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The Number of Categories: Al-Fārābī and Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī on an Aristotelian Problem

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Abstract

Aristotle's assertion that there are ten categories representing distinct types of predication sparked extensive debate among Peripatetic philosophers. Some upheld this classification, while others proposed alternative structures. Ammonius Hermiae and later Islamic thinkers like Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and al-Kindī introduced hierarchical frameworks, prioritizing the first four categories (substance, quantity, quality, and relation). The translation of Categories into Arabic, particularly by Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn, fueled further discussions, especially within the Peripatetic school of Baghdad. This article examines the views of al-Fārābī and his student Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, who defended Aristotle's tenfold classification against challenges from *kalām* scholars. While both employed similar argumentative techniques, al-Fārābī adhered closely to Aristotelian principles, whereas Ibn ʿAdī's Christian background influenced his approach. Through their works, this study explores the broader debate on the nature and number of categories in Islamic philosophy.

Keywords

Aristotle's Categories – Baghdad School – al-Fārābī – Islamic philosophy – Peripatetic philosophy – Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī

Introduction

Aristotle's Categories is a foundational work in his logical corpus, dedicated primarily to exploring how language and thought relate to reality. In this short treatise, Aristotle presents a classification of all possible types of things that can be subjects or predicates in propositions, aiming to clarify the basic ways we speak and think about objects and their characteristics. Central to this analysis is Aristotle's identification of ten fundamental categories, each representing a distinct type of predication or way of describing reality.[1]

Aristotle determined that the number of the categories is ten, but does not explain how he arrived at this number. This led many Peripatetic philosophers to address the issue and offer explanations.[2] Consequently, two groups of philosophers emerged: those who adhered strictly to Aristotle's assertion and those who oppose it. Over time, this became a major topic in most works dealing with the Categories or the theory of categories. Typically, philosophers aligned with the Peripatetic school defended the assertion that the number of categories should be exactly ten, no more and no less. On the other hand, some philosophers proposed fewer than ten categories, while others suggested more.[3]

Debates also arose regarding the status of Aristotle's ten categories and whether they could be treated equally. For instance, Ammonius Hermiae (fl. ca. 550) proposed dividing the categories into those that are "in a relation" and those that are not. He considered the first four categories—substance, quantity, quality, and relation—as simple categories whereas the remaining

1 The Categories is the book that opens Aristotle's Organon. After Porphyry's *Isogoge* was added, the Categories became the second book in the Organon. Generally, the Categories discusses the ten categories (genera of being): substance (the subject) and the nine predicates that can be said of it, as will be explained later. It is worth mentioning that Aristotle addresses the theory of categories not only in the Categories but also in his Metaphysics.

2 Thom, Division of the Categories, 30.

3 See, for instance, Galen (d. ca. 200 ce) who, in addition to Aristotle's ten categories, proposed another category called "composition" and claimed that Aristotle overlooked it. According to Galen, this category was important for those interested in exploring how things were assembled and connected, such as "how one plaits a net or makes a box or a bed" (Galen, *Institutio Logica*, 45). Moreover, modern scholars have expressed differing opinions regarding the number of categories defined by Aristotle. Some assert that the number was ten, whereas others argue it is fewer. For example, Brentano (*Several Senses*, 50) addresses this issue, claiming that Aristotle quietly abandoned two of the original ten categories, namely "disposition" and "property." See ibid., 49–51, for further discussion on the debates among modern scholars about the number of categories.

six categories were viewed as composed of these first four.[4] This approach was continued by other philosophers, who similarly divided the ten categories according to an epistemological hierarchy, clearly placing the first four categories above the others.[5]

The Categories attracted considerable interest within Islamic culture, as evidenced by numerous translations and commentaries following Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's second/eighth-century translation.[6] Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. ca. 140/757) divided the categories into two main groups: the first four categories (substance, quantity, quality, and relation), which he termed "elements" (*arkān*), and the remaining six, which he regarded as derived from them (*mushtaqq minhā*).[7] Al-Kindī, after initially dividing the categories into substance (*jawhar*) and predicates (*maḥmūlāt*), further divided predicates into two groups: simple predicates (*mufrada*), which included quantity and quality, and compound predicates (*murakkaba*), subdivided into those unrelated to matter (*al-mawjūd lā maʿṭīna*), such as relation, and those related to matter (*al-mawjūd maʿṭīna*), encompassing the other six categories.[8] Both Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and al-Kindī thus prioritized the first four categories (substance, quantity, quality and relation), treating the remaining six as derivative. Paul Thom suggests that al-Kindī might have been influenced by Olympiodorus, who considered the six remaining categories as categories "in relation to other things," each representing a relation between substance and something external to it.[9]

Later, following the translation by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, the Christian physician and translator Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn (d. 298/910) also translated the Categories into Arabic.[10] Many commentaries were written on this translation, including those by scholars of the Peripatetic school of Baghdad. Most of these commentaries drew upon earlier writings from both the Hellenistic and subsequent periods.

4 Ammonius, *On Aristotle's Categories*, 112.

5 Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 143–154.

6 For Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of paraphrases of the first four books of the Organon, see Street, Arabic Logic, 530; Ighbariah, Grammatical Features, 251.

7 See Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Manṭiq*, 10.

8 Kindī, *Rasāʾil*, 370–372. Relative is a compound category because it expresses a reciprocal relationship between two entities, such as father and son. Combining the categories of substance and quantity produces two further categories: where and when. Combining substance and quality yields two additional categories: action and affection. Combining substance with another substance generates two categories: property and disposition. See Thom, Division of the Categories, 30–31.

9 Thom, Division of the Categories, 32–33; Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 151.

10 Badawī, *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, i, 14 (introduction).

Simplicius's commentary, in particular, was well-known among the logicians of fourth/tenth-century Baghdad.[11]

In accordance with the Aristotelian tradition, the Peripatetics of Baghdad maintained unequivocally that there are ten categories: (1) substance; (2) quantity; (3) quality; (4) relation (5) where; (6) when; (7) disposition; (8) property; (9) action; and (10) affection. They vigorously defended this position, especially in response to doubts raised by earlier and later Islamic scholars, some of whom opposed the Peripatetic school. These opponents notably included theologians (*kalām* scholars) who adopted an atomistic perspective grounded in a non-Aristotelian physics.[12]

During the fourth/tenth and the early fifth/eleventh centuries, philosophical debates within the Baghdad School intensified, with the Peripatetics increasingly emphasizing their standpoint against their critics. Often, these discussions became specialized and did not center around a particular text. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's (d. 414/1023) *al-Muqābasāt* exemplifies these discussions. The work encompasses various philosophical, logical, scientific, and linguistic discussions from the fourth/tenth century, including extensive explorations of the theory of categories, each focused on a specific issue.[13]

Indeed, methods originally developed by the Stoics and Plotinus for reducing the number of categories continued to be used by opponents of the

11 Simplicius's commentary on the Categories probably served as the bridge through which other commentaries cited therein reached Islamic culture; indeed, it was the most frequently cited commentary. It became famous for its extensive nature and for preserving many views of ancient commentators whose works have not survived (cf. Walzer, New Light, 103–106; also Chase, Medieval Posterity of Simplicius, 11–12).

12 The Baghdad Peripatetic school, also known as the Baghdad School or the Baghdad Aristotelians, was active in Baghdad during the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries. It included scholars from various religions and sects, though most of its members were Christians. The prevailing view is that these scholars did not know Greek; instead, they deepened their knowledge through translations from Syriac. They were actively involved in translating and editing the Aristotelian corpus and had a great interest in logic and physics. The school was founded by the prominent Christian logician and translator Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 328/939), whose immediate disciples included al-Fārābī and Ibn ʿAdī. The school continued until its last notable scholar, Abū l-Faraj b. al-Ṭayyib (d. 435/1043). For further details on this school and its members, see Rudolph, Hansberger, and Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, Ch. 7.

13 Each discussion in the book is called *muqābasa*, literally, borrowing fire or light from someone else; in this context, it refers to the transmission of intellectual knowledge. See, for example, Tawḥīdī, *Muqābasāt*, 157–158 (on quality); 240–241 (on relation); 279 (on an issue related to quantity, namely, the difference between a unit and a point); 291–292 (on an issue related to substance, specifically, the claim that substance [*jawhar*] is a homonym indicating more than one meaning); and 316–317 (on the definitions of quality, quantity, and substance).

Peripatetics within Islamic intellectual circles.[14] The Peripatetics of Baghdad systematically engaged with these methods to defend the Aristotelian enumeration of categories.

In this article, I examine the views of two prominent philosophers from the Baghdad Peripatetic school regarding the number of categories. The two philosophers are al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) and his student Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī (d. 364/974). Although both philosophers employ similar techniques in refuting their opponents, al-Fārābī attempts to remain closer to Aristotelian tradition, while Ibn ʿAdī's Christian background informs his discussions on God, the Trinity, and the material world.

Al-Fārābī: Categories in Themselves and Categories in Relation to Something

Al-Fārābī positioned the Categories within the logical corpus, placing it immediately after Porphyry's Isagoge.[15] This arrangement was consistent with the dominant approach of the Baghdad School, which continued the Peripatetic tradition. According to this tradition, the categories deal with expressions insofar as they signify concepts, and these concepts reflect external reality in some manner.[16] For example, the expression "table" signifies the concept "table," which corresponds to the substance "table" existing externally. In this view, the categories represent ten concepts reflecting the external world. Therefore, a philosopher like al-Fārābī who adheres to Aristotelian physics, should support maintaining the original number of categories, since they primarily reflect conceptual reality and secondarily external reality.

14 As mentioned above, both Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and al-Kindī expressed disagreement with the argument that the ten categories are ontologically equal. Even Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) expressed reservations about the possibilities of determining the number of categories through a rationally precise method, calling his own approach "the well-known division" (*al-qisma al-mashhūra*). See Ibn Sīnā, *Maqūlāt*, 83; also Thom, Division of the Categories, 35, 48; Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 155–159.

15 Fārābī, *Alfāẓ*, 104; idem, *Iḥṣāʾ*, 20. Al-Fārābī composed two commentaries on the Categories, one short and one long. The short commentary was published three times (Dunlop 1959; Al-ʿAjam 1985; Danesh Pajouh 1408 *Hijra*), while the long commentary has not survived, except for fragments preserved in a medieval Hebrew translation (Zonta, Long Commentary).

16 This interpretation of the categories differs from the ontological approach initiated by Ibn Sīnā, who tended to view the categories as indicators of ontological entities. See, e.g., Ibn Sīnā, *Maqūlāt*, 5.

Al-Fārābī does not discuss the issue of the number of categories in his *Kitāb al-Maqūlāt* (Book of Categories) as might be expected. Instead, he addresses it in his *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* (Book of Letters), under the title "'In Relation to Something' and the Number of Categories" (*al-nisba wa-ʿadad al-maqūlāt*).[17] Moreover, besides his *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, al-Fārābī touches upon the question of category numbers briefly in other writings, to which I will refer later.

The discussion generally centers on whether reducing the number of categories is feasible. Those advocating for reduction adopt approaches similar to the ones employed by the Stoics and Plotinus against the Peripatetics, suggesting either a reduction in or the elimination of certain categories. In his *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, al-Fārābī outlines and then refutes the arguments of the Peripatetics' opponents.[18] He first presents argument (a), claiming the number is seven; then argument (b) claiming the number is six; argument (c) claiming five; argument (d) claiming four; argument (e), claiming two; and finally, argument (f), which represents the minimum possible number—one.[19]

Al-Fārābī presents argument (a) as follows:

> Some people apply the term "relation" (*iḍāfa*) to all relational types (*aṣnāf al-nisab kullahā*), making it a genus encompassing all relational categories (*maqūlāt al-nisab*).[20] In so doing, [the number of] categories becomes seven: (1) "this object" being indicated (*al-mushār ilayhī*), neither present in nor [predicated] of a subject;[21] (2) quantity; (3) quality; (4) what informs (*ʿarrafa*) that it is acting;[22] (5) what informs that it is

17 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §§51–55.

18 Al-Fārābī does not name the opponents of the Peripatetics explicitly, but besides the Stoics, Plotinus, and other philosophers from late antiquity (see Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 211, who refers to some of them), Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and al-Kindī from the Islamic world can be included. Both scholars prioritized the categories of substance, quantity, quality, and relation over the other categories, arguing that the latter group was derived from the former (cf. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Manṭiq*, 10; Kindī, *Rasāʾil*, 370–372).

19 For examples of reducing the categories in the Hellenistic tradition, see Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 211.

20 To distinguish between two similar concepts in Arabic, *iḍāfa* and *nisba*, I translate the former as "relation" and the latter as "in relation to something." I discuss the difference between these terms later in this article. Additionally, all quotations from *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* are my own translations.

21 I.e., substance, an entity existing independently, not relying on another entity to exist or to be described.

22 I prefer to translate *ʿarrafa* here as "inform" instead of "define," as the term in this context refers to something that indicates or reveals agency, rather than offering a formal definition.

affected; (6) its disposition; and (7) its relationship to something [external to it].[23]

In *Kitāb al-Maqūlāt*, al-Fārābī defines the category of "relation" (*iḍāfa*) as a mutual relation existing between two entities. For example, a father implies a son, and conversely, a son implies a father (the father is the father of the son, and the son is the son of the father).[24] Argument (a) holds that the categories "where," "when," and "property" can be removed, since all three belong to the category of "relation," which functions as their genus.[25] This argument is based on the observation that "where" is a substance in relation to the place,[26] as in the statement, "Zayd is in the market"; "when" is a substance in relation to time,[27] as in, "Zayd arrived in the morning"; and "property" is a substance in relation to another substance,[28] as in, "Zayd wears a hat." Thus, the number of categories is reduced from ten to seven.

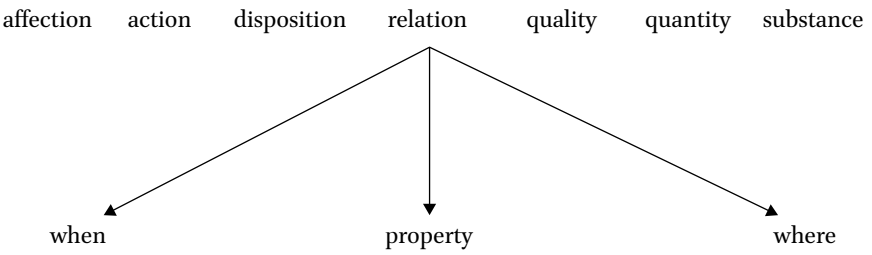

FIGURE 1 From Ten to Seven

In al-Fārābī's opinion, this argument is incorrect because it fails to distinguish between a category per se (*bi-dhātihā*) and a category "in relation to something" (*bi-l-iḍāfa*). He emphasizes the need to recognize two distinct

23 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §53.

24 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 103–104; also *Ḥurūf*, §90; Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 232–233. Both the father and the son belong to the category of "relation," although each individually belongs to the category of "substance." The father, as a parent, belongs to the category of "relation," but as a man, he belongs to the category of "substance"; cf. Ackrill, *Aristotle's Categories*, 97. Al-Fārābī (*Ḥurūf*, §41) notes that if we have two things, A and B, belonging to the category of "relation," their relationship is reciprocal, meaning the relationship of A to B is identical to that of B to A.

25 For more on reducing the number of categories using the concept "in relation to something," see Merlan, Greek Philosophy, 37–38.

26 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 110; Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 1, 21–22; cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, vi, 1, 14.

27 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 108; Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 442–443.

28 Ibid., 113; ibid., *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 438–439.

forms of each category. For example, he distinguishes between two types of the category of "where": "where in itself" (*ayna bi-dhātihi*) and "where in relation to something" (*ayna bi-l-iḍāfa*).[29] Al-Fārābī explains: "'where' in itself is like saying 'in the house' [...][30] or 'in the market.' 'Where' in relation to something includes terms such as up, down, above, and below."[31] "Where" in itself is the genuine category under discussion.[32] However, it must be differentiated from "where" said in relation to something else, which is not a truly "where" but rather "where in accident" (*ayna bi-l-ʿaraḍ*). For instance, "up" belongs to the category of "relation," since "up" is defined in relation to "down" and vice versa, although the expression itself denotes a specific place. When one relative implies its correlative, both terms belong to the category of "relation."[33]

Another example al-Fārābī presents in his *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* is the sentence, "Zayd is the father of ʿAmr." Even when taking the converse, the sentence remains valid: "'Amr is the son of Zayd." This "principle of cognitive symmetry" (*takāfuʾ*) is necessary for two objects—such as "father" and "son"—to be classified under the category of "relation." By fulfilling this principle, al-Fārābī argues, it becomes possible to exchange the subject (*mawḍūʿ*) and the predicate (*maḥmūl*) in a proposition without altering the equal relation between them. Thus, in the sentence "Zayd is the father of ʿAmr," "Zayd" is the subject and "the father of ʿAmr" is the predicate, whereas in the converse—"ʿAmr is Zayd's son"—"ʿAmr" becomes the subject and "Zayd's son" the predicate.[34]

If argument (a) is correct, any expression belonging to the categories "where," "when," or "property" should primarily belong to the category of "relation," which would encompass these three categories. The principle of symmetry—the possibility of switching subject and predicate without changing meaning—should therefore apply to these three categories. Al-Fārābī examines the sentence "Zayd is in the house," where the phrase "in the house" belongs to the category of "where." According to argument (a), this phrase would belong to the category of "relation." The question, however, is whether this sentence meets the principle of symmetry.

29 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §53; also Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 117–118.

30 Al-Fārābī mentions two Arabic synonyms to indicate "house," *dār* and *bayt*. I have chosen not to repeat the same phrase twice.

31 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 111. See also Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 22; Thom, Division of the Categories, 33–34.

32 The definition of this category, according to al-Fārābī, is: "'where' is the relation of body to its place" (Dunlop, Categories, 110).

33 Cf. Thom, Division of the Categories, 46.

34 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §49; also idem, *Maqūlāt*, 106. The expression "principle of cognitive symmetry" was coined by Sedley (Aristotelian Relativities, 527) in the context of discussing issues related to Aristotle's category of "relation."

Al-Fārābī's answer is negative. It is impossible to reverse the proposition by switching the subject and predicate while preserving the original meaning:

> When you say "Zayd is in the house", [the expression] "house" [is] part of the predicate; [When considering the converse of the sentence,] we cannot make the expression "Zayd" part of the predicate of "the house" in the same sense as when we said about "Zayd" that he is "in the house." Rather, if we say "the house is a property of Zayd," then "Zayd" becomes part of the predicate in a different sense from the original [i.e., a different meaning]. This applies to [the three categories]: "where," "when," and "property."[35]

Al-Fārābī argues that reversing the sentence leads to a different meaning—for example, "the house is a property of Zayd." This analysis demonstrates that the principle of symmetry, applicable to everything in the category of "relation" (*iḍāfa*), does not apply to the category of "where." For the same reason, it does not apply to "when" and "property" either. Argument (a) is incorrect because it fails to differentiate clearly between "relation" (*iḍāfa*) and "in relation to something" (*nisba*). The relationship between "Zayd" and "house" is unidirectional; to classify them both under "relation," the relationship must be symmetrical and mutual, which is impossible in the given formulation.

Elsewhere, al-Fārābī returns to this sentence, illustrating that to meet the principle of symmetry, its meaning must be altered. For instance, the particle *fī* (in), which appears in *Zayd fī l-bayt* (Zayd is in the house), must be interpreted as *muḥāṭ bi* (surrounded by). With this reinterpretation, the relationship between "Zayd" and "the house" becomes symmetrical: "Zayd" is surrounded by "the house" and "the house" surrounds "Zayd."[36] Such mutuality is required to include these terms within "relation." However, this mutuality comes at a high price—the original meaning changes significantly. If we preserve the original meaning, we lose the mutuality necessary for the "relation" category. Therefore, al-Fārābī writes:

> if the meaning of our saying "Zayd is in the house" is not that he is surrounded by the house [...] and [if] the intention of our saying "in the house" is not this type of "relation" (*iḍāfa*) but another kind of relation that does not fall within the [category of] "relation," then the category of "where" will not be included within "relation." Consequently, "where"

35 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §49.
36 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §§46–48.

> has two relations to the place; one appropriate to answer [the question] "where?" and another belonging to "relation."[37]

The meaning of the phrase "in the house" (*fī l-bayt*) may not be "surrounded by the house" (*muḥāṭ bi-l-bayt*), but rather "inside the house." In this case, this use of "where" does not belong to the category of "relation," but rather to the category of "where" itself.

Argument (a) does not distinguish clearly between categories in themselves and categories in relation to something, as al-Fārābī noted regarding the category of "where." What is said about "where" also applies to the categories, "when" and "property." Furthermore, argument (a) confuses the concepts of *iḍāfa* (relation) and *nisba* (in relation to something). The argument holds that since the three categories ("where," "when," and "property") refer to something external to themselves, they belong to the category of "relation," which is considered their supreme genus. Al-Fārābī argues the opposite; *nisba* includes *iḍāfa*, rather than *iḍāfa* includes *nisba*.[38] *Iḍāfa* is more specific because it is bidirectional, as illustrated by "Zayd is surrounded by the house," while *nisba* is more general because it is unidirectional, as in "Zayd is in the house," which does not preserve its meaning when reversed. Therefore, *iḍāfa* cannot include *nisba* and thus cannot serve as a supreme genus encompassing the three categories.

Argument (b) extends argument (a) with greater radicalism; this time, the category of "disposition" (*waḍʿ*) joins "where," "when," and "property," categorizing all four under the category of "relation," thus reducing the total number of categories to six.[39]

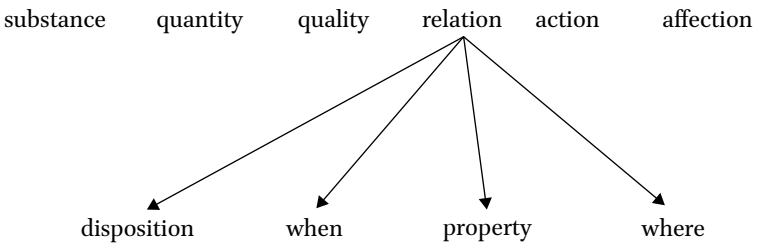

FIGURE 2 From Ten to Six

37 Ibid., §47.

38 Ibid., §§38–39; also §§46–50 for a discussion of semantic differences between *iḍāfa* and *nisba*.

39 Simplicius (*Categories 5–6*, 119) notes that some philosophers rejected the possibility of a category called "disposition."

Al-Fārābī describes this as follows:

> Other people classified the "disposition" of [the substance] under the [category of] "relation" [treating it] as a "relation," thereby reducing [the number] of categories to six.[40]

According to al-Fārābī, "disposition" is the correspondence between the parts of the body and the parts of the place surrounding it, such as a person being either standing or lying down. In each position, the relationship between the parts of the person (substance) and the surrounding place differs.[41] Argument (b) suggests that "the essence of 'disposition' is not completed except by a [particular] type of relation (*iḍāfa*)."[42] In the category of "disposition," the parts of the substance must align with (*muḥādhiya*) the parts of the place in which the substance is located. For example, a standing position requires a particular surrounding place, while lying down necessitates a different surrounding place.[43] This parallel between substance and place represents a type of relationship between two entities. However, al-Fārābī rejects classifying "disposition" under the category of "relation,"[44] explaining his position as follows:

> The "position" belonging to the body in relation to its essence belongs essentially to its "where," as it is termed, while the "position" belonging to it concerning another body belongs relatively to its "where." Since places are of two kinds, essential and relative, "position" likewise is of two kinds, essential and relative, However, [a thing] does not have a relative "position" unless it first has an essential "position." The essential type further divides into two kinds, a primary and specific place, and a secondary place shared with other bodies. Thus, a thing's "position" can be related either to its primary, specific place or to its secondary, common place extending to the horizons of the universe.[45]

The distinction between "disposition" in itself and "disposition" in relation to something else corresponds to the distinction between place in itself and place in relation to something else. A place in itself is designated for a

40 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §53.
41 See Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 111; Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 523–525.
42 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §53.
43 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 111. See Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 423–425, for a discussion about place according to al-Fārābī in particular and other Arabic philosophers in general.
44 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §53.
45 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 112; also Dunlop, Categories, 40.

particular body, whereas a relative place is larger, encompassing multiple bodies.[46] Consequently, "disposition" in itself pertains specifically to the place itself, while "disposition" in relation to something pertains to a shared place. Argument (b) addresses "disposition" in relation to something rather than "disposition" in itself; since the relative "disposition" is not genuinely real, argument (b) lacks justification.

Al-Fārābī further clarifies: "It is clear that 'disposition' as such is not a 'relation,' even if ['relation'] incidentally accompanies and attaches to it."[47] When "disposition" refers to something else, it ceases to be real "disposition" and becomes "disposition" related to something accidentally accompanying the substance. Again, confusion between category per se and category in relation to something else is the root of the error.

Argument (c) takes this reduction even further by adding the category of "action" to the previously mentioned categories:

> In the opinion of others, [the category of] "action" (*an yafʿal*) is said in relation to the [category of] "affection" (*an yanfaʿil*), and so [the number of] categories they obtain is five.[48]

According to al-Fārābī, "action" describes a substance acting upon or influencing something external,[49] while "affection" is the impact or influence of an external factor upon a substance.[50] Argument (c) seeks further reduction of the categories by combining "action" and "affection" into a single category. Including the previous reductions, this process reduces the number of categories to five. The basis of this argument is the claim that every action belonging to the category of "action" is always expressed in relation to the category of "affection." For example, if wood being cut belongs to the category of "affection," then the carpenter's act of cutting wood belongs to the category of "action." When a tree is cut, there must necessarily be someone cutting it, indicating that these two actions correspond and relate to each other.[51] Thus the overall scheme of categories appears as follows:

46 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 110–11.

47 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §53.

48 Ibid.; also idem, *Jawāb masāʾil*, 90–92.

49 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 113; Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 322–324.

50 Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 115; idem, *Jawāb masāʾil*, 91, 101; Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 324–325.

51 Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, vi, 1, 19.

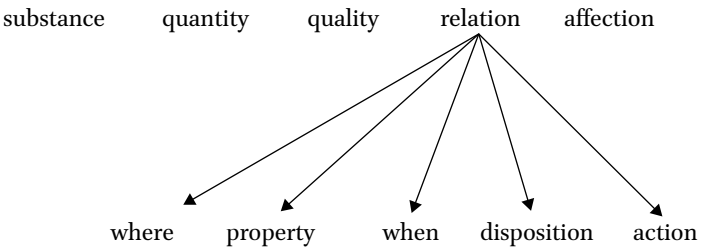

FIGURE 3 From Ten to Five

Al-Fārābī rejects this reduction too. According to him, attention must be paid to the nature of the relationship between the categories of "action" and "affection." When we have "affection," we necessarily have "action"; however, the reverse is not necessarily true—when there is "action," it does not necessarily follow that there is "affection." Al-Fārābī explains that in many cases, a factor exists intending to act on a particular object, yet the object lacks the willingness or capacity to be influenced by that factor.[52] If the relationship between "action" and "affection" is not symmetrical but rather unidirectional, clearly, these two categories do not belong to the category of "relation."[53] Moreover, "action" and "affection" do not always occur simultaneously. There are cases in which "affection" follows "action," as in the example of a painful blow, where the sensation of pain occurs after the blow and not simultaneously.[54]

As in his previous responses, al-Fārābī distinguishes here between category in itself and category in relation to another category. He maintains that although the category of "action" depends upon the category of "affection," the meaning of "action" itself is distinct:

> Changing the relations between the parts of the body through which the action is conducted. This does not necessitate [classifying "action"] under the [category of] "relation."[55]

52 Fārābī, *Risāla*, 164. Plotinus (*Enneads*, vi, 1,19) presents the example of writing on a tablet, asserting that the act of writing on the tablet belongs to the category of "action" because it is performed by the writer. On the other hand, when we say, "The tablet has been inscribed," this does not imply any activity by the tablet itself, comparable to the pain one feels as a result of a blow.

53 Fārābī, *Jawāb masā'il*, 90–91.

54 Plotinus, *Enneads*, vi, 1, 19.

55 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §53; also idem, *Maqūlāt*, 113.

The category of "action" thus has its own intrinsic meaning: the manner in which a certain object acts while performing an action. Additionally, this category has another meaning when considered in relation to the category of "affection." Once again, confusion arises between a category in itself and a category in relation to something. Furthermore, there is a related issue concerning both categories, "action" and "affection," which argument (d) describes as follows:

> Other [disputers] thought that the meaning of [the categories of] "action" and "affection" (*an yafʿal wa-an yanfaʿil*) refers to the actor and the affected agent (*al-fāʿil wa-l-mafʿūl*) [respectively]. Since the actor and the affected were included in the [category of] "relation," they (i.e., the disputers) considered the two categories ["action" and "affection"] also to be included in the [category of] "relation"; hence, according to them, [the number of] categories is four.[56]

Argument (d) holds that a similarity exists between "affection" (*an yanfaʿil*) and the affected (*al-mafʿūl*), as well as between "action" (*an yafʿal*) and the actor (*al-fāʿil*). Since *fāʿil* and *mafʿūl* belong to the category of "relation," it follows that *an yafʿal* and *an yanfaʿil* also belong to that category. If we consider the previous reductions, this reduces the number of categories to four:

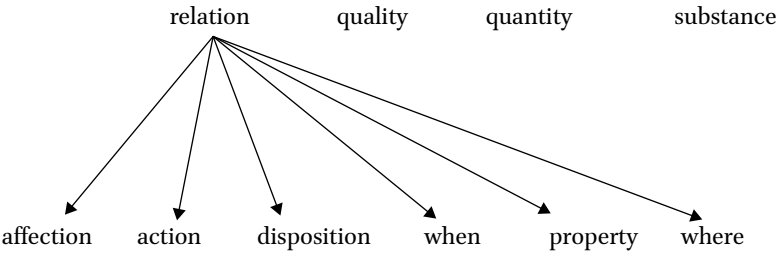

FIGURE 4 From Ten to Four

To clarify the distinctions between the pairs of concepts—"action" and "the actor," and "affection" and "the affected"—let us again use the example of the wood from argument (c). Here, two parallel actions occur: cutting the wood, from the perspective of the person performing the action (the carpenter); and being cut, from the perspective of the object receiving the action (the wood

56 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §53; cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, vi, 1, 22.

itself). The first action belongs to the category of "action," the second belongs to the category of "affection." The actor who performs the first operation is called *fāʿil,* and the object upon which the action is performed is called *mafʿūl.* Clearly, there is no identity between *an yafʿal* and *fāʿil,* since the former indicates the carpenter actively cutting the wood, while the latter only refers to the carpenter.[57] The same applies to *an yanfaʿil* and *mafʿūl*; the former indicates the wood as it is being cut, the latter refers only to the wood before or after being cut. Although the concepts *fāʿil* and *mafʿūl* are expressed in relation to each other and belong to the category of "relation" — since every *fāʿil* requires a *mafʿūl*, and vice versa — this does not imply that the categories of "action" and "affection" jointly belong to "relation." As al-Farābī explains, each category retains its own distinct meaning, despite being related accidentally.[58]

Argument (e) further reduces the number of categories to two:

> [Other disputers] claim that there are two categories: "this object" being indicated and its accident. They call "this object," which is referred to, "substance." Thus, they reduce the [number of categories] to two: substance and accident. [59]

This argument can be summarized as dividing the categories into two parts: a substance, and nine other categories predicated of it, each considered an accident (*ʿaraḍ*). According to this argument, accident becomes a supreme genus encompassing all the categories, leaving only two categories — substance and accident.[60]

57 See also Plotinus, *Enneads*, i, 19.

58 Fārābī, *Jawāb masāʾil*, 91.

59 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §54; also Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 212.

60 Cf. Dexippus, *Aristotle Categories*, 64, a commentary on Aristotle's Categories written in the form of dialogue between Dexippus and his disciple Seleucus. See also below for Ibn ʿAdī's position, as well as that of al-Suhrawardī (*Mashāriʿ*, 284), who proposes two categories: "substance" (*jawhar*) and "state" (*hayʾa*). As part of his critique of Aristotle's theory of categories, Plotinus (*Enneads*, vi, 1, 23) asks whether it might be sufficient to adopt a single category — "property" — since one might say that a substance "possesses dimension" rather than "quantity," or "possesses color" rather than "quality," and so forth with the remaining categories. It is also noteworthy that the physics of many theologians (*mutakallimūn*) relies on the concepts of "substance" and "accident," albeit with meanings different from those prevalent among philosophers. On this issue, see Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, v 2, 8, 56–57; also Pines, *Atomism*, 4–5, 19–20; and Dhanani, *Theory of Kalām*, 38–43. For more on the concept of "accident" in *kalām* and philosophy, see Ījī, *Mawāqif*, 480–491.

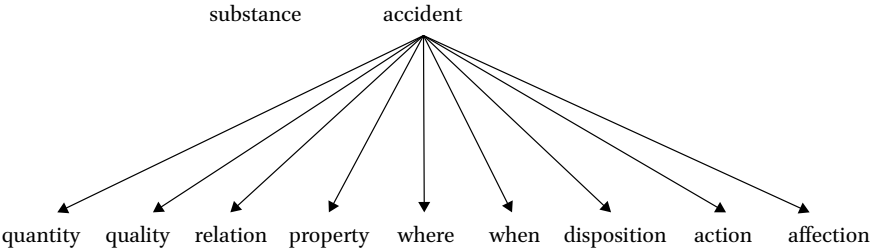

FIGURE 5 From Ten to Two

Al-Fārābī refutes this argument, writing:

> The meaning of "accident" is not a genus encompassing the nine [categories], but rather indicates the specific relation each of these categories has to [the substance] being indicated.[61]

He further explains that an accident is understood as something that is present in a subject. [62] Thus, the concept of "accident" should not be seen as a supreme genus for the nine categories, but rather as a feature attributed to the category when predicated of a substance. The confusion in argument (e) arises from identifying "genus" (*jins*), a logical concept in the Aristotelian sense, with "accident" (*ʿaraḍ*), an ontological concept. According to al-Fārābī, although the accident includes the nine categories, it does not function logically as their supreme genus, just as the concept of "category," which encompasses all ten categories, does not serve as their supreme genus.[63]

Al-Fārābī describes argument (f) as follows:

> [There are] people who think [...] that to achieve a composition (*taʾlīf*),[64] [many] things must be grouped together (*ijtimāʿ ashyāʾ*) so that they become arranged in relation to each other in a defined order. Such composition is something constituted from multiple categories. The connection [between these categories] is a type of "relation," and its genus consists in placing [categories] together according to a defined order and relationship; thus, [composition] belongs to the [category of] "disposition." It is not appropriate to assume a [particular] thing as a supreme

61 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §54.
62 Ibid., §53.
63 Ibid., §54.
64 Compare Galen's category of "composition"; see above, note 3.

> genus when it clearly belongs to one of these [compositions], since "disposition" serves as its genus (*jinsuhu*), while the other categories serve as its differentia (*fuṣūluhu*).[65]

Argument (f) reduces the number of categories even further, down to just one — the category of "disposition" (*waḍʿ*).[66] This argument assumes that everything is composed of many categories whose exact number remains unclear, and that these categories are connected by different types of relationships. Each connection represents a relationship that exists between two or more categories. Together, these connections constitute the object, composed of multiple categories interconnected by various relations. According to this argument, the category of "disposition" is the supreme encompassing all other categories, each representing possible relationships existing within the object. This argument appears unclear to al-Fārābī because it fails to explicitly mention "substance." For him, something can only be called a "category" if it is attributed to a particular substance: "A [certain] thing is called a "category" (*maqūla*) only in relation to the indicated [substance].[67] Furthermore, it appears that argument (f) extends beyond the traditional framework of category theory since its concern is primarily with relationships between connections and not with the different categories or species included within them.

In summary, although al-Fārābī does not explicitly name his opponents, his discussion of the number of categories shows that the issue had attained considerable attention within the Baghdad School, likely due to criticism directed against Aristotle. Unlike his predecessors in Islamic thought,[68] al-Fārābī addressed the issue systematically and attempted to present all possible arguments that his opponents might use. Subsequently, this problem became central in writings discussing the theory of categories, notably those of Yaḥyā Ibn

65 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §55. "Differentia" is a universal that distinguishes between two species belonging to the same genus, such as "rational," which differentiates humans from other animals. For more on al-Farābī's use of this term, see Alon and Abed, *Al-Fārābī's Lexicon*, i, 315–318.

66 Cf. Merlan Greek Philosophy, 79, who attributes a similar claim to the philosopher Severus (d. ?), proposing an overarching category entitled "the thing." Cf. also the Stoic position discussed by Plotinus, *Enneads*, vi, i, 25, as well as Simplicius (*Categories 1–4*, 29), who attributes the idea of one single category encompassing ten categories to a Pythagorean philosopher.

67 Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §55.

68 With the exception of Mattā b. Yūnus, who, according to Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī, wrote a work on the categories that apparently served as a source of inspiration for his two students, al-Fārābī and Ibn ʿAdī.

ʿAdī and Abū l-Faraj b. al-Ṭayyib. The next section is dedicated to discussing Ibn ʿAdī's contribution to this problem.[69]

Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī on the Number of Categories

In addition to being an Aristotelian logician and one of the co-editors and translators of the Categories,[70] the Jacobite philosopher Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī is also known for his anti-atomist views, to which he devoted more than one work.[71] Endress notes that the atomists whom he opposed were the Ashʿarites of his time.[72] Since Aristotle's theory of categories is based on his physics — a physics that divides existents into substances and the accidents that accompany them — whereas the atomists' study of nature is based on what they call "the indivisible particle" (*al-jawhar al-fard/al-juz' alladhī lā yatajazza'*),[73] Ibn ʿAdī saw it necessary both to attack atomism and to defend the traditional number of categories.

Before approaching Ibn ʿAdī's position on the number of categories, it is worth noting that, alongside his extensive Aristotelian education, he was also deeply engaged in theological issues, particularly in debates between Christians and Muslim scholars concerning the Trinity and the nature of Jesus.[74] Unlike

69 Ibn al-Ṭayyib addressed this issue in detail; see, e.g., Ferrari, *Kategorienkommentar*, 93–124. A Christian physician, philosopher, logician, and translator, Ibn al-Ṭayyib is regarded as the last representative of the Peripatetic school of Baghdad. He was a contemporary of Ibn Sīnā and wrote a large commentary on the Categories, which he also translated himself. For more information about him, see Rudolph, Hansberger and Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, 496–512. Ibn al-Ṭayyib's contributions to the debate on the number of categories will be examined in a forthcoming article.

70 At the end of the Categories published by Badawī (*Manṭiq Arisṭū*, i, 76), it is written: "The version of Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī that he copied himself, was corrected by al-Ḥasan b. Siwār and compared with the canonical version written by Isḥāq [b. Ḥunayn], the translator." See also Ibn al-Nadīm (*Fihrist*, 348), who mentions Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (d. 374/985) as the person who asked Ibn ʿAdī to translate Alexander of Aphrodisias's commentary on the Categories, but both texts — Alexander's commentary and Ibn ʿAdī's translation — have been lost. O'Leary (O'Leary, *Arabic Thought*, 114) claims that Ibn ʿAdī edited Alexander's translation of the Categories in addition to authoring his own translation of the work. See also, Bonadeo, *The Arabic Aristotle*, 11.

71 Endress, Critique of Atomism; Bennett and Wisnovsky, Newly Discovered.

72 Endress, Theology, 243.

73 Pines, *Atomism*, 4–5.

74 For some theological essays of Ibn ʿAdī, see for example, Périer, *Petits Traités Apologétiques*; Khūrī, *Jawhar wāḥid*; Al-Yasūʿī, *Fī l-tawḥīd*. Among Ibn ʿAdī's numerous treatises on the Trinity, one was specifically directed against the Muslim philosopher al-Kindī (d. ca. 256/870) who had written against the Christian doctrine. For more on Ibn ʿAdī's polemics against al-Kindī, see Périer, *Petits Traités Apologétiques*, 118–128.

the Muslim *mutakallimūn* who denied that God is a substance,[75] Ibn ʿAdī held that God is indeed a substance — one in a certain way, and many in another. The multiplicity in the essence of God differs from that found in the physical world. In the physical world, multiplicity involves distinct entities classified under ten separate categories, some substances, others accidents. By contrast, the multiplicity in God's substance is internal; it is not a multiplicity of categories, but of elements within a single, unified essence. This multiplicity, according to Ibn ʿAdī, is comparable to the composition of a logical definition (*al-ḥadd*), where a single essence is defined by multiple essential components. Just as a logical definition expresses unity through structured complexity, the divine essence is one, yet composed of three essential elements.[76] In contrast to this divine multiplicity expressed in the Trinity, the multiplicity in the natural world appears through the ten known categories, in which a substance may be associated with many accidents that are not essential to it.[77]

In his theological writings, Ibn ʿAdī attempted to offer a logical-philosophical justification for the internal multiplicity of God;[78] in his essays on the number of categories, he addressed multiplicity in the physical world. If we take it for granted that each of the ten categories is a supreme genus, then the question arises: can God be considered a genus? Ibn ʿAdī's answer is no. A genus needs its particulars in order to exist; the particulars are, in a sense, the cause of the genus. But God, as the cause of all things, cannot be caused by them and therefore cannot be a genus or be included in any of the categories.[79]

This fundamental difference between the natural world and God does not imply that God is not involved in the world. On the contrary, God is the creator of the objects that fall under the ten categories and He created them with perfection (*ʿalā ghāyat al-itqān wa-l-iḥkām*). In this sense, classifying the objects of the world within the ten categories reflects the Creator's intention and wisdom

75 One can gain insight into the position of the *mutakallimūn* who reject the claim that God is substance, by looking at al-Baqillānī (d. 403/1013), who wrote shortly after Ibn ʿAdī and may have been responding to him. In a chapter dedicated to the Christian claim that God is substance (*Bāb al-kalām ʿalā l-naṣārā fī qawlihim inna Allāh taʿālā jawhar*, al-Baqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 93–97) explicitly refutes this idea.

76 Ibn ʿAdī, *Fī l-tawḥīd*, 229.

77 Khūrī, *Jawhar wāḥid*, 164–168; also Rashed, Ibn Adi et Avicenne, 132, note 55.

78 Ibn ʿAdī uses the logical definition (*al-ḥadd al-manṭiqī*) to explain the essence of God. According to him, just as a logical definition expresses the one essence of the defined object, so too does the essence of God. For example, man is defined as a mortal rational animal; this definition refers to a single essence consisting of three elements. Similarly, in the case of God, He is one in one sense, but in another, He is three hypostases. For a more detailed discussion of Ibn ʿAdī's justification of the Trinity in his *Kalām ʿalā l-masāʾil*, see Ibn ʿAdī, *Fī l-tawḥīd*, 222–239; Khūrī, *Jawhar wāḥid*, 91–220.

79 Ibn ʿAdī, *Fī l-tawḥīd*, 223.

(*al-qaṣd wa-l-ḥikma*).[80] This is why Ibn ʿAdī saw it necessary to defend the ten categories against those who challenged their existence or number, a subject to which we now turn.[81]

As Rashed points out, Ibn ʿAdī's project is distinctly logical.[82] Indeed, he was interested in all aspects of logic, devoting numerous works to discussing issues related to the Categories.[83] Ibn ʿAdī dedicated more than one work to the issue of the number of categories, including *Fī anna l-ʿaraḍ laysa* [*huwa jinsan*] *li-l-tisʿ al-maqūlāt al-ʿaraḍiyya* (That the Accident Is Not [a Genus] for the Nine Accidental Categories),[84] and *Al-Sabab fī wujūd al-maqūlāt ʿashran* (The Reason for the Categories Being Ten).[85] To these, we may add his brief references in a treatise he sent to a Jewish philosopher from Mosul called ʿIrs b. ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd, entitled Responses to Bishr the Jew to His Questions (*Ajwibat Bishr al-yahūdī ʿalā masāʾilihi*), who had requested his assistance.[86] Ibn ʿUthmān was well-versed in Aristotle's physical, metaphysical, and logical writings, as well as in medicine and the works of the Alexandrian commentators.[87]

In this treatise, Ibn ʿAdī surveys various philosophical issues and answers a number of questions posed to him by Ibn ʿUthmān.[88] The eighth and the ninth questions concern the problem of the number of categories. According

80 Ibid., 260–261.

81 Notable in this context is the fact that al-Fārābī also took an interest in Aristotle's Physics and opposed atomism (Endress, Theology, 242). Although his interpretation of the Physics has not survived, we can gain some insight into his physical doctrines from other extant writings, such as *Al-Wāḥid wa-l-wiḥda* (The One and Unity) and *Fī l-khalāʾ* (On the Vacuum). See Baffioni, Movements, 295.

82 Rashed, Ibn Adi et Avicenne, 135. Even in his theological discussions, Ibn ʿAdī did not neglect logic. For example, in his theological treatise *Maqāla fī l-tawḥīd* (267), he addresses readers who are not well equipped to understand the content of the treatise, describing them as "the group that is not accustomed to logical arguments" (*lam yaʾlafū al-aqāwīl al-manṭiqiyya*).

83 Endress, *Ibn ʿAdī*, 87. Ibn ʿAdī's discussions of the Categories are found in *Maqālāt*, 144–147; 167–176; 180–188; 323–324.

84 Ibid., 144–147. See also Endress, *Ibn ʿAdī*, 50; Rescher, *Arabic Logic*, 43; Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 213.

85 Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 180–181; Endress, *Ibn ʿAdī*, 48–49, 90.

86 Ibn ʿAdī (*Maqālāt*, 314–329) notes (*Maqālāt*, 314) that the treatise was sent to Ibn ʿUthmān through another Jewish philosopher named Bishr b. Samsān. Ibn ʿUthmān 's request seemed unusual to Ibn ʿAdī, who did not conceal his surprise. In his view, the questioner could have approached another philosopher, Ibn Bakūs, who was closer to Ibn ʿUthmān than Ibn ʿAdī himself (*Maqālāt*, 330). On Ibn Bakūs, see Rescher, *Arabic Logic*, 141–142.

87 Ibn ʿAdī (*Maqālāt*, 335–336) was asked two questions about medicine, but he admitted that he could not answer them, acknowledging that he was not familiar with the field.

88 Ibid., 314; 329.

to Ibn ʿUthmān, neither Aristotle nor Porphyry addressed the eighth question.[89] In this question, he asks whether the categories or the supreme genera can be reduced to two; substance and accident.[90] In the ninth question, he asks why the number of categories is exactly ten.[91] Ibn ʿUthmān also quotes ʿĪsā b. Usayd, who had once addressed his mentor, Thābit b. Qurra, with a question about the number of categories.[92] According to Ibn Usayd, Ibn Qurra leaned toward a number greater than ten.[93]

Ibn ʿAdī's answers to these questions are brief and refer the questioner to the commentary of his teacher Mattā b. Yūnus on the Categories.[94] It appears, however, that Ibn ʿAdī later felt the need to compose his own independent work on the problem of the number of categories. One might reasonably surmise that these works were written after his correspondence with Ibn ʿUthmān; otherwise, he would likely have referred to his own works rather than to his teacher's.

In the face of increasing challenges, proponents of the position that the number of categories is ten were compelled to defend it. Ibn ʿAdī attempted, in his own way, to provide a justification rooted in Aristotelian physical concepts, which he believed led to exactly ten categories — each distinct, separated from the others, and possessing independent existence.[95] In his treatise The Reason for the Categories Being Ten, he presents the following justification:

89 Ibid., 323–324.

90 See a reference to this issue in Hellenistic philosophy: Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 211.

91 Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 324.

92 For biographical information on Ibn Usayd, see Qifṭī, *Ikhbār,* 164; and Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 380, who writes that Ibn Qurra preferred Ibn Usayd over others, and translated into Arabic a book called *Kitāb Jawābāt Thābit li-masāʾil ʿĪsā b. Usayd* (Thābit's Book of Answers on the Issues Raised by ʿĪsā b. Usayd).

93 Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 324.

94 Ibid., 333.

95 The principle that each category is independent and that no two categories overlap is one of the core tenets upheld within the Aristotelian tradition. Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī himself participated in the debate about the category to which "body" (*jism*) belongs, a discussion sparked by doubts raised by another scholar, Ibrāhīm Ibn ʿAdī, a relative of Yaḥyā. Ibrāhīm argued that the body belongs to the category of quantity rather than substance. Such claims often stem from confusion between the physical body (*al-jism al-ṭabīʿī*), which belongs to the category of substance, and the mathematical body (*al-jism al-taʿlīmī*), which is an accident and belongs to the category of quantity. For more on this debate, see Menn and Wisnovsky, On Whether Body is a Substance.

(1) Substances (*jawāhir*) are composed of matter (*hayūlī*); therefore, they undergo a process of generation (*kawn*).[96] Generation is a type of motion (*ḥaraka*), which necessitates the categories of (2) "action" and (3) "affection," each representing a kind of motion either originating from or directed toward the substance or to the substance.[97] Since everything that moves is primarily a body, and every body is made up of parts, there is a need for the category of (4) "quantity," as the parts constitute a measurable size.[98] Since movement occurs within a certain time, there is a need for the category of (5) "when." Some bodies are surrounded by other bodies, which gives rise to the need for the category of (6) "where." Since material substances are accompanied by things that cover or adhere to them (partially or fully) without being part of them, there is a need for the category of (7) "property." Because "action" and "affection" are typically driven by a desire to achieve certain ends, there is also a need for the category of (8) "quality," which refers to the goal or state being sought.[99] Since substances are multiple, and the intellect relates them to one another, there is a need for the category of (9) "relation." Finally, since the body is made up of parts and is surrounded by other bodies — and since a specific relation exists between the body's parts and what surrounds or is surrounded by them — there is a need for the category of (10) "disposition."[100]

Two points can be made about Ibn ʿAdī's scheme of the ten categories, presented above as part of his attempt to demonstrate their existence. First, he

96 As Kalbarczyk (*Predication and Ontology*, 226) states, in al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, when the discussion of substance arises within the theory of categories, the reference is to the material substance (*al-jawhar al-jismānī*). The same holds true for Ibn ʿAdī.

97 As in the case of a carpenter cutting a piece of wood, the act of cutting is considered a motion, and so is the condition of the cut wood — both are classified as motions. Simplicius, referring to Plotinus, presents an anti-Aristotelian view according to which the two categories, action and affection, are actually two species of a supreme genus: motion (Simplicius, *Categories* 9–15, 31–32; Plotinus, *Enneads*, vi, 1, 15).

98 Notably, the process leading to the category of "quantity" does not include discrete quantities (like numbers) and is limited to continuous quantities. Elsewhere, and under the heading *Fī l-kamm* (On Quantity), Ibn ʿAdī (*Maqālāt*, 183–184) notes that "discrete and continuous]quantities[are the two species of quantity."

99 In the sense that the categories of "action" and "affection" represent a gradual process that the substance undergoes, at the end of which the substance attains a static and fixed quality.

100 Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 180–181. Arab logicians generally use the term *waḍʿ* rather than *mawḍūʿ* to indicate "disposition."

does not follow the traditional order of the categories, which typically begins with the first four — substance, quantity, quality and relation. Instead, he starts with the concept of "motion" (*ḥaraka*), which leads him to the two categories of action (*yafʿal*) and affection (*yanfaʿil*) — categories that, in the Aristotelian tradition, are usually listed last. From these two, he proceeds to the remaining categories, concluding with the category of disposition. The second point, which follows from the first, is that Ibn ʿAdī chose to build his scheme of the ten categories on a purely physical concept such as "motion" — perhaps to emphasize that the substance in question is physical (*hiyulānī*),[101] while the other nine categories are accidents that accompany it.

In another treatise, That the Accident Is Not [a Genus] for the Nine Accidental Categories, Ibn ʿAdī continues to defend this assertion using a different approach — arguing that the number of categories cannot be fewer than ten, and specifically, that they cannot be reduced to two. The title of the treatise itself offers insight into its content; the ten categories are divided into the category of "substance" and the nine other categories, each of which is considered an accident. Given that each of the nine categories may be described as accidental, an immediate question arises: Is "accident" a supreme genus that encompasses the nine categories? If so, then the nine categories are reduced to one; and with the addition of "substance," only two categories remain.

The accident to which Ibn ʿAdī refers is existence (*wujūd*), which can be predicated of each of the nine categories. In a certain sense, one might say that each one of the nine categories exists (*mawjūda*) within a substance.[102] Ibn ʿAdī, however, rejects the possibility of reducing the number of categories in this way.[103] In so doing, he addresses those who argue that the accident called "existence" functions as a supreme genus for the nine accidental categories. He insists that anyone making such claim must first examine the relationship

101 In this regard, two types of substance must be distinguished: primary (or physical) substance and secondary (or a universal) substance. The former has actual existence, while the latter exists only in the mind. For more on the distinction between these two types of substance, see Fārābī, *Maqūlāt*, 91–93.

102 Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 144–145. On this basis, Plotinus (*Enneads*, vi, i, 1) referred to the categories as "the genera of being," considering them to be real entities. In his *Ḥurūf*, al-Fārābī dealt with this question before Ibn ʿAdī, examining the concept of "existence," its various meanings, and the different ontological contexts in which it appears. For a detailed analysis of the concept of "existence" in al-Fārābī's *Ḥurūf*, see Menn's Senses of Being, which compares al-Farābī's views at times with Aristotle and at other times with modern Western philosophers. See also Druart's broad interpretation of al-Fārābī's theory of categories and her distinction between the categories as logical concepts and as referring to existents of the physical world (Druart, Al-Fārābī, The Categories).

103 Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 145.

between "existence" and each of the nine categories, and determine whether this relationship meets the criteria required for a genus and its species.

The argument that "accident" is a genus (*jins*) of the nine categories runs as follows: since an accident is defined as "existent in something" (*al-mawjūd fī shay'*) — without being a part of it — it can be used as a predicate for the nine categories. But can "existent in something" truly serve as a genus for the nine accidental categories? Ibn ʿAdī's answer is no. He argues that since *mawjūd* (existent) is derived from *wujūd* (existence), the relationship between the two is not essential — unlike the relationship between man (*insān*) and animal (*ḥayawān*), where the latter serves as the genus of the former. Without such an essential relationship, "existence" cannot function as a genus for the nine categories.[104] To explain his argument, Ibn ʿAdī uses linguistic tools typically discussed in the first part of the Categories.[105] In this context, he clarifies the meaning of "derivative":

> By derivative, I mean every noun (*ism*) that signifies the named (*musammā*) through the mediation (*bi-tawassuṭ*) of something within it. It is derived from its source, as when you say "the writer" (*al-kātib*), for it signifies Zayd through the mediation of his writing (*kitābatihi*) from which the term is derived".[106]

Ibn ʿAdī, who insists on the existence of a third element mediating between the original noun and the derivative, uses linguistic derivation (*ishtiqāq*) to examine the nature of the relationship between species and genus — and, accordingly, to assess "existence" as a possible supreme genus for the nine categories.[107] For him, the relationship between genus and species cannot be one of linguistic derivation. To support this argument, he presents several examples of genera and their respective species:[108]

104 Ibid., 144–146; see also Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 212–214.

105 See Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 189, for a brief reference to this subject; also the reference in Isḥāq's translation, in Badawī, *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, i, 33–34.

106 Ibn ʿAdī, *Fī l-tawḥīd*, 217.

107 *Ism mushtaqq* is the corresponding term for the Aristotelian *paronym* (Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 1a13). For more about the concept of *ishtiqāq* and its relation to *mawjūd* in Ibn ʿAdī's philosophy, see Kalbarczyk, *Predication and Ontology*, 213–214; cf. Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §§19–26, 80; Menn, Senses of Being, 65–66, 77 for al-Fārābī's treatment of *ishtiqāq* in the same context.

108 Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 145. Notably, among the genera presented in Table 1, only the final example — "quantity" — represents a supreme genus. In the remaining examples, the genus is not supreme. However, this does not weaken the argument, since in this context, what is true for a supreme genus is also true for an ordinary genus. Moreover, it is possible

TABLE 1 Examples of genera and their respective species

GENUS (*jins*)	SPECIES (*naw'*)
animal (*ḥayawān*)	man (*insān*)
color (*lawn*)	white (*abyaḍ*)
shape (*shakl*)	triangle (*muthallath*)
quantity (*kamm*)	number (*'adad*)

Since the essence of the species is identical with the genus to which it belongs, we say: "man is an animal"; "white is a color"; "a triangle is a shape"; and "a number is a quantity." The reason is that the genus forms part of the species' essential definition. The second condition that must be met for something to qualify as a genus is that it cannot be used as a derived adjective for the species. For example, we do not say that someone is *ḥayawānī* or *maḥyūn*, we say simply *ḥayawān* (animal). The same applies to the other examples. This is different from the case of "existent" (*mawjūd*), which is derived from existence (*wujūd*), and the fact that *mawjūd* is a derivative term disqualifies it from being a supreme genus. Consequently, for "existent" to be considered a supreme genus for the nine categories, it would have to meet both conditions mentioned above, but this is impossible, because there is no identity between the essence of animals, colors, shapes, and quantities, on the one hand, and existence on the other. We do not say, "substance is existence (*wujūd*)" or "quantity is existence (*wujūd*)"; rather, we say, "substance exists (*mawjūd*)" and "quantity exists (*mawjūda*)." In other words, the adjective *mawjūd* must be derived from the noun *wujūd* before it can be attributed to the relevant species. This fact invalidates the possibility that the accident in question — existence — could serve as a genus, let alone as a supreme genus for the nine categories.

In a similar tone, in another passage, Ibn 'Adī refers to the concept of "existent" (*mawjūd*) in Aristotle, where he distinguishes between its usage in logic and in metaphysics.[109] In logic, *mawjūd* is treated as a homonym (*ism mushtarak*) that applies to the categories in different degrees and senses: "In the logical topics, Aristotle made *mawjūd* a homonym in which the ten categories participate (*tashtarik*), because his discussion is about the categories."[110] Thus,

that Ibn 'Adī included a variety of examples to demonstrate that the rule concerning derivation applies to all genera, not only to the supreme ones.

109 Ibn 'Adī, *Maqālāt*, 182–183.

110 Ibid., 182.

the degrees of existence of the categories vary, depending on their proximity to the central category — substance. For example, some have argued that "quantity" is closer to "substance" than "quality" is; therefore, the existence of "quantity" is more intense.[111] On the other hand, Ibn ʿAdī writes that Aristotle uses the concept "existence" differently in his Metaphysics: "In Metaphysics, he called it [i.e., existence] a genus because his discussion there concerns things that truly exist (*al-umūr al-mawjūda bi-l-ḥaqīqa*), and not the names that signify them." According to Ibn ʿAdī, metaphysics deals with real existents whose degrees of existence are equal; none has priority over another. Only in this sense can we say that "existence" is predicated equally of all existents and can function as a genus encompassing them.[112]

Following the Aristotelian distinction between the status of the categories in the Categories and the Metaphysics, and drawing on al-Fārābī's interpretation as presented by Menn,[113] existence has two senses. Existence as a "first intelligible" (*maʿqūl awwal*) refers to a category as it exists outside the soul — for example, "this man," who belongs to the category of "substance," which is his mode of existence. Existence as "second intelligible" (*maʿqūl thānī*) refers to a category as it exists in the soul — such as the universal concept of "man," which is an abstraction derived from all particular men that exist outside the soul.[114] For Ibn ʿAdī, existence is said univocally (*tawāṭuʾ*) of the categories when they exist outside the soul, while it is said of them equivocally or as a homonym (*ishtirāk*) when they exist as concepts within the soul. The central question in his treaty That the Accident Is Not [a Genus] for the Nine Accidental Categories is whether the accident defined as "exists within something" can constitute a supreme genus for the nine accidental categories. This is a logical question, because a supreme genus is a logical concept — a "second intelligible" — and if existence is predicated of these categories unequally, it cannot function as a supreme genus.

Such is Ibn ʿAdī's defense of the Peripatetic position that it is impossible to reduce the number of categories from ten to two. Existence (*wujūd*) cannot serve as a supreme genus for the nine categories because an adjective (*mawjūd*) can be derived from it — something that cannot be done with other genera such as an animal, color, shape, or quantity. Moreover, the claim that an accident (existence) could serve as a supreme genus for the nine categories is

111 Tawhīdī, *Muqābasāt*, 157–158.

112 Ibn ʿAdī, *Maqālāt*, 183.

113 Menn, Senses of Being, 76–84.

114 See Fārābī, *Ḥurūf*, §§3–7, for a more detailed discussion of the distinction between "first intelligible" and "second intelligible." For the ontological status of the universals, see Rashed, Ibn Adi et Avicenne, 119–129.

unfounded. It results from a confusion between two kinds of concepts: logical and ontological. Concepts such as "genus" and "species" belong to the domain of logic and have no ontological status — whereas a concept like "existence" has a clear ontological function. The confusion stems from importing the ontological concept of "existence" into the realm of logic. Furthermore, "existence" is an ontological concept that may function as a genus in metaphysics, which deals with real beings; but when the concept is used in logic, it must be treated differently than in metaphysics.[115]

Conclusion

Having examined the various arguments surrounding the number of categories, and the efforts of both al-Fārābī and Ibn ʿAdī to defend the traditional Aristotelian framework against attempts at reduction, it becomes clear that the debate was not only philosophical but also deeply connected to broader metaphysical and theological concerns. To fully appreciate the implications of this defense, it is necessary to consider how each philosopher's broader intellectual and religious commitments shaped their understanding of the Categories.

Although the two philosophers, al-Fārābī and Ibn ʿAdī, belonged to the same school — and the latter was a student of the former and significantly influenced by him — it is important to recognize a fundamental difference between them. Al-Fārābī, committed to preserving the Aristotelian logical tradition he inherited, understood the Categories as a logical treatise concerned with substance and the nine accidental categories predicated of it. The ten categories,

115 The explanation provided here regarding the concept of genus is confined to Aristotelian terminology; Plotinus, for instance, interprets the concept differently (Evangeliou, *Aristotle's Categories*, 98). Ibn ʿAdī's position on the categories closely resembles that of his teacher, al-Fārābī. In question no. 16 of *Jawāb Masāʾil* (page 90; see also the English translation in Rescher, *The Existence*, 40), al-Fārābī is asked about the phrase "man exists" (*al-insān mawjūd*): should "exists" be considered a predicate (*maḥmūl*) of man or not? Al-Fārābī responds by noting that Greek and Muslim philosophers have disagreed on this issue; some answered affirmatively, others negatively. For him, both answers are valid, depending on the context. If the statement is made by a physicist (*al-nāẓir al-ṭabīʿī*), then "exists" should not be considered a predicate, because in physics, the existence of an object and the object itself are identical. However, if a logician (*al-nāẓir al-manṭiqī*) makes the statement, then "exists" is treated as a predicate, because the sentence "man exists" consists of two terms whose relationship may be true or false. In other words, the physicist identifies the object with its existence, while the logician distinguishes between them. For further discussion of the different meanings of "existence" in al-Fārābī and the implications of this distinction for the ontological status of the categories, see Menn, Senses of Being, 83–84.

for him, represent the ten modes of existence in the physical world. Insistence on the number ten is integral to this tradition and also serves as a response to the approaches of *kālām* scholars, especially the atomists among them, who proposed a radically different view of the world from that of the Aristotelian philosophers. Any attempt to reduce the number of categories from ten would be understood as a challenge to the Aristotelian physics; therefore, all possible reductions must be systematically presented and refuted.

Ibn ʿAdī, as a devoted student of al-Fārābī, similarly sought to defend the number ten and wrote critiques of the atomistic worldview, which represented a physical and metaphysical alternative to the Aristotelian model. However, in Ibn ʿAdī's case, a distinct religious dimension informs many of his discussions. Influenced by his Christian faith, he draws a distinction between the logics of the upper and the lower worlds. God is manifested in three known hypostases, whose relationship is essential and analogous to the elements that make up a logical definition. By contrast, the physical world is marked by diversity and organized into ten categories that reflect God's wisdom.

In this framework, the Isagoge serves to illuminate the essence of God, while the Categories offer insight into the material world, which is divided into ten distinct categories. In this way, the defense of the ten categories emerges not only as a matter of logical classification but as a reflection of broader commitments to the nature of reality, the structure of knowledge, and the divine order of the world.

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