philosophers. The question can be resolved only after a detailed examination of all the Arabic passages of Themistius's paraphrase of the *Physics*, both those by Averroes and others.⁹

III

(2) *Topics*. Averroes mentions Theophrastus on the subject of topics in his *Talḥīṣ* of Aristotle's *Topics* (*Talḥīṣ al-Ġadal*) six times. In three of these, he cites him together with Themistius in a way that leaves little doubt that he is quoting Theophrastus through Themistius.¹⁰ Of the two instances where Theophrastus is cited alone, one occurs in the middle of a longer citation taken from

⁷ Themistius, *In Aristotelis Physica*, ed. H. Schenkl, CAG V,2 (Berlin), p. 195.8–21 = FHS&G, 156A, and pp. 191.22–192.2 = FHS&G, 155A, respectively. For a discussion of both these passages in the Arabic tradition see Paul Lettinck, *Aristotle's Physics and Its Reception in the Arabic World* (Leiden, 1994).

⁸ *Ta'riḥ al-hukamā'*, ed. J. Lippert (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1903), p. 39.13–14.

⁹ For the Arabic translations of the *Physics* and its commentaries see F.E. Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus* (Leiden, 1968), pp. 30–34, which, however, is in need of drastic correction and revision. This was not undertaken by P. Lettinck in his study referred to in the preceding note, who relied implicitly on Peters. Detailed information on the Arabic translations of Philoponus's commentary and its quotations of Themistius is given by Elias Giannakis, "Philoponus in the Arabic Tradition of Aristotle's *Physics*" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford, 1992), pp. 81–83 and 93–131.

¹⁰ In *Ibn Ruṣd: Talḥīṣ Mantiq Aristū*, ed. Gerard Jéhamy (Ġirār Ġihāmī), vol. II, *Kitāb al-Ġadal* (Beirut, 1982), pp. 556.14, 603.5, and 620.7. In 603.5 Averroes says expressly, "This is what Themistius did and before him Theophrastus."

Themistius,¹¹ and another consists of somebody's report about Theophrastus, not Theophrastus's own words ("it is also said that Theophrastus did that").¹² In the sixth instance, Theophrastus is cited at the very beginning of Averroes' *Talḥiṣ* together with Alexander of Aphrodisias with regard to their definition of *topos* (*mawḍiʿ*).¹³ In all these cases, therefore, it is certain that Averroes did not have direct access to Theophrastus's own *Topics* but drew instead upon a work by Themistius which quoted Theophrastus; in the case of the sixth instance, it is possible that he used instead the Arabic translation of Alexander's commentary on the *Topics* either directly or indirectly through the commentary of Yahyā ibn-ʿAdī.¹⁴

It is possible to identify closer the work of Themistius which constituted Averroes' main source of information. In his inventory of the philosophical sciences (*Aṣnāf al-ʿulūm al-ḥikmiyya*), Abū-Sahī al-Masīhī, a physician contemporary with Avicenna, lists among the textbooks for the study of Aristotle's *Topics* one by Themistius whose title he gives as *Taʿaqqub al-mawāḍiʿ* (*Investigation of the Topoi*).¹⁵ The *Fihrist* (249.23) also corroborates the existence of this book, while some parts of it may also be found in a similarly entitled and extant work by Avicenna, *Taʿaqqub al-mawāḍiʿ al-ḡadalī* (*Investigation fo the Dialectical Topos*).¹⁶ In the case of the *Topics* also, then, Averroes used Theophrastus through this work by Themistius.

¹¹ *Talḥiṣ al-Ġadal*, ed. Jéhamy, p. 604.2; see the translation of the passage in FHS&G, 132.

¹² *Talḥiṣ al-Ġadal*, ed. Jéhamy, p. 528.17: *wa-qad qīla inna Tāwufrustusa faʿala dālīka*.

¹³ *Talḥiṣ al-Ġadal*, ed. Jéhamy, p. 525.5.

¹⁴ See the references in Peters, *Aristoteles Arabus*, pp. 20–23.

¹⁵ See the references and discussion in D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden, 1988), p. 150 and note 7. It is tantalizing to see in this title a reflection of one of Theophrastus's works mentioned in the Greek bibliographies: 'Ανηγμένων τόπων α'β', "The Reduction of Topics, 2 books" (see FHS&G, 68, no. 18a), in which case Themistius's work would be a commentary or paraphrase of it. The close association of the two names in Averroes' citations listed above would tend to strengthen the likelihood.

¹⁶ Edited by M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu, *Collected Texts and Papers on Logic and Language* (Tehran, 1974), pp. 61–77.

IV

(3) Modal logic. Averroes has numerous references to the modal logic of Theophrastus in his *Talḥiṣ* of the *Prior Analytics* of Aristotle (*Talḥiṣ al-Qiyās*) and in his independent *Essays* (*Maqālāt*) or *Questions* (*Masā'il*); they all treat, however, only two views of Theophrastus: (a) that an existential premise (or, assertoric or hyparctic, *al-muqaddima al-mutlaqa al-wuḡūdiyya*) is a premise to which considerations of modality do not apply,¹⁷ and (b) that the mode of the conclusion in mixed syllogisms follows the mode of the inferior premise.¹⁸ In the introduction to one of the *Questions* (*Masā'il*), Averroes explicitly mentions his sources:

Our purpose in this essay is to enquire into the premise which is called existential and absolute: what it is and what Aristotle's doctrine about it is, for the commentators have disagreed about this matter. We say: According to what we find in the book of Themistius and to what Abū-Naṣr [al-Fārābī] reported, two opinions have been transmitted to us from the commentators about this [premise]. One is the doctrine of Theophrastus, Eudemus, and Themistius, and the other the doctrine of Alexander and subsequent commentators, except Themistius [FHS&G, 98B].¹⁹

The identity of the two sources mentioned by Averroes here can be established with relative certainty. The "book of Themistius" must be his paraphrase of the *Prior Analytics*, apparently lost in Greek; the Arabic translation, which the *Fihrist* mentions (249.8–9) was in three books, has also not been recovered, but is known from numerous quotations strewn in the literature. The reference to al-Fārābī must be to his *Šarḥ* or *Tafsīr*, *Commentary on the Prior Analytics*,

¹⁷ Cited in Averroes' *Maqālāt fī l-mantiq wa-l-'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*, ed. Ġamāl-ad-dīn al-'Alawī (1983), pp. 114.10 (covering the references to Theophrastus on pp. 114–116) = FHS&G, 98B; p. 148.6 = FHS&G, 98E; p. 156.14 = FHS&G, 98D; p. 177.7 = FHS&G, 98C; *Talḥiṣ al-Qiyās*, in Ibn Ruṣd, *Talḥiṣ mantiq Aristū*, ed. G. Jéhamy (Beirut, 1982), vol. I, p. 143.19 = FHS&G, 98F; p. 176.2 = FHS&G, app. 98B; p. 200.20 = FHS&G, 98G.

¹⁸ Cited in *Maqālāt*, p. 123.9 (covering the references on pp. 123–138) = FHS&G, 105; p. 176.13 = FHS&G, 106I; *Talḥiṣ al-Qiyās*, vol. I, p. 179.8 = FHS&G, 106H; p. 211.22 = FHS&G, app. 106H.

¹⁹ Cf further N. Rescher, "Averroes' *Quaesitum* on Assertoric (Absolute) Propositions," in his *Studies in the History of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), p. 91, note 2, and p. 94 and notes 14–15 for references to earlier literature.

which Averroes uses on numerous occasions.²⁰ Some material in al-Fārābī's commentary would have been derived from Themistius's paraphrase, some other from Alexander's commentary. In most of his references (as listed in the preceding notes) to both views of Theophrastus on modal logic, however, Averroes cites also Themistius. This makes it certain that he received his information also on this count also from Themistius rather than from a source other than Themistius in al-Fārābī's commentary. In either case, use of a work by Theophrastus himself can definitely be excluded.

V

(4) *On the Soul*. Averroes cites Theophrastus on matters dealing with the theory of the soul at most seven times,²¹ all on the subject of the intellect. His major source is Themistius's paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima*, extant both in the Greek original and in Ishāq ibn-Hunayn's Arabic translation, which contains an extensive section quoting expressly from Theophrastus's *On the Soul*.²² Averroes repeatedly refers to and is inspired by this passage in a number of his works; the question is whether this is Averroes' only source for the Theophrastus citations. Other candidates would appear to be two books of immediate relevance, the Arabic translation of Theophrastus's own *On the Soul*, mentioned at the outset (Section I), and a book on the soul by Themistius, independent of his paraphrase, which the *Fihrist* lists also as available in Arabic in two books (253.27: *Kitāb an-nafs, maqālatayn [sic]*).

The original passage by Theophrastus in Themistius, as well as the use that was made of it in its Arabic version by Averroes, have attracted considerable attention in recent scholarship.²³ It appears

²⁰ Complete and up-to-date information on both works is given by J. Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics* (Leiden, 1994), p. 6, nos. 2 and 7a, and pp. 7–9.

²¹ That is, if one counts the entry no. 5 below under “*Šarḥ* (*Commentarium magnum*) on *De anima*” in this section (p. 141), where the reference by Averroes would appear to be to Themistius and not to Theophrastus.

²² See the references and the translation below.

²³ Themistius's paraphrase of the *De anima* 3.4–8 was translated into English by F.M. Schroeder und R.B. Todd in their *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators on the Intellect* (1990), pp. 100–117, with notes and extensive literature; the passage by Theophrastus is translated on pp. 100–101 and 113–117. The entire paraphrase of Themistius is now available in an English translation by R.B. Todd. “Aristotle's theory of the intellect and its interpretation by Averroes,” who also used the

that there is still room, however, if we are to decide with anything approaching certainty the precise sources of Averroes on this subject, for yet another, more specific analysis. To this end, it is worthwhile giving in English translation the *Arabic* version of Themistius's long section on Theophrastus. This is useful for two reasons. First, it offers a translation of the Arabic — and not the Greek — text as *Averroes* would have read and understood it; and second, it presents the entire section divided into its constituent parts, visually distinguishing what Themistius indicates was said by Theophrastus from his own summaries of what he perceives to be the common positions of Aristotle and Theophrastus.

* * *

THEMISTIUS ON THEOPHRASTUS ON THE INTELLECT²⁴

It is best that we also mention what Theophrastus said about the potential intellect and about the actual intellect. Concerning the potential intellect he said the following:

*As for the intellect,*²⁵

[a] *how — I wish I knew — [is it], being from outside and as if carried [in]? For, as it is, it is contiguous.*²⁶

relevant passages in Themistius's paraphrase, was extensively discussed by A. Hyman in a similarly entitled article published in *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. D.J. O'Meara, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 9 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1981), pp. 161–191. Averroes' understanding of the material intellect and his arguments with and against the entire Aristotelian tradition were recently studied anew and in depth by Davidson, pp. 258–314. Echoes of these arguments, with special reference to Theophrastus, are analyzed by P.M. Huby, "Medieval Evidence for Theophrastus' Discussion of the Intellect," in *RUSCH* 2, pp. 165–181.

²⁴ R. Heinze, *Themistii in Libros Aristotelis De Anima Paraphrasis*, CAG V,3 (Berlin, 1899), pp. 107.30–109.3 = M.C. Lyons, *An Arabic Translation of Themistius Commentary on Aristoteles De Anima* (London: Cassirer, 1973), pp. 195.15–198.9. In the following translation I have tried to follow, for purposes of comparison, the wording of Todds's translation (pp. 133–134) to the extent allowed by the sense of the Arabic. The italic print indicates the text that an Arab reader would have taken to represent Theophrastus's words. All paragraphing and numbering are added for easy reference.

²⁵ I.e., the potential intellect, as is obvious from Themistius's preceding words and from Theophrastus's own statement in [b] below.

²⁶ The Arabic term used is *muwāṣil*, translating συμφυής; Davidson translates "linked", p. 261 and note 13.

[b] *And what is its nature? For the claim that it is actually nothing but potentially all things is correct, as is the case with sense-perception, for we ought not to believe about it that it is nothing at all in itself — for that would be contentious — but that it is a certain underlying potentiality as is the case with things mixed with matter.*

[c] *But that it is from outside perhaps ought to be posited not by way of being carried [in], but by way of being included together in the first generation.*

[d] *And how — I wish I knew — do the intelligibles come about? And what is being-affected for them?²⁷ For it [i.e., being-affected] must [occur], since it [i.e., the potential intellect] is going to come to actuality as sense-perception does. But which being-affected and which change can occur from a body to something incorporeal? And is the starting point from that [i.e., the body] or from itself? For someone might think that being-affected occurs to it only on account of that, because it does not occur from itself for some things in a state of being-affected and for some principle of everything.²⁸*

[e] *It is in its power to intelligize or not, just as [perception with] the senses is in its power.²⁹*

[f] *It is appropriate that it might appear that this too is repugnant, namely, that the [potential] intellect should have the nature of matter, with the result that it itself would be nothing while all things would be possible with respect to it.*

[Theophrastus also said] other things related to these which it would be too long to relate, despite the fact that what he said is not long but rather extremely abridged and concise on the term itself.³⁰ As for the concepts, what he said contains many problems, many reminders, and much solving of the problems. These are in Chap-

²⁷ The Arabic has the same reading as the Greek MSS and does not corroborate Heinze's addition <π>. The normal sense of the Arabic sentence, as written, would be, "And what is it for them to be affected?" Since, however, this can hardly be the meaning in context, a knowledgeable Arabic reader could conceivably understand the prepositional phrase *lahā*, "for/to them" (translating αὐτῶν), as meaning, "And what is being-affected on account of them?"

²⁸ There was apparently a problem in the Greek manuscript tradition with τῷ in line 108.5; Q read τὸ *in rasura*, accepted by Spengel. The archetype of the Arabic translator read τῶν, as a consequence of which he understood the sentence as follows: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ [scil. πάσχει] τῶν <μὲν> ἐν πάθει τῶν δὲ ἀρχὴν πάντων εἶναι.

²⁹ The Arabic supports Heinze's punctuation; cf. Todd, p. 190, note 75.

³⁰ Apparently the translator understood by τῇ λέξει (108.9) a reference to the term "intellect" under discussion here.

ter Five of his book on *Physics* and Chapter Two of his discussion on the soul. What appears from all these statements is that

[1] they³¹ were having, also concerning the potential intellect, almost one and the same problem — whether it is from outside or contiguous —,

[2] they were trying to specify precisely how it could be from outside and how it could be contiguous, and

[3] they were saying that it was also unaffected and separate, like the active intellect and the intellect in actuality; for he [Theophrastus] said,

[g] *The intellect is unaffected — unless indeed it is*³² *in a different way!* and he also said,³³

[h] *In its case, being — affected ought not to be understood as being moveable — for movement is incomplete-but rather as activity.*

After he had gone on for some time in his argument he said,

[i] *The senses cannot be without body; but as for the intellect, it is separate.*

After he, too, began on the subject of the active intellect which Aristotle treated with precision, he said,

[j] *We ought to investigate that thing to which we are pointing, and say,*³⁴ *for all nature, that some of it is like matter and potential, and some of it is cause and active;*

and that

[k] *that which acts is always nobler than that which is being acted upon, and the first principle is nobler than matter.*

³¹ The plural pronoun in Arabic would refer to more than the two philosophers immediately involved, i.e., Aristotle and Theophrastus, so that an Arab reader might be induced to include Plato as well, who was mentioned earlier in Themistius's text (107.23 Heinze = 195.8 Lyons). In the Middle Arabic of the translations, however, the distinction between dual and plural tends to be blurred.

³² The Arabic omits παθητικός (108.16), which might suggest that its inclusion in the Greek manuscript tradition is an interpolation; cf. the omission of the preceding ἄλλως in Heinze's manuscript Q.

³³ Reading *wa-qāla aydan* in the singular instead of the plural in Lyons.

³⁴ Reading the first person plural together with the Greek, *ilayhi nuširu fa-naqūla*, instead of the third person singular pointing in Lyons, *ilayhi yuširu fa-yaqūlu*. In either case, the meaning is not affected since what Theophrastus is pointing to is sentences from Aristotle's *De Anima* III.5.

[continuation of the above]

These things, then, he accepts, while those [matters] with which he has problems are the following:

[l] *What are these two natures?*

[m] *What is this*

substrate, or

[what is] that which

is attached to the

active [intellect]? For the intellect is as if mixed out of the active and the potential [intellects].

[n] *So if the [intellect] that moves is innate, it should also be eternal and perpetual;*

but if it is subsequent, then with what, and how, does

its generation [come about]?

It seems that it is an ungenerated substance³⁵ if it is imperishable.

[o] *Once it exists, why not perpetually?*

[p] *Whence come forgetfulness, error, and falsity? — adding — from the mixture.*

[p. 102.26–29 Heinze = 186.4–10 Lyons]

Theophrastus poses problems in the statements in which he investigates Aristotle's theory of the active intellect, saying,

[n] *If it [the active intellect] is like a disposition or faculty of that,³⁵ then, if it is innate, it should be eternal; but if it is subsequent then with what, and how, does*

its generation [come about], since

it seems that this one is ungenerated if it is imperishable?

[o] *Once it exists, why is it not perpetually?*

[p] *Whence come forgetfulness, and error? It may be from the mixture.*

From all this it is clear that what we have taken the case to be is not wrong:

³⁵ The translator clearly read the Greek as, "εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὡς ἔξις ἡ δύναμις ἐκεῖνον". The antecedent of "that" in the Arabic is not clear; it is feminine, which would appear to refer to the soul, *nafs*, though the word does not appear in the text.

³⁶ The unique Arabic MS of Fez has *ḡawhar* here, "substance", and it is clear that Averroes also read *ḡawhar* in his manuscript of Themistius's paraphrase. It would seem, however, that the original translation by Ishāq ibn-Hunayn had *hādā*, as in the parallel passage of 186.8 Lyons, translating οὗτος (instead of the οὗν ὡς in Heinze 108.26 and 102.28), and that *ḡawharan* (substance) is a corruption of *hādā* (this) that occurred within the Arabic tradition. G.M. Browne, "Ad Themistium Arabum," *Illinois Classical Studies* 11 (1986): 242, and, following him, Todd, p. 190, note 80, assume that *ḡawhar*, substance, stood in the original translation by Ishāq ibn-Hunayn and that accordingly Ishāq's Greek archetype had οὐσία, but then fail to resolve the discrepancy that this generates with Themistius's earlier parallel passage in 102.28 Heinze, which has οὗν ὡς/οὗτος.

[4] that in their opinion, the perishable intellect that is subject to being-affected is one thing, which is what they also call "common" and "inseparable from the body;" it is concerning this one that Theophrastus says,

[p1] *From mixing with it [the body] there come about forgetfulness and error;*

[5] and that there is another, different intellect, like something composed of what is potential and what is actual,³⁷ about which they believe that it is separate from the body, imperishable, and ungenerated.

[6] Regarding both these intellects they say that in one way they are two natures and in another that they are one, the reason being that that which is [composed] of matter and form is one.

* * *

From this it is clear that Themistius has two sorts of citations from Theophrastus. The first consists of twenty-one points quoted verbatim — or almost verbatim — (printed in italics above and numbered with letters from [a] to [p] and [p1]). The second is a series of six statements (numbered in Arabic numerals from 1 to 6) presenting with approval a summary of what, in the opinion of Themistius, Aristotle and Theophrastus believed about the potential and active intellect.

Averroes' citations of Theophrastus on this subject occur most notably in his *Šarḥ K. an-nafs*, the so-called *Commentarium magnum* on the *De anima*, extant in the Latin translation of Michael Scot,³⁸ and also once each in his *Tafsīr* on the *Metaphysics* and in a small essay on the conjunction of the human intellect with the active intellect. Because the history of the transmission of this last piece is complicated, a brief note is in order.³⁹

³⁷ Note that the translator understands the Greek τοῦ δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ not as adjectives modifying the implied noun νοῦ (i.e., "the potential and actual [intellects]"), but as the genitives of the substantival neuter formation τὸ δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ ("what is potential and what is actual"). For the significance of this interpretation for Averroes' understanding of this passage see below in this section under "*Tafsīr*" of the *Metaphysics*," entry no. 6 (p. 141).

³⁸ *Averrois Cordubensis Commentarium Magnum in Aristotelis De Anima Libros*, ed. F.S. Crawford (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953).

³⁹ See the detailed account, with bibliography, by Davidson, pp. 264–265.

Averroes wrote at least two, and possibly three, short essays on the possibility of the conjunction or contact of the human intellect with the divine active intellect. All three survive only in a medieval Hebrew translation, the original Arabic having been lost. The first two, which bear no specific title and which appear to be genuine works by Averroes, were published last century by J. Hercz and translated into German.⁴⁰ The third, bearing the title of *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction* (and of doubtful authenticity according to Davidson), was published most recently with an English translation by K. Bland.⁴¹ The first two essays edited by Hercz also exist, fused together as a single piece, in a medieval Latin version entitled *De Animae Beatitudine* and spuriously attributed to Averroes.⁴² Theophrastus is mentioned only in the first of the two pieces published by Hercz.

Taken individually, all these references by Averroes to Theophrastus's theory of the intellect can easily derive from the text in Themistius's paraphrase translated above, as follows:

A. Šarḥ (Commentarium magnum) on De Anima

1) Crawford, 389.57–63 (FHS&G, 308A, first part), where Theophrastus and Themistius are mentioned together, discusses the statement in paragraph [n] above.

2) Crawford, 390.86–391.116 (FHS&G, 308A, second part), where again Theophrastus and Themistius are mentioned together, develops the arguments stated in paragraphs [p], [p1], [m], [e], and [5] and [6].

3) Crawford, 399.351–361 (FHS&G, 309A) develops themes mentioned in paragraphs [b] and [f], and then [j], [l], and [m]. In this passage in Averroes, Theophrastus is mentioned alone ("third is the question of Theophrastus"), but the reference is clearly to the question in paragraph [b] above ("what is its nature?"), where

⁴⁰ J. Hercz, *Drei Abhandlungen über die Conjunction des separaten Intellekts mit dem Menschen von Averroes (Vater und Sohn)* (Berlin: H.S. Hermann, 1869). Hercz was a student of M. Steinschneider, who has a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the translation and transmission of these three pieces in his *Al-Farabi* (St-Petersbourg, 1869), pp. 94–109. See also Hercz's introduction.

⁴¹ K.P. Bland, *The Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect by Ibn Rushd with the Commentary of Moses Narboni* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982).

⁴² See H.A. Davidson, "Averrois *Tractatus de Animae Beatitudine*," in R. Link-Salinger, ed., *A Straight Path* (Festschrift A. Hyman) (Washington, 1988), pp. 57–73.

Themistius identifies it as a question by Theophrastus. The issue of “*receptio*” and “*preparatio*” mentioned by Averroes in this passage refers to the “underlying potentiality” in paragraph [b] (ὕποκειμένην τινὰ δύναμιν = *quwwatun mā mawḏūʿatun*), but this is not, in context, Averroes’ main focus; his entire discussion in this passage is rather occasioned by Alexander’s theory of the material intellect as mere disposition (*istiʿdād*), against which Averroes is vehemently arguing (Crawford, 395, 430.77–432.137, 442–443),⁴³ and in the course of which he also mentions Theophrastus’s position.

4) Similar to the preceding is also the context of the passage in Crawford, 432.123–134 (FHS&G, 309B), where this time Theophrastus and Themistius are again mentioned in tandem.

5) In Crawford, 444.11, apparatus (FHS&G, 321), some manuscripts read Theophrastus instead of Themistius, but this is clearly due to a misreading of the name. The theories discussed by Averroes are those of Themistius from his paraphrase.⁴⁴

B. *Tafsīr of the Metaphysics*

6) Averroes mentions once Theophrastus’s views on the intellect, again in association with Themistius, in the *Tafsīr* on the *Metaphysics*.⁴⁵ Here Averroes echoes Themistius’s summary of the views of Aristotle and Theophrastus as stated in paragraphs [5] and [6] above. The following juxtaposition of Averroes’ text with that of Themistius will best bring out the similarities as well as the differences between them:

Themistius (Arabic transl.),
§§ [5–6]

Averroes, p. 1489.2–6 Bouyges

There is another, different intellect,
like something composed of what is
potential and what is actual, [which]
is *separate* from the body, imperish-
able,

The material intellect survives;
the *separate* active intellect is
like form in the material intellect,
[together] resembling something
composed of matter and form;
 (“separate” above)

⁴³ See the extensive discussion of Averroes’ arguments against Alexander in Davidson, pp. 282–285.

⁴⁴ Similarly, Averroes’ text from Crawford, 452.257–453.293, printed as no. 325 in FHS&G, does not mention explicitly Theophrastus but only Themistius.

⁴⁵ *Averroès: Tafsīr ma ba’d al-tabīʿat*, ed. M. Bouyges (1948; repr., Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1973), vol. III, p. 1489.1ff. = FHS&G, 324.

and ungenerated; ... [these two intellects]

in one way are two natures and in another they are one, the reason being that that which is composed of matter and form is one.

it is the one which in a way creates the intelligibles and in another receives them ... it makes them in its aspect as form and receives them in the aspect of the material intellect.

The translator of Themistius, Ishāq ibn-Ḥunayn, understood the crucial description of the active intellect in 108.32 Heinze (συγκείμενον ἐκ τοῦ δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ, “a combination from the potential and actual [intellects]”) as meaning “something composed of what is potential and what is actual” (see above, note 37). On the basis of this reading, Averroes then interprets “what is potential” and “what is actual” as “matter” and “form” respectively. This enables him, in consequence, to claim that the intellect as form is the active intellect and that the intellect as matter is the material intellect. Since the compound of the potential and the actual is claimed by Themistius to be “separate, imperishable, and ungenerated,” it follows for Averroes that each of the two components, the active and the material intellect, is also imperishable; hence his opening statement in this passage that the material intellect survives.⁴⁶ This reading by Averroes is consistent with his later theory of the material intellect.

C. *First brief essay on the Conjunction* (Hercz)

7) Hercz 14–16 (German), 5 (Hebrew) = FHS&G, 308B (Latin translation of the essay, with a reference in the apparatus to the doublette of this passage in the *De animae beatitudine*). The views expressed in this passage are those mentioned in paragraphs [b]

⁴⁶ See the extensive discussion of Averroes’ later theory of the material intellect as occasioned by his reading of Themistius in Davidson, pp. 287–293; cf. Arthur Hyman, “Aristotle’s Theory of the Intellect and Its Interpretation by Averroes,” pp. 161–180, and R.B. Todd in Schroeder and Todd, *Two Greek Aristotelian Commentators on the Intellect*, p. 116, note 175. For Averroes’ further elaboration of the theory of the active intellect as form and the *dispositional* (*in habitu*) intellect as matter, with the material intellect acting as the locus, or subject, where the two meet, see Davidson, pp. 332–335.

and [n] above. The name in this paragraph appears either as Theophrastus or Themistius in both the Hebrew and Latin manuscripts of the piece. Steinschneider⁴⁷ thought Themistius was the correct reading, though Theophrastus would appear to be preferable as the *lectio difficilior*, and the wrong imputation probably due to misread or undifferentiated abbreviations in the Latin manuscripts. Be that as it may, the confusion of the two names in both the Hebrew and the Latin tradition must stem partly also from Averroes' constant mention of the two in tandem.

VI

If all Averroes' references to Theophrastus on the subject of the intellect can be plausibly shown to derive from the passage in Themistius's paraphrase translated above, there remains to investigate the possibility whether Averroes may have had at his disposal either one or both of the other books mentioned earlier, Theophrastus's own *On the Soul* and another book on the soul by Themistius. With regard to the former, apart from Ibn-an-Nadim's listing of it in the *Fihrist* reported at the outset (Section I), no trace of it or reference to it has been identified in Arabic philosophical writings in the East, let alone in al-Andalus. Most importantly, Averroes himself never hints that he had at his disposal a book by Theophrastus on the soul. Given his assiduity in citing his sources and his awareness of Theophrastus's importance in the succession of Peripatetic philosophers, it is difficult to imagine that he would have neglected to mention such a book had he had access to it.

The situation with an independent book on the soul by Themistius is apparently different and more complicated. Again as already mentioned (Section V), the *Fihrist* does cite it in the section on Themistius and not in the list of commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima* where the paraphrase is listed (251.12–13). There are three aspects to this question. First there is the question whether Themistius actually wrote such a work other than the paraphrase. Though it is clear that Themistius did not uniformly write commentaries on Aristotle's works in addition to his paraphrases, there seems to be evidence in Greek that he did write a commentary or an indepen-

⁴⁷ *Al-Farabi*, p. 97, for the Hebrew manuscripts; cf. Hercz, p. 14, note 24. For the Latin manuscripts see the references in FHS&G, 308B.

dent work on the soul. The information in the *Fihrist* provides strong corroboration for this.⁴⁸ Second there is the question whether this work was translated into Arabic. Again, Ibn-an-Nadīm's mention would theoretically establish this, insofar as he was listing not complete bibliographies of all foreign authors but only those books of theirs which were available in "the language of the Arabs" (*Fihrist* 2.9). Although there will always be lingering doubts in the case of books of which no trace has been found, the presumption is that his information was accurate. Nevertheless, a mistaken identification of the paraphrase, under a different title, as a separate book is always a possibility. Third, assuming that the book was translated into Arabic, did Averroes have access to it?

In his *Šarḥ* (*Commentarium magnum*) on *De anima*, Averroes explicitly refers to "Themistius's book On the Soul" (*dicta a Themistio in suo libro de Anima*, Crawford, 480.31–32). This, however, need not mean a book different from the paraphrase. In the first place, Averroes frequently refers to paraphrases and commentaries as "books" (*kitāb*) and not by their generic names (i.e., as "commentaries" or "paraphrases"); we saw above, in the section on modal logic (Section IV), such a reference to Themistius's paraphrase of the *Prior Analytics* as "the book of Themistius". More appositely, however, there is a reference to Themistius's paraphrase of the *De Anima* as his "book" in the *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction*.⁴⁹

The relation of the active intellect with the material intellect can be compared to a potter already immersed in the clay, as formulated by Themistius in his book.

This is a clear reference to the passage in the paraphrase of the *De anima* (p. 99.13ff. Heinze = 179.11ff. Lyons). Themistius talks

⁴⁸ See the discussion by H.J. Blumenthal, "Photius on Themistius (Cod. 74): Did Themistius Write Commentaries on Aristotle?" *Hermes* 107 (1979): 174, 182. The recent suggestion by J. Vanderspoel ("The 'Themistius Collection' of Commentaries on Plato and Aristotle," *Phoenix* 43 [1989]: 162–164), that Photius's reference (*Bibl. Cod. 74*) to *commentaries* by Themistius is to be explained by a presumed donation by Themistius of a "collection" of such commentaries to the library in Constantinople, is sheer conjecture. There is no evidence to support it and the very text of Photius can in no way be so read as to imply it.

⁴⁹ Even if this work is ultimately proven not to be by Averroes, as Davidson believes (see above, Section V, after the translated passage), it clearly follows Averroist practice and refers just as much as Averroes to books available in al-Andalus. The translation given below is slightly modified from Bland, *Conjunction*, p. 46.

about a carpenter and a bronze-smith instead of a potter, but the variation, if not deliberate, may be due to a textual variant. Secondly, the point on which Averroes cites Themistius is precisely the point that Themistius makes in the paraphrase (114.31–115.9 Heinze). Regarding Aristotle's unfulfilled promise in *De anima* 431b18–20 to investigate “whether or not it is possible for the intellect to think of any objects which are separate from spatial magnitude when it is itself not so separate” (trans. D.W. Hamlyn), Themistius provides just the following argument:

The intellect mixed with matter has the power to conceptualize the things that are completely separate from matter; just as it can intelligize the forms that are mixed with matter by separating them from matter, so is it clearly more likely to be such as to intelligize separate things.⁵⁰

Averroes was quite aware of the uniqueness and significance of this statement by Themistius. He has an extended discussion on it in the *Šarḥ* (*Commentarium magnum*) on *De anima* (Crawford, 487.235ff.), and quotes it literally in the course of his discussion in the first of the two short pieces edited by Hercz,⁵¹ while the *entire Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction* is devoted to this very question: the opening lines of this epistle read,⁵²

The purpose of this treatise is to investigate whether or not it is possible for the intellect in us which is called material ultimately to apprehend the separate forms. This is the question which Aristotle had promised us to investigate in the *De anima*,

referring precisely to 431b18–20. In none of these passage by Averroes (and, in case the *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction* is by a follower, by Averroists) where this question is discussed is there any indication that use has been made of a book by Themistius other than the paraphrase which contains that brief argument translated above (p. 115.5–7 Heinze = 210.6–8 Lyons). Thus, it appears reasonably clear that Themistius's independent book *On the Soul*, even if it existed in an Arabic translation according to Ibn-an-Nadim, was not accessible to Averroes in al-Andalus. And since it was shown in the listing above that all the references to Theophras-

⁵⁰ P. 210.6–8 Lyons. I am translating the Arabic text read by Averroes. For the significance of this statement see the discussion by Davidson, pp. 39–40 and 322.

⁵¹ Hercz, *Drei Abhandlungen*, p. 29, and cf. Hercz's learned note 42.

⁵² Bland, *Conjunction*, p 2, translation adapted with slight modifications.

tus on the intellect in Averroes could feasibly derive or be developments from positions in Themistius's known paraphrase of the *De anima*, it becomes established that on this subject also Averroes knew Theophrastus indirectly through Themistius.

VII

To sum up, then, it is observed that there is complete disjunction between those works by *Theophrastus* about which we can be tolerably certain that they were translated into Arabic and the works by Theophrastus used and quoted by Averroes. None of the works by Theophrastus that had been translated into Arabic was used by Averroes, who relied, for those works of Theophrastus which he did cite, nearly exclusively on the information provided by Themistius. In only one instance is there a remote possibility that he cited Theophrastus through Alexander of Aphrodisias (Section III), but the subject on which he quoted Theophrastus is so general — the definition of *topos* — and presumably to be found also in Themistius's book on the *Topics*, that robs this exception of any statistical significance. Averroes has therefore no first-hand information about Theophrastus. He derives his information about him predominantly from Themistius, and in the case of Theophrastus's theory of the intellect, exclusively from Themistius's paraphrase of the *De anima* (Sections V–VI). This conclusion is of significance in the assessment of the evidence provided by Averroes for the recovery of original material by Theophrastus.

Secondly, Averroes used *Themistius* mostly directly; in a few instances there are indications that he may have used him indirectly, through references in later philosophers such as Philoponus (Section II) and al-Fārābī (Section IV). This makes Themistius a significant source of philosophical ideas in Arabic and a detailed study of his Arabic works — to say nothing of a more precise understanding of his works in Greek and their reception in late antiquity — a major desideratum.

Finally, the conclusions reached here raise the question why *Averroes* bothered to mention Theophrastus if he had no access to an independent work by him and if Theophrastus's views were shared by Themistius, and what this indicates about Averroes' conception of the praxis of philosophy. This very significant question deserves separate study.